

Liberty

Chilling Free Speech

July 2010

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by Stephen Cox

The New Servitude

by Wendy McElroy

The Books of Summer

by the Editors & Contributors

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Letters

Just Deserts?

Tim Slagle's comparison of the "special talents" of corporate CEOs with the "special talents" of sports stars (Reflections, May) is much like comparing obesity from eating at McDonalds with obesity from eating at Burger King. The results in both cases are still ugly.

The obscene compensations paid to sports stars, movie stars, and CEOs are driven by greed and ego, not value. Between the savings and loan fiasco, Enron, and the recent bank meltdowns, we could do quite well without any more "special talents."

Michael Carraher
Martinez, CA

Slagle responds: I wonder how Mr. Carraher stumbled across Liberty magazine; perhaps its austere simplicity was confusing, and he mistook it for a communist journal when he bicycled it home from the bookstore.

Rewarding special talents is what this country has done since before its founding, and in turn those exceptional talents have built the most peaceful and prosperous nation in history. By design, everyone here can reap rewards in proportion to their abilities, so the most talented people on earth have patriated into our melting pot.

The best artists of the English language will all eventually find their way to our shores, and because of that our television, music, and motion pictures are among our most lucrative exports. English has become the language of popular art worldwide, and

non-English artists often create works in English with the hopes of being able to emigrate here some day. Occasionally an outraged artist will threaten to leave America if the political atmosphere doesn't change, but such idle threats are usually dropped after one meeting with a tax attorney.

Engineers and doctors emigrate here as well, making American engineering and medicine the gold standard worldwide. Our victory in the space race and subsequent military superiority was based on the ability of the best rocket scientists and nuclear physicists to settle comfortably into our society. Here they were free to speak their minds, and were rewarded quite handsomely for their intellectual contributions.

America is also home to the greatest athletes in the world. Even if your talent is as obscure as an ability to stand up on a surfboard, you can turn it into large profits here. The highest-profile soccer player in the world chose to live in a country where nobody watches soccer, because it was better to be an unknown in America than a superstar anywhere else. Ditto for the world's best hockey player.

There are still quite a few places on earth where the exceptionally talented are expected to share equally with the untalented. If Carraher thinks there is higher moral value in a nation like that, I suggest he move there.

But I don't expect he will; people who don't appreciate talent or ambition usually suffer from a deficiency of both. Rather than taking initiative

Letters to the editor

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Liberty (ISSN 0894-1408) is a libertarian and classical liberal review of thought, culture, and politics, published monthly except February by the Liberty Foundation, 4785 Buckhaven Court, Reno, NV 89519. Periodicals Postage Paid at Reno, NV 89510, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Liberty, P.O. Box 20527, Reno, NV 89515.

Subscriptions are \$29.50 for eleven issues. International subscriptions are \$39.50 to Canadian and Mexican addresses. Email subscriptions are available; visit www.libertyunbound.com for details.

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and self-determination, he chooses instead to reshape this nation from the unambitious comfort of his couch. At least Carragher should be thankful that talented people built a nation where he could luxuriate in sloth, envy, and arrogance — America, home to the fattest communists on earth.

Fighting for “Rationality”

Lori Heine, in her “Preaching to the Unconverted” (May), seems to fail to recognize that all political struggle is between two polar-opposite ideolo-

gies or philosophies: collectivism and individualism. “Left-wing,” so-called “liberal” Democrats and other “tribalists” generally favor a predominately collectivist approach. “Right-wing,” so-called “conservative” Republicans and other “marketees” generally favor a predominately individualist approach. An overwhelming majority of the general public (including both the “left” and the “right”) embraces its own concoction or mixture of the two ideologies.

The “left” rejects governmental

From the Editor

Have you ever felt an obligation to be unhappy? I have, and probably you have too. We’re all serious people.

After the so-called healthcare bill was signed into law, I felt that obligation very strongly. Here was a vast deformation of the American idea, a hodgepodge of lies and discredited notions, the world’s largest experiment in giving people nothing for something, the world’s largest pig in a poke. And that wasn’t all. Here was California, the state I live in, bankrupt in all but name. Here was my nation, crippling its future with every kind of fatuous, corrupt, and ruinous scheme. Here was the world, dividing its governance between mousy bureaucrats and vicious dictators, with the former usually assisting the latter.

I saw that, and I did my best to feel unhappy.

Yet the sun rose, the spring came, the clouds blew past my windows. Tchaikovsky’s Fifth was as thrilling as ever. “His Girl Friday” was as funny as ever. Cheap zinfandels were as interesting as ever. Lunch at Bleu Bohème was as good as ever, especially with a friend to share the meal. Macaulay’s prose had never seemed more succulent; the life of Washington had never seemed more beautiful — and the modest pleasures of life had never seemed more significant. I couldn’t resist: I enjoyed these things, and I was happy.

I’ll admit the truth: I found that I’m complacent. But I think I’m complacent about the right things.

I’m not complacent about the stupendous waste of human life entailed by this century’s idea that the solution to all problems is an increase of government power. I’m not complacent about the poverty, cruelty, and futility that follow, as the night the day, every increase in that force of error.

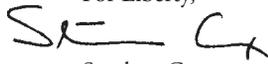
But I am complacent about the ability of human life to assert itself, no matter what the obstacles. I’m complacent about the power of the free market to minister to human desires, both the “low” ones and the “high” ones — and to do it and to keep doing it, as long as there’s a breath of freedom left. And I’m complacent about the power of the individual to think and know and survive and triumph — because any individual is cleverer than any state. In that contest, I know who’s going to win.

In Boswell’s life of Johnson, the old sage meets a humble college friend, who tells him, “You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don’t know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.”

That man speaks for me. I suspect that he speaks for many other libertarians. We don’t have a duty to be sad, just because of our philosophy. Instead, we have an inspiration to share the cheerful news of freedom — what freedom is, what freedom does, what freedom can do even under the most adverse conditions.

Come to think about it, that’s not a bad philosophy.

For Liberty,


Stephen Cox

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intervention when it comes to “morals.” They don’t want anyone telling them what to do when it comes to religious practices or lack thereof. They resent governmental restrictions on their sexual and other private behavior. However, they seem to have no qualms about taxation and governmental controls on private property.

The “right” furiously rejects governmental intervention when it comes to “private property and market activities.” They think that contracts are “sacred” and it’s government’s job to uphold and defend them. However, they seem to have no qualms about taxation and governmental “dictation of moral behavior.”

There is possibly a “third” way in which government has only one legitimate function, to seek out and punish by restitution and retribution the acts of: (1) fraud, (2) misrepresentation, (3) theft, and (4) unprovoked, violent, physical aggression against others. Government would have no power to tax, but would offer these “services” on the market in competition with other purveyors of the very same services.

Heine seems to be correct in advocating “reasonableness and discussion,” but until everyone understands the deep

penetration of collectivist practices into our everyday lives, the screaming and yelling will go on. Neither the “left” nor the “right” seem to recognize and understand that each embraces some freedoms and each embraces some collectivization.

True libertarians will continue to attempt education of both the “left” and the “right” with the goal of eliminating all collectivism and establishing a thoroughly rational individualism with an absolutely minimum of coercive governmental intervention.

David Michael Myers
Martinsburg, WV

Heine responds: Mr. Myers is quite correct that collectivism is the real menace threatening a traditional understanding of freedom. My article dealt with how to talk, one-to-one, with the individuals in our lives — our friends and family members — about the importance of freedom. These personal relationships are where we need to start.

If we merely lecture them, Glenn Beck-style, at a chalkboard — schooling them on “isms” that make their eyes glaze over — we will not move them. Indeed, the antidote for collectivism is the empowerment, the engagement, of

each individual. We don’t engage them by talking about “isms,” but by sharing the realities of our daily lives and making sense of what they mean.

The point I wanted to make, in my article, is that we must leave the chalkboards to the talkers on TV, who — no matter how right those who oppose collectivism may be — can only deal with us en masse. The day-to-day world where we live, in which the individual is everything, can only be changed one heart and mind at a time.

Into the Sunset

I agree with many of the points Jo Ann Skousen made in her review of “Alice In Wonderland” (“The Wonder Is Gone,” May), but I enjoyed the movie. One of my favorite things about this version came at the end, when Alice is standing near the bow of a ship as it sailed out of the harbor. She was not going off to save the world or rescue the environment. She was going as an apprentice to help further a business that her father had been a part of. It was portrayed as being somewhat of a glorious thing. How’s that for a unique message in today’s society?

Jon Black
Seattle, WA

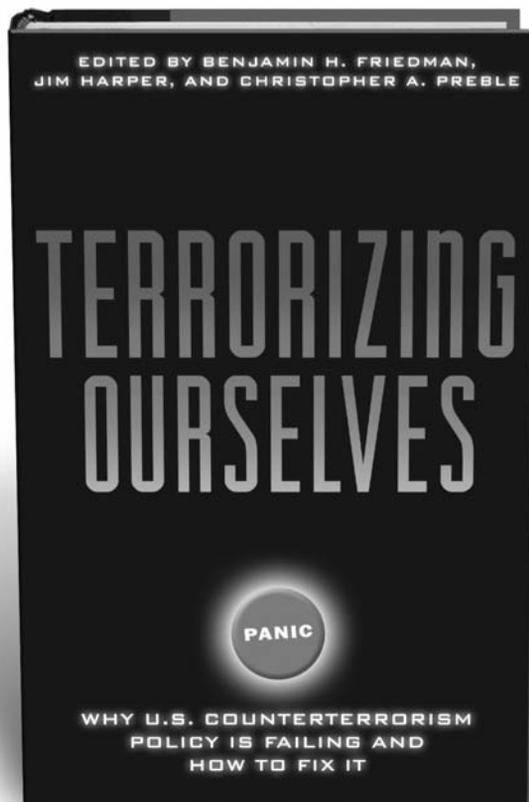
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Reflections

Twitspeak — According to the AP, Hugo Chavez has a staff of 200 to manage his Twitter account, thus demonstrating why socialism always fails. Under government control there is no incentive to reduce the number of employees, because there is no budget to meet. The government that hires is the same one that prints the money (note that Venezuela has a 30% inflation rate).

I don't care how important or popular The Hugo is; there is no need to hire 200 people for the same job that most teenage girls can handle on their own. Even assuming eight tweets an hour (which is a pace that would cause anybody to stop following you on Twitter), each employee would only be required to come up with one 140-character tweet per day. Something like: "Grabbing a steak with plantains (yum) B4 m off 2 torture some dissidents. ROTFLOL!" — Tim Slagle

No good Romans here — Casey Lartigue, Jr., a freelance education consultant based in South Korea, noted in an Earth Day 2010 article, "There are too many people who think there are too many people" (Korea Times, April 21).

The thing I have noticed about all those who assure us that there are too many people in the world, and that we have got to do something about it, is that I don't hear any of them offering to fall on their swords to help relieve the problem. — John Kannarr

Worthy of contempt — Libertarians may not get much respect, but they are getting attention.

In April, I attended a meeting of humanities instructors (those who teach "the great books"). At a plenary session, the president of the organization, a philosopher, gave a ten-minute summary of the philosophical issue of free will. He noted three major approaches to finding out whether people are free to act: the fatalist approach, the determinist approach, and the libertarian approach. But as soon as he said "libertarian," he hastened to explain — apologetically, perhaps — that he didn't mean "political" libertarian.

My guess is that he's been giving that speech for years, and only recently had it occurred to him that he needed to make sure that "libertarian" wasn't misunderstood. Thank you, Ron Paul!

The April 19 issue of The New Yorker had a cartoon showing two firemen pulling a hose toward a house on fire. The homeowner is fighting the blaze with buckets of water. When he sees the firemen, he smiles and says cheerfully: "No, thanks — I'm a libertarian."

Okay, it's patronizing. The cartoonist thinks that libertari-

ans are goofy, muddle-headed people who don't know what's good for them. But I think this attention, too, is an advance. At the very least, The New Yorker spelled the name right, and didn't capitalize it, either. — Jane S. Shaw

Glorious leader — Consider this question from The New York Times/CBS poll of 1,580 adults, April 5–12, with a 3% margin of error:

"Are Obama's policies moving the country toward socialism?"

This poll was mentioned in the Arizona Republic on April 18. The thrust of the article was that "96% of 'Tea Party' sympathizers" answered affirmatively to that question.

I must say, I was more struck by the fact that 52% of all respondents *agreed* that Obama's policies are moving the country toward socialism.

Think about that. Can you imagine a poll in the 1930s that said over half of Americans believed FDR's policies were moving the country toward socialism? Can you imagine a poll in the 1960s that said over half of Americans believed LBJ's policies were moving the country toward socialism?

Something is going on here. This is not just politics as usual. — Ted Levy

Blind squirrels — I've reflected before on what a sleazebag former Sen. John Edwards was and is. But his latest tabloid exploits (or, more precisely, the latest tabloid exploits of his shameless mistress) have yielded some good results. According to Salon.com columnist Rebecca Traister, "Rielle Hunter's involvement with a man I had planned to vote for revealed to me the wrongness of my own instincts, and the very real chance that we could have handed the Democratic Party's future over to a congenital liar and

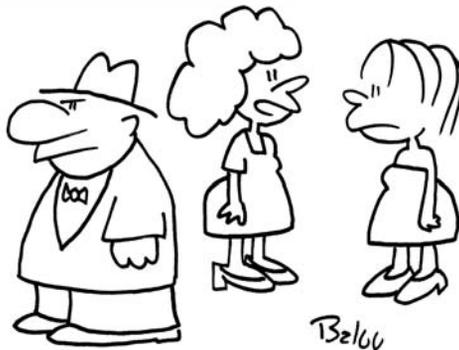
charlatan."

Brava, Ms. Traister. And may this realization be a lesson for others. — Jim Walsh

A bubbling brew — I don't understand the commotion over oil spilled into the Gulf of Mexico when a drilling operation went sour. Oil has always oozed out of the ground to foul land, lakes, and oceans. That's how people first discovered the stuff.

In nature some oil on the surface evaporates off as naphtha (probably the basis of the ancient Greek fire). Other oil is digested by bacteria converting it into simple organic compounds that other organisms feast on, leading to a localized exuberant biodiversity. The heavier components of oil remain as lumps called bitumen or asphalt.

The Dead Sea was called Lake Asphaltites because of the



"Politics is difficult for Leonard these days — his racism conflicts with his sexism."

gooey pebbles that floated onto the surface from underwater seeps. This asphalt was used on Egyptian mummies. Oil found floating on lakes or in puddles was used by Indians to caulk canoes, and as medicines. In California's uber-environmentalist Santa Barbara County, an estimated 11 to 160 barrels of oil seep into the ocean daily and have for countless centuries; the locals have made attempts at capping it.

Oil exists beneath the surface of the earth under pressure that causes it to seep to the surface by any available route. When a well is drilled into a pocket of contained oil the pressure forces it to gush out and over the wellhead. The pressure in the pool of drilled oil gradually falls, and the seep ceases. In this way, oil drilling actually has stopped numerous spills of oil onto the surface where it fouled land and water for eons.

The British Petroleum accident allows environmentalists to make arguments against offshore drilling. If environmentalists really wanted to preserve pristine nature, they would be appalled that drilling for oil has interfered with widespread oil seeps that enriched the environment before mankind messed things up.

— Erwin Haas

Inconvenient truth — Scientists have recently discovered that a graph shaped like an ice hockey stick, used to represent the recent rise in global temperatures over the

past 50 years, is virtually indistinguishable from a graph of Al Gore's net worth.

— Tim Slagle

Fruits and labor — I have very few vivid memories of early childhood. The ones I have come back to me in flashes, like a movie clip. One of the most vivid is the first time I questioned "authority" — that is, my parents — and realized that those particular authorities didn't know what they were talking about. The nexus of disillusionment or enlightenment (depending on your POV) was monetary theory.

But let me back up. I was about six years old, in the back seat of our family car with my irritating older brother as we all drove somewhere on a family vacation. My parents had just pulled off the road to buy us a basket of Bing cherries to share so we would shut up, stop fighting, and gorge ourselves on fruit instead. I remember asking my mother, who was in the passenger seat, "Why did we pay for this? Why don't people just take what they want?"

She gave me a stern rebuke about the moral wrong of stealing. But I persisted. That wasn't what I meant. Why did we need money to get the cherries? Couldn't we just tell the person at the stand that we wanted them?

As well as a 6-year-old could, I was asking about the function of money in society. When my parents realized that I

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

The big political news of May 6 was the British people's vote of no confidence in Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his Labour Party. The big news for Word Watch was what Brown said a week before the election. It was his "bigoted woman" remark.

At one of his campaign visitations, Brown was questioned ("heckled," according to a prissy mainstream media report) by a 66-year-old widow, Gillian Duffy, a steady voter for Brown's own party. Mrs. Duffy asked him about taxes and the national debt and the recent immigration of six million people to Britain. That last issue is of understandable popular concern at a time when the British economy is in a coma, jobs for native-born Brits aren't easy to come by, and the welfare state, which caters to many immigrants, has become increasingly discredited and suspect in all its dealings.

Anyhow, one of Brown's aides thought it would be good public relations for him to have a one-on-one with Duffy, and she thought it had gone well. But when he got back to his limo, he said, "That was a disaster; they should never have put me with that woman. Whose idea was that? It's just ridiculous. She was just a sort of bigoted woman."

There's the "bigoted woman" comment. Brown hadn't noticed that his mike was on.

His remarks were immediately heralded as an enormous *gaffe*. The effect was heightened when a newswoman played them back to the smiling, grandmotherly Duffy. Her face filled with horror. "You're *joking!*" she said, in a thick, non-London accent. "Where was I a *bigot?*" Nothing could have been more spontaneous, or more devastating. A chorus of other horrified voices called on Brown to apologize.

(Imagine the headline: "King George Urged to Apologize for 'Americans Are Traitors' Remark.") Try another one: "Roosevelt

Urged to Apologize for 'Big Stick' Gaffe." No, this kind of urging is a new thing.)

So Brown apologized. "I apologize profusely," he said, "to the lady concerned. I don't think she is that." It was assumed that what he meant by "that" was "a bigoted woman," not "a lady."

His syntax left a lot to be desired. The same was felt about his apology. Soon after, he turned up at Mrs. Duffy's house and spent another 45 minutes apologizing to her. Whether that was enough to win her vote did not transpire. He then continued his campaign, chastened by the shadow of Mrs. Duffy. One of his political friends made the inevitable remark: "He's apologized, move on" — which merely indicated that Brown himself was having a lot of trouble moving on.

But what are the precedents? Has President Obama, for instance, ever said anything that came close to the derogatory comment that Prime Minister Brown made on the open mike? Yes, he has. The comment that comes closest is the one he made during the presidential primaries, when for some reason he felt inspired to psychologize about voters in rust-belt states. "And it's not surprising then," he said, "that they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."

The same elitism as the "bigot" remark, right? The same disdain for the voters one is courting, right? The same portrayal of potential opponents as jerks and fools and Frankenstein-like stereotypes, stalking the electoral moors, lusty to destroy any modern-liberal planner who appears among them in a thousand-dollar suit? Oh yeah.

There's one difference. Obama had prepared his remarks. He delivered them publicly. Granted, he didn't expect them to be

wasn't advocating theft, they became utterly unable to answer my question. My mother and father had no communicable sense of why money was necessary or valuable in the economic exchanges of society. Their ultimate response was basically "shut up and eat your cherries." My ultimate response was to realize, "They do *not* know what they are talking about."

How significant is this memory? I don't know . . . but it is one of the few of early childhood that I have. Was it the seed from which religious and political doubt grew? Maybe. Maybe not. I do remember sitting back and being almost stunned by the realization that my parents did not have all the answers. More than that — they seemed angry because I had asked questions.

— Wendy McElroy

Pension deficit disorder — With the passage of Obamacare, organized labor now feels invincible. Like a randy roué jacked up on Viagra, Big Labor has been trying to screw the taxpayer as many times and in as many ways as it possibly can during these, its salad days. Several recent developments illustrate the surging satyriasis of the unions.

One was the subject of a RealClearMarkets.com article by Diana Furchtgott-Roth, about union tool Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA). Casey has introduced a bill that would bail out union pension plans, which are collectively underfunded by about

165 billion bucks (as estimated by Moody's).

His bill, with the truly Orwellian name of "The Create Jobs and Save Benefits Act of 2010," along with similar bills introduced by Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) and Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-OH), aims at shoring up the scandalously underfunded "multiemployer defined-benefit plans" beloved by organized labor.

These plans are run by the unions rather than the employers. They allow workers to move from one company to another but stay in the plan; yet they are, of course, a powerful device for keeping workers in the union for their entire working lives. It also turns out that multiemployer plans are less likely to be fully funded than single-employer ones — by nearly five to one!

Under the Casey bill, the federally owned Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation (PBGC) would be given the power to take over the pension plan of any company that withdrew from a union plan. The PBGC — that is, the taxpayers of America — would then have to pay the benefits of all employees until the very last worker or designated survivor died.

How convenient for both the greedy unions and the greedy businesses!

This nod in both directions could create a coalition of Dems and Repubs for the bill — a bill that is nothing but an exercise

disseminated to the nation. He confided them to a Democratic fundraiser in San Francisco, the Olympus and Valhalla of stereotypes and caricatures, a place where you can get away with saying anything at all about the beings who inhabit that weird world east of the Ferry Building. Nevertheless, his remarks didn't look like an urgent, immediate, pissed-off, uncalculated baring of the soul. He was trying to raise money for his campaign, and he was offering the rich people of the Left Coast what they wanted to hear. Probably his words were sincere. But they weren't as nakedly sincere as Gordon Brown's.

Lately, we've been hearing a lot of good things about "transparency" in government. Every politician now endorses "transparency." Yet "transparency" remains, like the afterlife, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler (at least no politician) returns. To paraphrase the old joke about heaven, "Everybody talks about transparency, but nobody wants to die." Gordon Brown blundered into transparency, and he died.

It's quite possible that if Brown hadn't called Mrs. Duffy a bigot, his party would have won significantly more parliamentary seats. That possibility may lead American politicians (those who have something to lose, at any rate), to speak with greater circumspection about the people they disdain. Obama may be more careful about accusing Arizonans of bigotry. He will still think they're bigots, but he won't be as likely to use the words that say it. Obama, after all, isn't a big cat that runs up to its prey and bites it on the neck. He's a little cat that lies in wait, hoping that his meal will just come strolling past his den.

So much for Obama. The history of Brown's mistake is similar enough to those of American politicians' "gaffes" to suggest that the American language is finally taking over the mother ship. There's a lesson in that word "gaffe." The fact that Brown's mistake was universally called a "gaffe" rather than an insult, a violation of decorum, a failure of empathy, a gross misapprehension of the electorate, a total absence of the common touch, an act of reverse

bigotry, a crude expression of arrogance, an intellectual blunder — all this illustrates the progress of cynicism on both shores of the Atlantic. "Gaffe" doesn't mean that you did something wrong, or thought something wrong; it means that your *act* somehow *went* wrong.

"Gaffe" is a cynic's condemnation, and Brown, for his part, showed a remarkable degree of cynicism. After visiting Mrs. Duffy in her home, he commented, "She has accepted that there was a misunderstanding and she has accepted my apology. If you like, I am a penitent sinner." Now, why would one evoke religious imagery at a time like that? Several reasons. (1) You don't believe in religion, but you want other people to think you do. (2) You are not repentant, but you want the reporters to say you are. (3) Despite your blunders, you consider yourself very clever, and you want to prove this to other clever people by using a private, ironic language that only they will understand: "If *you* like, I am a *penitent sinner*." He didn't believe that he had sinned (notice the word "misunderstanding"). But he knew very well that he had gotten caught.

Cynicism frequently takes a folksy form. That's what happens when Obama starts dropping his "g's," as he does whenever he thinks he's in trouble. And that's what finally happened with Brown, in his last debate with the other candidates. Knowing he was almost certainly washed up, he was still determined to exploit the Duffy affair if he could. "There is a lot to this job," he said, "and as you saw yesterday I don't get all of it right. But I do know how to run the economy — in good times and in bad."

Aw shucks. I admit I screwed up about that li'l ol' bigot. But my humility just shows I have the qualifications to *run the economy*.

Such cynicism is close to insanity — as cynicism often is. Both cynicism and insanity result from a severely distorted understanding of what the world is like, and a failure to learn any different.

Consider the following report from the Associated Press: "I thought he was understanding but he wasn't, was he?" said Duffy,

in moral hazard. As Furchtgott-Roth observes, it would encourage businesses to declare bankruptcy, dump their pensions on the PBGC, and reorganize under a new name. Freed from the responsibility to fund pensions, such companies would attain an unfair advantage over their competitors. The bill would also encourage unions not to deal seriously with underfunded pension plans. As our author caustically puts it, “Exactly how much mismanagement by employers and union leaders must the taxpayer underwrite?”

In April, President Obama issued an executive order that will push federal agencies to require contractors on large projects (\$25 million or more) to agree to unionize if they aren’t unionized already. Considering that 85% of American construction workers are not union members, this will be a major intrusion into the industry, one that is already suffering a 27% unemployment rate. (A contract that requires the contractor to employ only union workers is called a “Project Labor Agreement” or PLA).

Obama has thus rescinded an executive order issued by Bush, and has basically set the American taxpayer up to pay higher costs for federal projects. An independent study last year, commissioned by the Department of Veteran Affairs, showed that PLAs would raise construction costs on VA construction jobs by up to 9%. Other academic economic studies estimate that PLAs drive up costs by 10% to 20%. A study performed by the Beacon Hill Institute showed that PLAs inflated the cost of building 126 schools in the Boston area by 14%.

This is the corrupt ChicagObama at his slyest. Unions

shovel many millions to Obama and his cronies in Congress, who then funnel billions back to the same unions.

— Gary Jason

Sharp edge — In a recent article for the UK Sun, Simon Cowell (best known to Americans as the grumpy, sarcastic judge on “American Idol”) lamented the problems facing Britain. He singled out a problem that is not often mentioned in American media (and probably wouldn’t be mentioned, were it not for his position on the most popular American television series): “[Britain] has too many social problems — in particular knife crime and a collapse in family values.”

Knife crime? I thought people in Europe were more civilized than Americans and weren’t as prone to violence? As I’ve mentioned in these pages before, it’s probably just another remnant of the Knights of the Round Table mentality that is pervasive in British culture. But a knife is a weapon that isn’t used very often in America, now that 48 states allow people to carry the great equalizer. Every American knows that guns beat rocks, paper, scissors, or knives.

— Tim Slagle

Greek to them — Arrangements are under way to rescue the Greek government from its crushing debt. Allowing a member of the European Union and euro area to fail, so goes the worry, would trigger contagious panic. Dominoes would fall, perhaps Portugal and Spain. The single currency and even the EU might collapse. A rescue might give the Greek government time for an orderly restructuring — somehow — of its overly generous pensions and public salaries, its lax

who said she had planned to vote Labour but would now most likely abstain.” Mrs. Duffy showed an ability to revise her understanding. Contrast Mr. Brown. He (like our president) apparently started his career by thinking that the common people were bigots, but he knew how to fool them. He is ending his career by thinking the same thing.

A similarly distorted understanding is visible in the wise commentary of the media. about the PM’s “gaffe.” For the most part, it was viewed as an unfortunate event in theater history, not as a revelation of something seriously out of kilter in the rulers’ perceptions of the ruled. But this is a revelation of something seriously out of kilter in the media’s understanding of, well, everything it reports on.

And there was worse. Frank Luntz, an adviser to American Republicans, opined that the l’affaire Duffy was “the ultimate Shakespearean tragedy for Gordon Brown.”

Shakespearean? What?

Think about “Macbeth.” How could “Macbeth” be reworked so as to include Gordon Brown? Let’s see . . .

Lady Duffy: Think’st thou, my Lord, employment shall be bred

In full by such as throng fair Albion’s shore
With visas newly stamp’d? Nay, my Lord, not so!

Lord Brown: Thou bigot and rude-questioned dame, get hence!

But lodge thy ballot safe within thy party’s
Ample bosom. Now away! Take leave!
Nor cavil at thy Planner’s arch behest.

Lady Duffy: Thou daft vote-catcher, thou shalt rue this hour.

Lord Brown: Aroint thee, witch! None shall know this converse

Unless the microphone . . . the microphone . . .

O Gods! O Fate! My microphone’s awake!

Now save me, Heaven, from this devilish mistake!

In short, what in the world could be “Shakespearean” about Gordon Brown? Why “Shakespearean”? Why “tragedy”? Why “ultimate”? “Off with his head!” as the character in Shakespeare says. “So much for Brown.”

But why should we give Brown so much attention? He is not alone. There are many means of displaying one’s displeasure with normal people, and those means become more common all the time.

One method is simply writing directions as “directions” are written for Microsoft. You know that whenever you hit the drop-down menu under “Help,” those dudes in the cubes are laughing at you, man.

Another means of establishing one’s superiority to the world around one is to twist some ordinary expression until nobody but the initiates can grasp it. A Word Watch correspondent reports a recent incident of this. It’s from an office memo. “We of course,” it says, “need a fairly quick turn around on a draft to socialize internally and get to this prospective partner.” Our correspondent’s comment: “Can you even guess what that means?”

Not really, but I think the problem is “socialize,” a normal word to which the author has assigned an esoteric meaning. Maybe the synonym is “share,” but who can tell? Only the inner circle can divine the meaning.

Yet another way of making oneself a member of the verbal Illuminati is to smack other people in the face with hundred-dollar words. A news report describes Thad William Allen — a Coast Guard admiral (who knew the Coast Guard had such things?) who is acting as Obama’s “National Incident Commander” for the Gulf of Mexico oil leak — as a man “defend[ing] himself against

tax collection, and its reckless borrowing. Severe conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund might give the government political cover as it tried to comply. Preserving the euro, like maintaining a currency's gold parity under a genuine gold standard, would strengthen fiscal discipline; for a government cannot just print money to pay its debts.

The most obvious objection is "moral hazard": the expectation of further rescues would encourage further imprudence. A transfer of wealth from relatively prudent countries (governments, populations) to imprudent ones seems unfair.

Default on debt has often occurred without causing a major international crisis. Government debt is not linked to the rest of the financial system by multitiered leverage as extensive and as complicated as linked Lehman or AIG. Within a single currency area, default and bankruptcy have often occurred without endangering the currency. Nowadays we read of the precarious finances of Birmingham, Alabama; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles; and the state of California. Bankruptcy of any or all of these jurisdictions, even the secession or expulsion of California from the Union, would not threaten the dollar's continued existence.

My father's job on Wall Street in the 1930s was to form committees of holders of defaulted bonds. Each committee would negotiate with the debtor, even if it were a government, for restructuring the debt to keep losses as small and their distribution as fair as possible. This approach, still available today, instead of papering over the waste of resources underlying the default, faces up to this sorry reality.

criticism that the Coast Guard waited too long to intervene with BP. 'Everybody was acting at each point in accordance with our doctrine and our judgment,' said Allen, who is due to retire at the end of this month. 'There's no hard and fast criteria to some of this. . . . We have not had an event involving a platform like this in my career, and that's 39 years. This is an asymmetrical, anomalous complex unprecedented event.'

Does he think we should swallow that? Are we supposed to be reassured about the Coast Guard's performance by being told that it acted "in accordance" with its own "doctrine and judgment"? I'm not reassured. And I'm especially not reassured by the fact that the admiral's high and mighty declaration is followed by the relativistic "no hard and fast criteria." (By the way, "criteria" is plural, not singular, as the admiral seems to think.)

Now we come to his final phrases, that stuff about the "asymmetrical, anomalous complex unprecedented event." Gosh, ain't that somethin'? Lookit all them big words! I have no idea what "asymmetrical" means in this context, and I'll bet that you don't either. The whole assemblage of syllables appears to mean no more than, "Good Lord! This kinda thang never happinned before! Whadda we do now?"

Let's think about this. There's an oil platform. Conceivably it might catch fire. What would you do if it did? Is this situation so "asymmetrical" that you can't figure it out? The fact that I've never had a heart attack doesn't preclude my considering what I should do if I have one, does it? Or am I speaking too much in normal human language?

Nevertheless, peace to Admiral Allen — recipient of the Humanitarian Service Medal with one service star, the Coast Guard Unit Commendation with one award star and "O" device, and many other awards and commendations. And peace to his strange

Failure of a rescue effort (as for Greece) causes more panic than if a rescue had not even been attempted and if the psychology of panic had been better understood. However, a panic generates gripping news, especially when associated with murderous rioting or when registered and magnified by the stock market. It benefits some people, such as government officials. "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste," Rahm Emanuel, President-Elect Obama's chief of staff, told a Wall Street Journal conference in November 2008.

In the days of the original exchange-rate-oriented Bretton Woods system, Milton Friedman speculated that many officials relished the currency crises inherent in the system. Flying and telephoning here and there and confronting momentous events in all-night sessions enhanced these people's sense of importance. I wonder whether similar attitudes may be at work in the Greek situation.

Policymakers and financial journalists should understand the herd behavior and other psychological aspects of such situations. That advice comes too late for this one, but it should be remembered for the future. "Calm down" should be the watchword.

The deficit-proneness of Greece, as of most other governments, illustrates the dangerous short-term-orientation of politicians and democratic government. Saying so is trite, but sometimes trite remarks are correct and important.

— Leland B. Yeager

The beam in Obama's eye — Honestly, the high

locutions. Maybe he doesn't mean to diss the rest of us. Maybe he's just infatuated with the sound of his own voice. And even if that's not true, I forgive him. He's not really a member of the political class.

But Obama and Brown I do not forgive. "Bigot," indeed. "Cling to antipathy," indeed.

These people can achieve my forgiveness only if they abandon their anti-intellectual approach. I know that "intellectual" has become synonymous with "obfuscating" and "name-calling." But it shouldn't be that way. In my opinion . . . well, when the president figures out the distinction between "like" and "as," which is a consistent problem in his speeches, I'll start thinking of him as a thinker, as a person who doesn't cling to clichés, stereotypes, and bad grammar.

In the meantime, I want to observe that as many obnoxious things as libertarians say about other people, especially political people, they almost never use words that separate them into a superior group, or get hypocritical about how *other* people perform that separation, thus becoming "bigots." They may call people "fools," but they're unlikely to call them "bigots," even when those people are obviously bigoted against libertarian ideas. And libertarians are unlikely to use specialized jargon. They derive this tradition of restraint from the earliest libertarians. "When we say free speech," wrote Isabel Paterson, "we mean free speech." And in case you didn't get her message about the nature of freedom, she translated it into the plainest terms: "A lot of American principle is contained in the two words: 'Just don't.' Much of the rest is encompassed by the suggestion of minding one's own business. The whole is summed up in the word 'liberty.'"

"Free speech." "Mind your own business." "Just don't." "Liberty." There's no cynicism there.

jinks of the current administration are hilarious. Take the latest battle in Obama's neosocialist war on American capitalism, the so-called financial reform law he is pushing through Congress.

Obama's usual game is on display here: take a problem (say, lack of transparent trading regulations for derivatives), which could easily be solved by modest, bipartisan legislation, scream that it presents an unparalleled crisis (it helps to use the phrase "the worst since the Great Depression"), then claim that the crisis can be controlled only by a massive increase in state power. Then hit the campaign trail, demonizing some sector of private industry — here, investment banking — and if possible use a polarizing target (Saul Alinsky tactics are always a key part of the Obama game).

Obama hit the campaign trail, sure enough, and out of the blue, the Glorious Guardians of the American Investor (a.k.a. the SEC) loudly indicted Goldman Sachs. Incredibly useful timing, that! Very quickly and mysteriously, nasty emails written by Goldman Sachs employees (gloating over the housing crisis) appeared in the press, to ensure that the American public gets to experience the obligatory two minutes' hate that is needed to get it on board.

However, the game didn't go quite as smoothly as hoped, because of a couple of surprise revelations.

First, it turns out that Big Brother Obama and many of the bigwigs in the Red Congress were given lavish campaign donations by the selfsame Wicked Witch of Wall Street, Goldman Sachs. Indeed, Sachs was the second largest contributor to Obama's campaign, giving nearly \$1 million! As J.P. Freire noted in the *Washington Examiner* (April 20), Obama received seven times as much from Sachs as Bush did from Enron. Of course, while the mainstream media hammered Bush for this connection, with major attack pieces in *Time* ("Bush's Enron Problem") and in the *Associated Press* ("Bush-backing Enron Makes Big Money Off Crisis"), not to mention a documentary movie ("The Smartest Guys in the Room"), it all but ignored Obama's ties with Goldman Sachs.

Obama, by the way, subsequently refused to return the money, even as he used the Goldman Sachs' indictment as exhibit A in his drive to push his bill through. Needless to say, this fact was also virtually ignored by the mainstream media.

Second, even as the SEC tried Goldman Sachs in the court of public opinion, interesting news surfaced about the SEC itself. An internal report, done by SEC Inspector General David Kotz at the behest of Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), indicates that 17 senior SEC officials are being probed for making extensive visits to porn sites on the internet — even as the country's financial system was floundering and Bernie Madoff's group was looting people's life savings.

All this prompts the question: why is the administration talking about passing a welter of new rules, when even the existing rules aren't enforced? — Gary Jason

Dressed down — First Lady Michelle Obama will probably have to shop elsewhere, since her favorite designer is going out of business. Maria Pinto can no longer afford to keep the doors of her west side Chicago dress shop open. This must come as a surprise to fashion writers and gossip columnists around the world, who use terms like "glamorous," "elegant," and "fashion forward" to describe some of

the inappropriate outfits Michelle has appeared in.

For some reason, people don't want to criticize this administration. Perhaps it's a fear of being labeled "racist," or maybe it's just blind devotion. In deference to the empress's new couture, a forward fashion usually gets imitated; and I can't remember a moment in history when a first lady's designer wasn't elevated to world-class status. But not this time.

There is truth in the market. When the general public makes a decision not to open its wallets, that's louder than words. In this case, the market is making a thunderous remark, which no one has the courage to whisper. — Tim Slagle

Greeks bearing gifts — "Well, mobs get pretty ugly sometimes, you know." That's what Mr. Potter, the villain in "It's a Wonderful Life," says to Jimmy Stewart when yet another crisis hits the Building and Loan. He's right, too. When financial institutions fail — really fail — you can expect violence.

But many people apparently didn't expect the kind of violence that followed the financial crisis in Greece. For years the Greek government had been handing out enormous welfare benefits, using money that it didn't have, money borrowed from other people, people who received an erroneous idea about their debtor's financial condition. The truth having become known, the government bargained for a bailout, making feeble efforts to cut back on some of the supposedly free goods that the populace had come to regard as property rights. Hence riots in the streets and the murders of inoffensive citizens trapped in banks. It was the banks, you see, that were the enemy, not the lying politicians or the rapacious unions, or the middle-class thugs rampaging through the streets.

A popular saying among libertarians is one that comes originally from Proudhon: "Liberty is the mother, not the daughter, of order." I'm sure there would be violence in a libertarian society, but organized violence tends to result from the aggression or failure of an organized state.

If I let you borrow a few thousand dollars from me, and you refuse to pay it back, I'll be angry, but I'll probably be angry at myself as well as you; and I'll look for some orderly and legal means of making you pay. No mobs will form. If, however, you convince millions of voters to give you money and power so that you can support them for the rest of their lives, and what happens is that taxes soar and the banks get shaky and the currency is worth less and less, and if people are out of work they can't get jobs because no one has the money to hire them — well then, there's going to be a reaction, and it's not going to be pretty. Times like these bring out the worst in people.

You know I'm not just talking about Greece. Throughout the world, governments have tried to build order at the expense of liberty, but right now, nothing could look less orderly. — Stephen Cox

The price of success — The Southern Poverty Law Center is an Alabama-based political advocacy law firm that did some ground-breaking legal work in the 1970s. Its founder, Morris Dees, is a charismatic true believer in the promise of racial equality in the United States. And he's a pretty good lawyer, who made effective cases against white-supremacist groups and other malefactors. But, like many institutions and individuals, the SPLC became a victim of its own success.

Dees' early court judgments against what he called "hate groups" created a sort of institutional arrogance at his firm. Its self-defined mission expanded from battling bigots working against existing U.S. law to advocating a statist notion of "social justice."

Today, the SPLC's unwittingly Orwellian slogan is: "Fighting Hate. Teaching Tolerance. Seeking Justice."

The problem here, of course, is that one person's hate is another person's passion. And the words "tolerance" and "justice" — defined honestly — don't promise as much as utopian statists assume. When they say "tolerance," they often mean "endorsement;" and when they say "justice" they often mean "redistribution."

The intellectual decay of the SPLC's agenda may mean good things for America at large. The country doesn't have so many truculent racists any more — so the antiracists have to look harder and reach farther for problems to solve.

Along the way, Morris Dees' crusading firm has degenerated into a shill for liberal Democrats. And not even the establishment media revere the SPLC as much as they once did. In April, Newsweek ran a long-winded and pointless article about "hate" in America. (The emptiness of the piece may explain why the magazine's corporate owner has put it up for sale.) As expected, the journalistic drones included a concerned quotation from an SPLC employee:

Oath Keepers are "a particularly worrisome example of the 'patriot' revival," according to Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). . . . "Patriot" groups — described by the SPLC as outfits "that see the federal government as part of a plot to impose 'one-world government' on liberty-loving Americans" — are "roaring back" after years out of the limelight, according to Potok.

But even the drones recognized the self-interest in Potok's worries: "It is easy to exaggerate the numbers of these groups or the threat they pose, especially if you are an organization, like the SPLC, dedicated to exposing such things."

An unexpected bit of useful context from Newsweek; another humiliation for the SPLC — crusaders in search of a meaningful mission.

— Jim Walsh

A land far, far away — Like countless other Americans, I watched the so-called "epic" History Channel docudrama, "America, The Story of Us." I suspect that, like me, other viewers of this propaganda were troubled by what they saw: not the story of *us* lower- or middle- or even upper-class Americans but the story of *them* — self-deluded upper-upper-class Hollywood celebs and politically connected, bailed-out bankers.

That's right: actors and actresses and other professional pretenders, with no historical expertise to speak of, repeatedly interrupted the grand narrative of our nation to give us their take on past figures and events. P-Diddy celebrated the ingenuity of American workers; Michael Douglas muttered something about "land of opportunity" and "those type of people who want to take that risk" and "take that gamble" and "believe in a better life"; Sheryl Crow explained the price paid by pioneers (hunger, disease) during westward expansion. And so on. You get the point, right? This was not the most intelligent telling of times gone by.

To make matters worse, a dozen two-minute commercials — or spin spots — featured Bank of America, a company that,

according to The Economist, is viewed unfavorably by 53% of Americans, but which was represented here as a patriotic institution and part of our national heritage. These commercials were like documentaries within documentaries: short pieces that told the story of this, our national bank, at once mighty and benevolent, omnipotent and kind.

Okay, so the commercials were more mythological than documentary. In all fairness, though, Bank of America has made efforts, aside from these commercials, to appease American taxpayers and consumers. It paid back the \$45 billion it received from the Troubled Asset Relief Program. The company and the individuals who work for it are not evil. But a system that privileges government favoritism at the expense of the average hardworking taxpayer — ah, that's another issue altogether.

Perhaps Meg James, in her review of the series, put it best when she said, "United States history is filled with such heroes as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks and Bank of America. Well, maybe not, but the colossal bank is doing its best to join the pantheon." Yes, Bank of America is trying to save face. Can you blame it? If I were managing the company, I would do the same thing — which just goes to show that even well-meaning people can get caught up in the system of state corporatism.

The fact that (surprise, surprise!) King Obama opened the series adds another layer of irony not only to the series' message (America is great because of its ability to pull itself up from its bootstraps) but also to Obama's recent sanctimonious, antibusiness platitudes. For here was the architect of the bailouts appearing side by side with his partners in collusion, the bankers. Add to these images the blabbering, bobble-headed celebrities, and you get the blessed trinity of this age of secularism: government power, corporate cronies, and simpleminded sycophants.

CGI effects and kinetic camerawork provide eye-candy but little intellectual substance for viewers of this unfortunate, overambitious, overhyped flop. Anyone hoping for more than clip and cliché should avoid this series at all costs. Those who like oversimplification (dare I say dumbing down?) should skim the Wikipedia entry for "United States." That's much faster. And without commercials.

— Allen Mendenhall

What is it good for? — As we approach the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, and we find ourselves knee-deep in fresh military adventures, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, his spiritual exegesis of war, calls out with prophetic urgency.

I cannot read it without a shiver running down my spine. Lincoln deftly counterposes the inscrutable Creator with man's feeble, hubristic attempts to take the cause of God as his own. As Lincoln points out sardonically, both sides cannot possibly be prosecuting God's will, despite the not-so-small detail of each worshipping the same God. Surely Yahweh speaketh not with forked tongue?

In truth, war more resembles a *deus ex machina*, oblivious to all sides, descending upon man, who is left little choice but to wage it. Invariably, rationales are devised. Rallying cries, banners, and earnest reconstructions of *causa belli* ensue. These various human rationalizations represent futile attempts to assign scrutability to what is ultimately an inscrutable

endeavor: "All dreaded it, all sought to avert it . . . and the war came." There is an inevitability to the "coming" of the war. For all their pretensions as first-order promulgators, men are mere instrumentalities. Yet, Lincoln invokes his own interpretive prerogative, divining that God's sensibilities are so offended by the evil of slavery, that it *must* be the root cause: "All knew that this interest [slavery] was somehow the cause of the war."

Lincoln is not infallible. On a separate occasion he laments, "If I could save the Union by freeing the slaves, I would; if I could save the Union by not freeing the slaves, I would." That Lincoln might be guilty of inconsistency serves only to confirm his own human status. The power of the Second Inaugural is undiminished — although its lesson remains largely unlearned.

We see a persistently hubristic impulse on grand display in the Pentagon's recent Powerpoint slide on the "influences" at work in Afghanistan. Surely only God himself could preside over — let alone comprehend — this maze of blobs and arrows, this panoply of causes, countercauses, insurgent motives, imputed responses, and strategic half-nelsons. The chart reeks of Faustian triumphalism, the notion that if we can only get our hands around the totality of human motivations, then those twin vagaries — fate and the will of God — might be harnessed and subdued. Where, in this intricate mosaic, do we find the vaunted fog of war? "When we understand that slide," said General McChrystal, "we'll have won the war." Good luck.

Had the neocons only read less Leo Strauss and more Lincoln, imagine what could have been avoided. Fate is the province of God, not of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or, God forbid, of Microsoft. Since time immemorial, the mightiest kings have met their match in Ozymandias' "lone and level sands." It is hard to imagine technological innovations or advancements in military science usurping Shelley's poetic vision.

The grand illusion of control, abundantly evidenced by the Pentagon's assiduous arrows and tactical zones of influence, is a conceit that Lincoln brilliantly exposed. How sad that his successors failed to heed this crucial lesson of history. In war, the most chaotic endeavor of all, human mastery is a pipe-dream. A five-year veteran of war's maddening ebbs and flows, Lincoln would offer only this on the eve of almost-certain military victory: "With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured."

A healthy trepidation — as opposed to a bloodless, diagrammatic certainty — is the hallmark of wisdom. The only war cry worth its salt? "Get thee behind me, hubris."

— Norman Ball

Mass lonelyhearts — People who vote sometimes seem to be a political version of my old friend K's love life. An otherwise intelligent woman, K fell in love with all the caution of a rock sinking into deep water. She gave her heart and trust to this man . . . then to the next man, then . . .

Of course, every man on the impressively long list of "true loves" betrayed her, lied to her, and left her embittered — yet oddly able to render exactly the same love and trust again. In serial gabfests, she cried to me about being jerked around by men, like a puppet on a string. I kept arguing that the way to stop being jerked around was to let go of the other end —

don't grab another rope the instant it is dangled. Better yet, give a totally different type of man a chance. Stop running after "players" and try looking for substance over flash. My efforts were to no avail.

So with those who vote. They keep grabbing onto the political rope — that is, onto the sweet promises of this candidate, then the next. Embittered and betrayed by yesterday's politician, they find it instantly possible to put on straw hats and petition and campaign for today's version . . . whether he's named Scott Brown or Ron Paul. "This one is different!" the political junkies protest indignantly — just as K used to do. And just as she did, they brook no criticism of their true love de jour until, of course, it becomes abundantly clear which end of the string they are on.

— Wendy McElroy

Same as the old boss — Like every other person who believes in liberty, I am outraged by the continuing war that the Bush administration is waging against our civil liberties in the so-called "war on terror."

The latest outrage was the recent decision by the infamous Bush Department of Justice (DOJ) to demand that Yahoo turn over its clients' email messages that are stored in "the cloud," that is, retained on Yahoo's storage devices. Yahoo even now is battling the DOJ in federal court, arguing that all emails should need search warrants, because all emails (like all phone calls) carry the expectation of privacy, and that this should apply to all emails, no matter how old, and whether stored on home or host computers.

Yahoo has been joined by Google, whose attorneys filed a friend-of-the-court (*amicus curiae*) brief arguing that exact point. The fascistic Bushite DOJ has taken a different view. It admits that federal law requires a court order to examine messages in electronic storage that are less than 181 days old. But the DOJ is arguing that previously opened email is not really in "electronic storage"!

Coming on the heels of the DOJ's push in March to be allowed access to the logs of the locations of people's cellphones without court order, we can see a clear pattern of an out-of-control Bush administration eager to expand the power of government to snoop on innocent citizens.

But wait . . . I'm mistaken . . . it's the "civil libertarian" Obama administration that is doing these things.

Oops. My bad.

— Gary Jason

We're on notice — There have been few, and I mean few, substantial press reports about a recent appeal hearing concerning whether the alleged "Michigan militia" members pose a serious enough danger to be kept in jail. The most striking thing in the few articles about this appeal hearing is how very weak the government's case actually is.

It was reported that while on the witness stand, the FBI agent who led the investigation into the alleged militia could not remember details about the two-year long operation. It was also reported that the agent did not know whether the weapons seized from these citizens were legal or illegal.

That's strange. I think most Americans reasonably expected the chief officer of an investigation in which the suspects are alleged to be plotting against the federal government to remember and articulate the evidentiary details of the state's case — especially when nine citizens are held in jail without bond because of the allegations against them.

The judge hearing the appeal granted the defendants' motion to be released on bond. But freedom-loving citizens should not find comfort in this ruling. After all, it concerned an appeal brought by the defendants after the judge hearing their first bond request had sided with the federal government. And at the time of this writing, the release is being blocked by another court.

Whether one finds these people savory or unsavory is not important. What is important is the rights of these people, who appear from all available information not to have not committed a crime, but who were charged and incarcerated on the basis of the barest and most speculative of evidence.

Worst of all, we are only at the beginning of this case.

— Marlaine White

Word waffle — Former President Bill Clinton has warned that there is Danger in the wave of anti-government rhetoric, and “that words apparently do matter.” This remark set off irony detectors coast to coast, since Clinton is the president remembered for once questioning what the meaning of “is” was.

— Tim Slagle

Art forsakes — Extremely important in classical liberal philosophy are the distinctions between negative and positive rights, and between rights and social goods.

A negative right to X is the right not to be deprived of X by others. Of course, this generally entails an obligation not to deprive anyone else of X. A positive right to X is the right to be provided with or enabled to do X. This obviously entails an obligation for other people to provide X to anyone lacking it.

We classical liberals take a dim view of positive rights.

I certainly think that any person has a negative right to free speech, which for me entails the obligation not to interfere with him as he speaks his mind. But I don't hold that any person has a positive right to free speech, entailing on me or other people the obligation to enable him to speak — by, say, purchasing a radio station for him.

Unfortunately, people often confound social goods with positive rights. I don't think that any person has a positive right to an elementary education, but I do hold elementary education to be a social good. It is beneficial to society generally and me personally that citizens be widely educated. It makes for a more productive workforce, and hence a more prosperous society, and it increases my chances of flourishing. If I become gravely ill in a society that has few doctors, I may well die as a result.

But even granting that something is a social good doesn't mean that it has to be provided by government. A classical liberal can hold that it should be provided by private groups, or even that government should subsidize it but not provide it directly.

The most obvious example of the latter approach is the voucher system for schools. Under this system, the government collects the money allocated for public education, but instead of running the schools, it gives the money directly to parents, in the form of a coupon that can be used at any school that accepts it. This allows the force of competition to exercise its invisible hand to keep quality high. It also minimizes the intrusiveness and inefficiency, the dead hand, of government.

A recent study put out by an eminent British thinktank,

the Adam Smith Institute, carries this line of thought into a novel area. Entitled “Arts Funding: A New Approach,” by David Rawcliffe, it explores the idea of vouchers for art.

Rawcliffe begins by reviewing the expensive and inefficient bureaucratic structure by which the UK funds the arts. Essentially, four councils (one each for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) distribute nearly 700 million pounds (well over a billion dollars) to support the arts. This money is taxed from the people and given to the councils, whereupon bureaucrats dole it out to various individual artists and art organizations, by criteria that are notoriously unclear.

Rawcliffe then considers reasons for and against subsidizing the arts. Two arguments typically given for subsidization are that it creates “positive externalities” and is a matter of equity. Positive externalities include the national pride instilled by flourishing arts, the important legacy that art provides for later generations, the broadening of education generally, and the help that a vibrant art scene lends to tourism. The equity consideration is that the poor cannot afford to attend arts events or visit museums.

Clearly, both of these reasons are debatable, as Rawcliffe notes. He observes that an earlier study, done by David Sawers at another fine British free market thinktank, the Institute for Economic Affairs, argues on empirical grounds that those positive externalities are overstated at best. I would add that observation shows us that the great art which attracts people to the museums of the world was mainly produced before World War II, and it was usually supported by private patronage, not government subsidy.

As to the equity argument, it too is debatable. Taxing Ms. A to give Mr. B a ticket to the opera is forcing A to work for B's leisure.

For these reasons, Rawcliffe doubts that the arts should be subsidized at all, as do I. But the reality is that subsidization of art enjoys deep public support, not to mention support among elites, and within the arts bureaucracy itself. So subsidization is likely to continue.

Rawcliffe therefore suggests that, if the arts are to be subsidized, the most efficient approach is to take the money allocated and simply give each citizen a yearly arts voucher of about 11 pounds (\$17) to spend on arts events that the citizen chooses.

This consumer-side approach would have many advantages over the present producer-side approach. It would give everyone an equal share of the money. The present system,

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“Really? — I heard the same theory from *my* barber.”

Rawcliffe shows, distributes the money disproportionately to the big cities and to professional and higher income people, rather than to smaller cities and the working class. Moreover, the large arts bureaucracy, whose salaries consume much of the taxpayers' money for the arts (on the order of 10%), would be dramatically reduced. The scheme would also make artists aim to please the citizens whose taxes pay the subsidies — as opposed to pleasing the arts bureaucrats, who contribute nothing. The idea would reduce the corruption and politicization of the arts. And it would spur competition among the creators and purveyors of art.

This is an altogether fascinating case of the voucher concept.

— Gary Jason

Gentlemen's agreement — Now that the global warming consensus is falling apart, or rather, it is becoming increasingly public knowledge that it never was a consensus at all, we are getting more and more clues to how this massive snowjob has been perpetrated.

There was a broad, perhaps unspoken, gentlemen's agreement between alarmist scientists and their collaborators, the press, and other media. The scientists would often qualify their concerns about the potentially dangerous effects of global warming in their peer-reviewed journal papers. But whenever those same papers got reported to the public, the qualifications disappeared, to be replaced by expressions of the certainty of impending doom. Thereafter, those "quoted" scientists stayed mum about the exaggerations of their scientific findings and predictions, thus maintaining deniability about any role they played in essentially fraudulent propaganda being used to sway an often gullible public, and the politicians, government bureaucrats, and environmentalist advocacy groups seeking more power to impose their demands.

I had gradually been noticing this pattern, but it came to my full awareness just recently with the various exposures of false claims in the IPCC AR4 report (the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), and the subsequent reactions of the original scientists involved.

For instance, in a recent email interview, Michael Mann, creator of the infamous hockey-stick version of the history of "warming," claimed that his original 1998 paper stressed the uncertainties involved in reconstructing past temperatures. However, that didn't stop the IPCC from including it in their reports, and it didn't lead them to warn readers of their Report for Policymakers about how uncertain their case was, and it certainly didn't make it into news reports that the hockey stick was anything other than a certainty representing our future. And no IPCC scientist ever took the trouble to disabuse news reporters of their error.

The desired objective was achieved, scaring the public into willingness to accept the blame and disrupt their lives in order to prevent the coming tragedy. The scientists could remain blame-free, since their technical papers contained appropriate reservations and qualifiers. The media reporters, generally liberal and environmental alarmists, could claim they were reporting indisputable science, and only a few deniers, ignored by the media, would argue the point.

— John Kannarr

The union label — So far, it has cost the U.S. Treasury \$81 billion to keep the poorly run, union-screwed automakers GM and Chrysler alive. They are now basically co-owned by

the federal government and the UAW.

Recent stories about the companies — now derisively named Government Motors — should make us even more nervous about what they will cost us, going forward.

One was a report on CNNMoney (April 7) that GM lost \$3.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2009. After the legendary cash-for-clunkers program, which was supposed to boost sales for our ailing automakers, this was a disappointment, to say the least.

Now, GM is saying that it will return to profitability some time this year. Perhaps, but things look dicey, for a couple of reasons. First, during the same period, both Ford and Toyota reported profits. Second, the pension funds for both Chrysler and GM are grossly underfunded, and will need to be brought up to a proper level.

As reported in The New York Times on April 6, the pension plans at the two companies are underfunded by a staggering \$17 billion. As the story dryly notes, if the companies don't return to profitability, the pension plans could fail.

To correct the pension underfunding, GM will need to fork over \$12.3 billion, and Chrysler \$3.4 billion, over the next five years, just to achieve minimum funding levels. This, of course, will make it even harder for them to become profitable.

What if the pension funds fail? Well, here is where the fun begins.

In that event, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) will have to cover the pensions of 650,000 GM employees and 250,000 Chrysler employees. For as long as they live.

At that point, the PBGC would likely be pushed off a cliff. As I observed in a Reflection some time back ("Pension pains," October 2006), the PBGC has itself been underfunded for years.

But, hey, the taxpayer won't mind rescuing the PBGC. Remember: it's too big to fail!

— Gary Jason

Have it your way — I was arguing recently on a medical blog about the issue of laws mandating that caloric and nutrient information be conspicuously placed on menus at fast food restaurants. New York state has legislators that want to *ban* added salt and high-fructose corn syrup at *all* restaurants.

One response, from another MD, was: "I don't view putting nutritional information on the menu as forcing my preferences on others. Rather I view doing so as giving the consumer informed consent before consuming the food."

Well, as it happens, working at McDonald's was my first job. So I thought about the implications:

Customer: "I'd like a Big Mac, please."

McDonald's employee: "Sure. But first let me discuss with you the risks, benefits, and alternatives available to you. Big Macs contain two all-beef patties, cheese, lettuce, onions, pickles, special sauce on a sesame seed bun.

"The all-beef patties together weigh 3.2 oz. prior to cooking. We cook them on a 1,500° grill. There is a small but significant risk of E. coli infection. We have not personally seen this complication, but other restaurants have. There have been reported cases of younger children choking on sesame seeds. Please report choking to the proper authorities

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Naming Names

by Bruce Ramsey

Are you now or have you ever been a
signatory of a ballot measure in America?

On April 28, 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in the case of *Doe v. Reed*. Friends of the court on one side included the Cato Institute, the Institute for Justice, the Justice and Freedom Fund, Liberty Counsel, and a Washington state group called Voters Want More Choices. These were conservative or libertarian groups. On the other side were a gay-rights organization, some professors of political science, the newspaper industry, several state governments, and the left-leaning City of Seattle.

At issue was whether a state can name the names and addresses of all signers of an official petition, or whether the First Amendment to the Constitution gives signers a privacy right.

I use the term “naming names” because it recalls the late 1940s and early 1950s, when American liberals fervently objected to leftists being put under oath and asked to “name names” of members of the Communist Party. The parallel with petition signers is not exact, but there is a flavor of it in the story behind *Doe v. Reed*. This is a case about the government, political opponents, and a hostile media taking an interest in the political activity of citizens with unpopular views.

Sixty years ago, American liberals defended privacy. Now, in this area, they don't. Perhaps that is because it is not their ox being gored. Perhaps it is because they have learned to love government, particularly when their people are running it.

Perhaps it is both.

To the case. The “Reed” in *Doe v. Reed* is the chief elections official of Washington state, Sam Reed, a moderate Republican. He is a champion of public disclosure and wants the names disclosed. “Doe” is the stand-in name for two opponents of same-sex marriage who signed a petition to put Washington's new same-sex unions law on the 2009 ballot. The two Does want to win a constitutional right to stay anonymous.

Referendum 71 did make the ballot. To the disappointment of the people who put it there, Washington voters approved same-sex unions, making the Evergreen State the first to do so by public vote. (See “Man and Groom,” *Liberty*, January–February 2010.) *Doe v. Reed* is not an attempt to roll back gay unions in Washington, though it was brought by the people who would like to block gay unions in other states. *Doe v. Reed* is about signatures on any petition to put a thing on a ballot.

In some states, such as California, these signatures are not disclosed. If the plaintiffs win, California's rule will apply to all 27 states with citizen-sponsored ballot measures.

Here is how this case came about. On May 18, 2009, Gov. Christine Gregoire, Democrat, signed a bill granting same-sex couples all the rights and privileges of marriage in Washington. The new law was to go into effect July 26. But a conservative group called Protect Marriage Washington began circulating a petition of referendum, which would refer the law to the people. To do this, they needed 120,577 signatures — 4% of the votes in the most recent election for governor.

Gay activists were furious. After years of their effort for equality, the state had recognized their rights. Except for the name, “marriage,” their fight was over. They had won. Then suddenly they had not won. Their opponents, whom they had beaten in the legislature, popped up with a drive to put the issue to a public vote, a vote of the kind that gays had been losing all over America. Gays started a don’t-sign campaign, portraying the signing of Referendum 71 petitions as an act of hate.

One such activist, Brian Murphy, publicly threatened to “out” everyone who signed. He requested a CD of all the signers’ names and home addresses from Secretary Reed and said he would post them as a searchable database at his web page, WhoSigned.org. Another web page, Knowthyneighbor.org, had done this in Arkansas, Florida, Massachusetts, and Oregon. Murphy would do it in Washington and encourage his supporters to have “personal” and “uncomfortable” conversations with people they knew. Several others requested that CD, including the director of the gay-unions campaign, a self-employed political consultant and a former Republican legislator.

Protect Marriage Washington sued, beginning the case that has reached the Supreme Court.

Few defended Murphy’s tactic as decent or acceptable. George Will denounced him as an agent of “thuggish liberalism.” But the media and political establishment of Washington — a “blue” state — defended the decision of Secretary Reed to release the signers’ names and addresses. And they did have an argument. Public disclosure laws are crucial for citizens to keep tabs on their government. And it is hard to maintain that individuals have a *constitutional* right to be protected from “personal” and “uncomfortable” conversations. In oral arguments, Justice Antonin Scalia asked sarcastically whether Americans were “oh, so sensitive” and “touchy-feely” that disclosure of their names was “too much of an imposition upon people’s courage.” And he said, “You can’t run a democracy this way, with everybody afraid of having his political positions known.”

Well, yes. If there is going to be democratic voting, some people have to make their views known. But did all 138,500 signers have to be “outed”? By naming names, would the state be taking away their First Amendment rights?

The argument on the “yes” side begins by comparing the signing of a petition to voting. When you vote, your ballot is secret. One of the principal reasons for secrecy is to free you from intimidation, so that you will vote the way you want. This is the argument cited by earlier Washington secretaries of state for not releasing signatures, which was the Evergreen State’s policy for 80 years. But the comparison to voting is not a constitutional argument. The secret ballot is nowhere in the Constitution. It came from Australia and was not used in all U.S. states until the election of 1892.

During oral arguments, Chief Justice John Roberts asked Washington’s attorney general, Rob McKenna, whether there were any First Amendment “interests” in the secret ballot.

“Yes,” McKenna said. There might be “a potential chill from voting,” he said, “if you know your vote is going to be revealed.”

The chief justice followed with the obvious question: might there be also a potential chill from signing a petition if you know your signature is going to be revealed?

“Some chill may result, just as some chill may result from having your campaign contributions disclosed,” the Washington attorney general said, “but we do not think that it is significant enough.”

What would be significant enough? Evidence of intimidation? There was evidence from California’s fight over a same-sex marriage law there. ProtectMarriage.com, a conservative group, said in its friend-of-the-court brief that “supporters of Proposition 8 were subjected to economic reprisal, loss of employment, blacklisting, verbal abuse, racial and religious scapegoating, vandalism, threats of physical violence, actual physical violence, death threats, and other manifestations of public and private hostility.” The California victims, however, were donors and sponsors, not mere petition signers. California doesn’t name signers. Washington does, though for Referendum 71 it didn’t because of the lawsuit. That meant the chilling effect of naming signers had to be imagined. One side wanted to imagine it and the other didn’t.

On the other side, the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, which defends same-sex marriage, called the California experience “a handful of incidents” that did not amount to a “systematic victimization crusade.” The privacy side was trying to puff up its “mere discomfort at the zealous but constitutionally protected speech” of gay activists.

The WhoSigned.org threat *did* seem to come down to “discomfort” at “zealous speech” — and probably more at the thought of it than at the reality. But did that make it insignificant?

The answer might depend on the importance of the thing affected. If signing a petition were like voting, then a small effect was significant because voting is “core political speech.” It is subject to the “strict scrutiny” of the Court, which intends to allow very little of it. Circulating a petition has also been declared — in *Meyer v. Grant* (1988) — to be core political speech. But *signing* a petition has not been declared that — at least, not yet.

In *Doe v. Reed*, the State of Washington argued that signing a petition is “without significant expressive content” because the signer puts his name on other people’s words. But what about the signature gatherer? The petition isn’t in his words, either. He’s just a worker, typically paid a dollar or two a signature. The state argued gamely that gathering signatures “is core political speech because it involves interactive communication between the signature gatherer and the voter.” It implied, without saying, that signing petitions does not involve this.

If signing a petition to change the law is not political speech, what is it? It is *legislating*, the state said. Petition signers were acting as legislators — all 138,500 of them. And legislators’ votes are public. As Lambda Legal said, citizens have

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Presumption of Competence

by Wendy McElroy

The nanny state wants to turn adults into children.

A core principle of the nanny state is that people do not know their best interests and must be treated like children, with the state acting as guardian. Indeed, that's what the word "nanny" means. The nanny state proceeds from the presumption that you are incompetent to administer your own life. Even fully functioning adults are deemed unable or unwilling to make wise decisions, so the state rushes in to fill the void with regulation of every individual's personal health and safety.

How much trans fat or salt can be in your burger? You are too obese, too nutritionally ignorant, too addicted to McDonald's to be trusted. Should you smoke, drink, or chow down on sweets? Of course not! But if you do, then, like a good parent, the state will force you to bear the cost of irresponsibility by uber-taxing your minor vices and imprisoning you for your major ones.

The "wise parent" list scrolls on and on: wear a helmet while bicycling, don't use saccharine, no public nudity, don't loiter in parks, monitor your words to coworkers, don't download porn, take a urine test at work, don't drive too fast, take only approved drugs and only in the prescribed fashion, strap on your safety belt, pay a tax for the error of fast food, no smoking in public places, register your handgun, don't use incandescent bulbs, recycle, homogenize all milk, buy health

insurance. . . . Recently, Maine was pushing to eliminate sex-specific bathrooms because separate "men's" and women's" rooms discriminate against your gender rights.

Yes, where you take a piss is now a matter of state, to be debated by legislatures, and all because they want to protect you. Happily, Maine has backed away from politicizing toilets — but this didn't put the issue to rest.

Since adolescence I've known that the state is not there to protect me or be my wise guide; I have to protect and guide myself. In that process, my mistakes have been more valuable to me than the "wisdom" doled out by bureaucrats; my mistakes are what I learn from.

I did not gain this knowledge through reading or a high school debate society. I ran away from home when I was 16 years old and lived on the streets for as short a period as I could manage, sleeping in an unlocked church at night to keep from freezing. I was always cold, I was always afraid,

but I was lucky. In short, at 16 I was prime protection material; I was the sort of social problem about whom Sunday newspapers run human interest stories that touch the heart and end with by declaring that “there oughta be a law!”

The opposite of “there oughta be a law” was true. I call myself lucky because I was 16 years old and so legally able to work. I was lucky because the law did not “protect” me

The nanny state is quite willing to imprison those who disrespect its guardianship, and confiscate their property.

completely. I had a legal presumption of competence that gave me the option of taking a minimum wage job in a safe, warm place where I could earn enough to rent a room in a safe, warm boarding house.

But what if I had been 15 years old and unable to work legally? What options would I have had then? I could have begged on the street or worked illegally and so been entirely marginalized. I could have stolen or sold my body for sex, and ended up in jail. All these options would have placed me in conflict with the police and placed me outside of “respectable” society, into which I might never have integrated again. The child labor laws meant to protect me could have destroyed my life.

Inevitably, nanny staters will respond, “The government would have protected you, had you let it. There were social safety nets, such as foster care, just waiting to help a 15-year-old.” In short, they claim that the nanny state works just fine; the problem was me. The waywardly independent are blamed for their own misfortunes.

Those who make this claim vastly overrate both the availability and the quality of public assistance. Note: I am not arguing for more tax-funded aid or for more caring civil servants. Trillions of dollars and millions of bureaucrats have done nothing to prevent homelessness and the other social problems they allegedly solve. Those problems have turned into lucrative industries that have little to no connection with helping people, rather like public schools that produce illiterate and innumerate graduates. Moreover, such industries as child protective services constitute the main barrier to private charities that do a much more efficient and humane job.

A bit of reality needs to be injected into such questions as “Why do runaways and other homeless people so often prefer to sleep on the streets rather than be sheltered by government?” I can only speak for myself, but I think my reaction was a common one, or a common mixture. The only voluntary encounter I had with the subspecies of humanity known as the social worker guaranteed that I would never willingly turn myself into the authorities. Literally, I had to stand my ground in order to get a bed in which to sleep because I might have frozen outside; the clerk had to choose between housing me for one night and calling the police. When I did go to the second floor of the facility, I found dozens of empty beds.

She clearly would have preferred me to freeze rather than fill out forms. Only because a call to the police would also have required forms was I allowed to stay.

Yet people remain baffled by those in need who refuse government assistance. Part of the reason is that those people have never had to deal with nanny-state bureaucrats from a position of utter vulnerability. Civil servants process humans as though they were slabs of meat; their goal is to reduce the meat to a number affixed to paperwork that can be filed away. There is no more humanity in the various welfare industries than there is efficiency in postal workers, kindness at the DMV, or concern for dignity at airport screenings.

Add to this scenario another feature. Kids on the street are often there because every authority figure in their lives has betrayed them. Runaways know that being dependent means being vulnerable. When social workers tell them that being thrown into the system is for their own good, this only adds the insult of the kids’ being considered stupid, even while they are being set up for institutionalized abuse. People on the streets are not stupid about the system. They rub shoulders with the system every day; they know its daily realities far better than well-meaning people who pass a law and never give the homeless another thought, other than how to avoid the scruffy fellow sitting on the curb.

Still, it is important to remember that nanny staters who support child labor laws usually have good intentions. They want to prevent exploitation so that kids can have happy childhoods, good schooling, and fall asleep safely in their own beds. But those weren’t the choices I confronted. And had I been 15 years old, all that the well-intended laws would have accomplished would have been to narrow my choices to ones that made me a criminal or completely dependent upon the kindness of strangers. Laws would have eliminated my best chance to survive and emerge intact, to have the ability to trade my labor on the open market and so take care of myself.

What I have just written is not merely a rant against the nanny state. It is the prelude to an argument for what I call “the presumption of competence.” Some time ago I read this phrase in connection with the criminal law. In a criminal case, if a defendant asserts mental incompetence as a defense, the burden of proof is upon him or her to prove it; otherwise, the default position for the defendant is a “presumption of competence.” The phrase immediately called to mind one that is a close parallel: the presumption of innocence. The latter phrase describes the requirement for due process according to which the government has to prove the guilt of a criminal defendant beyond a reasonable doubt before it can impose punishment. The default position for the criminal defendant is the presumption of innocence.

Historically, the presumption of innocence has been one of the most important guarantees of justice for the individual against the overweening state. I was interested to see whether or not “a presumption of competence” could serve the same function. If people are protected from state aggression by being considered innocent until proven guilty, then perhaps they could be similarly protected by being considered competent until proven otherwise. I mentioned that possibility

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The Farthest Shores of Propaganda

by Stephen Cox

Two films from Hollywood's Golden Age tested the limits of how much explicit political programming popular art can withstand.

If you're looking for propaganda, you'll find an inexhaustible supply in American films.

Hollywood is a place where even a history of the Mormon church can wind up as political propaganda — leftwing propaganda, at that. In “Brigham Young — Frontiersman” (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1940), Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, impersonated by Vincent Price(!), is asked what his religion is all about. Well, he says, with C.B. DeMillish music playing in the background, it's about building a world that has “a brotherhood plan,” a plan that makes it “impossible for any one man to pile up a lotta goods or have power over his neighbors.” He likens his version of the New Jerusalem to “that anthill over there,” announcing that in the human anthill “everybody [will be] doing his share of the work and getting his part of the profits.” Thus summarized, Mormon theology comes much closer to Marx (“from each according to his ability, to each according to his need”) than anyone might have predicted.

With respect to political ideas, Hollywood films have proven remarkably absorbent. But rather than multiplying examples of the “Brigham Young” kind, it may be interesting to identify the limits of absorbency, the boundaries of entertainment propaganda in America. How far has propaganda been able to go?

The boundaries are identified, I believe, by a pair of movies, “Gabriel Over the White House” (1933), the most overtly fascist film ever released by a major studio; and “Mission to Moscow” (1943), the most overtly communist film. This is not a scientific determination, but I think you'll agree that it's hard to imagine more extreme ideological statements ever issuing from Hollywood.

President Hammond

“Gabriel Over the White House” was the work of Cosmopolitan Productions, an affiliate of MGM. It was released early in the month after Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated as president. It was produced by Walter Wanger, who was involved, during his career, with such exceptionally varied films as “The Sheik” (1921), “Invasion of the Body Snatchers” (1956), and the Marx Brothers' “Cocoanuts” (1929). “Gabriel” was directed by Gregory LaCava, a specialist in comic films

who would achieve his greatest success in "My Man Godfrey" (1936). The screenplay was written by Carey Wilson, who received writing credits for "Ben-Hur" (1925) and "Mutiny on the Bounty" (1935). It was a respectable Hollywood crew.

"Gabriel" tells the story of Jud Hammond (intelligently played by Walter Huston), a crass and mildly corrupt president of the United States. At his inaugural party he enjoys

Anyone who bothers to read the Constitution will discover that presidents have no power to impose martial law for an economic crisis.

witticisms about having purchased his office with promises he doesn't intend to keep. After his high-class guests have left the White House, he welcomes to its hallowed halls a young woman who is very obviously his mistress. But Hammond has worse moral failings. The nation suffers from a catastrophic depression; "starvation and want is everywhere"; yet Hammond remains undisturbed. While an "army of the unemployed" (shades of the Bonus Army of 1932) marches on Washington, demanding that the government "provide work for everybody," he diverts himself by driving recklessly along the public roads.

Fortunately for the republic, the president's car goes off the road, and he suffers "a concussion of the brain." He is, for all intents and purposes, dead. Then a miracle occurs. He is revived by a supernatural force — the archangel Gabriel. This supernatural being is never seen, except in a sketch that provides the backdrop for the opening credits. But his presence is known by the rustling of White House curtains, a theme from the fourth movement of Brahms' first symphony, and the good deeds that Hammond proceeds to do.

Instead of hiding in the White House, Hammond meets the million-man march of the unemployed in Baltimore, where the protesters are trying, in the words of their leader, "to arouse the stupid lazy people of the United States to force their government to do something before everybody slowly starves to death." Without waiting on the "stupid lazy people," Hammond decrees that the army of the unemployed will become an "army of construction," working for the government and "subject to military discipline," until, "stimulated by these efforts," the civilian economy revives. That takes care of the unemployment problem.

Hammond's next move is to visit Congress and demand money "to restore buying power, stimulate purchases, restore prosperity." (Then as now, "stimulus" was a crucial concept.) He further demands that Congress declare a state of emergency, then adjourn, while he "assume[s] full responsibility for the government."

"Mr. President!" a senator cries. "This is dictatorship!" "Words do not frighten me," he responds. "If what I plan to do in the name of the people makes me a dictator, then it is a dictatorship based on Jefferson's definition of democracy, a government for the greatest good of the greatest number. If

Congress refuses to adjourn, I think, gentlemen, you forget that I am still the president of these United States, and as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, it is within the rights of the president to declare the country under martial law!" Having provided this unique exegesis of the Constitution, he strides off indignantly.

Of course, anyone with a copy of "Familiar Quotations" can find that Jefferson didn't define democracy in that way. Hammond's words about the "greatest good" are cribbed, more or less, from Thomas Hutcheson and Jeremy Bentham — and the original context was not a consideration of "democracy." Also, anyone who bothers to read the Constitution will discover that presidents are granted no right to impose martial law whenever there's an economic crisis. But the American people must be "stupid" and "lazy," at least about reading and thinking, because the next thing you see on the screen is the front page of the Washington Herald: "Congress Accedes to President's Request: Adjourns by Overwhelming Vote — Hammond Dictator."

With his new authority, Hammond promulgates laws to prevent the foreclosure of mortgages; laws providing direct aid to agriculture; and laws, or regulations, or something, that will allow the United States to abandon Prohibition without waiting, as Roosevelt did, for a constitutional amendment. Hammond's motive for repeal is far from libertarian; what he desires isn't freedom but "a return to law and order." He plans to get rid of bootleggers by establishing government liquor stores to monopolize the trade.

Much is made of gangsters, their antipathy to the state, and their antipathy, for some reason, to the unemployed. Hammond therefore creates a federal police force to arrest them, try them at court martial, and execute them. The chief arresting officer serves as judge, and the executions are conducted with the Statue of Liberty in the background: liberty equals obeying the law. "We have in the White House," it is said, "a man who has enabled us to cut the red tape of legal procedures and get back to first principles — an eye for an eye . . ."

The audience is meant to understand that these methods restore the United States to prosperity. But what about the rest of the world? Acting under the continued inspiration of Gabriel, Hammond sets things to rights in that department, too.

An international conference is scheduled to meet at Washington to discuss the war debts owed by European nations to the United States — an enormous issue in 1933. (For a protoliberal perspective on the issue, see the entry for Garrett in "Works Cited.") The debts, clearly, are not being paid. Each nation pleads its inability to pay.

Hammond's solution is for all of them to give him the money they would otherwise spend on armaments. Then no one will owe anything, and there will be universal peace. To convince foreign diplomats that an arms race is futile, he stages a demonstration in which American dive bombers blast a pair of battleships into oblivion. This, clearly, is what will happen to the other nations' navies if they don't agree to give them up. It's for their own good: "The next war will depopulate the earth. Invisible poison gases, inconceivably devastating explosives, annihilating death rays, will sweep [the world] to utter destruction." Besides, if they don't agree to

disarmament, he's prepared "to force peace" on them.

So they agree. When it comes Hammond's turn to sign the Washington disarmament covenant on behalf of the United States, he uses the pen with which Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. It's the acme of his career as dictator.

But alas! Gabriel will flutter no more. Hammond collapses while signing the covenant. He dies amid a shocked and (for some reason) respectful throng of diplomats, who apparently agree with the sentiment of his (former) mistress: "He's proved himself one of the greatest men who ever lived."

Thus the tale endeth. "Gabriel Over the White House" is a fantasy of fascism-without-the-costs. The way to gain peace and prosperity, it asserts, is to seize dictatorial power; nothing but good can come of that. This is perfectly constitutional and thus, again, without costs. That removes some of the drama, but for the sake of pure propaganda, it's all to the good. Propaganda is based on self-righteousness: it always finds ways to assume — never to prove — the rightness of its cause.

Comrade Stalin

"Mission to Moscow" had a harder task. It set out to show the rightness, not of a fantasy American dictatorship, but of an actual foreign dictatorship, heartily disliked by most Americans. "Mission to Moscow" is America's most fervent mass-market propaganda for the Stalinist utopia.

The film was released by Warner Brothers in May 1943. The final result of the Nazi-Soviet contest on the Eastern Front was no longer in doubt, but generating American support for the Soviet Union was still regarded as vitally important by some people, especially politicians who feared that Russia would make a separate peace with Germany. The possibility of Stalin's trying the same stunt *twice* — first in 1939, in the Hitler-Stalin Pact, then in 1943 — should have shocked the conscience of anyone whose conscience hadn't died several years before. One person whom it grieved but did not shock was Joseph E. Davies, who had served from 1936 to 1938 as America's ambassador to the Soviet Union. Davies sponsored "Mission to Moscow" as a means of increasing American support for the Soviets and of keeping Stalin among the allies (MacLean 72–73, 90–91). The movie was derived, in one way or another, from Davies' book of the same name (1941), an account of his experiences in Russia.

Like "Gabriel Over the White House," the film had a respectable Hollywood pedigree. It was produced by Robert Buckner, who had written the screenplay for "Knut Rockne, All-American" (1940), and directed by Michael Curtiz, whose credits include "Casablanca" (1942), "Yankee Doodle Dandy" (1942), and other classic films. The screenplay was written by Howard Koch, who shared script credit for "Casablanca." But "Mission to Moscow" is a very odd piece of work.

To make the film more personal, and more official, Davies insisted on appearing as himself in a long prefatory scene. Blinking furiously into the camera, Davies lectures the audience about his "reliability" as a guide to Soviet politics. (Here and later, I quote from the film itself, not from the shooting script that appears, with some differences from the final result, in Culbert [57–224].) His evidence? His ancestors were "pioneers"; he was "educated in the public schools"; he was

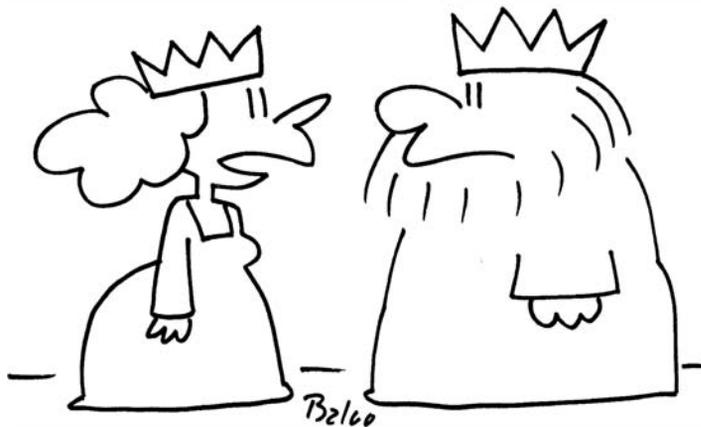
taught Christianity by his "sainted mother" (an evangelical preacher); he believes in the "free enterprise" system. After burning this incense on the altar of Americanism, Davies intones, "While in Russia, I came to have a very high respect for the integrity and the honesty of the Soviet leaders" and for their sincere devotion to "world peace." He adds that these honest leaders respected his honesty, too. Obviously, the audience should follow suit.

After Davies' pompous overture, the credits are shown and the real movie starts. Davies is played by Walter Huston, the same Walter Huston who had starred in "Gabriel Over the White House." He proves himself just as effective at portraying a communist dupe as he was at portraying a fascist dictator. In his first scene, he announces the movie's ruling idea: "No leaders of a nation have been so misrepresented and misunderstood as those in the Soviet government."

Skeptical viewers may wonder about that claim. They may also wonder how the little Christian boy from heartland America came to worship at the temple of the commissars. According to the film, it happened in this way: Davies was rowing a boat to his family's vacation camp in the Adirondacks when he was summoned to the White House to confer with his old friend FDR. The president asked him to go to Russia to get "the hard boiled facts" — as if Davies had some special talent as a researcher, or Roosevelt lacked the ability to read the reports already available.

Be that as it may, Davies takes the job and travels to Russia via Germany. At the train station in Hamburg he sees young people in uniform, marching past — the Hitler Youth. "Look at those little wooden soldiers," says Mrs. Davies. "It's as if they'd all been stamped out of the same machine." A glowering Davies shares his wife's outrage over the Nazis' destruction of individualism. But his next stop is the Soviet Union, where he is greeted by other squads of uniformed young people. "My, what fine-looking soldiers!" he says.

Equally fine-looking is the gourmet cuisine that materializes as soon as one crosses the Russian border. It's "real food," and plenty of it! — despite what the anticommunists say about millions of people being starved to death by Stalin, and despite what Davies' own book says about the dangers of eating in Russia: "British Embassy safest. French next. All the



"Mother's visiting next week, so I'd like you to lock up all the dissidents."

rest questionable as they depend on local products. No wonder that the [American] staff here have their own commissary for supplies" (Davies 19).

From here on, the film is organized as a checklist of arguments against critics of Stalinism. We quickly learn that, contrary to their public image in the West, Soviet leaders are merely unpretentious civil servants. Yet they are also deep thinkers. Meeting A.J. Vyshinsky, Stalin's chief prosecutor, Davies bumbles, "Ah yes, yes, we've heard of your great legal work, even in America." Yup, when Americans think of justice, the name Vyshinsky naturally comes to mind.

Some anticommunists assert that tyrants like Stalin couldn't possibly have the people's support. But their support is amply proved by stock footage of crowds marching across Red Square during the May Day parade. "I wouldn't have missed this for anything in the world!" says the irrepressible Mrs. Davies. As for the "peace" crowd — some people might be disturbed by Stalin's lavish display of armaments, but Davies takes the opportunity to thank God that Russia is "one European nation with no aggressive intentions."

It gets better. The Soviet people, we learn, possess the luxuries of life as well as its necessities. Mrs. Davies visits a posh cosmetics shop, personally supervised by Mme. Molotov (the same hard-bitten Stalinist who was later packed off to a concentration camp because she was a Jew, with Jewish friends, yet refused to relinquish her Stalinism). Mrs. Davies: "Women are much the same the world over. They all want to please their men!" Mme. Molotov: "I think we have much in common, Mrs. Davies."

Another thing that Americans and Russians have in common is the moral foundation of their governments. According to one of the film's many friendly Russian citizens, the Soviets' aim is simply "the greatest good for the greatest number of people" — the same idea that the fascist President Hammond falsely attributed to Jefferson. "Not a bad principle," says Davies. "We believe in it too."

But isn't Russia a "police state"? The American ambassador isn't worried — and why should he be? The secret police watch the Davies family from a car parked in plain sight, five feet away, as if they were auditioning for parts in "Naked

Support for the Soviet Union was still regarded as important by politicians who feared Russia would make peace with Germany.

Gun." Who could fret about bumbles like that? The serious role of detective is reserved for Davies himself. He tours the Soviet Union, trying to discover just how enormous its success really is. His findings come as "a revelation" to him: the victory of socialism is much greater than he could ever have imagined!

He notices only one problem. There are just too many industrial accidents in the Soviet Union. Since they couldn't possibly result from any problems inherent in a socialist industrial system, they could only result from sabotage. But

fortunately, the government is one step ahead of its enemies. It understands that leading figures of the Soviet Union have been allied for years with Germany, Japan, and the dreaded Leon Trotsky, in an attempt to overthrow the workers' state. The film follows the inexorable process of socialist justice as the traitors are seized, tried, and convicted *by their own confessions*.

Davies attends one of the "purge" trials (constructed out of "damning testimony" drawn from several such proceedings) and declares himself highly satisfied: "Based on 20 years of trial practice, I'd be inclined to believe these confessions. . . . 'Mein Kampf' is being put into practice" (by Trotsky, a Jew). Davies knows better than to think that confessions could ever be *extorted* in the Soviet system of justice.

Now the movie needs to grapple with the most obvious argument against the Soviet regime: it was Stalin, not Trotsky, who forged a pact with the Nazis in 1939. This complaint can only be answered by the testimony of Stalin himself. So, at the very end of his pilgrimage to Russia, Davies achieves an audience with Stalin, who imparts his deepest wisdom about the international situation. "The present governments of England and France do not represent the people," he confides. "The reactionary elements in England have determined upon a deliberate policy of making Germany strong. . . . There is no doubt that their plan is to force Hitler into a war" with Russia. If the Western powers don't befriend the Soviet Union, then the Soviet Union may have to befriend . . . Hitler ("protect ourselves in another way")! Stalin speaks, and Davies "appreciate[s]" his "frankness." He sees how logical the communist leader's ideas are.

In 1947, Jack Warner, who authorized "Mission to Moscow," told the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities that the film was made to help the war effort (Culbert 266). If that was the primary motive, how can we explain its blaming the war on one of America's allies (England) in order to exculpate another (Russia), which had started the war by concluding an alliance with Hitler? Even such absurdly pro-Soviet films as "Song of Russia" (MGM, 1944) never went that far. "Mission to Moscow" isn't about the war; it's about Stalin, and about justifying him at every step.

That's what it shows Davies himself doing. Inspired by his edifying conversation with Stalin, he returns to the United States, where he tries to combat American isolationism. Then, following Hitler's invasion of Russia, he travels about America, drumming up enthusiasm for the Soviets. He links opposition to the Soviet Union with "fascist propagandists" and paid agents of "the Axis," and he links all of them to "defeatists" and "isolationists" and opponents of conscription. He never mentions the fact that from 1939 to 1941, while Hitler was allied with Stalin, the American friends of Stalin were vociferous isolationists. When a wild-eyed man, obviously a lunatic, rises in Davies' audience to ask him about the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Davies explains that Stalin had to buy time, because "he was left standing alone" — another attack on England for not allying itself with him. A second man has the temerity to bring up Russia's invasion of "poor little Finland" in 1939 — but Davies immediately provides the facts: the invasion was Finland's own fault!

Nothing can surpass the unintentional comedy of these

scenes; nothing, perhaps, except the vision with which the film concludes, a vision of permanent solidarity among all participants in “this, the people’s war” — all the people, especially the Soviets, who are dedicated to “rebuilding a free world.” It’s a scene from the kitschiest kind of religious literature: as the peoples of the world trudge slowly toward the skyscrapers of the New Jerusalem, an invisible choir sings, “You *are*, yes you are! You are your brother’s keeper! Now and forever, you are!” Thus the sarcastic remark of Cain, the primal murderer, becomes the final argument for friendship with Stalin.

Evolution of an Archangel

No one who watches “Mission to Moscow” can keep from exclaiming, “How could this movie ever have been produced?” But first things first. Let’s consider how “Gabriel Over the White House” could ever have been produced.

“Gabriel” originated with a media tycoon, an ambitious producer, and an oddball book. The book was “Gabriel Over the White House: A Novel of the Presidency,” published anonymously by one Thomas F. Tweed, a political associate of David Lloyd George, former Liberal prime minister of Great Britain. Lloyd George, to whom the book pays tribute (Tweed 226–27), has often been accused of softness on fascism.

Enter Walter Wanger, with aspirations to advance himself in the film industry. In January 1933, shortly before Tweed’s novel was published, he induced MGM to buy film rights to the work. His goal, it seems, was to secure the backing of William Randolph Hearst, owner of Cosmopolitan Films and a friend of Lloyd George. The goal was realized: a screenplay was rapidly written, and Hearst rapidly came on board. He also tinkered with the script. To him is attributed the bullying disarmament speech that President Hammond makes to the other statesmen. This posed no problem for Wanger. He was happy to go along (McConnell 10–12, 19; Bernstein 82–84).

The fascism of “Gabriel” came primarily from the book on which it was based, and secondarily from its backer, Mr. Hearst. The director and screenwriter functioned as employees, doing their jobs. Wanger is another matter; he was the film’s entrepreneur. His biographer is short on analysis and long on details (not all of them accurately reported: he thinks that “Gabriel” is “set in the 1980s” rather than the late 1930s, which is the actual period [Bernstein 82, Tweed 12]); but he

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demonstrates that Wanger’s political expressions fluctuated like a fever chart. He supported communist causes; he supported American capitalism; he opposed war; he glorified war; he was praised by communists; he was successfully buttered up by Mussolini. His highs and lows were centered on a constant, naive modern liberalism, the type of “thought” that allowed him to bring “Gabriel” to life without ever worrying that it might be a fascist film. The biographer reports Wanger’s

boast that “the film anticipated many of Roosevelt’s innovative policies (such as the Works Progress Administration for the unemployed) and his use of radio for fireside chats” (Bernstein 130, 127, 87). The difference is that Roosevelt didn’t make himself a dictator. Wanger’s hero did.

Louis B. Mayer, operating head of MGM, reportedly wanted to pull the plug on “Gabriel,” thinking that the obtuse president whom one sees in its first scenes was a satire on

Propaganda is based on self-righteousness: it always finds ways to assume — never to prove — the rightness of its cause.

his friend Herbert Hoover (McConnell 8–9). Supposing that’s true, it had no apparent influence on the finished film. Yet while “Gabriel” was in the works, considerable anxiety was shown by the Hays Office, the film industry’s self-censorship organization. It was worried that the movie made American institutions look bad and might even encourage revolutionary sentiments (Bernstein 84–86).

FDR chimed in too. Through his aide, Stephen Early, he suggested last-minute changes, which were made. As a result, the army of the unemployed doesn’t appear in Washington, as planned — Baltimore is as far as it gets — and Hammond threatens the foreign leaders on a “private yacht,” not a Navy vessel (Nasaw 465–66; what you see on the screen, however, is still unmistakably a Navy ship). Around the time when the movie was released, Tweed’s publisher claimed that the novel “anticipated everything [Roosevelt] has done!” (advertisement, New York Times, April 4, 1933). It didn’t, and Roosevelt didn’t even like the movie. Trying to maintain Hearst’s political support, he sent him a backhanded letter of congratulation, saying he was “pleased . . . with *the changes*” and complimenting the film as “an intensely *interesting* picture [that] should do much to help [what, exactly?].” He reported that his friends considered “Gabriel” a “most *unusual* picture” (Nasaw 466, emphasis added).

But the major changes weren’t instigated by Roosevelt. They had already happened, during the transition from book to movie. “Gabriel,” the novel, is actually more fascist, and more interesting, than “Gabriel,” the film.

In the book, Hammond’s various programs to stimulate “consumption” result in a “huge national debt” and the “mortgaging [of] future assets,” but for him the real problem is “the existing capitalist system. . . . A system which permits humanity to be crushed and starved because of over-production.” He admits that he doesn’t know how to destroy capitalism — right now, anyway (Tweed 129–31, 219–20). He can, however, keep his own system going, and get other nations involved in it too, by arranging disarmament. Hence his actions at the great international conclave, where the book introduces a dotty bit of Wilsonian liberalism. Instead of threatening the diplomats with American air power, as he does in the movie, Hammond argues them into backing his peace scheme by offering to cancel their war debts, internationalize America’s

gold reserve, and create a world currency that will eliminate barriers to trade.

In other respects, however, the film represents a decided liberalization of the book. It presents a solemn, Lincolnesque president, not the grim, angry man who in Tweed's novel gets his way by sending an army of gun-toting brownshirts, the unemployed marchers-on-Washington, to threaten members of Congress until they are glad to surrender power to him. The cinematic Hammond urges people to read the Constitution and discover how many powers it purportedly gives him; the novelistic president informs the nation that no "mere document, no matter how sacred," can "bind the hands and shackle the rights of [the] people" — meaning him. He openly violates the Constitution (Tweed 121).

The novel's fictional narrator, a crony of Hammond, adopts a tone worthy of Goebbels' diaries, admiring his leader's clever means of consolidating power: packing the Supreme Court; using federal money to bribe the states into dismissing their legislatures and substituting executive "councils" approved by him; placing gauleiters in every state — "fiscal agents" whose power "surpass[es] that of even the Governor"; combining all police forces into a single national force, operated by himself; creating a nationwide investigation and surveillance agency; confiscating all privately owned guns; dispatching people who fail to surrender their guns to "convict labour battalions"; sending those who resist arrest to "a special concentration camp" on Ellis Island, where 90% of them are shot (Tweed 153, 186–87).

To create popular support for his policies, Hammond invents a Department of Education, which is actually a department of propaganda, and mesmerizes the populace with long television speeches. (Strangely, the impoverished people of America have so much spending power that when TV goes on the market, two-thirds of them buy it, despite the fact that it costs "under \$100" — in today's money, \$1,500 [Tweed 80].) The Secretary of Education is a national socialist idealist who tells a friend, "Good God, the more I see of that man [Hammond] the more I want to be his doormat" (Tweed 119). Hitler could demand no more.

The oddest, but most revealing, feature of Tweed's story is its conclusion. Hammond discovered his great political ideas after being knocked on the head in an auto accident; now he suffers another knock on the head and forgets them all. When he finds out what he's been doing for the past four years, he's horrified at his betrayal of "liberty" and "the spirit of individ-

ualism." He tries to announce this in a television speech, but his fascist associates in the White House shut off the broadcasting equipment. Enraged by their betrayal, he suffers a heart attack, and they calmly let him die. One of these helpful friends suggests that during Hammond's four years of political heroism "he had not been normal . . . He had been on the borderline of insanity" (Tweed 286, 271). The reader is expected to agree. Yet he is also expected to agree that it was a good idea for Hammond's friends to kill him, once he'd regained his common sense.

None of this interesting material gets into the movie. The film version of "Gabriel Over the White House" is a ridiculous example of extremist propaganda, but it is also an example of the moderating influence that Hollywood professionals and even Washington politicians can have in the shaping of propaganda for the mass audience they want to attract. No one involved in the movie held out for the purity of the original tale. Hearst groused about the small and late changes suggested by the White House, but he acquiesced. The others appear to have known, instinctively, what they had to do at each stage of the movie's production. The bland will find a way.

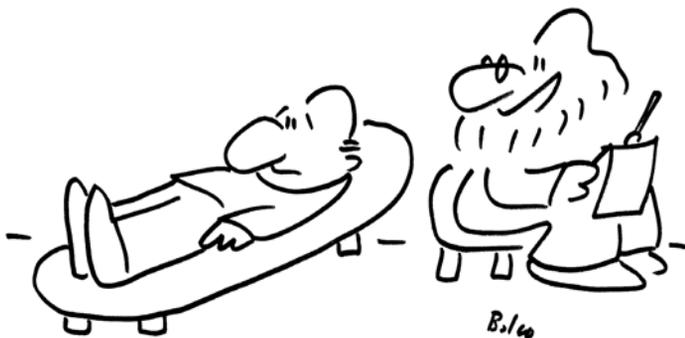
"Brainwashed"

"Mission to Moscow" developed in the opposite direction, from a drab book to a strident movie.

Joseph E. Davies, author of "Mission to Moscow," the book, was a midwestern lawyer who became active in politics and was rewarded with a third-class job in the Wilson administration. In this capacity he became friends with Franklin Roosevelt, who two decades later appointed him ambassador to the Soviet Union. By that time, Davies was married to the richest woman in the United States, Marjorie Post Hutton, leftwing daughter of C.W. Post, the cereal king. In "Mission to Moscow," the movie, we hear of their summer camp. This "camp" was Mrs. Davies' baronial estate, "an island kingdom, self-sufficient like a fief of feudal days" (Koch 111). During Davies' trips to Europe he depended on the services of Marjorie's 357-foot yacht, the "Sea Cloud," which carried a crew of 69 and featured a hospital, a gymnasium, and, of course, a movie theater (MacLean 22, 42). He never realized that his marriage was the only interesting thing about him.

Robert Buckner, producer of "Mission to Moscow," remembered Davies in the way that most people did, as an ignorant windbag and self-advertiser: "He was a pompous, conceited, arrogant man with greater political ambitions than his abilities justified . . . Stalin brainwashed him completely" (Culbert 254). Buckner's opinion was shared by virtually everyone in the Moscow embassy. "Ambassador Davies," said one of his colleagues, "was not noted for an acute understanding of the Soviet system, and he had an unfortunate tendency to take what was presented at the [Bukharin-Rykov purge] trial as the honest and gospel truth" (Bohlen 51). Another colleague, the famous George Kennan, who had the job of translating for Davies, remembered his naive trust in his own opinions, which were mainly those impressed upon him by his Soviet hosts (Kennan 83).

After his return from Russia, Davies put together an account of his experiences, the literary "Mission to Moscow" — a mélange of letters, journal entries, and bureaucratic reports,



"I'm going to refer you to Dr. Keinsorge — he actually enjoys this sort of thing."

650 pages long, a tome almost as engaging as the phone book, but much less reliable. Only researchers as hapless as the current writer could have made their way through this book. Yet it became a bestseller, probably for the same reason that presidential memoirs, which have the same characteristics, become bestsellers: it was topical, and people imagined it would give them some kind of special wisdom — only to read a few pages and discover their mistake.

Roosevelt may have suggested that Davies' book be turned into a movie; much more likely, the bumptious Davies may have suggested the idea to Roosevelt. Anyway, Warner Brothers thought "Mission to Moscow" was a good property. Davies, unlike virtually every other writer in Hollywood history, was given a contract granting him "approval" of "the basic story" (Culbert 15–17).

According to Buckner, Davies used his power to make sure that the movie whitewashed the Moscow purge trials. Buckner claimed that "an ambiguity about the guilt or innocence had been purposely suggested by Davies when the script was being written, but when time came to shoot the scene . . . Davies insisted on the guilt." When Buckner protested, he says, Davies threatened to pay off the studio and produce the film himself, using his wife's enormous reserves of money; and Warner Brothers backed down (Culbert 253).

A man like Davies was bound to make a fool of himself, perhaps in exactly that way. Nevertheless, Buckner's recollection, written in 1978, is decidedly untrustworthy. On May 20, 1943, soon after the film was released, Buckner wrote to Jack Warner, "I have carefully read all the criticisms [of the movie] and most of those boys are wide open on nearly every point. But at least we flushed out the Red baiters and the Fascist element in the press" (Culbert 253, 33). Is this the person who objected so sternly to Davies' Stalinist interpretation of history?

And was there ambiguity in the script before Davies' intervention? It doesn't appear in the available records. The first draft of the script, written by Erskine Caldwell, confirmed the wildest fantasies of the purge trials by showing Trotsky conspiring directly with Hitler to subvert the Soviet Union. Howard Koch's script exchanged Hitler for the marginally more believable Ribbentrop, Hitler's foreign minister, but left it perfectly clear that the Stalinists were right to purge the "Trotskyist" subversives (Culbert 162–64, 237). The Caldwell-Koch Nazi scene was finally dropped, which may be evidence that somebody, probably Buckner, was disgusted by this extremity of Stalinism. But it is hardly evidence that the screenplay was ambiguous about the conspirators' guilt. That is nonsense. Nothing went into the movie, or stayed in it, that Davies didn't allow, whether he really wanted it or not; but he didn't write the script, which is of a different character from Davies' book.

True, almost every segment of Davies' book sums up favorably for the Soviets. Marveling, for example, at the fact that so many people convicted of offenses against the state were men of "recognized distinction" and "long-continued loyalty," Davies concludes that the *evidence* against them must have been powerful indeed (Davies 201). To which one may reply, What evidence? When Davies can't twist logic, he resorts to mere cold-bloodedness. Footnoting the work of Commissar for Heavy Industry V.I. Mezhlauk, a man he

admired, Davies adds: "Note: Mezhlauk has recently been 'liquidated' — whereabouts unknown" (Davies 385). No critique of Stalin is implied.

Yet one could produce a whole book against the Soviet system, and a large book at that, merely by quoting Davies' accounts of purges, executions, labor abuses, famines, and the communists' early meditations on the usefulness of a deal

*To create popular support for his policies,
Hammond invents a Department of Education,
which is actually a department of propaganda.*

with Hitler. In Davies' text, the Soviet Union is a "totalitarian" state; trial confessions are "bizarre"; and "hundreds of thousands of people" are said, on good authority, to have died in the "horrors" of an agricultural "strike" that was "broke[n]" by the government (Davies 486, 405, 179). None of these "ambiguities" appears in the movie script — though, supposedly, it was "Davies' brilliant, legalistic fact-finding" which convinced the scriptwriter that nothing about the Soviet Union needed to be "whitewashed" (New York Times, June 13, 1943). What's the explanation?

David Culbert, the best commentator on this film, brings up two questions: "Was 'Mission to Moscow' a Stalinist tract? If so, did this mean that there were communists in Hollywood?" He easily establishes the answer to the first one: Yes. But he's still baffled by the movie's extremism. He blames it on the assumption that "entertainment programming should contain social 'messages,' the stronger the better." He blames it on government officials — Roosevelt, Davies — who sponsored the film, thinking it would help to win the war. Still, he observes, "this film is not within reason" (Culbert 13, 39). He can't account for its *degree* of extremism.

But that's easy enough. Communists did exist in Hollywood, and Howard Koch, the principal writer of "Mission to Moscow" was one of them.

Several years after "Mission to Moscow," Koch was temporarily "blacklisted" by the studios, receiving a crown of martyrdom that he wore with pride for the remainder of his long life. Did he deserve it? That is, was he martyred in the original, early Christian meaning of that word — punished as a witness, in this case a communist witness, to his own beliefs?

The answer is yes — on Koch's own testimony.

The Double View

Koch published the story of his life, "As Time Goes By," in 1979. It has often been used as a basic source for movie history. When reading it, however, one notices odd things. Normal questions go unanswered; narratives that begin in a credible way develop some exaggerated, virtually incredible feature, even when they have nothing to do with politics. And on that subject, Koch uses a variety of tricks both to conceal and to reveal his true identity.

He asserts that he was reluctant to write "Mission to

Moscow" — because he was tired and needed a vacation, not because he was averse to Stalinism. Indeed, no one, including Koch, ever alleged that he had any intellectual or moral scruples about "Mission to Moscow." Late in the game, a functionary of the government's Office of War Information, which was enthusiastic about the film, suggested that it include a defense of the Hitler-Stalin Pact (Bennett 498); but the defense was very probably in the script already, and Koch never blamed its presence on the government.

Jack and Harry Warner, he says, overcame his objections to the job by insisting that it was his patriotic duty, and he started writing a script from scratch, not really knowing what to do. Happily, though, "the opening sequence . . . emerged full-blown" while he was riding a train through Needles, California (Koch 106).

That's the story. No one seems to have noticed that it ignores one fact: the opening had already been laid out by Erskine Caldwell, before he was fired because of his clumsy dialogue (Culbert 18 reports this fact but draws no conclusions about Koch's veracity). Koch supposedly didn't want to do the film, but he was determined to take full credit for it.

Koch describes at great length his visit to the Davies' summer "camp" to discuss the movie. Strangely, he neglects to mention the fact that Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet Ambassador,

Robert Buckner, producer of "Mission to Moscow," remembered Davies in the way that most people did, as an ignorant windbag.

was also present, for the same reason. That seems to have made no impression on him (Koch 109–16, Maclean 92, Culbert 20, 25, 253–55). One person he does mention is his friend Jay Leyda. He insisted that the studio hire Leyda as a special "technical adviser." He suggests that Leyda, who had spent several years in the Soviet Union, worked only on surface details, not on substantial matters (Koch 116–17, 123–24). Subsequent research has shown that Leyda was a Stalinist who probably had significant influence on the film (Radosh 8–10).

About the purge trials, and the question of the defendants' guilt, Koch writes, "I doubt if we will ever be certain of the answer, which is buried in the hearts of dead men." After all the years between 1943 and 1979, the defendants' preposterous confessions still look to him "like admissions of guilt for which they were sincerely penitent" (Koch 130). In 1943, of course, he knew even less about Russia than he does now, because "the American news media were almost without exception anti-Soviet, so their reporting could hardly be considered objective" (Koch 130, 98). Substitute "Nazi" for "Soviet," and you'll see the fallacy: if you oppose something, you're not being objective, so long as that something is Stalinism.

But if Koch was as naive about politics as he suggests, how did he happen to sign up for so many political causes? One cause he is proud to mention is the Waldorf Peace Conference

(1949), an attempt to mobilize intellectuals in the support of Soviet foreign policy. He was an official of the sponsoring organization. He boasts that other members included "such 'subversive' characters as Albert Einstein, Harlow Shapley, Linus Pauling, Philip Morrison, Paul Robeson, and others of that eminent stature" (Koch 165, 178). That list is carefully compiled. It's enough to say that Einstein's pacifism habitually led him to temporize with communism; that Shapley, a distinguished astronomer, was a communist stooge to a hilarious degree (Hook 390–94); and that Robeson, a great singer, was a recipient of the Stalin Peace Prize. All were, indeed, "eminent."

Like other unreconstructed communists (Lillian Hellman is the best example), Koch depended on ordinary Americans' ignorance of history when he asserted his innocence about the ugly ideals he held. Yet he also courted the cognoscenti. He simultaneously targeted two audiences: (A) naive, trusting folk, whom he expected to fool; (B) cynical insiders, who shared his values and approved his sleight-of-hand.

This is the formula for a great deal of modern propaganda. One doesn't refer to fascism or Stalinism, or cite one's friendship with Goebbels or Gus Hall — though Koch comes close to that, in his praise of John Howard Lawson, the most outrageous and vulgarly abusive of the Hollywood communists, who in his view was a candidate for "sainthood" (Koch 89, Cox 92). Instead, one discusses "peace" or "social justice" or "national self-determination" and dilates on comrades of "eminent stature" in some non-political field. People in the know will penetrate the code. If others start to wonder, you can angrily demand, "Are you calling Einstein a communist?"

Koch goes farther. He enjoys flirting with detection. Speaking of his activities in the late 1940s (specific dates are rare in his book), he announces, "I must have attended a hundred or so meetings; I don't recall that the name of Stalin was ever mentioned." Could anyone, at that time, ride for an hour on a city bus without hearing the name of Stalin, much less sit in political meetings — about "peace," of all things — and never hear it? He continues: "The war was now over and his [Stalin's] role in world affairs was no longer prominent" (Koch 166). But this was precisely the period in which Koch, a supporter of the communist-front Progressive Party, was struggling against President Truman's efforts to contain . . . Joseph Stalin (Koch 165). It's all very funny — for those who get the joke.

In 1855, Lewis Cass referred to Americans who, "while humbly affecting to know nothing [are] resolutely determined to direct everything" (Klunder 271). Koch, who was constantly involved in politics but constantly denied that he knew much of anything about it, is a good example of the type. And without the authorship of someone like him, "Mission to Moscow" couldn't have come together, no matter what the White House or Joseph Davies wanted. The movie needed an author who was just "naive" enough to push the most cynical line imaginable.

The Moral of These Stories

Is there anything of general application that one can learn from the history of "Gabriel Over the White House" and "Mission to Moscow"? I think there is.

One thing, curiously, is the truth of a cherished libertarian

conviction — a belief in the potency of ideas, particularly the ideas of creative writers. It's worth noting that many early influences on the American libertarian movement — Isabel Paterson, Rose Wilder Lane, Ayn Rand, Albert Jay Nock, H. L. Mencken — were professional novelists or essayists. In a way that these people would not have appreciated, "Gabriel Over the White House" and "Mission to Moscow" show that ideas have power. Koch's communist ideas escaped the normal constraints of a capitalist studio and blazed across the screens of America. Tweed's fascist ideas found their market, though not quite in their original form. What this means, however, is that, contrary to most libertarian theory, the creative imagination is a very mixed blessing.

More cheerful thoughts are suggested by what the two films reveal about the usefulness of propaganda, especially propaganda that takes an overtly polemical form.

In America, few propaganda movies of any kind have legs *as* propaganda. "The Birth of a Nation" (1915) glorifies the Ku Klux Klan; but very few simpletons ever went to see that movie — or D.W. Griffith's next big picture, "Intolerance" (1916), which attacks Prohibition — to be instructed in political ideology. For many people, to be sure, propaganda just confirms existing biases. Movies such as "Julia" (1977) and "Reds" (1981) confirmed for the '60s generation the fond belief that emotionally troubled bourgeois leftists have their fingers on the pulse of history. This may be significant, for the persons involved, but it is of doubtful ideological importance.

It's hard to say what biases "Gabriel Over the White House" confirmed. Its themes may have appealed to the broad, yet shallow, quasi-fascist fringe of American voters, represented in that era by Huey Long and Father Coughlin; this idea has been suggested, though never documented (Carmichael 160–61, 168). The movie did make money. Cheap and easy to produce — it occupied only 11 shooting days (some authorities say 18) and cost \$210,000 — it cleared \$200,000 in profits (Bernstein 83, 86; McConnell 9). It received some bad notices and some good ones. "Variety" predicted that it wouldn't inspire anybody to think about doing anything (Carmichael 174), and it didn't. It was a symptom of its times; it was not a cause.

As for "Mission to Moscow" — it flopped. "It never broke even," the producer said. That's putting it mildly. Culbert notes that the studio tried to destroy all the prints in October 1947 (when the movie attracted unwelcome attention from the House Committee on Un-American Activities), but that made no difference. It had already finished its miserable run. It reported gross American receipts of \$945,000, after production costs of \$1,517,000 and advertising costs of \$500,000. It enjoyed a big run in Russia (Culbert 256, 31–38), where it may have disheartened good people with its fervent show of American support for Stalinism. But this is speculation.

Culbert wisely observes that "Mission to Moscow" shows the fallacy of the idea "that mass media control what we think. There is a limit to what the traffic will bear." I would say more. There is no evidence that, as Culbert asserts, pro-Soviet pictures "kept anti-Soviet feeling from getting even larger" in the United States (Culbert 41, 35). I have yet to find evidence that "Mission to Moscow" had any active influence on anyone, except to arouse a highly visible campaign of opposition by John Dewey and other anti-Soviet leftists,

who had a great time exposing its lies in the public press. When the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship staged a rally at Madison Square Garden to award a certificate of appreciation to "Mission to Moscow" and everybody

Koch depended on ordinary Americans' ignorance of history when he asserted his innocence about his communist ideals.

involved therewith, the principal speaker, the veteran communist sympathizer Corliss Lamont, denounced the enemies of the Soviet Union and listed "ten chief points in the present anti-Soviet campaign": "question of Finland . . . claim that Russia is persecuting religion . . . talk of a negotiated peace with Hitler," etc., etc., and "film version of 'Mission to Moscow'" (New York Times, May 21, 1943). Lamont didn't realize it, but "Mission to Moscow" was a powerful weapon *against* the cause it endorsed.

I once heard a preacher say, "The First Amendment gives everybody the right to prove he's a God-damned fool." That's the good news about America; the bad news is that America has all these God-damned fools. Yet they have seldom been so foolish as they were in the case of "Gabriel Over the White House" and "Mission to Moscow." □

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Naming Names, from page 18

a right to “to lobby, through personal advocacy, the people who legislate.”

The comparison of petition signers to legislators falls over if you push on it. Legislators are government employees. They are public figures. They crave publicity. They are popularly elected. They represent citizens, and citizens need to know how they vote because citizens can vote for or against them. Petition signers are voters. Private citizens. They represent only themselves. “Disclosures about *private* speakers do not promote *government* transparency,” said the brief from the Justice and Freedom Fund.

Supporters of disclosure argued that voters have a right to know who is proposing to change the law by putting a measure on the ballot. I agree. But the people proposing to change the law are the *sponsors*. For Referendum 71 that would be the officers of Protect Marriage Washington, who filed the petition for referendum. Their names are on TV and in the newspapers. People know their names. What was the people’s need to know the names of the 138,500 signers of Referendum 71?

The strongest reason the state gave, and it was none too sturdy, was the prevention of fraud. In Washington, matching signatures on petitions to signatures of registered voters on file is the province of the secretary of state. That’s Sam Reed. Usually his staff checks only a sample of signatures, and projects whether there are enough. In close cases, the staff checks them all — and Referendum 71 was a close case. The law allows the pro and anti sides to post two observers each to watch the checking and file objections. There were some objections — is “D.J. Smith” an acceptable signature for Daniel Jerome Smith? But there was not a case for fraud.

The state also had an in-for-an-inch, in-for-a-mile argument: you sign a petition in public. In Washington, the petition sheet has space for 20 names and addresses, so maybe 19 signers see yours, plus some people who look at the petition and don’t sign. By giving your name and address away in public, the state argued, you gave up your claim to privacy.

But there are thousands of petition sheets; in a drive for 138,500 signatures, there would be at least 6,925 of them. Imagine your name and address on one. Maybe 25 people see it; and if they are fellow signers, they agree with you. “It is opponents that constitute the concern,” says the brief filed by Voters Want More Choices. Remember that *Doe v. Reed* began with a threat to allow anyone who opposed your signature to make an instant computer search for your name and address.

Of course the ballot measure’s private sponsor has that information already. You gave it to him. In some states, he cannot use his list of names and addresses for any private purpose, but in Washington he can. Still, that need not mean that the state can. The state is bound by the First Amendment. Private citizens are not.

The import of all these arguments is not in their relation to Referendum 71, but in where they go beyond that. Here the state was asking for names and home addresses. But what if it asked for more? Justice Samuel Alito asked Washington Attorney General McKenna: how about telephone numbers? Washington doesn’t ask for telephone numbers, but suppose it did. It might want to do that, Alito said, so that petition signers “could be engaged in a conversation about what they

had done.”

There follows in the Supreme Court transcript:

A.G. McKenna: It would depend on the strength of the state interest in having the telephone number. The state does not have an interest in the telephone number on the petition form, because the state only needs to know from the petition form the name and the address in order to verify [the signature].

Justice Alito: I thought you were saying that one of the interests that’s served by this is to allow Washington citizens to discuss this matter with those who signed the petition. So putting down the telephone number would assist them in doing that.

A.G. McKenna: Yes, it probably would make it easier for people to contact.

Justice Alito: So you would endorse that?

A.G. McKenna: That would be a policy determination for the legislature to make.

Justice Alito: No, I’m not asking the policy question. I’m asking whether the First Amendment would permit that.

A.G. McKenna: I believe it could . . .

Here McKenna is trying to wiggle away and Alito is trying to pin him down. McKenna is not asking that the state collect and disclose phone numbers. He doesn’t want anything to do with the idea. His job is to win a case for his employer, the State of Washington, and his colleague, Secretary Reed. Also, McKenna is the state’s highest elected Republican, and he is positioning himself to run for governor in 2012, which would make him the first Republican governor elected in 32 years. By championing open government, he reinforces his standing as a champion of clean government and a friend of the press. Justice Alito has different concerns. He is trying to knock down an argument by showing where some other people might take it.

The arguments in *Doe v. Reed* may be applied to other things, most obviously to political contributions. In the same month as the oral arguments, the Institute for Justice filed a new lawsuit in Washington state. It is challenging another part of the state’s public-disclosure law. That part requires any group spending \$500 in any month to influence legislation to file reports with the state, including publicly disclosable information on each donor of \$25 or more.

The Institute for Justice argues that such low ceilings chill grass-roots activism. One of the groups in its case is in a heavily minority area of Seattle where owners have been organizing to protect their property rights. Many are immigrants from communist countries, where they learned from experience not to lend their names and addresses to any group opposing the government.

In America they face a different variety of government, to be sure. But it is still a government. It is still jealous of its powers, and it still tends to put its own interests ahead of private citizens’. Look at it in that way, and you arrive at the position of Brad Smith, former chairman of the Federal Election Commission and current chairman of the Center for Competitive Politics. The Institute for Justice quotes Smith in its brief for *Doe v. Reed*: “What is forced disclosure but a state-maintained database on citizen political activity?”

And that is why libertarians should care about *Doe v. Reed*. □

Zoophobia

by Jerry E. Ellison, Jr.

*Mary knew her
transgression would
bring swift and ter-
rible punishment
— but she'd never
imagined this . . .*

"Honey, I was pulled over by a zookeeper this morning," Mary sobbed. Her husband Simon carefully put down his bottle of soy soda and gave her his attention. "What?"

"Yes, I was speeding," she explained. "N-not fast! Just a little."

"There is no excuse for this." He took a gulp from the pop and sighed. "Did they keep the car?"

"Yes, Simon. I had to walk home."

"I'll get a lawyer." Simon scrolled down phone numbers on the refrigerator. "Sometimes you can get the car back with a fine."

Mary whispered, "I-I'm supposed to report to the zoo tomorrow."

"Good!" He tapped on a number savagely. "It'll teach you a lesson."

Mary stared at him sorrowfully as he pleaded with a friend of the family for assistance with getting back the car. He asked nothing about getting her back.

Next morning, the neighbors mustered to shake their heads in disgust as men in khaki shorts came for her. She meekly squeezed into a cage in their dog catcher truck. It was tight and uncomfortable and she cut her finger on a burr in the wire. She had to lie down with her legs under her belly to fit when they closed and locked the door behind her.

Mary could peer out the cage as the truck drove around making other pickups. She could see other people, and worse, other people could see her. Most pickups were as

submissive as she was, but a few struggled and were shot with a tranquilizer gun.

One man was particularly upset, screaming about something called a Constitution. Mary struggled to see beyond her angle of vision, but couldn't quite make it out. The man bolted past her cage and she could hear him slam against the truck, rocking all the cages. She heard nothing for a while except for murmuring from the cage next to her.

The man screamed, running back in front of her cage. Mary saw a gash across his forehead.

Khaki men surrounded him in a semicircle, their tranquilizers drawn. He backed up toward Mary's cage, giving her a terrified glance. She reached a finger through her cage to give him the barest touch. They fired. One of the darts struck Mary, putting her to sleep.

Mary woke with a blurry nose up in her face. It was . . . yes . . . a woman, obviously displeased with her. As her head cleared, she saw a sign around the woman's neck that said "Vulture."

"She's awake," Vulture woman squawked. "About time."

A dozen people clutched close to Mary. All of them had signs around their necks, each with a type of animal on it. Mary looked down and saw that she bore a "pigeon" sign.

"Welcome to the zoo," said Marmoset, the chased man. The wound on his head had been dressed.

Mary stood up, but she was still a little woozy. "Is this . . . is this it?"

Marmoset shook his head. "No, not really. It's just the holding area before we get . . . the procedure."

"Before you all get the procedure," explained Vulture. "My lawyer will have this all straightened out for me."

"Maybe." Marmoset snorted.

"You can count on it," she insisted.

Mary took a stumbling step forward and propped herself up against the wall.

Aardvark put a hand on Mary's shoulder. "You better sit down, Pigeon." He helped her to the floor. "The show is about to start."

"The show?" Mary asked. "We get a show?"

"You are the show, honey." Vulture goaded.

"That's a false wall over there," Marmoset explained. "The public comes by for several hours to stare." He looked at his vacant watch tan out of habit. "And it's about that time."

"Oh, no," she said small.

Vulture leaped. "It's for the good of society. It'll teach malcontents that they better not practice antisocial behavior!"

"You're for it?" Mary asked, fondling her pigeon sign. "What they'll do to us?"

"Yes, turn you all into animals." Vulture said with satisfaction. "It's how you behaved, and what you will be."

"Miss Vulture has a little cognitive dissonance problem," Marmoset observed.

A motor cranked against aging gears, slowly lifting up the front wall. Sunlight spilled into the cell as Marmoset planted himself in front of the others with an obscene gesture at the ready. With the false wall gone, bars were revealed. Children

squealed with delight as they caught the first glimpses of the prisoners within.

"Simon!" cried Mary. "Simon, is that you?"

Simon was in the crowd with his new companion. He pointed, and began throwing peanuts into the cell. It took Mary a while to sort out why he wasn't answering. To him, she was an animal.

Marmoset did his best to pique spectator attention with an onslaught of kinetic insolence. Even the vilest of his curses eventually wore off on their short attention spans, but new arrivals kept the audience full. Marmoset was nearly exhausted by the time the false wall closed for the night. He collapsed on the floor.

"Now what did that prove?" mocked Vulture.

"That I am," he panted.

"That you are what?" she pecked.

Mary knelt over him. "I think you were marvelous," she smiled.

No one noticed how two zookeepers entered the pen, but they shoved Mary out of the way. Roughly wrapping a tether around Marmoset's neck, they quickly dragged him towards a corner and dropped down through the floor with him. Mary followed them through the opening before it sealed behind her. The fall knocked her unconscious.

Awaking with a terrible headache, Mary sighed, rubbing the large welt on her crown. A little dried blood matted her hair. "Twice? This can't be good for me," she said to herself.

The clinical white corridor seemed to throb as she staggered around the corner. She passed a gurney and thought about taking a little rest. So sweet, the foam board seemed.

Staggering further, she found a door stenciled "H+ LAB." She hesitated. She knew what she would find, or at least she had a general idea, but to see it, see it alone, see what they had in mind for her ached more than her head.

She opened the door and screamed. Behind, Zookeepers darted her multiple times. The room receded as she gasped, "Three times is not fair."



Mary awoke on the wing, remembering. She fluttered her beautiful blue wings up through the branches of taller and taller trees, hoping for cover.

"The net, the net Stephano!" she heard a zookeeper cry down below.

Stephano swept a long net pole through the air in vain, trying to catch Mary. She made it to the highest branch of a tall eucalyptus tree. A tiny Pygmy Marmoset was waiting. He climbed aboard the huge Crowned Pigeon's back, holding on to her crest plumage for stability.

She maneuvered along the branch until she reached a part of the aviary mesh that Marmoset had partially chewed through, imperceptibly. She pecked at it. The size of a turkey, she set all of her weight to pushing through the mesh. It gave way with effort.

One last look below through a blood red iris, then off. The couple flew to freedom. □

Presumption of Competence, *from page 20*

briefly in a reflection in the June issue of *Liberty*; this article results from my growing conviction that the presumption of competence is an important concept.

To restate: A “presumption of competence” means that every adult is presumed competent to make his or her own choices as long as those choices do not interfere with the equal, peaceful right of others.

I specify “adults” because I want to avoid the various complexities of “children’s rights.” If a presumption of competence were to become entrenched in the law and society, then the age of competence would obviously become an important point. But until undisputed adults are accorded this presumption, it is premature to introduce the complication of children.

In some circumstances, of course, adults cannot be presumed competent; an obvious case is a man in a coma. The comatose man would retain his natural rights, so no one could properly aggress against him; but someone would have to assume guardianship in order to make the choices that would keep him alive. In many cases, people manage this problem themselves by giving someone a power-of-attorney or its equivalent. But for a functioning adult — that is, for a person who maintains his or her own life, whatever quality of life is chosen — the bar to proving his or her incompetence should be so high as to be insuperable. The legal assumption of competence for anyone who handles daily life without committing violence or fraud should be unassailable.

Another way to state the foregoing is to say that a third party should never interfere with the peaceful choices of another merely to be useful; interference can be justified only when it is necessary to preserve life. The distinction between “useful” and “necessary” is crucial.

Almost every measure passed or proposed by the nanny state is sold on the basis of “usefulness.” The measure will make you healthier or happier or more secure. Next to nothing that is passed or proposed serves to safeguard life and equal liberty. Some measures are packaged as “necessary” — for example, creating no-smoke environments. But granting a correlation between smoking and a heightened risk of cancer at some undisclosed point does *not* mean that every puff is life-threatening. At most, puffing away is risky behavior in much the same way as crossing a busy intersection, skiing, driving in the snow, and a thousand other common activities. The objective of the nanny state is not to save your life or lib-

erty but to redefine its own role in society so that it runs the daily lives of people who are competent to run their own.

When the nanny state usurps the right to make decisions for you, it is placing itself in a position of unsolicited guardianship over your life. But the usurpation involves much more than this. A comatose man retains his natural rights; a third party cannot take his life — or even his property, absent legal proof that he will never again be competent to control it. By contrast, the nanny state is quite willing to imprison those who disrespect its guardianship, and confiscate their property; it is willing to aggress against those pursuing their own peaceful choices. The nanny state claims more than mere guardianship, though that is bad enough; it claims the right to control and punish your choices. It claims ownership.

And this is what the conflict between the nanny state and the individual comes down to: not whether X or Y choice is the correct one to make, but who owns the person making that choice.

Libertarianism is based on self-ownership. This is the claim of jurisdiction that every human being rightfully has over his or her own body, simply by virtue of being human. Self-ownership underlies all other rights. Indeed, if you don’t own yourself, then it makes no sense to speak of freedom of conscience or belief, freedom of speech or association, or to lay claim to the products of your labor. If you do not have jurisdiction over your skin and everything inside it, then you cannot claim anything.

There is a word to describe the situation in which another party claims ownership over the body of another: it is “slavery.” In light of that, the nanny state is misnamed. It would like to project the image of a wise guardian of children, and adults who are treated like children — a sort of stern Mary Poppins who uses a “spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down.” But a more accurate image is that of a slave owner. One hand of the nanny state may be wagging an admonishing finger, but the other hand is holding a whip.

The presumption of competence abolishes both. Productive people who are occupied with what Henry David Thoreau called “the business of living” do not take well to the state lecturing them like a priggish maiden aunt. People who assert the presumption of their own competence will not submit either to the lash or to the laws that the nanny wants to wield. □

Reflections, *from page 16*

immediately. The American cheese slice is processed and chemicals are added to preserve freshness. There is a theoretical risk that some of these preservatives are carcinogenic in large doses, and therefore Big Macs® are not recommended over the long term. The special sauce is proprietary, but you should be aware of the rare but life-threatening possibility of anaphylactic reaction to the sauce.

“Again, if pruritus, rash, tongue swelling, difficulty breathing, or feelings of faintness occur, dial 911. Do not call us or your physician.”

Customer: “So what’s the risk of E. coli infection?”

McDonald’s employee: “Over 12 billion sold. Four cases of E. coli infection.”

Customer: “Seems like a pretty safe bet. Big Mac, please.”

McDonald’s employee: “Now, you have a right to know there are alternatives to a Big Mac. In this same store you could instead have a Quarter Pounder or Angus Burger. Similar sandwiches are available nearby at Wendy’s, Burger King, In-and-Out Burger, and Jack-in-the-Box. If you wish, I can provide you with directions to these locations. Your choice of other restaurants will not affect the quality of my service when you order here.”

Customer: "I think I'll just go with the Big Mac."

McDonald's employee: "Would you like fries with that? The fries are cooked in a hot vat of pure vegetable oil and salted. Excess salt intake may cause . . ."

Customer: "No. Just the Big Mac."

McDonald's employee: "Yes sir. That will be \$8.95 plus tax."

Customer: "Prices have gone up, I see."

McDonald's employee: "I'm sorry, sir, but the training costs and time requirements of informed consent are not free. But you must admit you're much better off now."

It seems that even intelligent folks like doctors sometimes have difficulty grasping basic economics, such as the idea that mandates have costs, and that businesses already have every incentive to provide consumers with all the information they really want.

— Ted Levy

Conscientious objection — A strange new medal is being proposed for NATO forces in Afghanistan. It is a medal for "courageous restraint" exercised by soldiers who are at risk but do not use deadly force and so prevent civilian casualties.

Critics of the proposed medal — most prominently Americans — object on several grounds: it would embolden "the enemy" to know that lethal responses are discouraged; soldiers are being told *not* to defend themselves in a de facto war zone; and, even though civilian deaths might be prevented, military ones would be increased.

My objection is more fundamental. If NATO wants to give medals to soldiers who don't use force that endangers civilians, then why not just hand them out to everyone who refuses to serve?

— Wendy McElroy

One born every minute — President Obama signed a nuclear treaty with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, while the *real* president, Vladimir Putin, was in Venezuela selling nukes to Hugo Chavez. The signing ceremony will be broadcast on Russian TV, as the premiere episode of the Russian version of the American TV series "Punk'd."

— Tim Slagle

Trainwreck — Bloomberg Businessweek reported in April that a group of economists at Stanford University just issued a study of the fiscal soundness of California public employee pensions.

The economists looked at the pension fund level of the three major state systems, the California Public Employees' Retirement System, the California State Teachers' Retirement System, and the University of California Retirement System; they also looked at the future retirement obligations these funds are committed to cover, and they compared the two. Further, they used a more realistic estimate (4.14%) for returns on investments than the 7.5 to 8% that the fund trustees use in their official calculations of funding levels.

The result? The economists found that the pension plans are now underfunded by an astonishing \$500 billion. That is about six times the budget of the entire state government.

The study recommended, unsurprisingly, that the state lower benefits to future retirees, increase contributions from existing workers, and be more conservative in investing the funds. Yet a spokesman for the public employees immediately

labeled the report "funny math," saying that his fund has averaged a return of 8% yearly. The spokesman obviously never heard the standard disclosure for investments: past returns are no guarantee of future results.

If the Stanford report is accurate, it is hard to resist the prediction that the state of California is headed for insolvency.

— Gary Jason

Zoning out — There are certain holidays I dread — New Year's Day, Labor Day, the Fourth of July, Memorial Day. In themselves they are enjoyable, often accompanied by feasts with friends and family. What I dread is the "Twilight Zone" marathon that at least one cable network inevitably airs on these holidays.

A member of my household makes a point of catching at least part of the marathon. When I enter the room in which it's being watched, I always manage (despite every effort) to catch the same episode. And it always bothers me.

I am not sure of the episode's title, but if you've watched one of these marathons, you've seen it. It's a story about a little boy who has the mental power to make his thoughts and words real. The adults around him are terrorized by his power. Rather than discipline the child, his parents tell him to wish his sadistic creations "into the cornfield" so they don't have to see them.

It is clear that this is a spoiled, demented child. But at a moment during a small gathering for his birthday, when the boy is distracted, one man in the group says that if they all act now they can stop him. It might work, but everyone else in the group is too afraid to act. The boy realizes what the man has said, gets angry, and turns him into a jack-in-the-box. All around are horrified. The boy's parents tell him to wish the jack-in-the-box into the cornfield. Then things go along "as usual" — a very odd, twisted state in which fearful adults do all they can to keep the child happy.

What bothers me isn't the boy's mental power — that's not real. It's the failure of the adults to stop him. Rather than act to end this form of tyranny, they appear to feel safer indulging him. As a result, they live in perpetual fear. This failure to act, this willingness to live in the cold comfort of fear, can become all too real.

We see it in our political life. The people who populate our government are like petulant children, kids who imagine themselves endowed with special powers. When challenged on their actions and their presumptions to powers they do not have, these statisticians try to silence their critics. They create a culture of fear, villainizing people who speak out.

To remain free citizens, we cannot afford to put up with these childish politicians, bureaucrats, and political appointees, ambitious for powers they (fortunately!) do not have. In reality, they work for us. If we don't want to lose our freedoms, we must prevent ourselves and our fellow citizens from growing accustomed to a culture of fear. We cannot fear to act, and we cannot fail to act. When the administration and the popular press try to caricature their opponents and "put them in the cornfield," we must clamor all the louder. Only in that way can we bring more people to the cause for liberty.

— Marla White

In the swing — Overlooked in all the news about the

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The Books of Summer

Every summer, Liberty assembles a group of editors and contributors to recommend books that other readers might want to take to the beach, the mountains, or just the chair next to the air conditioner. The advice, like the authors, is entirely individual; but we're betting that you'll find more than one book here that you'll want to read.

Last year, I recommended "The Deniers" (2008), by Lawrence Solomon, as a good introduction to the topic of global warming. Normally, I would not recommend another book on the same topic a year later. However, I do find the raging discussions on global warming important for many reasons, and the book "Heaven and Earth: Global Warming, the Missing Science" (2009) by Ian Plimer, is certainly one of the more interesting contributions to the debate. Plimer is professor of mining geology at the University of Adelaide in Australia. He also holds the post of emeritus professor of earth sciences at the University of Melbourne. He is well known, knows a great deal about the history of our planet, and brings a far broader perspective to the debate than you may have encountered.

He argues that the climate is continuously changing, that the changes we are now seeing are not unusual, and that it is unlikely that conditions are substantially influenced by humans. The last one thousand years have seen variation in temperature that significantly exceeds the variation we have experienced in the last one hundred. The variation seen over longer time scales is much higher. Air temperature, sea levels, and CO2 levels have all exceeded what we now see. Plimer's

historical analysis is both fascinating and of central importance. Did you know that during the Cambrian Period it was 7° C warmer than now, and the CO2 concentrations were 15–20 times higher? That was certainly not due to the folly of humans, and no "tipping point" leading to runaway warming occurred.

The last glaciation ended 14,000 years ago. We are now in what is called an interglacial period, and there has been a gradual upward trend in temperature. However, there are cycles leading to periods of warming and cooling. There was a relatively warm period 6,000 years ago in which sea levels were two meters higher than they are at present. The "Little Ice Age" lasted from AD 1300 to about 1850, and there has been a gradual upward trend since then.

The whole discussion of whether or not we face an impending catastrophe because of warming produced by human civilization is important. The common assertions that "a scientific consensus has formed" and that the planet is in imminent danger are simply wrong. It is true that a majority of climate scientists believe that warming is occurring, and perhaps even that it is caused by human behavior. However, there are very knowledgeable scientists on both sides, truth has been badly

obscured by individuals who benefit from the current hysteria, and it is time for a calm, careful analysis of the data. I doubt that the outcome will lead to anything like what is regarded as the common wisdom. I find Plimer's perspective refreshing, provocative, and ultimately heroic.

— Ross Overbeek

Ross Overbeek is a cofounder of the Fellowship for Interpretation of Genomes.

The movie "Taking Woodstock" (2009), directed by Ang Lee, led me to the book of the same name by Elliot Tiber (2007). I knew of Woodstock as a hippie happening a bit before my time. What I found interesting about the movie and the book was the portrayal of the Woodstock festival, "Three Days of Peace and Music," as an impressive entrepreneurial venture.

In 1969 Tiber was a 33-year-old gay designer living in Manhattan, while spending his weekends trying to save his parents' rundown Catskills motel. One weekend he read that some concert promoters had been denied a permit in Wallkill, New York. He came up with the crazy idea of inviting them to hold the festival on his parents' property. Lo and behold, they showed up to check it out. Taking the lead was 24-year-old Michael Lang, who went on to become a prominent concert promoter and producer.

The Tiber (actually Teichberg) property wasn't suitable, but Elliot drove Lang and his team down the road to Max Yasgur's nearby farm. At least that's Tiber's story; other sources say he exaggerates his role. He did play a key role, however, in that he had a permit to hold an annual music festival, which up until then had involved a few local bands.

There's a wonderful scene, better in the movie than in the book, when Lang and Yasgur negotiate a price for the use of the farm. We see it dawning on Yasgur that this is a big deal. We see Elliot panicking that the deal will fall through, and that without the festival business his parents will lose their motel. And we see Lang's assistant reassuring Elliot that both parties want to make a deal, so they'll find an acceptable price, which indeed they do.

And then, with 30 days to transform a dairy farm into a place for tens of thousands of people to show up for a three-day festival, Tiber describes (and Lee shows) a whirlwind of

activity: "Within a couple of hours, the phone company had a small army of trucks and tech people on the grounds, installing the banks of telephones that Lang and his people needed." Helicopters, limousines, and motorcycles come and go. A few hundred people are erecting scaffolding, stage sets, speakers, and toilets. The motel keepers are trying to find rooms and food for the workers and the early arrivals. The local bank is eagerly providing door-to-door service for the mountains of cash flowing into bucolic White Lake.

Meanwhile, there are a few locals who don't like the whole idea. In Tiber's telling, they don't like Jews, queers, outsiders, or hippies. Maybe they just didn't like a quiet village being overrun with thousands of outsiders. In any case they had a few tools available to them. A dozen kinds of inspectors swarmed around the Teichbergs' motel. The town council threatened to pull the permit. Tiber writes, "Why is it that the stupidest people alive become politicians?" I asked myself." At the raucous council meeting Lang offered the town a gift of \$25,000 (\$150,000 in today's dollars), and most of the crowd got quiet. Yasgur stood and pointed out that "he owned his farm and had a right to lease it as he pleased." That didn't stop the opposition, but in the end the concert happened.

The psychedelic posters and language about peace and love — and on the other side, the conservative fulminations about filthy hippies — can obscure the fact that Woodstock was always intended as a profit-making venture. That was the goal of Lang and his partners, and it was also the intention of Tiber, Yasgur, and those of their neighbors who saw the concert as an opportunity and not a nightmare. The festival did rescue the Teichberg finances. It ended up being a free concert, however, which caused problems for Lang and his team. Eventually, though, they profited from the albums and the hit documentary "Woodstock."

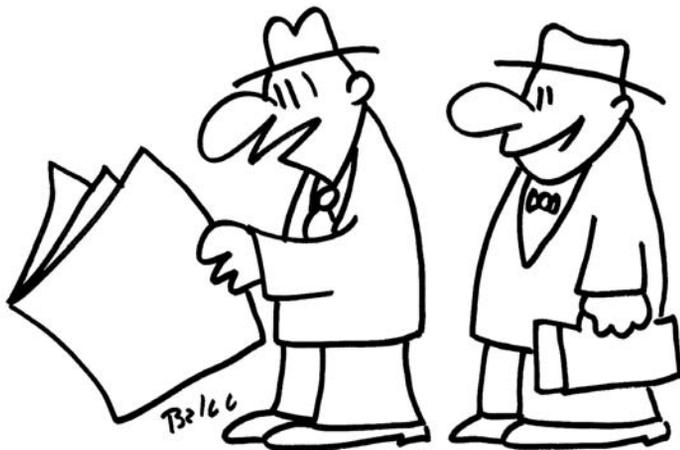
In his book Tiber also details his life split between Manhattan's scene and his parents' upstate struggles. He tells us that as a young gay man in the '60s he encountered Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Marlon Brando, Wally Cox, and Robert Mapplethorpe. He writes, "One of the great benefits of Woodstock — a benefit that, to my knowledge, has never been written about — was its sexual diversity." But I think the fact that there were gay awakenings at Woodstock — and three-ways and strapping ex-Marines in sequined dresses — would surprise people less than the realization that Woodstock was a for-profit venture that involved a lot of entrepreneurship, hard-nosed negotiation, organization, and hard work. "Taking Woodstock" (the book, but better yet the movie) is a great story of sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll, and capitalism.

— David Boaz

*David Boaz is the author of *Libertarianism: A Primer and The Politics of Freedom*, and is the editor of *The Libertarian Reader* and the *Cato Handbook for Policymakers*.*

About nine or ten year ago, I went on a veritable binge of biographies, something like six in a row. For a biography to be a truly terrific read, I concluded, the person's life story needs to be interesting in some way, and the biographer needs to be a great writer.

A few months ago, I read an autobiography that meets both criteria. "Street Shadows: A Memoir of Race, Rebellion,



"History keeps repeating itself."

"You say that every four years."

and Redemption" (2010) by Jerald Walker, is the memoir of a bright kid from the rough streets of Chicago, and how he got temporarily diverted toward the thug life: drugs, petty crimes, inattention to school. It is also a memoir about how this person made a conscious choice to put his life back on track, and did.

Walker enrolled in community college, then ended up at the prestigious University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. He eventually got a Ph.D. and became a college professor (full disclosure: at my institution) and a family man. His story is interesting partly because of the trajectory itself: how does someone "become" a thug, and how, why does he straighten out? The story is also interesting in that Walker's journey away from the streets is marked by conscious choice making.

It's refreshing to see a life story told in a way that affirms the human ability to be self-reflective and deliberative. Walker never portrays himself as a victim or a puppet: he honestly takes ownership of his bad choices as well as his good ones. He confronts and is confronted by racism, but he doesn't use this as an excuse or a short cut — rather, as an opportunity for inquiry into the nature of race and the nature of the self.

It is a fascinating story, and it meets the other criterion: Walker is a terrific writer. So whether or not you are a habitual consumer of memoirs, I recommend this one very strongly.

I wanted to mention a philosophy book also, but I didn't read anything new in the past year that I'd care to recommend to readers of this magazine. Nevertheless, I have had occasion recently to revisit a classic of sorts: Ludwig von Mises' 1957 book "Theory and History: An Interpretation of Social and Economic Evolution." As is the case with Hayek, some of Mises' works are more accurately categorized as philosophy, and this is an example. Mises explores, among other things, the metaphysical and epistemological issues that inform Marxism. Since Marxism as a social-political theory presupposes certain philosophical positions on determinism, materialism, the nature of history, and so on, it's worthwhile to examine these, and Mises is very insightful in his analysis. He also has a fascinating discussion of the nature of value. Austrian "subjective value" theory is often invoked against Marxist or other theories that claim to discern "the" value of goods. But does that mean we lack a basis for valuing liberal institutions? Mises' analysis helps to illuminate that problem. It's well worth revisiting, or discovering for the first time, this neglected classic.

— Aeon J. Skoble

Aeon J. Skoble is Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Philosophy Department at Bridgewater State College, in Massachusetts.

More than 30 years ago I bought a hardback copy of "War and Peace" (1869) at a used bookstore (\$4.50). Back then, "War and Peace" had a reputation for being the world's greatest novel, not to mention one of the longest novels and among the most difficult to read because of the complexities of the characters' relationships and the fact that their names, in the Russian manner, appeared in different forms from page to page.

I kept "War and Peace," carrying it cross-country twice, even though I wasn't sure I would read it. It came to symbolize one of those things that people say they will do before they

die. Will I ever read "War and Peace"? I wondered.

A few months ago, for unknown reasons, I picked up the 1,371-page volume and decided to try it. I discovered that my cast-off edition has an intact 12-page insert that includes the names and affiliations of the characters in order of their appearance, plus a separate list of their family groupings. It also has a map of Napoleon's campaign and retreat. This insert makes reading "War and Peace" easy. Yes, easy.

So I have achieved my 30-year ambition of reading "War and Peace." Do I recommend it for summer reading?

Of course!

It is engrossing both on the personal level (the story) and for its sweeping depiction of a period of European military history. But yes, it is slow-moving. Because so many characters are involved and because they are introduced in a leisurely manner, the plot builds only gradually. I was within 400 pages of the end and still didn't know whether the protagonist was a likeable oaf (a sort of Forrest Gump) or someone who would make something of his life. At the end, I was weeping, partly because he did.

As the primary plot — that is, the personal stories of individuals and their families — takes shape, another plot is going on: the Russian military response to the Napoleonic campaigns, which is incorporated into a theme even bigger than the war itself. I quickly picked up Tolstoy's ambivalent and complex attitudes about war, especially *that* war, attitudes that become clearer in his second epilogue to the novel, in which he analyzes events in the light of determinism and free will.

Almost from the beginning, the novel instilled curiosity in me, first about serfdom, then about the Napoleonic wars, and then about Count Tolstoy himself (curiosity that I hope to satisfy in the future.) I never found the novel boring, but, on the other hand, I could always (until the end) leave it comfortably and pick it up when I felt like it. Now that I have read it, its characters and story linger in my thoughts.

The encomiums in the introductory pages of the 1942 edition are amazing. It is "the greatest novel ever written," "a dictionary of life," "the supreme fictional achievement in the literature of the world." But, I wonder, who reads it now? I can't help thinking that my small entry here may be something of a swan song for "War and Peace."

I never hear anyone talking about the book, and I haven't engaged anyone in conversations about it. My guess is that fewer people now want to read long, slowly building novels that lack overt sex or theatrical suspense, however famous they once were. "War and Peace" doesn't fit today's schedules or tastes. But I'm glad my timetable didn't run out before I read it, and if you really do have time for summer reading, you won't regret reading it, either.

— Jane S. Shaw

Jane S. Shaw is president of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

Books can be classified according to the times they concern: present, past, or always-present.

Among books on current affairs, I recommend a work by Liberty's frequent contributor Randal O'Toole: "The Best-Laid Plans: How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future" (2007). Though

it may seem odd to say that this is an amusing book, there is a good deal of dark humor in O'Toole's analysis of planners, their plans, and the unintended consequences. In particular, his discussion of planning in Portland, Oregon is both a damning indictment of government planning and an amusing read.

For people interested in the history of comparatively recent times, Fred Anderson's "Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766" (2000) is a fine book to turn to. The same can be said of William Trotter's "A Frozen Hell: The Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939–1940" (1991), which tells the tale of a savage little war and tells it well. The Finns' remarkable struggle against overwhelming odds has generally been given short shrift over the years; Trotter does much to make amends. It is far from a happy tale, but it is a good one.

Going farther back in history: Richard Fletcher's "Moorish Spain" (1992) is an excellent introduction to a period and a place of great interest, though often much misunderstood. Fletcher's writing is pleasant and engaging without being pedestrian, and his judgment is sound. Carefully avoiding sentimentality, Fletcher offers us an honest portrait of a remarkable world; he gives us history with the bark off, and that is as it should be.

Those interested by Fletcher's work on medieval Spain may wish to turn to another good work on the middle ages, Gordon S. Brown's "The Norman Conquest of Southern Italy and Sicily" (2003). Most people know that the Normans (Northmen) conquered England. Brown presents a short history of the "other" Norman Conquest, an achievement of sorts that has gotten far less notice than it deserves.

Now for books about timeless issues, about the always-present. One is David Hackett Fischer's classic study of the theory of history, "Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought" (1971). Though I've enjoyed Fischer's works of American history, this one is my favorite. You may have to find a used copy of this instructive and very amusing work, but it is certainly worth the trouble to do so. It's a book of permanent value about permanently recurring intellectual problems.

Not all problems are capable of solution. One person who realized that was Samuel Johnson, whose novella "Rasselas" (1759) has been a frequent — though not, sadly, a constant — companion of mine over the years. It's a parable about the difficulties of what Johnson calls "the choice of life." Those who have read and admired Voltaire's "Candide," published in the same year, should also enjoy Johnson's work. It is slight in length though not in depth.

Johnson satirized the stoic philosophy, along with many others. So it seems fitting to recommend as well the stoic philosopher Epictetus (AD 55–135), who had much to be stoic about: he was crippled, and was born a slave. His thoughts on timeless issues are available in the "Enchiridion," a collection of pungent maxims. Jefferson wrote of Epictetus that he "has given us what was good of the stoics." Whether this be fair to the other stoics, the "Enchiridion" is very much worth reading.

— Liam Vavasour

Liam Vavasour is a student of history who lives in Northern California.

James J. Hill (1838–1916), a Canadian farm boy who had lost one eye in a childhood accident, became a Randian business hero. In the days before typewriters, his legible handwriting gave him an early advantage in the business world. He worked in coal, warehousing, and steamboating before turning to railroads. Based in St. Paul, Minnesota, he unified and improved the efficiency of many small lines. His signature achievement was the Great Northern Railroad, which reached Puget Sound on the Pacific.

Unlike his competitors, Hill sought no government subsidies. Nor, unlike them, did he seek protection from competition. He consistently championed free trade both at home and internationally. He spurred demand for his freight services by promoting development of the regions where his lines extended, by encouraging immigration, and by demonstrating advanced techniques of farming and animal husbandry.

Hill traveled widely and worked long hours attending to detail: seeking routes that would minimize fuel-consuming slopes and detours, negotiating with financiers, and observing the strengths and weaknesses of rivals and associates. Hill's career contains episodes of personal rivalry, races to build or consolidate lines, and rate wars and rebating like those that provided material for muckrakers.

The book I am recommending, "James J. Hill and the Opening of the Northwest" (1976), was written by Albro Martin, a Harvard professor of business history. He editorializes very little, but he evidently admires the Schumpeterian "creative destruction" and "constructive monopoly" (p. 90) of Hill's real world, so different from textbook chapters on pure and perfect competition.

Besides learning much about the rise of the United States to economic greatness, the reader will enjoy an eventful story. Photos of Hill, family, collaborators, and rivals bolster the text. So do maps, even though cluttered with irrelevant detail.

— Leland B. Yeager

Leland B. Yeager is Ludwig von Mises Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Economics at Auburn University.

I think that one effect of the long-anticipated arrival of popular ebook platforms will be renewed interest in older titles. This will come in part from the details of the so-called "Google book settlement," which allows that search giant to digitize publications that are at least a few years old. To keep you ahead of the curve, I'm suggesting a few older, less-well-known books by great writers, so you can fill your Kindle or iPad with rich stuff that's still appropriate for the beach or other restful climes.

First, I suggest Vladimir Nabokov's "Bend Sinister," which tells the story of a totalitarian regime through the eyes of a prominent professor who had been the dictator's grammar school classmate. Nabokov does a great job of showing that the totalitarian mind is essentially egocentric and that it uses the pretense of altruism and humanitarian concern to cloak amorality and emptiness. The qualities you expect from Nabokov are all present: puns (the dictator's political front is called "Ekwilism" — the "E" is long); comedy (a classic scene in which halfwit bureaucrat-soldiers send the narrator back and forth across a bridge because his papers are not in order); and heartbreak (the narrator's young son is tortured to death

in a government prison).

"Bend Sinister" was originally published in 1947, two years before Orwell's "1984," although some readers and even a few critics have assumed that Nabokov's book is an "answer" to Orwell's. This misimpression may be enabled by the fact that Nabokov disdained Orwell as an inferior writer who trafficked in clichés. Orwell was a great *writer* . . . but Nabokov was a greater *novelist*. "Bend Sinister" proves this.

Second, I suggest Kurt Vonnegut's "Jailbird" — a picaresque novel of political paranoia and a damn fine satire of corporate excess. Its narrator is a fictional Watergate conspirator who serves his time (a great bit comes when, full of self-pity, he expects to be the only Harvard grad in his minimum-security prison, and turns out to be just one of several), then tries to rebuild his life. But the real star of the story is the RAMJAC Corporation — a bit player in other Vonnegut novels. Throughout "Jailbird," RAMJAC is a creeping presence. Companies as diverse as McDonald's and the New York Times identify themselves as "a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RAMJAC Corporation." And more are being absorbed all the time. The story's denouement turns on the question of who really runs RAMJAC. Vonnegut's reputation has dimmed in the last decade or so (he died in 2007 but hadn't published a novel since the late 1990s); he spent the last years of his life badmouthing George W. Bush so intensely that many of those who cared enough to listen wrote him off as a political partisan and angry old man. This is too bad. Vonnegut was a free-thinker in the best sense, with an anti-authoritarian streak that any libertarian should appreciate.

Finally, I suggest "The Vintage Mencken" — a collection assembled in the early 1980s and reissued in the early 1990s. Though saddled with a slightly condescending introduction by the middlebrow culture peddler Alistair Cooke, the book serves well as either an introduction or a refresher course. Mencken's coverage of the Scopes "monkey trial" spans several selections and is fantastic. It occurred to me, rereading those pieces, that his reports from Tennessee would make a great motion picture. In the right hands. With a strong dose of irony. Perhaps the Coen Brothers? Or maybe today's sensibilities are too coarse to appreciate it.

Anyway, nothing tops Mencken's coverage of a Cuban political imbroglio in 1917. In his dispatch, the Bard of Baltimore quotes a trusted source: "The issues in the revolution are simple. Menocal, who calls himself a Conservative, is president and José Miguel Gómez, who used to be president and calls himself a Liberal, wants to make a comeback. . . . José Miguel says that when Menocal was reelected last year the so-called Liberals were chased away from the so-called polls by the so-called army. On the other hand, Menocal says that José Miguel is a porch-climber and ought to be chased out of the island. Both are right." Sounds like Cuba today. Hell, sounds like the United States today.

— Jim Walsh

Jim Walsh is an assistant editor of Liberty.

My recommendation is for a book called "Conscious Business: How to Build Value Through Values" (2006), by Fred Kofman. Self-help books don't rank high on my list of favorite reading. Mostly I'm too old to give a damn. But I read this one because it was written by the son of a friend, who publishes

Ayn Rand's books in Spanish for the Argentine market.

So I was not really surprised to see an aphorism by Nathaniel Branden in the first chapter. I was a bit surprised to see several by Lao Tzu throughout. By the time I got to the Ludwig von Mises quote in the last chapter I was not surprised at all because it had become obvious that Fred Kofman understands the value of values very well indeed, and that he has adopted values that make perfect sense to me — and I suspect will do so to you, too. He has a highly developed sense of structure for a free-market workplace, as well as good tips for how to get your "team" to work most effectively, no matter where your place is on the team.

"Conscious Business" sounds very much like John Mackey's "conscious capitalism." But although Kofman's book isn't in any way antithetical, this is not a call to arms. Rather, it's a call for self-responsibility and learning how to work with other people in your environment, no matter what their hangups (or yours) may be. Kofman gets very specific in his situations and suggested solutions, all of which should make it easier for you to understand and translate in your own predicaments.

The lessons of "Conscious Business" are of obvious use to anyone who works for a corporation, whether as a leader or a worker bee. But you might find Kofman's examples and suggestions very welcome in dealing with your spouse, children, parents, or other family members, as well as friends . . . or non-friends. Many libertarians prefer the isolation of self-employment. It's sometimes said that libertarians have no friends. "Conscious Business" is all about interaction with others. Maybe it's the lone wolves who need it most?

— Andrea Millen Rich

Andrea Millen Rich heads Stossel in the Classroom, John Stossel's project to develop critical thinking among high school students by introducing challenges to conventional wisdom.

"The scene on the stage was obliterated for her; the drama was in her mind." This is perhaps the most valuable sentence in modernist literature — a summary and slogan of modernism itself — and it is waiting for you about an hour into Willa



"I was fine-tuning the economy, and I turned out to be tone deaf."

Cather's masterpiece novella "My Mortal Enemy" (1926). It will take you just another hour to finish the book, by which time you will discover a few more things about modernist literature, and a whole lot more about one of its most complicated characters — Myra Driscoll of Parthia, Illinois, who, once upon a time, gave up a family fortune to marry the man she loved.

We find Myra 25 years after her fairytale decision — a New York socialite of endless charm and kindness and curiosity, happily married, of course, and deeply happy, except that sometimes her mouth "curls like a little snake." We do not yet know the source of the serpentine smile, but we can forgive it, because Myra is such a generous woman. Just now she is advising a young man into a romance with a woman quite a bit older than he.

Yet something is wrong with Myra. No sooner has the young man taken his leave than a sensation of guilt overcomes her. "No playing with love," she says, "and I'd sworn never to meddle again. You send a handsome fellow like Ewan Gray to a fine girl like Esther, and it's Christmas eve, and they rise above us and the white world around us, and there isn't anybody, not a tramp on the park benches, that wouldn't wish them well — and very likely hell will come of it!"

"My Mortal Enemy" is not a complete novel, nor is it even a complete character study. It is rather a biography cast in the form of a fairytale, with an "enemy" who may be the heroine, and a "hell" becoming increasingly real. You know how it begins. Now watch it mature in Cather's hands.

— Garin K. Hovannisian

Garin K. Hovannisian is a freelance writer living between Los Angeles and Erevan, Armenia.

Two of my favorite authors were socialists. One was George Orwell, who redeemed himself by being a critic of the "sandal-wearers and bearded fruit-juice drinkers" who made excuses for Stalin. Another was Jack London (1875–1916), who redeemed himself through his art.

Scour London's most famous short story, "To Build a Fire," and try to find any socialism in it. There is none. Instead there is implacable nature — reality with a capital "R." Sometimes

it takes form as cold that reaches 75° below zero, sometimes as a tropical typhoon. In London's story "A Piece of Steak," in which an aging prizefighter loses a bout, it exists in the imperatives of the human organism. London's Nature does not deny his characters strength or choice. The man in "To Build a Fire" is strong enough. He just makes bad choices.

London wrote some socialist tracts, which you can read on the internet if you have time to waste, and a novel, "The Iron Heel," which supposedly influenced Orwell. There is a large dose of Marx in that book, and it is worth reading only as archaeology. But London also imbibed the works of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Friedrich Nietzsche — which made him a conflicted socialist. He portrayed his own young self in "Martin Eden," a novel he intended as a denunciation of individualism but through most of its length reads as an affirmation of it.

An account of all this is in Texas historian James L. Haley's new biography, "Wolf: The Lives of Jack London" (2010). London grew up at the edge of poverty, raised by a strange mother and a not-too-effectual stepdad. He quit school at the end of the eighth grade to work in a pickle factory, and after that attended a bit of prep school, a bit of high school, and a bit of university, in between episodes of stealing oysters, shoveling coal, working on a North Pacific sealer, prospecting for gold in the Yukon, and riding the rails as a hobo. It was while tramping after the Panic of 1893 that he became a socialist, mainly out of sympathy, Haley says, for the men who were too old and broken to work.

Haley is sympathetic to London's socialism, as was London's previous biographer, Alex Kershaw, who wrote "Jack London: A Life" (1997). Haley writes, "It is easy for modern eyes to see the early 20th century Socialists as naive and slightly ridiculous." Well, yes. London died one year before the Russian Revolution. He didn't see that the Communists would bring tyranny. He was for the workingman standing up and defending himself. He had been a "Work Beast" and knew how hard it was. Haley writes: "London's concept of socialism as it evolved was never the socialism of the slacker. He did not oppose the finer things in life, indeed he wanted them for himself." For a while he was America's most successful writer, America's equivalent of Arthur Conan Doyle; and he used his work to buy a big ranch and a fancy sailboat, and have the attentions of a Japanese valet.

Haley has written a fine biography of this complex character. Most of it is not about London's socialism, but about his life and art — both of them far more colorful than the human average. London was a man who took life in big bites, and even antisocialists can admire him.

— Bruce Ramsey

*Bruce Ramsey is author of *Unsanctioned Voice*, the biography of Garet Garrett.*

Funny books are notoriously difficult to recommend with success. My efforts to do so are usually met with some response like the following:

"Eh? I don't know. These books usually turn out to be either inane works of whimsy or dull, complacent satires. Besides, what do you know about funny? Whenever I see you I feel that much more intimately acquainted with death."

"Just read it," I say, "and I'll spare you my company for



two months.”

I'm no stranger to this natural skepticism myself, as it kept me away from the works of P.G. Wodehouse until, during a recent fever, I reached over and picked up a copy of “The Inimitable Jeeves” that had been yellowing by my bedside for years. After the first story — featuring the sublimely wise and cunning butler Jeeves, his charmingly inferior employer Bertie Wooster (the narrator), and Bertie's friend Bingo Little, a glutton for true love — I was hooked. If it didn't exactly cure my fever, at least it made me want to be cured, if you catch my curve.

Comedy comes in two general forms. One is overtly dark or serious, the humor working deep undercover to subvert and complicate the surface. The other is apparently light and frivolous, with the seriousness in disguise. Wodehouse practiced the latter kind. He called his stories “musical comedies without the music” — and, unlike most musical comedies, with comedy actually included. This explains why his books feel to me like distinctly literary versions of my favorite television shows. With zany schemes, elusive romances, fearsome aunts, socially reputable morons, and plots woven by hilarious miscommunication, opportune drinking, and gambling, Wodehouse created a comic paradise energized by sheer delight.

Wodehouse (1881–1975) wrote over a hundred books, and surely many of them are to be avoided. Possibly you once started one of the duds and saw nothing in it. It's a Murphy's Law of funny-book giving that the title you receive as a gift will never be the author's best. Either you get one of those cheap anthologies of lesser work, or the gift-giver, having read and loved one particular book, decides to get you a different one by the same author, considering the pleasure he got from the first to be enough for you both. So let me be clear about what I endorse.

Jeeves and Wooster are Wodehouse's most famous creations. Their escapades comprise 14 books, and “Inimitable Jeeves” is a great place to start. The two highest-rated novels are “The Code of the Woosters” and “Right Ho, Jeeves,” and after that, any story or novel written before WWII. Another classic worth starting from is “Mulliner Nights,” in which Mr. Mulliner, holding after-hours court at the Angler's Rest, recounts absurd family tales connected to every subject gurgled forth by his barmates.

Read these and you will want more, more, more, for Wodehouse is perhaps the only writer whom one can non-stupidly describe as *fun*. He also illustrates the fact that no deeply funny comedy is ever truly “light.”

— Alec Mouhibian

Alec Mouhibian is an author based in Los Angeles.

There are two books that I especially enjoyed this year, and that a sense of guilt compels me to discuss right now. The guilt arises from the fact that I intended to do full and proper reviews of these books, but never found the time.

The first is a book mentioned by Sarah Palin in her autobiography (which I did review for Liberty a few months back). It is “Tilting the Playing Field: Schools, Sports, Sex and Title IX” (2003), by Jessica Gavora. This is a superb, short book (180 pages) about the major problems caused by the passage in

1972 of the meddling legislation known as Title IX, which prohibited gender “discrimination” in American schools.

As Gavora notes, the goals of Title IX were ostensibly laudable: to expand opportunity for women. But, as we have seen so often with well-intentioned laws, activist groups have exploited the law to advance their pet agendas. She discusses how, starting in the 1990s, the law was interpreted to demand equal funding of men's and women's sports programs (something not explicitly written in the law), despite the obvious fact that fewer adult women than adult men are interested in participating in such programs. The result has been the termination of many men's sports programs in colleges throughout the country.

The law continues to be used to push quotas for women — but only selectively. So women's groups have demanded that the law be used to force math, engineering, and physical science departments to institute quotas for admitting women, under the theory that the statistical difference between male and female graduates from these programs indicates that women are victims of invidious discrimination. The fact that men are hugely “underrepresented” in many other programs and fields — such as psychology — is not considered a fact worth discussing, much less a fact that calls for the implementation of quota schemes. And the fact that women are now 56% of all college undergrads is not seen as a problem requiring affirmative action for men. The victimhood game is played in a very peculiar way, one that guarantees that women and the other “minorities” (women, in fact, are in the majority), at least those anointed by the liberal elites, will always win, or appear to win.

The second book is “Power to Save the World: the Truth about Nuclear Energy” (2007), by Gwyneth Cravens. Cravens is a novelist and environmentalist writer who was a longtime skeptic about nuclear power. After an odyssey of nearly a decade studying the nuclear power industry under the guidance of Dr. Richard Anderson, a nuclear scientist specializing in risk assessment at the Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico, she now completely supports nuclear power.

Her book is a detailed and thoroughgoing (419 pages!) analysis of the feasibility of dramatically increasing our use of nuclear power. She deftly disposes of many of the myths that people resort to in opposing that use. She shows why nuclear power is safe, reviewing its history of safe operation here and abroad, both on land and in ships at sea, and showing that the design of modern nuclear plants makes accidents highly unlikely and very containable.

Along the way, she notes some facts that will surprise the average reader. For instance: people around Chernobyl and in Hiroshima receive a lower dose of background radiation than people in Denver. People in a uranium mine receive a lower dose than people in Grand Central Terminal. Sailors in a nuclear sub receive a lower dose than sailors on shore leave. Cravens reviews the costs of nuclear power and plans for safe storage of nuclear waste — again, covering issues that are often believed to be insurmountable problems for the industry.

I consider her book the clearest and most comprehensive review of the industry in recent times, and I cannot commend her enough for writing it.

Both these worthy books are all the more commendable

for the intellectual honesty demonstrated by their authors — Gavora, a woman who played sports in school, and Cravens, a devout environmentalist.

— Gary Jason

Gary Jason is a contributing editor of Liberty.

My book is “The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume 1: The Spell of Plato” (1945), by Karl Popper. It should be read, with appropriately open minds, by classical liberals and libertarians, especially those interested in Popper’s achievements in the philosophy of science and his lifetime quest for knowledge. When, in 1943, he wrote this insightful attack on utopian thought, Popper was a social democrat, and social democracy’s egalitarian and democratic sentiments are voiced throughout. However, Popper was, as one presumes Einstein and many other intellectual socialists to have been, an individualist and lover of freedom. Over the years, through his association with Friedrich Hayek, he became more of a classical liberal — something bemoaned by many of his biographers and associates.

In order to make that transition, he must have had the intellectual honesty to realize that his chosen means, socialism, was incompatible with his end of an “open society,” a society based on individualism as opposed to tribalism. And his analytic approach allowed him, even in 1943, to make criticisms of totalitarian society that could have led to tremendous breakthroughs had he simply dropped certain assumptions about politics.

To say that Popper had too much confidence in democratic government goes without saying, especially when he presents his ideas of “social engineering.” He clearly identifies the problems of the utopians — those who, like Plato in the “Republic,” wish to remake the entirety of society based on some sort of abstract model — and supports a more gradual “piecemeal” approach, one in which incremental change could be reversed or modified by voters based on what was learned in the experiment. At this point he is on the verge of an intellectual leap that, with his prestige, might have changed the course of history. If he had not been blinded by his assumptions about the crucial role of political decision-making, he could have proposed a truly free society, in which consumers “vote” on experiments every day.

Popper recognizes and includes clearly private institutions as part of the social fabric, for instance when he mentions in a list of social institutions “such things as an insurance company, or a police force, or a government, or perhaps a grocer’s shop.” Even to do so indicates thinking that is open to a discussion of the market’s problem-solving capabilities.

It would seem strange to write about this book without more emphasis on its discussion of Plato himself, but Plato is not my interest here. Popper was writing in the time of a great world upheaval and attacking someone he perceived as the most important philosophical supporter of a tribal or “closed” society. In the second volume, having prepared his ground, Popper takes on Hegel and Marx.

— Brian J. Gladish

Brian J. Gladish is a longtime libertarian and more recently a student of Austrian economics residing in Prescott Valley, Arizona.

Lack of disposable income this summer will spell doom for many a beach trip or mountain retreat. Fortunately, the

cost of escape by book is still manageable within even the tightest budget — at least if you, like me, follow the domestic economy of Erasmus, who said, “When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes.”

Still, not just any book will do. What kind of escape is it to plunk down your few spare dollars, only to read about people and places much like your own? Conversely, why force yourself through a travel diary about an exotic place that you could be visiting, if only Wall Street and Washington DC hadn’t collapsed to bankrupt the country?

Instead, here are some novels that will allow you to get as far away as it is possible to go: deep into alternate worlds and realities.

“The Magicians,” by Lev Grossman (2009) starts in something very much like our world, though one permeated by magic and dotted with academies of arcane study; and the academies are not finishing schools but colleges. Grossman rips up the conventions of magical-school fantasy: the magic here is more about dead languages and weather conditions than wand-waving, and the students behave like the elitist brats they mostly are. But this is not a satire. It’s more like an imaginative mashup, especially when the magicians are turned loose on Fillory, a Narnia-like childhood literary refuge where they quickly find themselves out of their depth. As many have noticed, the pains of adventuring and the pains of growing up are closely linked, and Grossman manages both well, while neatly tying up all the strands of the story.

A bit farther into adulthood is “The Stranger” by Max Frei, the first in a series of books that has captivated Russian readers much as J.K. Rowling’s enchanted Anglophones. It is now finally available in translation (2009; paperback out June 1). Frei — “Sir Max” for most of the novel, and also a pseudonym for the author Svetlana Martynchik — is a listless, insomniac 20-something who dreams himself into the city of Echo, where he is offered a job as the nighttime representative of the Minor Secret Investigative Force: essentially, a magical detective. The resulting mix of pulp noir, B-horror movie, fantasy, and folktale, told by Max himself as the chatty, idiosyncratic first-person narrator, provides an experience unlike that of any other book I’ve read. It also bucks the trend of short chapters in popular fiction, providing meaty 80-page episodic chunks that are just about right — it’s not a book to be sped through.

The book that *will* keep you up well past any semblance of a bedtime is Neal Stephenson’s “Anathem” (2008), which is told by the narrator Erasmus (or Raz), a fid in the math of Saunt Edhar. Confused? After 50 pages or so it will all seem utterly natural, but the basic translation is that he is a young monk in a secular monastery devoted to research and preservation of the natural sciences. The novel starts inside this institution and slowly telescopes out to reveal a complex world of inquiry and intrigue. By the end, it’s a full-blown space opera that, unlike so much of the genre, refuses to dumb down once the action kicks off. “Anathem” is the first novel I’ve read in ages that actually allowed me to block out the rest of the world — perfect stuff for a summer getaway.

— Andrew Ferguson

Andrew Ferguson is a contributing editor of Liberty and a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Virginia. At present he is working on a biography of science-fiction writer R.A. Lafferty.

Reviews

"The Nurture Assumption," by Judith Rich Harris. The Free Press, 1998, 480 pages.

"No Two Alike," by Judith Rich Harris. W.W. Norton, 2005, 352 pages.

Psychology Grows Up

Jamie McEwan

I would have been terrified to discuss Judith Rich Harris' *"The Nurture Assumption"* when it was first published in 1998. Harris — not a researcher or professor, but a writer of psychology textbooks who had washed out of Harvard's Ph.D. program many years before — was proposing a complete revision of the prevailing assumptions about childhood development. Her thesis, in a nutshell: "Parental nurturing is not what determines how a child turns out. Children are not socialized by their parents. The nurture assumption is a myth and most of the research used to support it is worthless" (xv). This was radical indeed. If Harris' analysis was correct, almost all current child development theories could be thrown out the window. Discarded, as well, would be popular therapies such as psychoanalysis, and all theories which assume that children are largely blank slates on which their parents write their future character.

How was the poor layman sup-

posed to handle this hot potato? Whom could you solicit for an unbiased opinion on this paradigm-shifting thesis? A *Newsweek* cover story on Harris (Sept. 7, 1998), while noting "some big guns on her side," called that "a minority opinion," and went on to say that "many scientists are nothing short of scathing" about her ideas; it quoted several of them. And the opposing scientists were, indeed, scathing. But you could hardly look for guidance from the putative experts, for in many cases these were the same people whose lifetime assumptions were under fire.

Harris did have early supporters. Harris' article kicking off her revisionism, published in the prestigious *Psychological Review* in 1995, won the George A. Miller award for "an outstanding recent article in psychology" — a delicious irony, for the same George A. Miller after whom the award was named had signed the letter asking her to leave Harvard's Ph.D. program. The review in *The New York Times Book Review* by social psychologist Carol Tavris was favorable, if somewhat cau-

tious. And David Rowe, a behavioral geneticist who in 1994 had published *"The Limits of Family Influence,"* was an immediate ally.

But Harris' detractors were heavily credentialed, and the unfavorable reviews numerous. The reader could certainly be sure that Harris wrote and analyzed well, but if you bought into her theory on the evidence of her book alone, there was always the possibility that she was ignoring a body of contradictory evidence, or misinterpreting the data in some subtle way. The possibilities for the layman — or even the expert, for that matter — to make a fool of himself seemed to lie on every side.

In 2008, when *"The Nurture Assumption"* was reissued in a 10th-anniversary edition, the picture was much less intimidating. That is not to say that Harris' views had been wholeheartedly accepted. Far from it. But it had become clear that there was no hidden body of evidence, no glaring misinterpretation. It appears that her devastating critique of what she calls "the nurture assumption" has not been

refuted, and further research has reinforced her conclusions. It seems unlikely that formerly mainstream views will recover completely from Harris' razor-sharp analysis.

During the intervening decade, Harris had also published a follow-up, "No Two Alike" (2005). The reviews of this book were considerably friendlier, the criticisms more cautious. No more scathing comments — at least not that I could find. Harris was now part of the intellectual landscape; it was no longer possible to dismiss her out of hand, in hopes she would go away.

The believers in the central role of early childhood experience, and of parents, in determining personality — "developmentalists," as Harris calls them — have defended their views with two main arguments.

Argument number one: "The interactions are so complex that we simply can't separate parental influence from other factors." Harris devotes a chapter of "No Two Alike" (27–49) to demonstrating how carefully designed studies can, indeed, tease out parental influence from other determinants.

Argument number two: "Parents have lots of influence, but in unpredictable directions, so that no net effect shows up in the studies." This is theoretically possible, but Harris points out that this would mean that each given style of parenting would produce balanced effects, i.e. that "the same parental behaviors can cause one child to

While researching for yet another textbook, Harris noticed that mainstream assumptions did not fit with the findings of carefully designed studies.

become more cheerful and another more depressed, one more honest and the other more deceptive" (74). The likelihood of such balance seems quite low. And even if that were true, what would it say about the developmentalists' proclivity for recommending some parenting styles over others? If the effects are evenly balanced, any such recommen-

dations are baseless. The developmentalists, as Harris points out, want to have it both ways.

It may be that developmentalists will eventually be able to salvage more than the 1% parental influence on a child's eventual adult personality that Harris grants them in a generous moment. (Harris does note that a few studies reach the high-water mark of 5%, though she calls them "of dubious quality" [86].) But, in Harris' wake, theories of parental influence on development will find it difficult to regain the hegemony they enjoyed through the latter half of the 20th century.

True, Harris' theories about what shapes adult personality are themselves speculative, and like all new theories should be viewed with a healthy skepticism. But they are intriguing and well-reasoned, if only preliminary. We may ask those who pounce on the incompleteness of her attempts: who can expect the pioneer to find her way directly to the full truth, without misstep or deviation?

Harris is, first of all, an analyst and organizer of others' research studies, and secondly, a theorist with an outsider's perspective on the field of psychology. She has suffered from a hard-to-diagnose combination of the autoimmune diseases lupus and sclerosis since the 1970s, and lives a mostly shut-in life. During the years 1981–1994 she wrote textbooks on child development. These early books relied on both the research and the theories of others and reflected the mainstream emphasis on the central role of parents in childhood development. But while researching for yet another textbook, she noticed that these mainstream assumptions did not fit with the findings of a number of carefully designed studies.

Harris never completed the textbook. Instead she spent months delving ever more deeply into the research on development. She found that much of the research that supported the orthodoxy was undermined by a fundamental flaw: the failure to control for the effects of heredity. Many studies show, for example, that children of broken homes are more likely than other people to get divorces. Yet factor in the genetic component — inherited personality characteristics associated with divorce that are demonstrably not correlated

with shared experiences — control for socioeconomic status and an increase in parental changes of residence, and the connection, so often carelessly attributed to differences in the specific in-home environment, disappears. ("Nurture Assumption" 290–291.)

In taking note of the significant effects of genetics, and casting doubt on the more extreme claims of developmentalists, Harris was only repeating the conclusions of observant parents everywhere. (My own four children differed markedly in their response to stimulus while still in the womb, not to mention afterwards.) But the evidence, and Harris' analysis, did far more than simply repeat, time after time, the importance of the genetic makeup of children. It also reduced to near-zero the role of differing upbringing styles or "psychologically correct" parental strategies in determining adult personality. (One reviewer joked that if Harris could have reduced it to less than zero, she would have.) Now that was not intuitive to any late-20th-century parent, caught up as we were in the culture of the Dr. Spock generation. But as Harris points out, the belief in dispositive parental influence is relatively recent: former generations assumed what now seems one half-step closer to the truth, that personality was inborn.

Astonishingly, it doesn't seem to matter much whether identical twins are raised in the same family, or raised in different families; either way, they end up just as similar — and just as different. Much has been made of the bizarre similarities of identical twins raised in separate households, but Harris is equally impressed, and more interested, by the remarkable degree of difference between identical twins raised in the same household.

Harris is careful to point out the ways in which parents *are* important — especially in providing the basics for survival, such as food, shelter, and protection. It is only after these are controlled for as much as possible that we see parental influence approach zero. Prenatal environment is important. It is also crucial that parents, or parent substitutes, provide visual stimulation, exposure to language, and the opportunity for human attachment during the first three years of life; without these, normal development is endangered. In

addition, parents' socioeconomic status and their choice of where to live are crucially important in determining what their children's peer group is likely to be; one of the few active steps parents can take to shape their children's future, according to Harris, is to change neighborhoods. She also makes an exception for the rare — usually large — family, or more likely group of families (she cites the Amish and Orthodox Jews), that succeeds in creating its own mini-peer-group. Another exception: "Anything learned at home and kept at home — not scrutinized by the peer group — may be passed on from parents to their kids. Maybe even how to run a home" ("Nurture Assumption" 311). And there is of course a host of influences on a minor level — if you pay for enough piano lessons, your child will probably learn to play the piano.

This adds up to a lot of, well, what we laymen might call "nurturing." But we must remind ourselves that Harris is using the phrase "the nurture assumption" to stand for a deep and elaborate array of child development theories popular during the latter half of the 20th century. The normal parental nurturing of young children, as practiced throughout the millennia, is not in question.

Then what is it that parents, with few exceptions, do *not* do? Harris' evidence is strong that parents' varying child-rearing styles or philosophies do not shape their children's personalities, do not teach them strategies they use in dealing with the social world outside the family, and do not determine their future happiness.

Then what does shape personality? No one is sure. Clearly, heredity is important. The studies of behavioral geneticists indicate that inherited traits account for about 45% of adult personality ("No Two Alike" 119). It has been argued that they are overstating the case by failing to separate heredity's direct effects from the environmental feedback of those same effects. Children with certain inborn traits will go on to be treated differently by both parents and peers, which will magnify the effects of the original genetic differences. So perhaps genetics directly determines only 30% of adult variation. But Harris can shrug her shoulders at this controversy, for her goal is to account for the 55%

that lies outside both direct and indirect genetic determinants.

Then there's the random factor — from the "developmental noise" that creates small genetic differences even between identical twins, to chance encounters with strangers on the street or bullies in the schoolyard. Though Harris gives a nod to randomness, she does not find it a complete or satisfying explanation. In "The Nurture Assumption," she focuses on peers. She makes an excellent case that personality is still quite malleable well up into the teenage years, but that even in early childhood, outside-the-home behavior is influenced far more by peers than by parents. One telling example is that children of immigrant parents tend to resist speaking their parents' language, instead becoming fluent, and accentless, in the language of their schoolmates. Other examples abound.

Harris' main goal in "The Nurture Assumption" is to debunk the titular premise, and to provide a plausible substitute for parental influence. In this she can be said to succeed. But peer influence provides that substitute largely for the lack of other possible candidates. Solid evidence is hard to come by. The studies Harris cites in support of her "group socialization theory" were not designed with her theory in mind; in fact, many are simply failed attempts to demonstrate the importance of the parental role.

It also remains unclear exactly who constitute "peers." Do we include only the peers the child knows personally, or do perceived peers (known from television shows, commercials, magazine articles, and ads) also count? What drives children and teenagers to conform to their peers, and what makes them differ?

In "No Two Alike," Harris addresses these questions, and more. She devotes the first part of the book to restating and redefending the main thesis of "The Nurture Assumption"; no need to have read her first book in order to read the second. Some may find this section repetitive, and her attack on a few of the critics of "The Nurture Assumption" has struck some readers as unnecessarily detailed, not to mention merciless, but Harris writes and thinks so well that I for one am happy to go along for the ride. We follow Harris as

she tracks down the unpublished study that the Newsweek cover story cites in its "Exhibit A," and discovers that Newsweek has misreported a crucial fact. (The article states, "[Jerome] Kagan measured babies at 4 months and at

Much of the research that supported the orthodoxy was undermined by a fundamental flaw: the failure to control for the effects of heredity.

school age." It was really at 4 months and at 21 months.) And it is instructive, as well as humbling, to see Harris demonstrate how fatally flawed a plausible-seeming study can be.

I'm afraid I could easily have breezed through the summary of a study of "positive parenting" on school behavior, for example, and come away with the impression that the authors had indeed produced evidence of the benefits of improving school behavior through instructing parents in such parenting, as they apparently thought they had. It takes Harris' scalpel to show that the authors had failed to control for what is known as "compliance determined susceptibility bias." By selecting a subgroup of parents who were most willing to follow parenting advice, they allowed genetic factors to come into play; children of conscientious parents might well inherit the tendency to be conscientious themselves. Go back to randomly assigned groups — both of those instructed in "positive parenting" and of those given no instruction at all — and the positive effects disappear; no difference in school behavior was observable between the two groups (133–135).

In another example, Harris digs deep to find that one widely quoted (though never published) study seems to have been based on the interactions of fewer than eight rhesus monkeys, followed only to the age of 15 months. For various technical reasons, and because some of the monkeys had to have been used as controls, it seems highly likely that the conclusions were based on the reactions of one or two

monkeys (64–68). The phrase “grasping at straws” comes to mind.

In the second part of the book Harris is bold enough to develop her own theory of childhood and adolescent development. In her view, adolescents of a given peer group are similar to one another because of the effects of an innate socialization system that creates the urge to conform to one’s peers. At the same time, they will differ because of another inborn desire: to achieve status within that same group of peers.

It is hardly innovative to point out the importance of status in human relations — status has been a theme of literature ever since Achilles chose glory

Freud failed to consider that it could be heredity that caused finicky mothers to have finicky children.

over long life in Homer’s “Iliad,” and it would be difficult to make a list of contemporary novels that do *not* deal with status. In Dale Carnegie’s popular book, “How to Win Friends and Influence People” (1936), I find this saying: “If you tell me how you get your feeling of importance, I’ll tell you what you are” (50).

But two things are, as far as I know, unique to Harris. One is her claim that it is precisely the striving for status that drives individuation. Even identical twins growing up in the same household find that they cannot occupy the exact same status niche; they must specialize in order to compete. The other is her careful delineation of the status system from two other “systems” or “modules” of the brain that deal with human interactions: the relationship system and the socialization system. She provides a useful chart of the three.

The idea that the brain has different, and sometimes conflicting, systems for dealing with its various tasks is consistent with research into damaged brains and of the findings of brain-scan technology — and consistent with the results of introspection as well. But it should be noted that, to date, there is no hard evidence for the existence of

the three separate systems that Harris proposes. It is not happenstance that she makes many references to famous fictional detectives (Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, Sayers’ Peter Wimsey, and Tey’s Inspector Grant), for her method is similar: eliminate all other possible suspects, until only one is left standing. But just as in reading any detective novel, we have to ask ourselves: has our detective cast her web broadly enough, considered all the potential suspects?

In support of her theory she calls on the reasoning of evolutionary psychologists, and especially on one of their popularizers, the linguist (and following the publication of “The Nurture Assumption,” email friend of Harris) Steven Pinker. Now, I admire and recommend Pinker — you have to love a colleague of Noam Chomsky who is perfectly willing to praise, for example, the work of Thomas Sowell. But the disparity between the inflated claims printed on the cover of Pinker’s 1997 book — here I need only refer to the title, “How the Mind Works” — and the light, lively, fascinating, but sketchy and speculative work that lies between the bindings, illustrates the gap between reach and grasp in Pinker’s nascent field.

For the most part Harris’ anthropological speculations seem quite sound; it seems highly likely that early humans formed into groups and subgroups, and that children’s survival beyond the age of three had more to do with their membership in the group than with the efforts of their parents. I am fascinated by Harris’ casual speculation that, far from having an overpowering tendency to learn life lessons at home, the growing mind might not only resist generalizing from any one social context to another, but might specifically be structured to resist generalizing from family to outside-family milieus. One young person I know posited that the influence was more likely to go the other way from that suggested by the developmental psychologists: she finally learned how to deal with an overbearing father by adopting strategies she gained in dealing with other overbearing adults.

However, the reader may feel a certain disjunction between Harris’ meticulous care in the interpretation of experimental results and her much

more speculative use of the “reverse engineering” of evolutionary psychology. Reverse engineering is great fun, and potentially illuminating, but it strikes me as a somewhat dicey business, based as it is on assumptions about the unknowable life of prehistoric hunter-gatherers. The common working assumption, that their life was much like that of existing (or recently existing) hunter-gatherers, is questioned by many anthropologists, who note that surviving groups of hunter-gatherers are of necessity those who occupy remote and marginal territories, while prehistoric humans no doubt concentrated in relatively rich areas. There is some reason to think that late Paleolithic homo sapiens enjoyed a robust health, not equaled since. Australian anthropologist Peter McAllister maintains, for example, that aboriginal runners could have outsprinted Usain Bolt.

But this is a relatively minor quibble. It should come as no surprise that when analysis gives way to theory-building, the reasoning necessarily becomes looser and more speculative. And at our current level of understanding of the human mind, any proposed theory is necessarily sketchy.

So little is known! This is the most astonishing revelation of the “nurture assumption” controversy — that so much developmental theory could have been built on such weak foundations. When we read that Freud failed to consider that it could be heredity that caused finicky mothers to have finicky children, rather than, as he opined, the mothers’ toilet-training practices, we may feel indulgent about a pioneer’s mistakes. But when it is demonstrated that the same sort of mistake was repeated over and over during the next century, it is not indulgence we feel, but amazement and dismay. Here is one reason psychology has lagged behind the other sciences.

Think of the waste! Think of the hundreds of books that carefully instruct parents in the best way to craft their children’s development, from Dr. Spock’s fairly benign advice to extraordinarily perfectionist and guilt-inducing works such as “The Drama of the Gifted Child” (2008). The thousands of articles. The countless hours that patients have spent on the couches of psychoanalysts, attempting to clear

neuroses that were either imaginary or activated only in the family context. Your love-hate relationship with your father or mother may be quite real, and can upset you every time you interact with or even think of him or her, but it may not be otherwise important in your life today. Cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal therapists have long emphasized focusing on the neuroses of time now, with notable success; studies indicate that in the treatment of depression, for example, the benefits of their therapies often equal or surpass those of the popular antidepressant drugs. By contrast, traditional psychotherapy, with its focus on past trauma, is a signal failure in dealing with depression — on average, it has no favorable effect at all. In a sense, Harris' work is a case of theory catching up with practice.

It will take both to clear away decades of intellectual rubble. And it will be a struggle. There is a strong paternalist streak among the intellectual elite — witness their influence within the Beltway. Established academicians and popular writers alike have resisted Harris' conclusions not so much because they are untrue as because they are thought to be dangerous. What will parents make of the observation that parenting styles don't seem to matter very much? Won't they take that as an excuse to neglect or maltreat their children? Knowing parents, both good and bad, I doubt that the answer is yes. But paternalist assumptions run deep in our current welfarist, for-the-children society, motivating a great deal of behavior that we would be better off without.

In "The Nurture Assumption," Harris provides a rather good "moral of the story" — a moral I wish she had emphasized more in her later book. Her suggestion is that parents would do best to focus on their relationship with their children in the present, rather than constantly strategizing their parental role, trying to push or prod or sculpt their children into what they conceive as the proper shape for the future. I think this is good advice, no matter what the percentage of parental influence turns out to be. Overbearing parenting — and we must remember to include in this general category the over-nurturing, over-praising, and over-sensitivity that has become popular today — isn't a good idea, even for the parents. It isn't that

children's futures are thereby imperiled; it is simply that their presents are thereby degraded. Reflecting on the death of his son, the character of Alexander Herzen in the Tom Stoppard play "Shipwreck" says, "Because children grow up, we think a child's purpose is to grow up. But a child's purpose is to be a child." We don't have to be looking to the future to value a good relationship with our children. Harris emphasizes that the parent-child relationship is important in the same way that every long-term relationship is important. It is part of our lives.

Despite this life-affirming conclusion, Harris later found it necessary to write, in an article for the *Wilson Quarterly* ("How to Succeed in Childhood," Winter 1999): "I am not advocating irresponsibility. Parents are in charge of how their children behave at home. They can decide where their children will grow up and, at least in the early years, who their peers will be. They are the chief determiners of whether their children's life at home will be happy or miserable, and they have a moral obligation to keep it from being miserable. My theory does not grant people the license to treat children in a cruel or negligent way." But I think it very unlikely that Harris' theories will be taken as an excuse for cruelty or negligence; parents who wish to be cruel or negligent are not usually looking for intellectual excuses to do so. And though Harris probably means physical abuse when she refers to "cruelty," it may be that the hectoring and guilt-tripping and bullying inflicted by many well-intentioned parents should count as a form of cruelty as well, and that the perpetrators, and their children, will greatly benefit from having the unnecessary — indeed, imaginary — burden of shaping children's character removed from the parents' shoulders.

At this point we can only dream of the day when someone might provide the same service to teachers and their pupils. "In loco parentis" still means responsibility to the state for "shaping young minds," with all the attendant arrogance, cost, and sheer waste of time.

The cultural zeitgeist responds very slowly to new ideas, and the 20th century's intellectual fads will no doubt take many decades to fade. Books and articles

of bogus parental advice are still being written, printed, and sold. The state, whether governed by Republicans or by Democrats, is more willing than ever to subsidize and insist upon the importance of "educating the whole child," in an expert-approved way, both at home and in the classroom.

Luckily, Harris' struggle with an entrenched establishment is not a lonely one. First of all, her work is based on the original research of many others. And, in a number of interrelated fields, there is a widespread effort to replace those academic subjects that carry the hitherto oxymoronic rubric, the "social sciences," with something worthy of the name. Psychology may be in the forefront of this changeover. Yet it is still struggling to shrug off the pseudo-scientific heritage — indeed, one might almost call it the witch-doctory — of its beginnings, as it attempts to gain the status of a true science by incorporating the insights gained from genetics, neuroscience, and other "harder" disciplines (also, however, largely in their infancy). Asked whether psychology is finally on its way to becoming a true science, Harris responded: "I'm doing my best to nudge it in that direction. Its progress has been very uneven, with some specialties forging ahead and others lagging behind."

This is part of the process of clearing away a widespread cultural myth — the myth of "the blank slate," as Pinker calls it (the title of his 2002 book). Harris'

There is a strong paternalist streak among the intellectual elite — witness their influence within the beltway.

work is one part of the clearing process. She shows that it isn't only laymen who should repeat to themselves 20 times each morning, "Correlation does not equal causation." In attempting to go further, to point the way toward a new developmental theory — and pointing the way is all she really claims to do — she necessarily exposes herself to attack from the flank. But I believe she is pointing in the right direction.

It's hard to know what effect the eventual fall of the blank-slate mythology will have on the cultural and political scene. Conservatives, who have long claimed that the utopianism of the left is based on the erroneous assumption that human nature is infinitely malleable, are understandably feeling vindicated. But any theory of personality can be bent to almost any political end. The assertion that there is such a thing as innate individual nature, or that individuals are, for better or worse, influenced by peer groups as well as by their parents, doesn't have to constitute an endorsement of conservatism. You can find it in many a libertarian essay. As Harris commented in an email, "the fact that something is innate doesn't mean that it's unchangeable."

Pinker closes a chapter of "The Blank Slate," by saying: "Every student

of political science is taught that political ideologies are based on theories of human nature. Why must they be based on theories that are 300 years out of date?" (305). Though it will settle nothing, I would like to think that the quality of debate will be improved by the debunking of the "tabula rasa" myth.

In the grand scheme of life, however, how one votes in the general election is of vanishingly small significance. Far more important are one's day-to-day interactions. Harris' work can and should have an impact not only on every parent but on every child. And everyone is someone's child. Harris largely avoids giving advice; hers are not self-help books. But surely an appreciation for the truth of the parent-child relationship will have a beneficial effect. Truth always turns out to have its uses. □

film. While the camera work is impressive and occasionally even breathtaking, especially clips of the massive rolling sea, the film lacks the charm and emotional connection of "Winged Migration" or even last year's "Earth." The music, by Bruno Coulais, is pleasant but not moving. The film as a whole feels less like a celebration of sea life than like a preachy documentary — especially with Pierce Brosnan's stern, dispassionate narration.

Before the film ended, the neighborhood Earth Day celebrants were crawling over the seats, running along the aisles, tossing popcorn at one another, and in every way expressing their lack of interest in the film as their mothers tried in vain to corral them. They couldn't wait to get out to the video arcade in the theater lobby. (Meanwhile — not to brag — my little Miles, a true lover of fish, was delightedly calling out the names of every creature that appeared on the screen.)

I shouldn't be so flippant. There is much to like about this movie, which was filmed over the course of four years in over 50 underwater locations. It captures some astounding footage of unusual sea creatures, and demonstrates the often symbiotic relationship of predators and cleaners, fish and plant life. Thoughtfully, the editors cut away just before the blood begins spurting as sharks and whales snatch sea lions into their massive jaws. We do, however, see crabs munching on the drumsticks of other crabs and flocks of predatory birds diving in to snatch up baby turtles as they make a frantic dash for the sea. "Only one in a thousand turtles will survive their first day, but that is enough to assure the survival of the species," Brosnan intones.

I guess what really bothered me about the film was the obligatory ending, with Brosnan telling us that humans are destroying the seas and the planet itself. Now, don't get me wrong. I do think we should take care of what we have. That's one of the reasons I'm such a proponent of private property: we take care of the things we own, though we tend to ignore or abuse the things that belong to others. But activists today seem to want humans to leave the planet to the animals entirely, forgetting that humans are animals too. If it's okay for birds to eat 999 out

"Oceans," directed by Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud.
Disneynature/Greenlight Media, 2010, 103 minutes.

Planeteers

Jo Ann Skousen

"Oceans" is the second of an annual Earth Day movie release by Disney Studio's new Disneynature label. The series is designed to draw attention to the planet, thereby drawing in crowds during the sluggish post-spring break, pre-summer vacation season. Judging from the audience at the viewing I attended, the strategy is working: hoards of young Planeteers were there for a neighborhood Earth Day celebration, or so it was explained to me by one of the mothers after the movie ended.

I was there with my 4-year-old grandson, Miles, who couldn't care less about Earth Day or saving the planet, although he is very good at putting away his toys and throwing his popsicle sticks into the trash. We went to the movie simply because he loves fishies.

"Oceans" was made by the same team of documentarians that made the remarkable "Winged Migration" (2003), which partnered stunning cinematography with lush French impressionist music to create a gorgeous work of art. Unfortunately, "Oceans" falls short of the expectations created by the earlier

of a thousand baby turtles, why isn't it equally okay for humans to eat fish? Especially if those fish are farmed, harvested, replaced, and sustained by the humans?

Yes, we humans use tools and technology, and that makes us able to do greater damage. The film shows trash carried to the ocean and refuse dumped into rivers, and this is indeed troubling. But we aren't the only animals that leave their refuse behind. When I walk to work every morning, I have to dodge big blobs of excrement left by the flocks of Canada geese that have permanently immigrated to our community — without papers, visas, or green cards, I might add.

"Oceans" shows a crablike creature (Miles would know its official name) cleaning out its cave by expelling sand and excrement and just leaving it there by the front door. By contrast, people employ water treatment plans to clean and reuse the water we expel from our homes and businesses. And my human neighbors carry plastic bags to clean up after their pampered pooches, who would otherwise blithely leave their refuse behind to decompose in the sun.

In fact, businesses everywhere in the developed world are doing their best to control pollution while still producing the goods that contribute to our wellbeing. The oil slick now heading for shore in the Gulf of Mexico is a tragedy, but scientists are working around the clock to figure out how to stop the gusher and clean up the mess. Moreover, BP would have begun burning the oil immediately, before it had time to spread, if environmentalists hadn't urged the government to prevent the controlled burnoff because of the smoke pollution it would have caused. I have confidence that by the time this magazine reaches its readers, the problem will be under control and safeguards will be in place at all remaining wells to prevent a similar occurrence.

"Oceans" reminds us to be mindful of our neighbors under the water as well as those on land. But it is a delicate balancing act that humans create — maximizing our quality of life while avoiding accidents and disasters. It's a balancing act every bit as complex as those taking place in the world beneath the sea. □

"The Joneses" directed by Derrick Borte. Echo Lake Productions, 2010, 96 minutes.

Sleeper-Cell Marketing

Jo Ann Skousen

Don't you just hate those people down the street? The ones who have the flashiest new car, the latest electronic toys, the perfect decor, and the toniest parties? Everyone tries to keep up with them, but how do they afford it? And don't you hate the neighbors on the other side of the street just as much — the ones who wear tacky clothes, drive an ordinary car, and have home parties trying to sell you their latest multilevel marketing gimmick?

These two couples live side by side in "The Joneses," a movie that takes marketing and consumerism to an eerie new level. The Joneses — Mom Kate (Demi Moore), Dad Steve (David Duchovny), and teens Mick (Ben Hollingsworth) and Jenn (Amber Heard) — seem like the perfect family. They are tall, tan, athletic, and impeccably groomed, drive a sporty new car, wear the trendiest fashions, and carry the latest in personal communication devices (one really can't call them phones any more). As the film opens, they are moving into their new home in a wealthy suburban neighborhood of multimillion-dollar McMansions.

Like the Rizzo family in "City Island" (reviewed in this issue), the Joneses have something to hide. But unlike the Rizzos, they have donned their masks with diabolical deliberation. We know something is a little off when we see Steve, after being wonderfully affectionate and romantic with

Kate in public, trundle off to sleep alone in the guest room. It gets even creepier when, a few minutes later, Jenn slips out of her clothes and into Steve's bed. (Yes, she's the teenage daughter mentioned above.) Incest?

No. Marketing. "I'm a single 45-year-old failed golf pro former car salesman pretending to be someone else," Steve quips cynically. The Joneses are not really a family, they are carefully selected sales reps, part of an elaborate advertising campaign designed to influence the residents of wealthy neighborhoods into coveting the goodies the Joneses drive, wear, eat, drink, and play with.

"Keeping up with the Joneses" is the name of the game, and these four play it to perfection. Like the alpha personalities described in Malcolm Gladstone's "The Tipping Point," they have that charismatic "it" factor that make people want to be like them and, consequently, to "want what they've got." They can even convince their snobby upscale neighbors that it's the height of fashion to serve frozen sushi from a box and drink rum punch from a foil pouch with an attached straw (yes, exactly like a Capri Sun fruit drink).

The Joneses aren't the only ones in the neighborhood with dollar signs in their eyes, however. Neighbors Larry (Gary Cole) and Summer (Glenn Headly) welcome the Joneses to the neighborhood with a lovely basket of skin care products made by the multilevel sales company that Summer

represents. She uses the “if you think it, it will happen” personal meditation technique of marketing. As hard as she tries, though, Summer doesn’t have “it.” She spends a fortune on her marketing techniques, but garners only a few sympathy sales.

The concept of this movie is clever and timely, demonstrating the hardcore nature of stealth marketing in the 21st century. Traditional commercials and print ads have become old-fashioned and ineffective for today’s buyers. Instead, product placement is now almost as important as the script and the director in movie making. Products are blatantly inserted into scenes, suggesting, for example, that if you want to be as masculine and heroic as maverick CTU agent Jack Bauer, you need to drive a Hyundai (Ford stopped sponsoring “24” last year, so you’d better dump that Bronco).

Hollywood celebrities are paid big bucks to wear certain clothing lines, carry certain accessories, and frequent certain night spots. Even President Obama ended up in a billboard ad for Weatherproof a few months ago when a smart photographer saw the marketing potential in a picture he shot — although I don’t think it was intentional on Obama’s part; he just happened to like that jacket, and I have to admit he looked great in it.

Although the concept may seem gimmicky, “The Joneses” is not as one-dimensional as it may sound. The film is honest in its portrayal of the errors of consumerism without being preachy. It acknowledges the keen dissatisfaction that occurs in the never-ending game of one-upmanship. Having proudly purchased a slightly newer version of the sporty car Steve has been showing off, Larry is furious when he sees Steve driving up a few days later in an even newer and flashier brand. Status based on material objects (not personal qualities) is fleeting.

Fleeting, that is, until the bills come due. Nothing makes the year pass as quickly as those sweet little words, “No payments for 12 months.” The Joneses are “selling a lifestyle,” but that style can lead to bankruptcy. Steve begins to feel uncomfortable about his role as an undercover marketer when he sees what it does to the neighbors he has grown to care about, and this creates

conflict in the “Jones” household.

The film also explores the question of what constitutes a family. Even fake families face problems. When Mick gets in trouble with the law for serving those rum punch pouches at a house party when the folks aren’t home,

“Mom” comes to his rescue. When Jenn has boyfriend trouble, she calls “Mom,” who hurries to her side with a sincere hug and a sympathetic ear. For better or worse, people acting like families become families. It’s as simple as that. □

“Route 66,” executive producer Herbert B. Leonard. VCI Video, DVD release 2004. Television series, 1960–64.

On the Road Again

Gary Jason

I confess that I am not much of a TV devotee. However, available now through the ever-reliable Amazon is a remarkable series from the early days of television that was, in terms of quality and content, revolutionary. This recent release celebrates the show’s 50th anniversary.

“Route 66” played for only four seasons, 1960–1964. It was a sort of picaresque, realist series — mainly dramatic, though occasionally comedic — built around two central characters, Buz Murdock and Tod Stiles. For the first two and a half seasons, the fine actor George Maharis played Buz. Then he was replaced (for health reasons) by Glenn Corbett, who played Lincoln Case. Throughout, the second character was Tod Stiles, played by Martin Milner, also a fine actor. The most memorable episodes, however, were the ones involving the character Buz.

In TV talk, the series was a combination of “episodic” style, with the main characters appearing in every episode, and “anthology,” in which every week

a whole new cast of supporting actors appeared in an entirely new story. In movie terms, the series concept was a classic “buddy” show, melded with a “road” picture. (Think of the Bob Hope — Bing Crosby “road” pictures meeting “Easy Rider.”)

In the series premier, Tod, an upper-class kid who went to Yale, finds himself orphaned when his father dies suddenly, leaving him with only a car, a convertible Corvette. He decides to drive around the country, taking the legendary Route 66, with his friend Buz, a tough young man who grew up in an orphanage and learned survival skills in “Hell’s Kitchen,” a rough bit of New York turf. Buz had worked for Tod’s father, so that’s how they knew each other. Each week they visited various towns and cities, hiring on for a wide variety of jobs — as construction workers, fishermen, shrimpers, loggers, oil rig workers, ranch hands, factory workers, salesmen, or whatever work they could get.

The dynamic between Buz and Tod was interesting. Tod was a tall, sandy-haired all-American type, while Buz

was a more uninhibited working-class guy from the streets. In many of the early episodes, Buz got into fistfights with other characters. Their occasional moral clashes were all the more interesting for that reason.

Along the way, they became involved in the lives of the people they met, people for the most part with troubles or a dark side. The sorts of characters who appear in this series are not the typical upbeat characters who inhabit most of TV land. We meet such people as a tormented jazz musician, a has-been fighter, a self-destructive crop

duster, an abused mute girl, a vengeful blind dance instructor, a hunted pregnant Indian girl, and so on.

Besides the consistently good acting by Milner and Maharis (Maharis was a product of the Actor's Studio in New York, and had substantial stage and TV experience), the series was outstanding for the quality of the supporting actors. They included many actors who went on to notable careers. Part of the fun of watching the series is spying people whom you know very well from their later work: Alan Alda, Ed Asner, Martin Balsam, Tom Bosley, James

Brown, James Caan, Robert Duval, Gene Hackman, Ron Howard, David Janssen, DeForest Kelley, George Kennedy, Harvey Korman, Cloris Leachman, Jack Lord, Lee Marvin, Walter Matthau, Julie Newmar, Leslie Nielsen, Suzanne Pleshette, Robert Redford, Burt Reynolds, William Shatner, Rod Stieger, Jack Warden. Redford, by the way, was considered for the role of Tod Stiles.

Also making the series outstanding were the creators, Stirling Silliphant and Herbert Leonard. Silliphant was an award-winning writer for movies ("In the Heat of the Night") and television (including the series "Naked City," 1958-1963). He wrote about three-fourths of the episodes of "Route 66." Leonard was a distinguished producer, with such series as "Naked City" and "Rin Tin Tin" to his credit. (Rin Tin Tin, the German shepherd who "starred" in a hit series, appears in one of the early episodes of "Route 66.")

Silliphant and Leonard did something unheard of: they filmed on location all over the United States. To this day, "Route 66" is the only fictional TV series filmed on location throughout the country. Silliphant himself toured the country looking for good locations, often grim and gritty locales, that fitted the "realist" orientation of the creators.

Usually, Silliphant's dialogue was exceptionally literate. It used a lot of beatnik slang and existentialist-sounding quotes. Sometimes this came across as a bit pretentious, but it was usually apt. Clearly, Silliphant was influenced by Jack Kerouac's beat classic "On the Road," which had appeared three years before the series began. Indeed, the obvious debt that Silliphant owed to Kerouac led Kerouac to consider suing Silliphant for plagiarism (at least according to Kerouac's biographer Dennis McNally).

Add to this a terrific score by composer Nelson Riddle, not to mention one of the most gorgeous cars ever designed, and "Route 66" is a delight. The episodes hold up well as drama after half a century. But one additional benefit from watching the series now is that it allows the viewer to see the rapid pace of change wrought by our dynamic capitalist system.

This is especially interesting if you are, like me, old enough to remember the times when the series was produced.

Notes on Contributors

Two collections of *Norman Ball's* essays are due this year: *How Can We Make Your Power More Comfortable?* and *The Frantic Force*.

Baloo is a *nom de plume* of Rex F. May.

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To cite one example: As Buz and Tod go from town to town, they take a variety of jobs, almost all of them “blue collar” jobs. But the America of readily available low- to medium-skill work is long gone, replaced by an epistemic (or post-industrial) economy. In one of the more comedic episodes (filmed at UCLA, in front of an enormous room-filling IBM mainframe from that era), a hapless Tod tries desperately to learn programming, while an equally hapless Buz tries his hand at sales.

We also notice the enormous *social* transformations of the past 50 years — especially in the role of women. In all the episodes I watched, Tod and Buz get jobs, and invariably all the other

workers are men. Women workers are scarcely seen.

Another difference you notice has to do with the homogenization of American society. The cities Buz and Tod visited in the ‘60s had marked regional differences, which time and globalization have tended to diminish over the decades. That is one of the instructive things about watching a fine old series such as “Route 66.” You get a vivid visual sense of the rapid changes in our folkways brought about by what Schumpeter called the “creative destruction” that is capitalism. But you are also instructed again about the deeper and permanent psychological verities of our human nature. □

“City Island,” directed by Raymond De Felitta. CineSon Entertainment, 2010, 100 minutes.

Acting Like Ourselves

Jo Ann Skousen

What is your deepest secret? Can you share it with the people you love most? This is the theme of “City Island,” a wonderful little indie film set in a working-class fishing community on the eastern shore of the Bronx. The film suggests that everyone has a secret, everyone wears a mask, and true bonds are formed when you have the courage to take off the mask and reveal your whole self.

As the film opens, the Rizzo family is gathering for a holiday weekend. They seem like the typical working-class family — loud, contentious, but solid. Each one has a secret. The film implies

that this is typical too. Their secrets are probably a little more outlandish than yours: Junior (Ezra Miller) harbors a fetish for 300-pound women; daughter Vivian (Diminik Garcia-Lorido) is secretly working at a strip club to earn money for college; all of them are hiding the fact that they smoke. But we all have secrets we’re afraid to reveal. “City Island” is the best kind of comedy, rich with understanding of human relationships, and funny because it reveals our foibles, not because the characters mouth comic quips. The humor is natural and satisfying.

Vince Rizzo (Andy Garcia) is a prison guard who secretly longs to be an actor. His dream is so secret, in fact, that every week he tells his fam-

ily that he is going to a poker game when actually he is sneaking off to an acting class in Manhattan. You can guess what his wife Joyce (Julianna Margulies) will begin to suspect he’s sneaking off to do. Meanwhile, Vince discovers (and quickly hides) an even bigger secret: Tony Nardella (Steven Strait), a young man being paroled at the prison where Vince works, is his own son from an early relationship, a son he never acknowledged or supported. Tony needs a sponsor, so Vince decides to bring him home to do some construction work in the backyard, without revealing to anyone, including Tony, their true relationship. Vince wants to test the family dynamic first. Let’s see: hot wife, sexy daughter, and a handsome, bare-chested ex-con lifting lumber in the backyard, who doesn’t know they’re related . . . potential dynamite might be an apt description of the dynamic.

The film’s underlying themes of acting and secrets give it depth and staying power. Shakespeare said it well: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players” as we act our way through life. In this film, the acting class is a metaphor for life, and the characters are a training session for actors.

Michael Malakov (Alan Arkin), Vince’s self-important acting teacher, chastises his students for pausing as they read their lines: “Keep going! Say the line! What are you pausing for? Jesus, everyone thinks he’s Brando. Just say the line!” The film’s self-conscious focus on acting makes the audience pay more attention to the subtleties of the actors on the screen, as well as to the masks we don in real life.

For example, when Vince and his acting partner Molly (Emily Mortimer) begin working on their class assignment together—an assignment in which they are supposed to reveal a deep secret to each other and then use it in their next class dialogue — they pause, they think, they struggle to find the courage and the right words to say it. In short, Garcia and Mortimer do exactly what the acting coach has said not to do — and it works. Brilliantly. Suddenly we understand what it was that made Brando such a brilliant yet seemingly effortless actor — he let his character think before he spoke.

In the next scene, the Rizzo family eats dinner together and everyone talks at once, stepping on each other's lines in the way we do when we're having a conversation. No one pauses, no one listens. This style of acting was developed by director Robert Altman and perfected by actress Meryl Streep, who is the queen of thinking, listening, and acting at the same time. It reminds us that most of the time, we don't think and we don't listen. We just talk.

Later, when Vince reveals to Tony that he is going to acting school and is headed to his first audition, Tony tells Vince not to sweat it. Everybody acts all the time. He had to act from the moment he walked into the prison, he says; he had to create a persona and act tough and unconcerned because if he revealed his true fears, they would have come true. Tony demonstrates this in Vince's face, and Vince uses Tony's demonstration word for word in his own audition. Use what you see and make it your own — that's another mantra of acting. The three different acting techniques, strewn effortlessly through the film, make it an actors' movie and give it an intellectual undertone not expected in the working-class setting.

Of course, removing the mask and being oneself is the goal. One of my students at Sing Sing said recently, "We all wear masks in this prison. We have to act the tough guy, we have to act like we agree with things. But here in this classroom we can take off the mask. With these men in this classroom I can be who I really am and say what I really think. Then I put the mask back on and go back to the cell block." "City Island" asks you to consider this: where can you take off your mask? Where can you be your true self? The person you can reveal your secrets to is your true family, your true friend.

"City Island" shows that it may not be easy to take off the mask, but it's definitely worth the effort.

"The Joneses" and "City Island" come to the same conclusion, although they approach it from completely different directions: life is more satisfying when we can take off the mask and be ourselves. In a season when most big-budget films have been flawed, these two independent films stand out as gems. □

"Time Stands Still," directed by Daniel Sullivan. Manhattan Theater Club.

Timeless Problems

Jo Ann Skousen

"Time Stands Still" opened in New York on January 21. It is one of those theatrical gems that invites you to approach it from several directions, and always rewards you with something memorable. Though set in the aftermath of a Middle-Eastern conflict, it is not a play about the politics of war, per se. Instead, it is a play about occupations, about relationships, about gender roles, and ultimately about the desire to make one's life count for something.

As the play begins, James (Brian d'Arcy James) is helping Sarah (Laura Linney) into their New York loft apartment. Sarah's leg is encased in a full-length brace, her arm is in a sling, and dozens of angry red shrapnel scars cover her face and neck. We know immediately that these are serious people whose lives have Meaning. What they do Matters.

We soon learn that James and Sarah are foreign war correspondents; he a writer and she a photographer. Sarah has been injured in a roadside bombing that killed their local guide, a young man whose own family had already been killed in the war. James was in the States during the attack, recovering from emotional injuries suffered during the course of their work, and he feels guilty about not being there when she was injured.

Richard (Eric Bogosian), Sarah and James's editor and dearest friend, soon

arrives to welcome Sarah home, bringing along his sweet, bubbly, and very young new girlfriend, Mandy (Alicia Silverstone). Mandy's get-well gift, a pair of helium balloons, is ridiculously childish and out of place in this serious, life-threatening setting with serious, world-changing people. When Mandy announces cheerfully that she is an "event planner," Sarah responds with a barely concealed smirk and roll of the eyes. Clearly, in this long-established social group where occupations Matter, Mandy has no substance. She is Fluff.

Relationships apparently matter too. Sarah and James are trying to decide where their relationship is headed next. He proposes marriage and a more traditional life. It is time to Settle Down, Start a Family. Before accepting the proposal, however, Sarah tearfully confesses that while James was in the States, she and their guide, Tarik, became lovers. James confesses that he already knew — something about the tone of her voice and her emails while they were apart. Yet he forgives her. Like the self-serving Torvald in Ibsen's "Doll's House," James thinks his forgiveness is Magnanimous and Open Minded.

But forgiveness is not what Sarah seeks. Far from it. Her tears are borne of grief, not shame. Her friend and coworker, a man she loved, was blown up right beside her. She needs compassion, empathy, the sharing of grief. After all, Tarik had been James's guide too! But James just wants it all behind them.

Though he and Sarah were not married when she fell into Tarik's embrace, they were in a committed relationship of nearly nine years. It is perhaps understandable, though despicable, when he confesses his first reaction to the news of Tarik's death. It was relief.

Compare Mandy's reaction to Sarah's accident. As it turns out, Richard and Sarah had once been lovers as well, 20 years earlier. They continued as colleagues after the romance ended, and when she met James, the friendship expanded to include him. For nearly a decade they have been the Three Musketeers. Now sweet, innocent Mandy is trying to join the group. When Mandy heard of Sarah's life-threatening injuries, her reaction was not relief. "When we heard that you were hurt," she says, "I prayed for you. I said, 'Please, please, God, oh please, help Sarah get better. Please, God. Richard loves her so much.'"

There lies the heart of the conflict, and the understated theme of the play: Amid all their angst about Important Work bringing Important Issues to light, Mandy demonstrates true love. Sarah could easily represent a threat to Mandy's relationship with Richard, but she wants Sarah to get better, because she knows how much Sarah's friendship means to the man she loves. If it matters to him, it matters to her.

Gender roles are another important issue in this play, and they are presented subtly and effectively, not as separable topics for social commentary but as matters related to the basic problems of human action, set in the framework of time. The man wants to marry

and start a family; the woman is driven by ambition to make her life count. Her single-eyed focus on her career makes "settling down" seem too much like merely "settling." James stays home, keeps house, and writes movie reviews while Sarah takes pictures of people in distressed situations. Reversing ordinary roles in this manner turns the traditional conflict between home and career into a universal dilemma rather than a feminist cause.

The title contains an ironic metaphor for the action of the play. The camera can make time stand still; it can tell, or attempt to tell, a whole story in a single shot. But in real life, time marches on, choices must be made, and indecision, we often find, is the same as deciding "no." In the practice of photography, Sarah's focus on her work is clear and true, but the rest of her life is a blur, seen from an emotional distance. Perhaps the problem could be solved by a simple f-stop adjustment — but Sarah will not stop to make one.

The acting and direction in this four-character play are superb. Stage lights catch the glint of tears in Laura Linney's eyes as she describes her relationship with Tarik. She leans her injured neck and cheek subtly toward her houseguests, daring them to stare at her scars, which she wears as proudly as medals. Yet when she and James are alone, she covers them with a sweater to assuage the guilt she knows he feels for having returned early to the United States. With three Oscar nominations, two Tony nominations and three Emmys to her credit, Linney moves effortlessly between stage and screen, recognizing

the need to go large for the stage while never going over the top. It is a completely believable performance.

Alicia Silverstone, best known for her screen work in such teen flicks as "Clueless" and "The Crush," could have found herself hopelessly out of her league on the Broadway stage. But she is a joy to watch as the delightfully naive, totally honest young girlfriend. Her eyes dart searchingly from one side of the stage to the other, sometimes trying to comprehend what the others are saying, but more often urging the older and presumably wiser Musketeers to understand what she is trying to say. She reminds us that Planning Events is perhaps the reason Wars Matter. It is to preserve the ordinary events of our lives and our culture — weddings, births, business meetings, holidays, celebrations — that we go to war. While Sarah photographs death and suffering, Mandy celebrates life. What she really can't comprehend is why the others don't get it.

In "The Poisonwood Bible" (1998), Barbara Kingsolver also addresses this contrast between those who go to war and those who stay at home: "We whistle while Rome burns, or we scrub the floor, depending. Don't dare presume there's shame in the lot of a woman who carries on. On the day a committee of men decided to murder [prime minister Patrice Lumumba] what do you suppose Mama Mwanza [a tribal woman] was doing? Was it different the day after? Of course not. Was she a fool, then, or the backbone of history?"

Only time will tell. But it does not stand still. □

Reflections, from page 34

Obama administration's war on Wall Street is an interesting fact. Obama, it turns out, has played more golf in his first 14 months than Bush did in his entire eight years!

Now, I don't mind Obama hitting the links. Not at all. The less time he spends in the Oval Office the better. But where are the news media? I mean, if Bush — who was often criticized for his absences from the White House — had played golf that much, you can just imagine the headlines that would have been written: "Bush Golfs While Soldiers Die"; "Bush Putts as Marine Losses Soar."

But of course, since Obama brought the troops home, no American servicemen are dying. That makes it all okay.

— Gary Jason

Off camera — In the contentious debate over whether Arizona has the right to enforce immigration laws, one item

seems to have escaped the notice of those comparing Governor Jan Brewer to a Nazi. At the request of the governor, as of July 16 all 76 state-owned traffic cameras in Arizona will be removed.

Originally set up by Janet Napolitano, now secretary of Homeland Security (who for some reason has a reputation of being a civil libertarian), the cameras were positioned at locations all around the state.

According to the original plan, Napolitano projected a revenue increase of \$90 million to the state budget — a fact that calls into question the idea that these cameras were really being used as a *safety* measure. Naturally, however, real revenues fell far short of projections, since most motorists just threw the speeding notices into their recycling bin.

— Tim Slagle

Jakarta, Indonesia

Failure to recognize great art, noted by the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

Authorities have removed a statue of Barack Obama from a park in the Indonesian capital following a public backlash and have moved it to a school that the U.S. president attended as a child.

The bronze statue of “Little Barry” shows a 10-year-old Obama with a butterfly perched on an outstretched thumb. Among the critics were members of the “Take Down the Barack Obama Statue in Menteng Park” group on Facebook, who said “Barack Obama has yet to make a significant contribution to the Indonesian nation. We could say Obama only ate and shat in Menteng. He spent his subsequent days living as an American,” the web page said.

Philadelphia

Security theater, in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:

While passing through airport security, Rebecca Solomon was alarmed when a TSA worker motioned her toward him and pulled a small, clear plastic bag from her carry-on. Inside the bag was fine, white powder.

“Where did you get it?” Answer truthfully, the TSA worker informed her, and everything will be okay.

Two thoughts came to her in a jumble: A terrorist was using her to sneak bomb-detonating materials on the plane. Or a drug dealer had made her an unwitting mule, planting coke or some other trouble in her bag while she wasn’t looking. Her heart pounded. She started to sweat. She panicked at having to explain something she couldn’t.

Then the TSA employee started to smile. Just kidding, he said. He waved the baggie. It was his.

Menifee, Calif.

Words of concern, from the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*:

After a parent complained about an elementary school student stumbling across “oral sex” in a classroom dictionary, Menifee Union School District officials decided to pull Merriam Webster’s 10th edition from all school shelves.

School officials will review the dictionary to decide if it should be permanently banned because of the “sexually graphic” entry, said district spokeswoman Betti Cadmus.

Board member Randy Freeman, an elementary school teacher and parent to four daughters in Menifee schools, said he supports the decision to ban the dictionary temporarily. Freeman said it’s “a prestigious dictionary that’s used in the Riverside County spelling bee, but I also imagine there are words in there of concern.”

Nashville, Tenn.

TANSTAAFB, from *The Tennessean*:

The so-called complimentary breakfasts at many hotels in Tennessee have stirred the appetite of state revenue officials.

The state wants to tax the lodging businesses for the food they offer as part of free breakfasts that are included in their room rate. The budget-strapped revenue department hopes to get an estimated \$10 million for its coffers from the sweet rolls, coffee, and such that hotel patrons enjoy at no charge from the Smoky Mountains to Graceland.

Portland, Me.

Inspirational attempt at suppressing biological instinct, in the *Portland Press-Herald*:

About two dozen women marched topless downtown in an effort to erase what they see as a double standard on male and female nudity. The women, preceded and followed by several hundred boisterous and mostly male onlookers, many of them carrying cameras, stayed on the sidewalk because they hadn’t obtained a demonstration permit to walk in the street.

Ty McDowell, who organized the march, said she was “enraged” by the turnout of men attracted to the demonstration. The purpose, she said, was for society to have the same reaction to a woman walking around topless as it does to men without shirts on.

McDowell said she plans similar demonstrations in the future and said she would be more “aggressive” in discouraging ogglers.

Minneapolis

Jurisprudence of the living dead, in the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*:

The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals allowed a group of zombies — or rather, several protesters costumed as such — to press ahead with their lawsuit against police who arrested them for disorderly conduct, overturning a lower court in finding that the group of seven “zombies” had been wrongfully detained during a 2006 shopping mall protest against consumerism.

At the time of the protest, the plaintiffs were wearing makeup that gave them a “living dead”

look: white face powder, fake blood, and black circles around their eyes. They lurched stiff-legged through the halls of the mall urging shoppers to “get your brains here” and “brain cleanup in aisle five.” The protesters carried audio equipment including loudspeakers and wireless phone handsets, which police described as “simulated weapons of mass destruction.”

Havana, Cuba

Novel strategies for increased agricultural yield, noted by the *The Economist*:

Cuba’s state-owned farms are massively inefficient, and rarely provide more than 20% of the country’s food needs. Raúl Castro has acknowledged the problem, and introduced some changes — farmers can now legally buy their own basic equipment such as shovels and boots.

Washington, D.C.

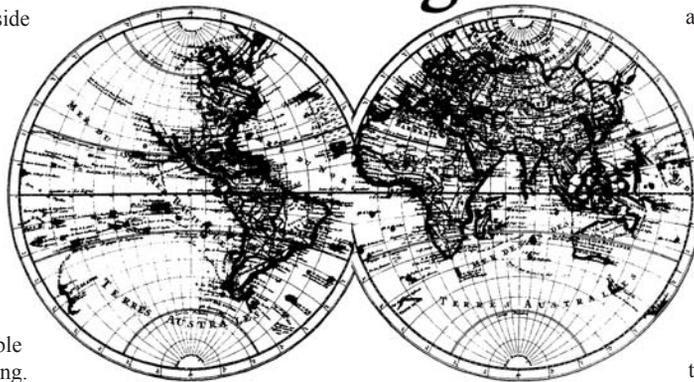
Legal equivalent of scrounging for change in the couch, from the venerable *Washington Post*:

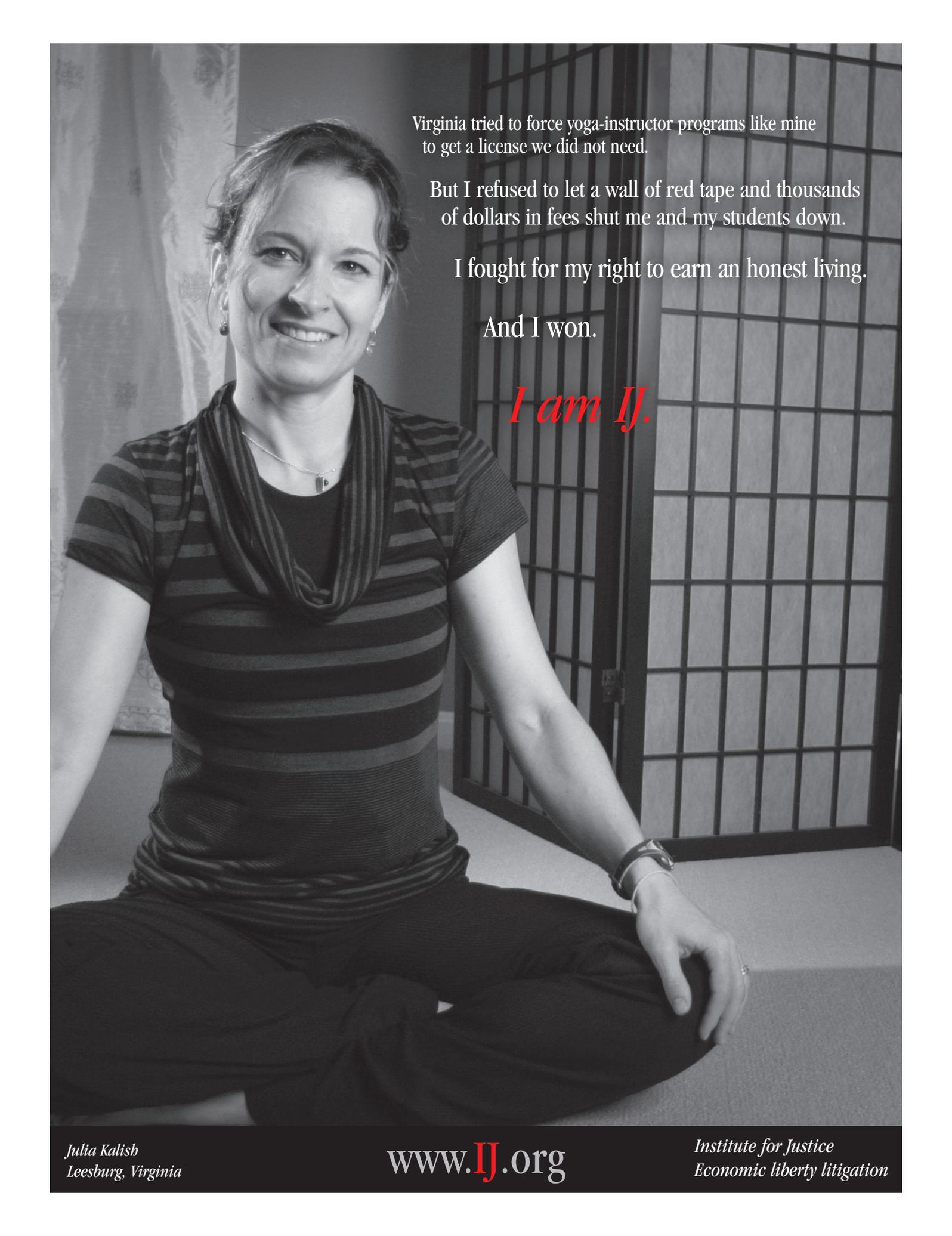
The attorney general for the District has filed a lawsuit against an AT&T Inc unit, seeking to recover consumers’ unused balances on prepaid calling cards.

The suit claims that AT&T should turn over unused balances on the calling cards of consumers whose last known address was in Washington, D.C. and have not used the calling card for three years.

“AT&T’s prepaid calling cards must be treated as unclaimed property under district law,” the attorney general’s office said in a statement.

Terra Incognita





Virginia tried to force yoga-instructor programs like mine
to get a license we did not need.

But I refused to let a wall of red tape and thousands
of dollars in fees shut me and my students down.

I fought for my right to earn an honest living.

And I won.

I am IJ.

*Julia Kalish
Leesburg, Virginia*

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