THE ELECTION'S OVER! THANK GOD.

the weekly Standard

NOVEMBER 18, 1996 $2.95

UGH

Four More Years of This Guy?

REES: WHAT NEWT LEARNED

CALDWELL: MONEY TALKS

BARNES: NO WAY TO WIN

MURAVCHIK: GEORGE MITCHELL

THE EDITORS: WE LOST! WE WON!

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OUR ELECTION DIARY: PARTYING & SPINNING

the weekly Standard

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'That's Why You Lost'

It's been tough sledding this week for any Dole staffers with a little fight left in them. At a post-election forum 32 hours after Clinton declared victory, political consultants and operatives lined up 18 across for an epiphanic requiem filled with conventional wisdom. The only insider attempting to put a little English on his delivery was Dole media man Alex Castellanos—and he was punished swiftly and without mercy.

Comparing Clinton to a disengaged boat captain, Castellanos said, "The captain can have a little transgression here and there, fall off the boat, chase the stewardess, whatever . . . but if we're still moving forward, it's hard to change captains." For that, he was booed. (The forum, sponsored by the *Hotline* newsletter, was held in the auditorium of the National Education Association.) When Castellanos recounted how Clinton lied about everything from middle-class tax cuts to telling the press he only ate one doughnut when he actually consumed two, a journalist in the audience yelled, "Alex, get over it!"

When Castellanos insisted that "Bill Clinton isn't fit to make Bob Dole's license plate—though he may soon be doing so," White House political director Doug Sosnik was compelled to interrupt. "That's why you lost," he sniffed.

Castellanos was there to show some Dole commercials—not the vanilla pap we saw on TV but effective negative spots that were, needless to say, vetoed by Dole senior staffers and therefore never publicly aired until the post-election forum. There was a Clinton corruption montage set to the song "You Cheated, You Lied" and a clever spot called "How To Speak Liberal." Another ad featured Hillary encouraging supporters "to see what happens after the election, when Al [Gore] and I feel totally at ease to be our real selves." After they were shown, Democratic consultant Mandy Grunwald let loose.

"These spots—they really tell me why you-all lost," she snarled in nearly the same formulation as Sosnik's (leading us to believe that White House talking points had instructed all Clintonites to talk incessantly about why Dole lost).

She continued: "You play to your faithful, and that's not what America wants to hear." Remember, she was talking about ads that *never ran*.

This "that's why you lost" business is eerily reminiscent of the mantra about Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas five years ago—"You just don't get it." No, we got it, all right. A Dole campaign with the spine to run those ads would have done a sight better than the campaign that lost so mindlessly.

Liberalism After CCRI

The commanding victory of the California Civil Rights Initiative set off predictable cries of horror from the state's liberals. A collection of advocacy groups, including the ACLU, immediately challenged its constitutionality in federal court. Twenty-three students were arrested for illegally occupying a bell tower at the University of California at Berkeley in protest. The Los Angeles City Council declared it wouldn't be enforcing the measure. Mario Savio, the radical activist who began the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964, died Wednesday—and his friends blamed the anxiety caused by CCRI for his demise.

Then there was the guerrilla war against an editorial in the Berkeley student newspaper, the *Daily Californian*, that endorsed CCRI. Nearly all 23,000 copies of the paper were stolen (the largest such theft of student newspapers anywhere, according to the Student Press Law Center). Word of the pro-CCRI editorial had leaked out; a delivery driver reported seeing someone follow him at each of his stops, apparently confiscating the papers along the way. Berkeley, which actually has a monument to "free speech," has once again revealed that it's free speech for me, but not for thee.

He Bombed in New Haven

In a recent issue of the *New York Observer*, Sidney Blumenthal helps explain how he has become the least respected political journalist in Washington. "I am not a reporter," Blumenthal declared. "I don't believe that the accumulation of isolated fact upon fact yields some sort of pure truth, capital T."

The admission comes as no surprise. Consider some of the examples offered up by the *Observer*'s Robert Sam Anson in what is among the most devastating profiles

Scrapbook

in memory. In 1992, Blumenthal "urged other reporters to desist from writing anything that could jeopardize Mr. Clinton's chances." What about telling the truth? a fellow journalist wondered. Blumenthal's answer: "It doesn't matter. This is too important."

At the *New Yorker*, where he moved after the election, Blumenthal was widely suspected of tipping off the administration when his colleagues planned to write unflattering pieces about the Clintons—a couple to whom he had grown close ever since the three were introduced at (where else?) Renaissance Weekend. Blumenthal's reputation as a duplicitous Clinton shill grew so strong that Michael Kelly, the *New Yorker*'s Washington bureau chief, barred him from entering the magazine's D.C. offices.

On a recent Monday night, a play by Blumenthal called *This Town* opened for its first and only night at the National Press Club. It's set in the White House press room, where a group of bumbling reporters tries to bring down the president by manufacturing a ridiculous scandal about his dog. Needless to say, the press comes off as inept and malicious, the administration as honorable and blameless.

Afternoons at the DMV have moved more quickly than the tedious two-hour production, which featured a lackluster cameo appearance by none other than outgoing labor secretary Robert Reich. Few of the jokes were funny; many of the one-liners seemed as hackneyed as the play's title. As Sidney Blumenthal is not the first to demonstrate, propaganda hardly ever makes good art.

Jack 'n' Jude, Part VIII

Many of the Scrapbook's readers have expressed sadness that our long-running chronicle of the co-dependent relationship between sometime supply-side publicist Jude Wanniski and onetime vice-presidential candidate Jack Kemp seemed to reach its end last week. It's true: We had thought to ring down the curtain on the self-described "puppeteer," the Geppetto to Kemp's Pinocchio, who provided the most diverting subplot in the campaign. But even a marionette show deserves a curtain call. And Wanniski has provided one.

Once a noted author and journalist, Wanniski is pioneering a new literary genre these days—the self-published (on his World Wide Web home page) letter-to-the-editor. His Nov. 5 letter to the *Washington Post* (so far unpublished by the paper) is titled "I Ain't No Crackpot." The letter responds to the syndicated column of George Will, who had called Wanniski "Kemp's crackpot adviser."

Wanniski is intent on ridiculing Will's assessment that the Wanniski *Weltanschauung* boils down to this proposition: He "thinks World War II was caused by Germany's tax and monetary policies."

Now it's certainly true, as Will suggested, that Wanniski monomaniacally believes tax policy is the engine driving world history. But it turns out, in Wanniski's words, that he has "never come close to making that crackpot assertion" about Germany's tax policy. No, the Man Who Would Have Been Counselor to the Vice President insists, it was America's economic policies that caused World War II, specifically the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, "a hypothesis that I originated," he proudly notes.

And with this our chronicle of Wanniski ends . . . we think.

Casual

My Son the Libertarian

E.J. Dionne's Election Day *Washington Post* column was positively Whitmanesque, an evocation of the envelope-stuffing communitarian politics of his Massachusetts childhood. Casting an American ballot is inherently good, he reminded me. Dionne even takes his kids to the polls with him, the better to pass on the faith.

I like E.J. Dionne. When I reviewed his latest book in these pages back in March, I pointed out that he is smart, serious, and good with words. Then I dumped all over him. It was (I thought) a tough review, and I added Dionne to the growing list of people I've criticized in print—and therefore fear meeting face to face.

Bad luck: In August, at the Republican national convention in San Diego, we were introduced. But E.J., who I thought might haul off and punch me right in the bazoo, instead greeted me warmly. I was, and am, grateful for the courtesy.

On Election Day, I thought I could begin to return the favor. I would vote in the full spirit of Dionnism, with an optimistic spring in my step—even though I am a weirdly jinxed voter. In three successive elections since 1988, I had not cast a single successful ballot, even for school board. Big deal, I told myself last Tuesday morning, the *Washington Post* sitting in my lap. Tally ho! Let's try again—for E.J.

It didn't work. First off, for their own good, I had to leave the kids behind. My 4-year-old, Oliver, has unformed politics. He likes Ross Perot because "he's crazy and he has big ears." But if I took Ollie to the polls, I figured, I'd have to take his older brother, Nicholas, too. And Nick, I have concluded, is already dangerously overexposed to politics. He's only 8 years old, and more like me than I am.

"Democrats suck," my beloved first child announced one afternoon about a month ago. No, they don't, I said levelly, and mind your tongue. "But you're a Republican," he replied. "*You* think Democrats suck." At this I'm afraid I lost my temper. If my son is going to have thuggish, blockheaded political opinions, let him go get some of his own. Mom's a Democrat, I sternly reminded him. That brought him up short.

Too short, in fact. A couple of weeks later, Nick came home with the results of his elementary school's mock presidential election. Clinton beat Dole, 365 to 75. Perot got 13 votes. Harry Browne, the Libertarian, got 3. I was suspicious. Who voted for Browne, I wondered? Two fifth graders, Nick said. Who else? "And me," he chirped. "See, Libertarians don't believe in taxes. And if there are no taxes, there'll be no street lights. It won't be safe for the buses to bring us to school, and I'll get to stay home."

I let him practice staying home on the real Election Day and went off to vote on my own. All for naught. In his victory speech that night, Clinton referred to his political opponents as "those who sought to stop America's progress with the politics of personal destruction." It wasn't a fair description of me. I don't mind saying I think Bill Clinton is smart, serious, and good with words. It's just that I also think he's a rat-faced liar and a wretched president. So I voted for Dole.

Connie Morella is the incumbent congresswoman for the Maryland neighborhood we moved into this summer. She's the kind of Republican who votes with Clinton on partial-birth abortion. Her upscale constituents love her. They care about pocketbook issues, not social ones. A change in tax rates, they understand, might mean the crucial difference between remodeling your kitchen with a $3,500 Sub-Zero refrigerator and just scraping by. I thought about this for a moment. I voted against her.

But I still want a Sub-Zero refrigerator as much as the next guy, so I voted for the tax-cutting "Ficker Amendment" to our county's charter. I first became aware of Robin Ficker, the amendment's author, in 1986 at a Washington Bullets basketball game. I was seated 10 rows back from the visiting bench. Five rows in front of me was Ficker. All game long, through a megaphone, he hollered that New York Knicks center Patrick Ewing was an ape. And worse. Ewing is seven feet tall and must weigh three million pounds. Why he didn't reach around and kill his tormentor is beyond me. Maybe, during pre-game warmups, before I arrived, Ficker had shouted that Ewing was smart, serious, and good with words.

By eleven o'clock the night of the election, it was apparent that, once again, every one of my votes—even the ones for school board—had come a cropper. It's depressing, being a complete and constant loser. While the rest of the family soundly slept, I fished E.J.'s morning column out of the recycle bin and reread it. It was everything I remembered: intelligent, responsible, well-written. This time, though, for some reason, it made me want to puke.

David Tell

Strom Thurmond Keeps on Going

In "Why Strom Thurmond Will, and Ought To, Win" (Nov. 4), Andrew Ferguson confuses a man "worthy of fascination" with one worthy of reelection.

Ferguson concedes that Thurmond was a segregationist. But that's okay, we're told, because his politics were only "moderately disgusting." And, unlike many of his contemporaries, Thurmond was sober the whole time.

African Americans, no doubt, will be relieved to know that Thurmond's shameful 1948 presidential campaign may have been motivated by political calculations—his desire to run for Senate—and not genuine racism.

Ferguson tells us that Thurmond has never been accused of sexual harassment. But in the same paragraph we learn that "a couple of narrow escapes" from the Senate's president pro tempore have the women on another senator's staff afraid to ride alone in an elevator with him.

So while South Carolinians faced an important choice about who would represent them for the next six years, Ferguson is lost in a Tennessee Williams reverie, waxing nostalgic about the pre-civil-rights South, where men in white suits sitting in the lobbies of hotels cut deals "among the palmettos as ceiling fans wheeled lazily overhead."

If nothing else, Ferguson's apologia adds a new spin to the character issue. When it comes to our leaders, having character apparently isn't as important as being one.

Bart Acocella
Washington, DC

Reading Andrew Ferguson's article I recalled the one time I met this extraordinary man. Imprisoned in weekly meetings of an army reserve unit in 1958, Thurmond, then a general in the reserve, was presented to our unenthusiastic group as a special treat—a guest speaker.

After reading Thurmond's resume, the unit commanding officer introduced him by saying, "I now give you General *Sherman*!"

We broke up completely, but ol' Strom just got up there and gave his speech. To this day I wonder if he heard the gaffe.

Norman Brust
New York, NY

Good Fellas After All

James W. Tuttleton's "Dos Passos's America" (Nov. 4) pushed me over the edge. Is Tuttleton trying to preserve a falsehood? He writes: "The execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, anarchists who in a robbery had murdered a factory paymaster and guard, Dos Passos called 'judicial murder,' and he twice got himself arrested in protest against it."

The sources I have read suggest that "judicial murder" is indeed an accurate description of the death sentence. Judge Thayer, assured of their guilt because they were anarchists, was as prejudiced as possible; the evidence was insufficient to support the conviction. In 1977 Gov. Michael Dukakis issued a proclamation acknowledging the errors of the trial and clearing the names of the defendants.

Edward M. Williams
Lansdale, PA

Pac Bell Is No CCRI Foe

Heather Mac Donald's article "Why They Hate CCRI" (Oct. 26) misrepresented my comments and my company's position on the California Civil Rights Initiative.

Pacific Bell was neutral on the ballot measure. Mac Donald made it sound like our efforts to inform voters were designed to urge our employees to vote against the measure.

That is not true. We *did* make efforts to inform employees on many issues by bringing in speakers pro and con. We did this for CCRI, and we will continue to help our employees hear both sides of significant issues.

Mac Donald even quoted an employee's negative comment about our governor. Not only does that employee (now retired) have no recollection of saying it, the statement absolutely does not reflect the view of our company.

Anna Wong
Director, EEO, Affirmative Action and Diversity
Pacific Bell
San Ramon, CA

Heather Mac Donald responds:
My description of Pacific Bell's affirmative-action "education" campaign was taken virtually verbatim from Ms. Wong's and other workers' remarks to me. If Wong thinks that the campaign, as described, falsely conveys a pro-affirmative-action bias, perhaps she should reexamine it. As for the employee's memory lapse, it happens to the best of us.

Internet Promises

David Gelernter's piece "Less Surfing, More Learning" (Nov. 4) was a marvelous demolition of Clinton's promise that all fifth graders would be able to log on to the Internet by the year 2000. Three cheers for Gelernter's piece and all others that expose the vacuousness of Clinton's statements and policies.

There is a vast amount of evidence proving that American education is sliding into quicksand—thanks mainly to Clinton's education-union allies—but this most cynical and opportunistic of presidents just gives us Pollyanna rhetoric and absurd promises like guaranteed Internet access. To engage in craven political pandering while the dumbing down of American youth con-

tinues is simply despicable.

It is bad for a president to run interference for union or corporate special interests that merely want to plunder the taxpayer or consumer. But it is *depraved* for a president to assist special interests that damage the minds and futures of millions of children. Historians should write about Bill Clinton in tones of revulsion usually reserved for the likes of Nero.

GEORGE C. LEEF
EAST LANSING, MI

David Gelernter's piece is right on the money. Here in California, the techno-craze has Internet enthusiasts wailing that without Internet access in the classrooms, our children will be unprepared to compete in the 21st century. But California was the lowest-scoring state on the 1994 NAEP reading comprehension test for fourth graders. Talk about trying to run before you can walk.

Perhaps the investigators looking at DNC fund-raising should examine the connection between this harebrained scheme and Silicon Valley's enthusiastic endorsement of the Clinton-Gore ticket. The close ties between campaign contributions and the Clinton administration's policies show just how far a dollar will go when standards no longer matter.

KATHERINE POST
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

As for David Gelernter's commentary on the absurdity of universal Internet access for schools, the facts can hardly be disputed. Currently America is not educating its children for tomorrow. Access to the Internet does not provide an advantage over other, more traditional, teaching tools or methods. I concur with Gelernter: Entertainment is not within the purview of our schools.

KENT LASSMAN
ALEXANDRIA, VA

Dissing Dole in Art

Kevin Chadwick's art, depicting Bob Dole's face in an hourglass, on the Nov. 4 cover was offensive. I was appalled at THE WEEKLY STANDARD'S treatment of Dole, a decent man whom I truly admire.

ESTELLA BREITLER
AURORA, CO

Misled and Miffed

Regarding "Music Without the Words: The Torture of Writer's Block" (Nov. 4): How could the editors conspire with Joseph Epstein to condone such a misleading title? I expected an article about songwriters who have lost their knack. Surely there are many composers among your readership who are equally disappointed.

VINCENT W. FRANCO
ARLINGTON, VA

Good News for Ohio

Claudia Winkler's article "Outfoxing the Status Quo" (Nov. 4) is interesting in light of the smashing success of Republicans in the Ohio Assembly and, despite efforts of the AFL-CIO and the teacher unions, the reelection of Michael Fox to that body. As Winkler points out, Fox's efforts in the Cleveland public schools, though largely ignored by Republican strategists and bigwigs, have not been ignored by parents and voters who know their kids deserve something better than a pathetic 32 percent high school graduation rate.

If Republicans do not take the failure of inner-city schools seriously, they will be missing more than a chance to do some real good for America's future. They will be ignoring an issue that has real potential for loosening the stranglehold of teacher unions and the AFL-CIO on inner-city voters. Whether or not vouchers are the answer, Fox, by his ingenuity on the issue, has demonstrated his sticking power in Cleveland. Republicans should pay attention.

JULIE ANN KESSLER
CLAREMONT, CA

Quit Panting After Youth

I totally agree with the last paragraph of "Panting After Youth" by Edwin Diamond, Catherine Donaldson-Evans, and Leah Ginsberg (Nov. 11). It refers to the token political coverage of campaign issues foisted upon "Generation Xers," and, at 28, I suppose I am one. The point the article doesn't make is that almost all the political coverage, news shows, campaign ads, even the candidates' debates, which were aimed at the "older" audiences, were at least as token as the ones directed at my generation.

Watching this year's campaigns made me more than a little ill. To see such an obviously corrupt administration be reelected was thoroughly disgusting, but my disgust is more for the supposed "independent" general news media that ignore such corruption. When the public is given no compelling reason to vote for change, you can't blame them for being uninformed or maintaining the status quo. Shame on the Republican challenger who also did not provide the reasons, although he certainly knew of them and referred to them indirectly many times.

S. DAVID DOYLE
GAITHERSBURG, MD

the weekly Standard

We Lost! We Won!

The election results can be described and explained. Their practical effect can be logically predicted. But beyond that, it's difficult to make much of what happened last week. All year long, the two parties struggled mightily for control of the best-polling buzzwords. Somehow, along the way, no one managed clearly to ask American voters for a direct and important decision about anything. So they didn't make one. This year will melt seamlessly into next, most of the major players still in place—and in almost exactly the same relative positions. All talk of "mandates" rings hollow.

It rings most hollow, and comes predictably loudest, from President Clinton. No one is more responsible than he for our current politics of unmeaning. For two years now, Clinton has offered to beat any ideological price on whatever the nation might desire, and having so devalued himself—and his party's creed—to make the sale, he now fulsomely praises his customers' wisdom. "I was born in a summer storm to a widowed mother in a small town," the president said in his ridiculously self-dramatizing victory speech, and there is "no person in America tonight who feels more humble in the face of this victory than I do." Every child in America, he oozed, "deserves the main chance that I was given."

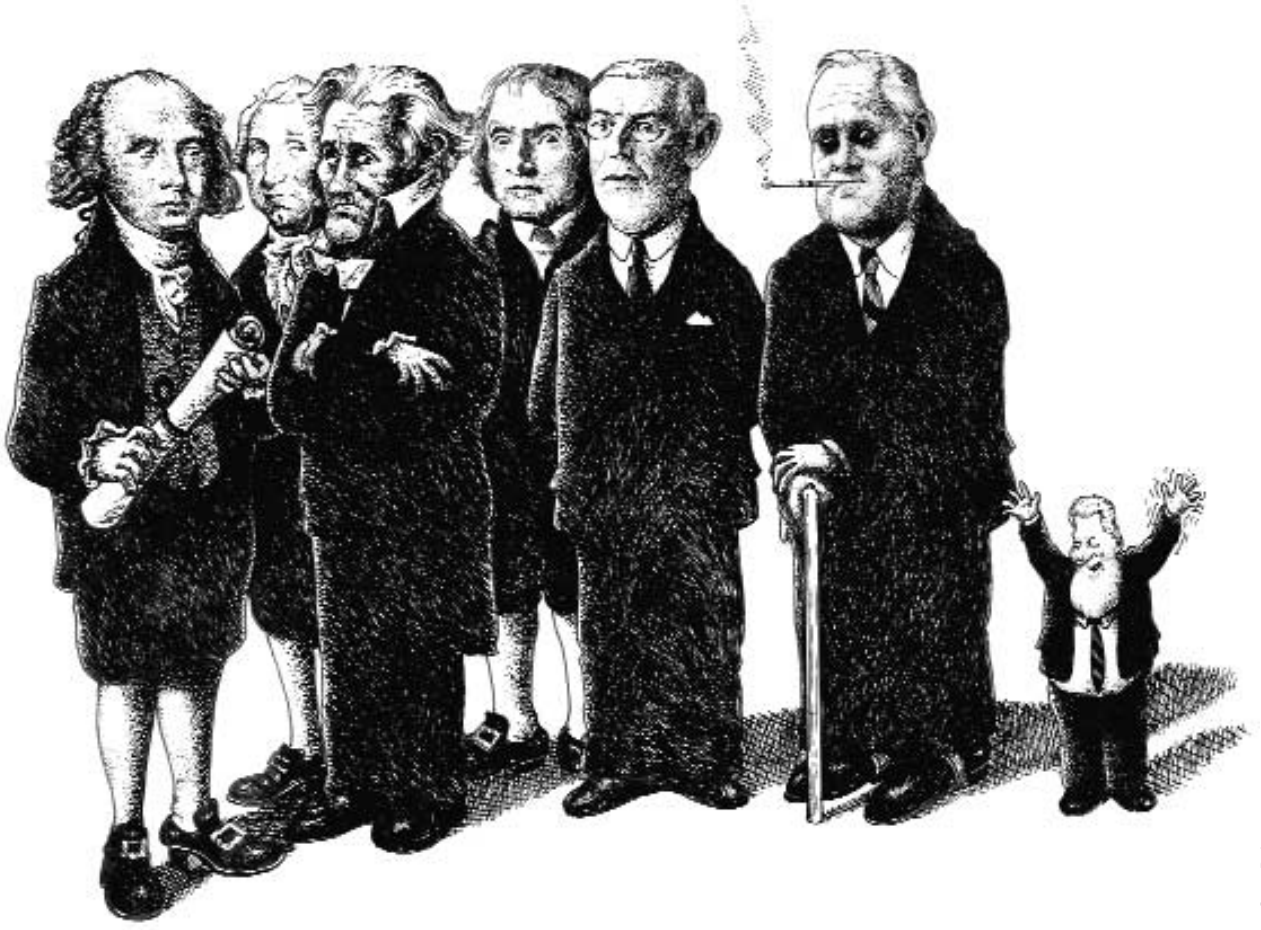
> AFTER A STATUS QUO ELECTION, ALL TALK OF "MANDATES" RINGS HOLLOW. IT RINGS MOST HOLLOW, THOUGH, WHEN IT COMES FROM CLINTON.

Indisputably, Bill Clinton is a man with an eye for the main chance. But he is in no way humble. The president believes himself to be a quality historical personality. Introducing him Election Eve, Vice President Gore mentioned Clinton, absent apparent embarrassment, in the same breath with Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Wilson, and FDR. Clinton, Gore said, carries "burdens of unimaginable weight." The president stays up "well after midnight" in the People's cause, "however difficult the challenge, however towering the obstacles, however long the odds." And for Clinton's reelection win, Gore announced with astonishing and unseemly cheek, "America is not just better off, it's *better*."

So the very goodness of the nation is certified by this election, the Clintonistas believe, and had Bob Dole become president, by logical corollary, our goodness would have been impeached. How, then, to explain the reelection, at the very same moment, by the very same voters, of what just yesterday Democrats called Bob Dole's brothers in darkness? Newt Gingrich, the antipode foil of the Clinton campaign, will return as speaker of a Republican House. Next year's Republican Senate majority will be *larger*.

The Republican party has had a remarkably bad year in 1996, half or more of its wounds self-inflicted. Speaker Gingrich is the most unpopular politician in America. His brave "revolution" is now associated in the public imagination with an obstinate and frightening attempt at Medicare reform. Credit for the 104th Congress's most notable achievements—welfare reform and domestic-spending reductions, for example—has been partly stolen, infuriatingly enough, by the president. And the entire Republican enterprise has suffered for months under the public-relations weight of the Dole campaign, which managed to win just 41 percent of the popular vote.

Under such circumstances, it is a tribute to the inexorable tidal pattern of partisan realignment that the Republican party in 1996 should have consolidated—and in some cases expanded—its historic 1994 mid-term gains. The GOP's House and Senate finishes were better than average for a year in which an opposing party's president is reelected. Its House freshmen, overcoming the targeted demagoguery of an AFL-CIO advertising campaign, were returned to office at a bet-



Sean Delonas

ter than average rate. Republicans retain 32 of the 50 governorships. They remain near parity in the state legislatures. And all things being equal, if nothing much changes, the normal electoral pattern, six years into a presidency, will produce a still more Republican America in 1998.

But *should* nothing much change these next two years? Should the GOP, having more than survived the near-death experience of 1996, now bank its advances and sit quietly still while American politics flies a slow, semi-conscious path to conservatism?

A tempting prospect, no doubt. After four years in office, the Clinton administration has produced what is arguably the most conservative domestic politics since the age of Eisenhower. And the gaseous, soufflé mandate Clinton claims for himself ("It is time to put politics aside, join together, and get the job done for America's future") is a barely disguised prescription for more of the same. The "vital center" of American politics (his phrase) remains, by bipartisan understanding, a few degrees to the right of current federal reality. Any significant near-term move to the left, no matter what, seems scarcely imaginable.

Bill Clinton cannot afford explicitly to acknowledge this truth, even as he is taking career-burnishing advantage of it. And the Republican party, chastened by recent experience, unsure how to manage its ideological base, and thinly populated with attractive national spokesmen, now seems similarly inclined to lower its voice. "We don't have to live in a world of confrontation," Speaker Gingrich observed, rather spiritlessly, after the election. "Let's see what [the president] has to say and see what he proposes," Majority Leader Trent Lott proposed, on behalf of an incoming Senate that appears even more conservative in makeup than the House.

As a revenge fantasy, this is undeniably delicious. Bill Clinton is ostentatiously reshuffling his administration. His new staff will be learning difficult jobs from scratch. They will have no substantive agenda to guide them. They will have precious little in the way of policy announcements to feed an irritable White House press corps. They will have burgeoning scandals and criminal investigations to worry about. Why *not* also let them stew a while in their own partisan juices? By the

way, Mr. President, what *about* Medicare?

The rope-a-dope is a smart and appropriate tactical posture for the GOP the next six months or so. And an unsatisfactory one if it lasts much longer than that, in our view—unsatisfactory on more than aesthetic grounds. The products of self-government are supposed to be purposeful, not automatic. If America is to be conservative, it should become so by deliberate decision, not by endlessly delayed default. Such decisions require debate. Such debates require the articulate, organized leadership of national political parties. At some point soon, if their majority-party status is to be secured, congressional Republicans will have to recover their post-1994 confidence and go back to full-scale work. Just as noisily. Only this time, better.

—David Tell, for the Editors

It's the Campaign, Stupid

No Excuses, No Alibis: Dole Lost It Himself

By Charles Krauthammer

The search is on among those who would learn nothing from history for the large, irresistible forces that made this an unwinnable election for the Republicans. There are none. The reason for the Republican defeat is to be found not in the economy, not in the opponent, not in the stars, but in the candidate. The most important fact about the 1996 presidential campaign for Republicans is that, but for Dole (and Kemp), it was winnable.

Now, one could at this point get a little metapolitical and blame the nominating process that gave us this candidate. Or blame the psychological inclination of Republicans, dating back 40 years, to nominate the next senior guy in line. But whether anyone else could have been chosen by the Republicans is a question best left to the metaphysicians. In this year, in this universe, Republicans chose Dole. And Dole lost it.

The inevitability theorists contend that no one could have won an election against an incumbent president enjoying 5.2 percent unemployment, 3 percent inflation, and 3 percent growth. Untrue. Exactly two years ago, at the midterm elections of 1994, economic conditions were nearly identical—5.6 percent unemployment, 2.7 percent inflation, 3 percent growth. Yet Clinton was decisively repudiated. Indeed, the entire ruling Democratic establishment was repudiated. Democrats were not just stripped of control of Congress, but humiliated by the defeat of dozens of incumbents, including the speaker of the House. Meanwhile, every one of the 177 Republican incumbents running for reelection to the House, Senate, or governorships won.

Economy is not destiny. True, with a weak economy even Dole might have beaten Clinton. But that is not saying much. Even with a strong economy, Clinton's support was always broad and thin. His tepid popularity cannot compare to the kind of enthusiastic backing that made, say, Reagan in 1984 or Johnson in 1964 truly unbeatable. Clinton enjoyed none of Reagan's reservoir of loyal personal support. And no one feels a sense of shared political mission with Clinton, the way so many did with Johnson in 1964.

Reagan spawned vast numbers of Reaganites. He created a whole class of voters known as Reagan Democrats. The only Clintonites in the country are the people who work for Clinton in the White House. Clinton never could get a majority of voters to pull the lever for him. Of the two-term presidents since FDR, Eisenhower was reelected with 56 percent of the vote, the other three (Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan) with right around 60 percent.

Yes, Clinton is one of the great natural politicians of our time, a consummate campaigner with an uncanny ability to extricate himself by guile and mendacity, as needed, from one self-inflicted disaster after another. Indeed, his ability this year actually to turn his reputation for personal sexual scandals to his own benefit stands as one the great feats of political jujitsu of all time.

By implying that any treatment of his financial or official misconduct (Whitewater, Travelgate, Filegate) was a species of "character attack," i.e., as ad hominem

as criticism of his sexual dalliances, he managed for months (till the Huang affair simply overloaded the circuits) to deflect a whole line of potentially devastating attacks on administration corruption.

It was a contemptible defense, but extremely effective. One almost has to admire its audacity, the sheer nervy skill of rendering out of bounds any questioning of the scandals of this most scandal-ridden administration since Nixon's. But two things need to be said about that slickness.

First, it was, and is, a response to a fundamental political weakness. It was desperation defense. It worked, but it reveals how vulnerable this candidacy really was, how deep were the suspicion, distaste, and distrust that Clinton was fending off.

Second, while it needed a compliant and complicit press to work, it also needed an inept and inarticulate opponent. It was Dole's—and Kemp's—job to make corruption an issue. It was not that hard to do. One merely had to confront Clinton's sleight-of-hand directly and draw a clear distinction between (a) sexual misconduct, which Dole could graciously have offered to declare out of bounds (although the very declaration would have served to highlight it, the kind of maneuver of which Clinton is a master) and (b) the abuses of power, nepotism, obstruction of justice, and selling of favors uncovered almost weekly in his administration.

In the last week of the campaign, Ross Perot delivered a series of highly pointed, coherent attacks on just this subject. Dole never came close to making the case. He would repeat the word trust in triplicate, holler "where's the outrage," declare himself a man of his word, and rest his case.

Perhaps the apotheosis of this tactical ineptitude occurred when the Huang-Indogate scandal erupted. This was a gift to Republicans. It came not from any effort by Dole but from revelations in the press. A functionary of a foreign conglomerate gets a high Commerce Department post with security clearance on sensitive trade matters. Later he is made a DNC

vice president for money-raking. And rake he does.

An Indonesian gardener gives $425,000 to the Democratic National Committee. Illegal South Korean gifts are uncovered. Money is raised and funds laundered in a Buddhist temple. How does Dole handle this golden opportunity handed to him just in time for the presidential debates?

Midway through a response to a question about political participation and voter turnout, he mouths a tortured aside, a string of disconnected nouns—Indonesia, rich people, *L.A. Times*, 250,000 dollars—offered up in a syntactical mess that even insiders had trouble deciphering. And the most important phrase—"Democratic National Committee," the destination of all this funny money, the source of this corruption—never made it into Dole's aside at all.

But Dole did not satisfy himself with incomprehensibility. A few days later, just as interest was mounting in the Huang affair, Dole changed the subject. In a move that the Clinton campaign could only have dreamed of, he delivered a speech on campaign-finance reform.

This was sheer madness. Instead of making the issue the laws that Clinton had already broken, Dole was proposing new laws. And it not only changed the subject. It provided the Democrats with an instant counterpunch. They rushed onto the airwaves with an ad correctly pointing out that Dole had, in fact, resisted campaign finance reform for years.

Instantly, the issue of Democratic corruption was turned into an issue of Dole hypocrisy. If the press hadn't carried on with its further investigations of the Huang affair, the issue would have died completely. Finally, under pressure not from Dole but from the press, Clinton had to address the question in a speech on the eve of the election. Naturally, he too proposed campaign finance reform. It took the *Washington Post* editorial page to point out the sheer audacity of Clinton's maneuver. Dole could not manage it.

A final flourish of tactical incompetence occurred

in the waning days of the campaign with Dole's desperate attempt to get Perot to abdicate the race in his favor. There was not a chance in the world that Perot was going to do this. There was every chance in the world the story would leak and embarrass Dole.

The story leaked. Dole was embarrassed. But far more important than embarrassment was the fact that Dole had thus created yet another distraction. At a time when Dole was desperately trying to make an impression on the national consciousness as the alternative for those still uncomfortable with Clinton, Dole's maladroit maneuver gratuitously resurrected Perot's candidacy. Heretofore, Perot's infomercials and speeches had been totally ignored. He had been excluded from the debates. He was at 3 percent in the polls and going nowhere.

Dole's spurned entreaty did not just get Perot several days of coverage. It forced the press to treat him for the rest of the campaign as a serious candidate. After all, Dole had. He succeeded in conferring upon Perot's candidacy a legitimacy that had eluded it for months. The rest of the race was treated as three way, helping Perot climb from 3 percent to an 8 percent finish. That 5 percent represented lots of people fleeing Clinton. They had been given an alternative place to park their protest—by Dole.

A more fundamental problem with Dole's campaign was that he was too worldly to take it seriously. For Clinton, campaigning is life; governing is the price he has to pay to keep doing it. For George Bush, campaigning was a chore; for a man whose previous posts had almost all been appointive, campaigning was an exceptionally clumsy and common appointment process, grubby business to be gotten out of the way.

For Dole, campaigning, like politics, was a game, yet another of the political arts, most of which he is good at. Unlike Bush, Dole did not despise the game. He was at once amused and puzzled by it. He could not quite figure it out. But figure and muse and talk about it he did plenty.

His penchant for referring to himself in the third person was more than a rhetorical tic; it was a true reflection of his approach to running. He was detached. He stood outside his own campaign. Rather than engaging in it, he appeared to be observing. He became a commentator on his own campaign, an ironic critic.

The irony was deadly. For example, after months of to-ing and fro-ing on the California Civil Rights Initiative, the anti-racial-preference referendum, he finally decided with a few days left in the campaign to come out strongly in favor. Asked why by a TV reporter, he answered, "It is an important issue, a wedge issue."

Now, "wedge issue" is what Democrats call a controversy that they would prefer not to have discussed because most people oppose it for good reason. After all, any issue that divides people—i.e., any political issue of any consequence—might be called a wedge issue. But Democrats never call, say, the minimum wage a wedge issue even though it certainly places a wedge between employer and employee. Issues that prove awkward for their own racial or feminist constituencies, Democrats invariably stigmatize as "wedge."

And now Dole, the commentator, proceeds to endorse that stigmatization. He both tacitly accepts the Democratic characterization of CCRI as an illegitimate issue designed to win votes by creating "division" and reveals his own deep ambivalence about affirmative action. His ironic endorsement of CCRI did not help Dole a bit in California, where he lost big (by 13.5 points). Indeed, its main effect was to hurt CCRI. By the end, CCRI proponents were begging the Republicans to stay out of their campaign.

This was no isolated slip. Dole spent much of the campaign musing about whether he ought to make certain issues into issues. The predictable result was to undermine whatever stance he finally took.

First, there was the tax cut. Dole publicly agonized for weeks whether or not to go for it, thus focusing attention not on the economics of the question but on the psychology and the politics: Was this reach for an un-Dole-like cut a sign of faithlessness and opportunism? These were not questions invented by the press. They were questions Dole put to himself and then broadcast—thus detracting totally from the substance of the issue.

And here was an issue ready-made: a president who had gone back and forth on middle-class tax cuts at least three times since 1992 and who was now shamelessly proposing a balanced budget as if he had invented it—after having fiercely resisted it for three years. Yet Dole's Hamlet-like behavior on taxes managed to turn the tax issue into this: Had Dole betrayed 30 years of principle on balanced budgets by now proposing a supply-side tax cut?

The most famous of Dole's self-immolations, however, occurred on the "character issue." For weeks Dole fretted publicly about the propriety of raising the question. Publicizing its own internal debates, Dole's staff managed to produce weeks of headlines on the theme "Will Dole make character an issue?" No Clinton strategist could have devised a more effective way

Michael Ramirez

to deflect debate from the central weakness of Clinton's candidacy.

Would Dole go negative? Should Dole do negative? That was the story. After weeks of temporizing, Dole did finally do a bit of flailing on "character." But by that time, the country had grown so weary of his musings, so cynical about the revelations that had gone uncommented upon, that he had lost the issue. After Democrats had poured tens of millions of dollars throughout the first half of 1996 into devastating negative campaign ads against Dole and the Republicans, Dole managed with his own waffling to highlight and delegitimize his own few pathetic stabs at "negativity." Polls showed that by a huge margin voters thought Dole's campaign more negative than Clinton's. True, press bias encouraged this misperception. But Dole's own actions, his trumpeted ambivalence and misgivings, created the misperception in the first place.

Dole's reluctance to go on the offensive had deep roots. He had come out of the '76 campaign characterized as a hatchet man. He seemed intent this time on undoing that image. At times it seemed as if undoing that image was more important than winning this election. One can understand the Dole campaign's spending the first few months trying to establish the warmth and humanity of the candidate. That is standard campaign tactics. Warm and fuzzy was the theme, indeed the purpose, of that orgy of feeling in San Diego.

But this defensiveness, this compulsion to prove at every turn that Dole was not the monster that the press and Democratic "Dole/Gingrich" commercials had made him out to be, never stopped. In the first presidential debate, for example, Clinton savagely attacked Dole's Medicare proposals as leading to one calamity after another. Dole rebutted not one detail. His response was this: His mother had been on Medicare, he loved his mom, and he thus would never do anything to hurt her. QED.

This was not just a reflection of Dole's inability to engage Clinton intellectually. It was also a reflection of the fundamental defensiveness of his whole campaign. Dole proceeded to recall with pride his days in Kansas signing welfare checks. A campaign that should have been about Clinton's probity became a campaign about Dole's decency. In the end, Dole won on decency. And lost the election.

Dole did, however, have one huge handicap in trying to focus the campaign on Clinton's character: his running mate. Jack Kemp declared that questioning character was beneath his dignity—and beneath Dole's, to boot, thus making it even more difficult for Dole to raise the issue.

It should have been Kemp's job to highlight, relentlessly, the scandals and corruption of this administration. That is not beneath a vice-presidential candidate. That is his job. Al Gore found it not at all difficult to attack the flip-flops, the inconsistencies, the duplicity, everything he could about Bob Dole.

Clinton's ethics were certainly a legitimate issue. And had Kemp made the case, he would have spared Dole—with his palpable ambivalence and agonizing ineffectiveness—the ordeal of having to make it himself. But Kemp preferred to talk about capital-gains taxes. He preferred to indulge himself by campaigning in hopelessly Democratic precincts, in barrios and black churches—appearances that could bring no benefit to Dole's electoral chances, but much to Kemp's

amour propre and standing in the liberal media.

The campaign Kemp conducted was a disgrace. He not only refused to go on the attack, but, in his one performance before a national audience, did not lift a finger in defense of Dole. It was an act of deep disloyalty to the man who had rescued him from oblivion.

Given the vulnerability of the incumbent, a more tactically adept challenger could have won this year. But Dole's deepest failing was not tactical—it was strategic, one might even say philosophical. He had only the most tenuous hold on the conservative idea. The great irony of this campaign is that, in a country where the ideological tide is running inexorably to the right, the party of the right is unable to nominate a candidate who can articulate its ideas.

Clinton could. After the debacle of 1994, he moved relentlessly to the right on welfare, on school choice, on V-chips, on teen curfews, on school uniforms. Meanwhile, Dole could not rouse himself in the first presidential debate even to raise such issues as affirmative action and partial-birth abortion.

Instead, Dole ran on character, his character. He ran as the heir to the ideologically bereft Gerald Ford and George Bush. He had offered, in one particularly comical encounter with Republican faithful, to be Ronald Reagan if they really wanted him to. But he couldn't. He did not understand nor could he articulate the simplest conservative idea.

"The bottom line, in retrospect, is this was not a winnable race," said John Buckley, Dole's communications director, on Election Night. Nonsense. Clinton had two huge vulnerabilities. His character, for all of his charm, was deeply distrusted. And his ideology, for all his dissimulation, was the more liberal. He was beatable on either count. Dole simply could not make the case. ♦

The Inevitable Clinton Victory

By Fred Barnes

Was President Clinton's defeat of Bob Dole inevitable? Absolutely. It's the one thing that at least some Dole aides and nearly everyone advising the president agreed on by the end of the presidential campaign. Indeed, both now figure a Clinton win had been inevitable for months. The president's men give Clinton a large chunk of the credit for this. He'd cleverly moved to the right, ambushed congressional Republicans in last winter's budget battle, embraced conservative social values, and emerged as a poised ceremonial leader in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing. "That essentially did it for us," a Clinton adviser says. "Nothing much changed from early spring on." For most of the campaign, Dole aides thought a Clinton win was anything but inevitable. But some of them have come around. "The bottom line is, in retrospect, this was not a winnable race," John Buckley, communications director of the Dole campaign, told the *Washington Post*.

We all should have known this from the start. In a period of peace and prosperity—such as now—an incumbent president is all but certain to be reelected. It's that simple. The president doesn't have to have been responsible for creating either peace or prosperity. Those merely have to exist on his watch. Is this unfair? Not really. If voters ousted a president who was identified with good times and didn't seem bent on triggering bad times, that would hardly be a victory for stability or continuity. But the point is, the verdict of a majority of voters is based on what they've experienced. Something more than a scandal is required to trump their experience: No president in the 20th century failed to win reelection because of a scandal. So forget about Whitewater, Travelgate, Filegate, Indogate, etc.

On top of peace and prosperity, Clinton presided over a period when national optimism broke out. Conservatives were surprised by this—I was—because they aren't especially optimistic at the moment. Dole's answer was to declare himself the most optimistic man in America. No one believed him. After a dark period, real people became hopeful. For the first time in five years, more Americans felt the country was headed in

the right direction than felt the opposite. A large number of Americans believed their personal financial situation had improved since 1992. In the network exit poll on Election Day, a majority said the national economy is in good shape. Business confidence is also up.

All this meant there was nothing Dole could do to win the election. The outcome was out of his hands. He was beyond the help of strategists and consultants. Fine-tuning his campaign wasn't enough. True, if an earth-shattering event, some calamity for America, had occurred, Clinton would have been vulnerable. But Dole couldn't produce anything like that. Or if the public had come to believe Clinton was way, way out of whack with them on matters of policy and ideology, Dole might have had a shot. Clinton made sure that wasn't possible by repositioning himself to the right. This is precisely what congressional Democrats failed to do in 1994, which explains why they lost the House and Senate despite peace and prosperity.

Clinton was lucky, for sure. He hit the economic cycle right, avoiding a recession in his first four years. Nothing was more important than this because nothing poisons an administration like a recession. Absent a recession, George Bush would have won reelection in 1992. Absent a recession *and* a national catastrophe (the Iran hostage crisis), Jimmy Carter would have triumphed over Ronald Reagan in 1980. Absent Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson wouldn't have dropped out in 1968. Absent the Korean War, Harry Truman probably would have run again in 1952.

The list of presidents who've won reelection without both peace and prosperity has no names on it. But look at the roster of those who ran for a second term when both prevailed. Reagan got 59 percent of the vote in 1984. Richard Nixon was reelected with 61 percent in 1972. After succeeding John Kennedy, Johnson got 61 percent in his bid for a full presidential term in 1964. Dwight Eisenhower won with 56 percent in 1956. Harry Truman won narrowly in 1948, proving that peace and prosperity matter more than personal popularity and charisma (Truman had neither) when an incumbent seeks reelection.

Prof. Allan J. Lichtman of American University has developed a formula, based partly on peace and prosperity, for predicting whether an incumbent party wins reelection to the White House. He concluded a year ago that Clinton's reelection was inevitable and indeed wrote that in his book, *The Keys to the White House*. "This was an incumbent president seeking reelection with a united party at a time of prosperity at home when there was no calamity abroad comparable to the hostage crisis and when the nation was relatively tranquil at home," he says. "Incumbent presidents just don't lose historically under those conditions. No one ever has." Lichtman said his confidence was slightly shaken when the McDougals, Clinton's business associates, were convicted last summer. "It looked like something [more] might be coming out of the special prosecutor's office," he says. When nothing did, the inevitability of Clinton's reelection was restored.

The Lichtman formula is based on thirteen keys. When five or fewer are negative, the incumbent party wins. Clinton had exactly five negatives: His party, shellacked in 1994, lacked a mandate. There was serious third-party competition. Clinton had achieved no major policy changes. He'd managed no foreign-policy success. And he lacked national-hero status or towering charisma. So the eight positive keys controlled: Clinton faced no primary contest. He was the incumbent. The economy didn't fall into a recession during election year. Long-term economic growth was better than the average growth for the previous two presidential terms. There was no sustained social unrest. The administration was "untainted" by a "major" scandal. (Lichtman has critics on this one, but I agree that for whatever reasons the Clinton scandals didn't reach "major" proportions. Had White House aides or the Clintons been indicted, that would have been major.) He had no foreign-policy catastrophe. And his challenger was not charismatic or a national hero.

There's an argument that since Clinton got less than 50 percent of the vote, he was beatable. Not so. If Ross Perot hadn't run, Clinton undoubtedly would have topped 50 percent. In any case, the fact that he won despite flaws underscores the fact that peace and prosperity are controlling. Clinton didn't have much else. He's widely distrusted. His personal life is not admirable. His administration has been schizophrenic. And while the Clinton scandals were small, they were numerous. More often than not, Clinton doesn't appear presidential. Yet he won.

Would a better-run campaign than Dole's have had a chance? I don't think so. In truth, this was the best campaign Dole was capable of mustering. His debate performances, while hardly masterful, were far better than anything he'd done in the primaries. And if Dole couldn't beat Clinton, who could? Not Jack Kemp. We now know his weaknesses as a national candidate. Colin Powell? He'd have split the GOP and might have turned out to be poor campaigner. Richard Cheney? He's capable, but hardly the charismatic figure needed. Bill Bennett? Reluctant candidates never make good candidates. Lamar Alexander? Come on. Okay, Ronald Reagan might have beaten Clinton, but he wasn't available.

Nor was there an issue that might have catapulted Dole or another Republican challenger over Clinton. Dole could have done better in touting his tax cuts, but there's no history of proposed tax reductions transforming a race in time of prosperity. That happens in bad economic times. Had Dole pounded the issue of partial-birth abortion, that would have helped among Catholic voters, who rejected Dole massively. But neither it nor other social issues would have made up the 8-point deficit by which Dole lost. Earlier emphasis on character might also have been smart, but most people knew about Clinton already. They care about Clinton's character. They just care more about peace and prosperity. ♦

The Value-Free GOP

By John Podhoretz

In 1996, Republican party candidates took little or no credit for their legislative accomplishments, feared the label "extremism," began describing themselves as full of "common sense," and finally maintained their control of the House and Senate by going on the attack against their Democratic rivals in any way they could in the final two weeks of the campaign. Newt Gingrich trashed his millionaire opponent for paying hourly teenage employees the minimum wage—an election-year conversion for a man who fancies himself a conviction politician and surely still believes the minimum wage is a foolish and destructive economic policy, particularly for teenagers.

But Gingrich was just following the dominant trend in this year's Republican campaigns: He sought to de-ideologize himself and his election. Those were Bob Dole's instincts too. Dole chafed against his own pro-life stance and refused to make a major issue out of partial-birth abortion, or school choice, or gay marriage. He finally saw the light on the California Civil Rights Initiative in the last two weeks, but then, terminal patients are willing to try any wild idea in search of a miracle cure.

Dole did, however, go for a tax cut, while Gingrich toted around an ice bucket to symbolize the kinds of congressional reforms he had supervised in the previous two years. These are important policy matters, to be sure. But they are insufficient. The two most important figures in the Republican party this year did nothing—*nothing*—to connect these issues to what really matters, especially in presidential elections. Tax cuts and ice buckets are all well and good (tax cuts particularly), but they speak to worldly concerns—like economic growth, a slightly higher living standard, the efficiencies and petty corruptions of public service. They say little about higher and more fundamental concerns. They do not answer questions about the spiritual health of the nation. They do not address the ominous sense we all have that Americans are, with every intake of breath, unconsciously inhaling a philosophy that stresses individual pleasure over individual responsibility; that our capacity to be our best selves is weakening; and that if we have grown weak, what in God's name will today's children be like when they assume the burdens of adulthood?

Bill Clinton built his reelection campaign on these questions. And as Republicans watched in baffled amazement, the man reviled as a draft-dodging philanderer and inveterate dissembler got to the right of the GOP on questions of morality. He transmuted worries about children's physical health—tobacco, unsafe drinking water—into a display of concern about their spiritual well-being. He talked about the literacy of eight-year-olds. He knit together ideas about responsibility and community. He sought passage of a measure to make it easier for parents to keep their kids from watching TV shows they think inappropriate. To express both his disgust at their flight from responsibility and his dislike of weaponry, the president announced that he would prevent deadbeat dads from owning guns.

It's all blather, of course. Smoking is a medical problem, *not* a problem of the soul. There is no tap-water crisis. Children are already supposed to be fully literate by the age of eight, but aren't because the union-controlled schools Clinton treats as sacrosanct are a scandal. The V-chip won't work. The "deadbeat dads and guns" business is a cynical synthesis of focus-group research. But in a moral landscape so parched, Clinton's values pitch was the only one made in 1996. Some say this was a peace-and-prosperity election, and it may have been, but peace and prosperity weren't the

only things—or even the main things—Clinton talked about. He talked about *values*.

I was taught to dislike the word "values" by my teacher Allan Bloom, who explained it was a subversive way of reducing absolute truths to mere cultural biases. The fact that it has become the substitute word for "virtues" or "morality" suggests the spiritual poverty of this cultural moment. Be that as it may, the Republican party was supposed to be the party of values—not just family values, but values more broadly defined.

The GOP assumed that mantle with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. The smug and superior attitude of American liberalism was dealt a crushing blow in that decade when Reagan became the most public advocate of Western values—for freedom against tyranny, and for the sanctity of life under law. It is common wisdom to think Reagan won the election of 1980 with the question, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" But Reagan's question was not only about the economy; it was about the feeling that totalitarianism was on the move, that Jimmy Carter had lost faith in the American people, that the country was going to hell for many more reasons than stagflation and oil shocks. It, too, was about *values*.

The leading lights of the Republican party have been fleeing values for four years now. The Republican party's failure to place the 1996 election in a broader and more resonant context did not happen by accident. I am not referring to voters here but to the party's apparat, both elected officials and unelected bureaucrats—the Republican National Committee and its staff and the legion of consultants who have taken the behind-the-scenes roles once played by party bosses in smoke-filled rooms.

The first indication of the party's fear of values came in the aftermath of the 1992 Republican convention in Houston. I could go into detail about how poll data demonstrate the convention was not the disaster everyone said it was at the time (Bush fared no worse from it than Dole did from the universally praised if stomach-turning 1996 convention), but that doesn't matter. What matters is that the party apparat thought it a disaster; indeed, the apparat sought to pin the blame for Bush's defeat on the "hijacking" of the party by Pat Buchanan's supposedly "divisive" talk of a "culture war."

Now, I am not an admirer of the Buchanan speech. Its bitter talk about "taking the country back block by block" was a grotesque caricature of a serious and important idea about reclaiming lost ideals and ways of life. But Buchanan at least does not wish to be loved by those who naturally loathe him. The GOP apparat does. Mary Matalin talks lovingly in her book *All's Fair* about the *Washington Post*'s Ann Devroy, known for her bitchy and ad hominem coverage of the Bush White House. Gingrich's press secretary sups and kids around with the leftist journalist Sidney Blumenthal and calls Blumenthal his friend; Blumenthal detests conservatives and Republicans so much he would laugh and sing if Blankley were suddenly hauled off to jail.

Of course people on opposite sides of the political spectrum can be friends, but by definition, enemies can't be friends. The apparat sought approval from people who believed, and told the world, that the Republican party had become hostile, intolerant, and a force for ill in America. Why? Because Dan Quayle dared to say that it was wrong for a TV sitcom to make light of illegitimacy. Because people who believe that abortion is murder wouldn't somehow sit down and shut up and stop making people feel bad for doing it.

Eight days after Bush left the White House, the Republican National Committee descended on St. Louis's Union Station to choose a new party chairman.

The RNC is not what you think it is—it's made up of 165 people, three from each state organization and a few territories. And they are not, to put it mildly, a bunch of Christians sitting around plotting to make snake-handling and glossolalia the state religion, while some supply-siders huddle in the corner showing each other a napkin with the Laffer Curve on it autographed by Laffer himself. They are mostly party hacks, the kind of people who have 15 handwritten notes apiece from George Bush hanging in their living rooms.

There were three serious candidates for chairman that year—Spence Abraham (now a senator from Michigan), John Ashcroft (now a senator from Missouri), and Haley Barbour. They are all pro-life, but Barbour had the advantage of being less passionate on the subject than Abraham and Ashcroft. Barbour won because the committeemen and women recognized themselves in him—a longtime political hack with exceptional skills for whom the Republican party was more akin to a team than a cause. In his first press conference as chairman, right there in Union Station, he told those of us in the room that he subscribed to the idea that the GOP was a big tent with room in it for people of all views.

There's a reason conservatives are offended by the idea of the "big tent": It's an offensive idea. Of course a bigger tent is better than a smaller one when you're talking about a political party. But a "tent" has no value in itself. Only what happens inside the tent mat-

ters. When Barbour and others talk about the "big tent," they are sending a signal that the Republican party is unwilling to take on the task of winning people over to conservative ideas, to figure out how ideological concerns can best be translated into public policy and public relations.

For example, the avoidance of values-talk these past four years has primarily been a means of avoiding the issue of abortion. But it is manifestly untrue that abortion is too divisive an issue for the party to use to its advantage, even if it is done well and carefully. Ronald Reagan and George Bush were pro-life; there is no evidence that their stand hurt them. Indeed, we know in the case of Reagan that it may have *helped* him even among those who are not pro-life. One of the qualities people most admired about Reagan is that he stood up for what he believed, even if they disagreed with him and particularly if his stand appeared lonely and unpopular.

That is a truth other politicians can learn from (assuming, of course, that they believe in something, anything, which many of them don't). This isn't just a matter of ideology. In a world in which people increasingly describe themselves as "conservative" without really knowing what the word means, the party that defines "conservatism" best is the party that will hold the key to the future.

Define conservatism the GOP did after taking over Capitol Hill in 1995. But it did so almost entirely in economic and managerial terms. The Contract With America is a document primarily about government: its interference in the economy, the way it takes too much money from the American people and small businesses and big businesses and exempts itself from the laws everybody else must follow. Lawyers and liberal cabinet departments and agencies are bad; defense spending and a balanced budget are good. Again, I agree with all this, but the Contract is more notable for what is missing: *values*. The Republican party comes together to stand not for a capacious moral vision, but for libertarianism. Ralph Reed and the Christian Coalition, who appear in Democratic nightmares as a puppetmaster pulling the strings of the American government, were rewarded with only one section of one item out of the ten in the Contract. Guess what it was? A tax cut (or more precisely, a $500 per-child tax credit).

Values-talk was barely spoken in 1995 by senior party officials. The only memorable remark came from Gingrich, when he blamed liberalism for the horrifying incident in which a pregnant mother was slashed and her nearly-born baby untimely ripped from her womb. He had previously blamed liberalism for Susan Smith's murder of her own toddlers and had said Woody Allen's affair with his teenage stepdaughter was somehow representative of the Democratic party. To put it mildly, Gingrich is not very good at values-talk.

For his part, Dole seemed to think Clinton's lack of values was so blatant that the values-hungry American people would turn to him, exemplar of what it means to sacrifice for your country. But the point about values-talk that neither Gingrich nor Dole could grasp is that it cannot be personal. Values are, by definition, abstract. They deal with matters higher and more enduring than the flaws or evils of individuals (even presidents). The purpose of talking about values is that it is supposed to resonate with voters, to give them a sense that you are on their side, and to lead them to ask the questions you want them to ask *on their own*.

If Dole had decided to make a case for a more honest, more decent, more civil culture—instead of making the case for himself as a more honest, more decent, more civil man than Clinton—people might have come independently to understand the ways in which a president's character does affect how they feel about their country and what their children need to learn about lying and getting away with it. Dole was misguided to tell voters to vote for him because he was a better man for a better America. That slogan smacks of vanity, and we all recognize vanity is a human weakness. The naked expression of it suggested that Dole was not nearly as good a man as he was claiming to be.

If the GOP continues to avoid values-talk in Dole's aftermath, if it continues to make itself the party of the wallet instead of the party of the soul, it will be placing all its hopes for the future on the Democratic party's capacity for misbehavior and on the business cycle. Maybe the Democrats will revert to the old-style liberalism Americans properly detest. Maybe Clinton's deceits will become so undeniable in the second term that the nation will turn away in revulsion from his party. Maybe the economy will go into a deep recession. These calamities could very well happen.

Even if they do, over the longer run a successful party has to be more than the beneficiary of its opponents' mistakes. An often courageous opposition to liberalism has brought Republicans into the majority in Congress and set the stage for a realignment that is not merely political but philosophical as well. But as this most recent campaign showed, mere opposition to liberalism is no longer enough. Nor are tax cuts, deregulation, and character issues. The Republican party will fail, and fail soon, if it does not find the fortitude and the wit to speak to the American people about the truths that matter most. ♦

Too Much Too Soon:
Newt Gingrich and the 104th Congress

By Matthew Rees

To appreciate the ways in which the political landscape has been altered since Republicans took control of Congress two years ago, consider the ways in which the Democratic party has changed in the past four years. Before 1994, Democrats on Capitol Hill actively sought a $265 billion tax increase and the Clinton health-care plan. And after 1994? House minority leader Dick Gephardt trumpeted the release of a political agenda for the future a few months ago. It was called "Families First" and proved to be a hodgepodge of minor proposals. There were no calls for tax hikes or spending increases; instead, this imitation Contract With America endorsed Republican ideas like business tax relief. "People don't want big government solutions," declared the party of big government.

And what would Democrats have done if they had taken control of Congress last week? "I don't see any legislation we would attempt to undo," Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle said before the election. No? What about repealing the anti-gay-marriage law? Changing welfare-reform legislation? Restoring at least some of the New Deal farm programs ended this year? Republicans succeeded in making $53 billion worth of discretionary spending cuts during the last Congress; surely the Democrats want some of that money back. Not according to Gephardt: "We're all New Democrats now," he said a few months ago. Daschle agrees: "This president and the Democratic leadership in Congress have learned that comprehensive approaches to longstanding problems are not likely to succeed, and are not necessarily advisable," he told the *New York Times* before last week's election. "We believe in the incremental approach."

If that's true, it's a lesson they learned from watching the many mistakes House Republicans made after taking control in January 1995. The first 100 days of the 104th Congress told the tale. The months went by in a frenetic blur; there were late nights and screaming fights on the House floor and contentious Gingrich press conferences every morning, all of it live and in living color on C-SPAN. And the House passed new law after new law: Nine of the ten Contract With America items were passed. Congressional reform one week; a ban on imposing expensive mandates on state governments the next. A massive overhaul of the American tort system one month; a $353 billion tax cut the next. It was dizzying and confusing. There was no time for much of a case to be made on behalf of any of these items, some of which were highly technical. Deceitful Democratic counterspin was easier to understand (and more appealing to a credulous media): *Republicans were taking food from children's mouths by cutting school lunches. The tax cut favored the rich. Newt and the rest were greasing the skids for big business by making lawsuits harder to file.* And who was out there selling the Contract besides Gingrich in those edgy press conferences? The *Washington Times*. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page. Rush Limbaugh and other talk-radio hosts, who spent weeks trying to beat back the Democratic spin to little effect.

"We spent too much time legislating and not enough time politicking," says a senior GOP House aide. He believes that if the Republicans had 1995 to do over again, they would schedule the Contract votes over a year-long period, to emphasize each bill and spend more time taking credit for each achievement.

Even conservative activists like Grover Norquist now acknowledge that "you can't do everything in two years."

Yet energized by their takeover of Congress, the Republican revolutionaries acted as if these would be the only two years they would ever hold a majority. Such zeal was occasionally admirable, and sometimes inspirational, but it also produced a number of costly political blunders.

A strange thing happened during the forced march of the 100 days: Washington Republicans were so focused on getting the Contract through the House that they literally forgot it takes two houses of Congress to get legislation to the president, and it takes a president's signature to make it law. On two separate occasions, as the tax bill and the tort bill finally secured enough votes for passage in the House despite early signs that Republicans were fearful of them, people working behind the scenes burst into applause before a small voice in the room reminded them that the bills had to get through the Senate. (The tax bill

went nowhere. A sliver of the tort-reform bill passed and was signed into law by Clinton.)

A Senate Democratic leadership aide pinpoints the chamber's debate over regulatory reform in the summer of 1995 as the time Republican momentum really began to slow. The House had passed a bill that addressed complaints from business groups about government regulations. It passed easily, even though moderate House Republicans were queasy about it and warned the leadership that some of the provisions were misguided and politically dangerous. At the same time, a spate of news stories came out detailing the key roles lawyers and lobbyists played in drafting the legislation.

When the bill went to the Senate, it ran into a roadblock. Democrats and their interest-group allies skillfully and shamelessly waged a scare campaign about the potentially disastrous effects of the legislation, invoking the specter of an E. coli epidemic. As Senate Republicans weakened the bill in search of a deal, tensions erupted with their House counterparts. Though the bill never passed, so many of the proposals struck at workplace issues—such as a reduction in the budget of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration—that the AFL-CIO was emboldened to launch its $35 million advertising campaign against the Republican majority in the House.

The Senate's failure to pass regulatory reform, as well as many other parts of the House's ambitious agenda, was a source of constant frustration and irritation for House Republicans. Aides on both sides say the lines of communication between the two chambers were never as close as they should have been. In meetings with his colleagues, Gingrich often invoked the restructuring experiences of Fortune 500 corporations as a model for Congress. It was an appealing, but flawed, model, overlooking the fact that corporations don't face obstacles equivalent to senators and a president.

Republicans really allowed their ambitious, good-small-government zeal to overtake political reality in their single-minded pursuit of a balanced budget. The effort began inauspiciously on February 15, 1995; the House had already passed a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget, and the Senate was still engrossed in debate. On that day, Gingrich declared he wouldn't consider any budget that didn't reach balance within seven years. (Why seven years? That was "the longest period in which you can maintain the discipline to insist on it happening," Gingrich said. How did he know? "Intuition.")

This was a major announcement, but it turned out Gingrich not only failed to mention it to Bob Dole and Republicans in the Senate, he hadn't even talked about it with his own budget honchos, John Kasich and Bob Livingston. These committee chairmen—Kasich runs Budget, Livingston runs Appropriations—were dumbfounded by Gingrich's unilateral proclamation. They immediately warned Gingrich that boxing them in to a seven-year budget plan was a mistake. According to *Washington Post* reporters David Maraniss and Michael Weisskopf, Kasich presciently pointed out that such an effort would demand Medicare cuts "unlike any this town has ever seen before."

Livingston and Kasich later lined up behind Gingrich, but in retrospect it's clear Republicans took a huge and unnecessary gamble. The idea of a balanced budget is incredibly popular in the abstract, but the GOP's experience last year was a reminder of the pain involved in proposing dramatic spending cuts. And the remarkably square-shouldered decision by Republicans to be "honest" budgeteers—which meant accepting the economic assumptions of the pessimistic Congressional Budget Office—resurrected their age-old image as green-eyeshade accountants more interested in double-entry bookkeeping than economic growth.

Stephen Moore, director of fiscal policy studies at the Cato Institute, says the whole exercise was a mistake. He suggests that after the Senate failed to garner the two-thirds majority necessary to pass a constitutional amendment (the vote took place in March 1995), Republicans should have pursued a more modest effort at cutting spending and taxes while blasting vote-switching Democrats and the White House for opposing the amendment.

This isn't as silly as it sounds: The Contract didn't promise a balanced budget, only a vote on the amendment. In any case, the political advantage Republicans might have enjoyed from passing a balanced budget would have been blown out of the water by Bill Clinton's decision to endorse the idea of a balanced budget a few months later.

Once the Republicans walked into the balanced-budget trap, however, it was almost inevitable that their Boy Scout-like earnestness would be trumped by Democratic deceits. Take the proposal for Medicare reform. When it was first presented to GOP chairman Haley Barbour in February 1995, he strongly advised delaying action until after the presidential election. Barbour recognized the political sensitivity of scaling back spending on health care for the elderly. But he was rebuffed by Gingrich, who rightly saw Medicare as a budgetary time bomb but wrongly believed Medicare was not sacrosanct in the way Social Security was. "If we calmly and methodically execute, we're

going to do fine," Gingrich told Elizabeth Drew. "I mean, people are going to look back on this and say, 'That must have been easy.'"

Gingrich did do a masterful job of persuading powerful interest groups like the American Association of Retired Persons not to make a fuss about the proposed $270 billion in Medicare savings. He expended an inordinate amount of energy on getting reporters not to use the word "cut" to describe the savings since they were actually "reductions in the rate of increase." But it was hubristic to believe there would be little or no cost to taking on a popular entitlement.

At first, there was little response from voters, and Republicans thought they were really on to something. But they learned better in November, when it came time to pass an interim spending bill to keep the government running. House Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer insisted that a temporary increase in Medicare premiums be added to the bill for arcane government bookkeeping reasons. This gave Clinton the opening to veto the bill, which shut the government down for the first time. Gingrich wised up. He wanted to get rid of the premium increase almost immediately, but came under enormous pressure to keep it in from Republican freshmen enraged at Clinton's shameless milking of the shutdown (remember the closing of the Grand Canyon and Mount Rushmore?).

The more fundamental problem was the Republican negotiating strategy on the overall budget for 1996. The Republicans were so convinced of their righteousness and annoyed at Clinton's dissembling that they became ever more aggressive; they began with "no compromise" and moved quickly to "we'll close the government if we don't get what we want."

"If I were doing it all over again, we would consciously avoid the government shutdown," Gingrich recently told the *Washington Post*. "It was clearly a mistake." Still, before things turned sour, the GOP's obstinacy did yield some remarkable progress. Clinton began 1995 with no intention of supporting a balanced budget, advancing a proposal with $200 billion deficits for eternity. When Clinton's budget was brought to a vote in the Senate, not a single Democrat supported it.

Clinton later introduced a budget that would reach balance in 10 years and continued to move gradually toward the Republican position. On November 19, he said he would do what he and congressional Democrats had steadfastly maintained they would never do: agree to the Republican demand that any budget proposal reach balance by the year 2002, as judged by the Congressional Budget Office.

This was a monumental achievement and should have been credited as a victory for the GOP. But Republicans enjoyed no political advantage from pulling Clinton rightward; indeed, they were promptly declared the losers and by a 2-1 margin were blamed for the two government shutdowns. Gingrich now says he miscalculated in thinking Clinton would cave in to the Republicans and sign a balanced budget then and there. But that analysis is a miscalculation too: Clinton *did* support a balanced budget, just not the balanced budget Republicans wanted him to support. The real miscalculation was the failure of House and Senate Republicans to split the difference between the Clinton budget and the GOP budget, declare victory, and go home. The blame for this does fall squarely on the shoulders of Gingrich and the 73 freshmen (though even Bob Dole cautioned in September 1995 that "this will not be an autumn of compromise").

Gingrich's obduracy during the budget negotiations is forgivable—the administration's conduct really was appalling throughout—but that can't be said of the weird mistake he made on November 15 with an improvised remark that probably did the greatest long-term damage to him and his party. At a breakfast with reporters, Gingrich foolishly revealed that he had sent the White House a "tougher" interim spending bill than he had originally thought he would, out of pique. Clinton had refused to negotiate on the flight back from the Yitzhak Rabin's funeral, Gingrich said, and then made Republicans exit out the back door of Air Force One.

Gingrich was asking for a spanking, and he got one: "CRY BABY," screamed the New York *Daily News* the next day, complete with a sketch of Gingrich in a diaper. There's no exaggerating the importance of Gingrich's quip. It transformed what appeared to be a principled disagreement over government spending into a petty political dispute and crystallized national opposition to the Republican budget effort.

Lost in the flurry of attention to the gaffe was an equally embarrassing comment Gingrich made the same morning: "The public relations fight [over the budget] is easy. That's why we've ignored it." There's a word for that: hubris. The last two years have offered a daily reminder that virtually any political undertaking requires not just a precise legislative strategy but also an understanding of how to deal with deceitful attacks on your ideas.

Republicans certainly could not have anticipated the $35 million attack from Big Labor; it was unprecedented. But GOP strategists realize that they lacked the all-important firepower of outside interest groups to make the case for them on issues like the balanced budget and Medicare. It wasn't for lack of trying;

countless appeals were made to an array of business groups that were asked to fund an aggressive advertising campaign. Ask top Republicans today about corporate groups like The Coalition or the Business Roundtable, and you'll be greeted with a string of expletives or sighs of disappointment. During the shutdowns, the House GOP leaders sought to coordinate a business-funded advertising campaign, but they only managed to raise a fraction of what they wanted. "Big business fell down on the job," says Tony Blankley, Gingrich's press secretary.

That's not entirely fair. Both business types and party activists worked their hearts (and wallets) out on the Contract With America. Their resources and their enthusiasm were burned out by the time the first hundred days came to an end. They were further depressed by the fact that after all their work, only two of the nine items had actually been signed into law. This suggests another reason why the too-much-too-soon strategy was so misguided, and why we shall not see its like again.

Gingrich failed to understand that political enthusiasm is not in inexhaustible supply. It has to be replenished. It needs victories, not just battles.

So bruised by the experience of 1995 were Republicans that they capitulated to Clinton in September and passed a flurry of legislation—including a $6 billion spending increase and new health-care mandates—they would have laughed at the year before. It was a triumph for GOP moderates and liberals, and a sobering reminder that politicians in trouble always resort to the government checkbook to find a way out. "I think the next two years will be like the last six months of the 1996 session," liberal Republican representative Jim Leach told the *Washington Post* last week. That would be unfortunate too.

And yet, when all is said and done, Republicans *did* maintain their hold on Congress and *did* reshape Washington's political environment in their favor. The challenge now is for Republicans to apply the lessons of the past two years to the next two: Walk, do not run, to the nearest realignment. ♦

A Democratic Scandal

By Christopher Caldwell

Come February, the tongues of congressmen will be folding themselves around such names as Arief Wiriadinata, Jim Riady, Grigory Loutchansky, Samir Danou, Jorge Cabrera, George Psaltis, and Tai-Ying. These are, of course, the donors of the shady contributions to the Clinton campaign that have been the focus of daily revelations for a month and more. The Republican Congress is going to convene hearings on the matter to find out what happened and what exactly American officials—John Huang, Mark Grobmyer, Mark Middleton, and the late commerce secretary, Ron Brown—did to solicit the money.

President Clinton, in the spirit of nonpartisan comity, is ready to help. The president has expressed his high hopes that there will finally be movement toward far-reaching campaign-finance reform. The White House hopes to drum up public distaste for the "politics of personal destruction" and to browbeat zealous House investigators into relinquishing the reins to a bipartisan campaign-finance-reform committee.

Where these foreign donations are concerned, however, the campaign-finance system is not the issue. The issue is what *laws* were broken, and by whom, and just how serious the violations were. It already appears certain that foreign businessmen have sought to buy influence over U.S. policy—specifically, foreign policy, human-rights policy, drug policy, and trade policy *as made in the White House*. We already know that attempts to shift policy have been made: An emigré Middle Eastern businessman named Samir Danou raised just under $500,000 at a Michigan fund-raiser attended by the president. Those present were given private audiences with Clinton, and the explicit goal of the fund-raiser was to influence U.S. policy on Iraq—"to open sanctions," according to Danou's daughter. She added that Clinton "promised" to help lift the embargo.

Democrats have sought to muddle the procedural issue of campaign finance and the ethical, even criminal, issue of outright bribery. But the two are not the

same, and they know it. The campaign-finance system was created in the wake of Watergate to make sure that the financial excesses of Nixon's reelection effort were never repeated. Such excesses were legal at the time, but they were so sleazy they inspired outrage. *Bribing* American officials, and the pursuit of bribes by American officials, have been illegal since the nation's founding.

The American campaign-finance system is now so full of loopholes that practically no excess or prevarication is punishable. You really have to go out of your way to commit an actionable offense, and that's what former Commerce official John Huang did while working at the Democratic National Committee. A Korean company gave him $250,000 through a nonexistent U.S. subsidiary. Cash contributions from anonymous donors were laundered through a fundraiser at a Buddhist temple in California. Contributions have been made under false names, and from false addresses (like DNC headquarters).

An indication that there's something larger than electoral law being violated is that the DNC has cooperated with investigators only under judicial duress. It filed its final election donor report eight days late, just minutes before a court was to rule on its conduct. Huang, in constant contact with his lawyer and relying (by his own account) on Hillary Clinton for emotional support, remained a fugitive from justice until U.S. marshals tracked him down to appear for a court suit brought by the public-interest group Judicial Watch.

David Harris, formerly a senior official of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, told *Newsday* of his alarm over Huang's fund-raising—and over the fact that Huang was given a top-secret security clearance even *before* taking a job in the Commerce Department. Harris said that Lippo Bank, Huang's former employer, was close to the Chinese intelligence service in Beijing, and added: "I have seen no evidence of spying. . . . But it is inconceivable to me that someone would get a position of that sort without a full check. . . . This type of thing sends chills through the body of any intelligence officer." This, in turns, raises the prospect of economic espionage inside the Clinton administration.

Now, that dwarfs campaign-finance reform in importance. And yet the media, which have been aggressive in pursuit of the foreign-donations story, persist in portraying Huang's activities as common to both parties. *Newsweek*'s October 28 cover was typical: The cover line reads "Candidates for Sale," next to pictures of both Clinton *and* Dole. The *New York Times* has also frequently paired the two candidates' fund-raising operations, accusing Bob Dole of hypocrisy for his attacks on Clinton's fund-raising. Why? Because Dole himself, the *Times* pointed out, engaged in fund-raising practices *that would be illegal if the reforms he was championing actually passed*, a breathtaking piece of sophistry that confused an actual tort with a hypothetical one.

The key issue in the Huang case involves the sale of access to the White House, something Dole is absolved of, since he didn't, and never will, live in the White House. Republicans have not occupied, and will not occupy, the White House for quite some time. The Huang scandal is not bipartisan; it is about the Clinton administration and the Clinton-run DNC, and only about them. ♦

Christopher Redux

The Career and Record of George Mitchell

By Joshua Muravchik

"Sure, it's not going as well or as fast as everyone would like, but it's . . . an alternative to conflict. The participants are still talking. . . . You take a step forward, a step backward. You go back and try again. What is the alternative? There is no alternative."

These words sound like they come straight from the mouth of Warren Christopher, the outgoing secretary of state and author of the stupefyingly titled *Diplomacy: The Neglected Imperative*. Actually, they were spoken by George Mitchell—the man whom Christopher is reported to be pushing as his successor—about his efforts to settle the conflict in Northern Ireland. They suggest the ways in which the former Senate majority leader may simply be the second coming of Warren Christopher to Foggy Bottom, albeit with a tad more personality and a somewhat sharper partisan and liberal edge than Christopher.

He would be a curious choice. During his 14 years in the Senate, Mitchell displayed little abiding interest in foreign policy: He never secured a seat on the foreign affairs or armed services committees. His most notable foreign-policy moment came in 1991, when he led the opposition to a declaration sought by George Bush authorizing the use of force against Iraq. Mitchell argued that "diplomatic pressure" and economic sanctions could compel Saddam Hussein to disgorge Kuwait. This and his voting record in the Senate show that Mitchell shares Christopher's deep faith in the powers of diplomacy and his weak appreciation for that which undergirds effective diplomacy, namely military power.

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When he became majority leader in 1988, the *New York Times* described Mitchell as "a solidly liberal lawmaker" and said that "in choosing Mr. Mitchell, Democrats rejected the notion that they should use the majority leader's race as an opportunity to distance themselves from the Eastern liberal image that some believe cost their party the White House." An excited Ted Kennedy said Mitchell's victory constituted "a welcome signal that the liberal and progressive ideals of the Democratic Party have broad support among Senate Democrats from all parts of the country."

In *National Journal*'s annual review of senatorial voting patterns, Mitchell was firmly in the liberal wing. Indeed, in five of his 14 years as a senator, he was included in the group with the most liberal record on key foreign-policy votes.

In short, Mitchell is no "New Democrat," but a believer in the old-time religion from the days when voters refused to give Democrats dominion over the nation's security. Compare his record with that of Sam Nunn, the quintessential New Democrat. Of the 61 foreign-policy votes *Congressional Quarterly* studied during Mitchell's 14-year tenure, he opposed Nunn about half the time—an unusual difference of opinion for two senators from the same party.

The sharpest distinctions between them were on defense issues and Central America. Nunn often supported aid to the government of El Salvador and to the Nicaraguan contras in their battles against communism; Mitchell did not. Things changed with the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s, Mitchell and Nunn worked hand in glove on two major issues: the Persian Gulf and Bosnia. The story of their collaboration does neither man credit.

From the moment U.S. forces were deployed in the

Gulf, Bush administration spokesmen argued that, as commander in chief, the president could send soldiers into battle without a vote by Congress. Mitchell bitterly disputed this on the constitutional grounds that Congress had to authorize any such action. But when Bush sought such authorization, Mitchell fought tooth and nail to deny it.

Mitchell argued that "this is not a debate about American objectives"—this was the "no one hates Saddam Hussein more than I do" part. No, he and the administration differed about "how best to achieve" their common goals. "Should we start with war?" he asked, after five months in which Bush sought to compel Iraq's departure from Kuwait without having to fire a shot.

Bush's steps toward war, Mitchell said, had "upset the balance between resources and responsibilities, between interests and risks." He was angry that the partners in the anti-Saddam coalition—all of them countries far smaller and far weaker than the United States—weren't carrying as much weight as we were. "If there is to be war in the Persian Gulf," he said, "it should not be a war in which Americans do the fighting and dying while those who benefit from our effort provide token help." America should not "assume a greater burden and a greater responsibility than other nations with an equal or even greater stake in the resolution of the crisis."


Kent Lemon

George Mitchell

Mitchell's solution was the "Mitchell-Nunn resolution," which authorized only economic sanctions against Iraq for a period of 18 months. The two senators cobbled the resolution together as a supposedly responsible alternative to Bush's imprudence. After all, Mitchell said,

> War carries with it great costs and high risk: an unknown number of casualties and deaths; billions of dollars spent; a greatly disrupted oil supply and oil price increases; a war possibly widened to Israel, Turkey, or other allies; the possible long-term American occupation of Iraq; increased instability in the Persian Gulf region; long-lasting Arab enmity against the United States; a possible return to isolationism at home.

But the costs and risks Mitchell assessed so direly were unlikely to change if America continued to do nothing but exert diplomatic pressure and levy sanctions on Saddam Hussein. And as for the balance of burdens between America and its allies, Mitchell's analysis was utterly backwards. Had the Mitchell-Nunn resolution passed, the balance in the coalition would have *worsened* because our allies would have hedged their bets by appeasing Saddam. If America had felt compelled to fight after the 18 months were over, it would have had to fight *alone*—and this scenario assumes there would even have been a military option left after the repercussions the Mitchell-Nunn resolution would have touched off. The greater likelihood, had Mitchell and Nunn won, is that Kuwait today would be the 19th province of Iraq.

Once the war began, Mitchell hastened to close ranks with the administration in a show of national unity. But in his reply to Bush's 1991 State of the Union address, he could not resist a little partisan assault on the president he had previously accused of being "almost nostalgic about the Cold War."

Despite his formal support for the war effort, he offered a litany of moral equivalencies to it. "Students massacred in China, priests murdered in Central America, demonstrators gunned down in Lithuania—these acts of violence are as wrong as Iraqi soldiers' killing civilians," he said. "The President says he seeks a new world order. We ask him to join us in putting our own house in order. . . . If we can make the best smart bomb, can't we make the best VCR?"

In 1994, there was yet another Mitchell and Nunn resolution—yet another alternative to strong action in the midst of yet another military crisis. The issue was whether to lift the arms embargo that was keeping the government of Bosnia naked before its Serbian enemies. Sentiment in Congress was running strong for lifting the embargo and arming the Bosnians. But the administration, fearful of friction with European allies and Russia, turned to Mitchell and Nunn to act on its behalf. They offered a substitute that would merely have asked the president to try to persuade the allies to agree to lifting the embargo. Since leaving the Senate Mitchell has ceased to carry water for Bill Clinton on Bosnia. The private International Crisis Group, of which he is now chairman, forthrightly criticized the

fatally flawed elections that were held in Bosnia this year at the administration's insistence.

One issue on which Mitchell rose ever so slightly above partisanship while still in the Senate was human rights in China. In 1990 he introduced legislation to deny China "most favored nation" status unless Beijing began respecting the rights of its citizens. At the time, the *New York Times* said Mitchell was "trying to define sharp differences between the Democratic Party and the [Bush] Administration on China policy." Indeed, Mitchell and others continued to press the issue until Bush was forced in 1992 to veto the MFN bill.

After assuming the presidency in 1993, Clinton soon announced he *would* extend China's most-favored-nation status for one year—but that future renewals would depend on China's human-rights progress. Mitchell backed him. A year later, Clinton reversed himself and announced the "delinking" of trade and human rights in U.S. policy toward China. Mitchell broke with him this time and again sponsored legislation linking MFN and human rights. However, with Democrats flocking to support their president, the measure was defeated in the House and Mitchell dropped it. It is unlikely that Secretary of State Mitchell could persuade Clinton to reverse himself again on China. But he would likely stand before China's totalitarian gerontocracy with a stiffer posture than Christopher's.

Still, the capital that might feel the greatest jolt in a transition from Christopher to Mitchell would not be Beijing but Damascus. Christopher made two dozen visits to Damascus in a futile and embarrassing effort to court Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad. Mitchell is of Lebanese Maronite extraction on his mother's side, and there are a few hints in Mitchell's record of a sympathetic concern for the plight of Lebanon, whose sovereignty has been fatally compromised by Syria.

In 1983, he was one of only two Democrats to vote to authorize the Reagan administration's deployment of U.S. Marines in Lebanon—the only key foreign-policy vote of his career on which he bucked an overwhelming majority of his Democratic colleagues. When President Bush met with Syria's Assad in Geneva during the Gulf crisis, Mitchell went out of his way to denounce the meeting as a "serious misjudgment by the president" on the grounds of "Syria's long record of complicity in terrorism" and its parlous human-rights record.

Bill Clinton's first two years in the White House were marked by an utter aversion to foreign policy. And his choice of the sphinx-like Christopher as secretary of state seemed intended somehow to keep these issues under wraps. In the second half of his first term, Clinton appeared to gain a growing appreciation for the importance of foreign policy. With no more election campaigns in his future, Clinton revealed recently that his thoughts were turning increasingly to achieving greatness in his presidency. Might he look to the international arena for the fulfillment of this last quest?

The selection of Mitchell suggests otherwise. All of the other candidates rumored to be under consideration for the position—Madeleine Albright, Richard Holbrooke, Sam Nunn, Strobe Talbott—possess broader experience and deeper interest in foreign policy than Mitchell. His appointment would mean that Clinton is seeking another Christopher to mind the store while the man from Hope seeks his place in history in the groves of domestic policy. ♦

Just Another Tuesday Night Inside the Beltway

By the Staff of The Weekly Standard

AFSCME Party, 8:00 PM

Jerry McEntee, head of the public-employees' union known as AFSCME, is presiding over one of the most delightful of tonight's victory celebrations: Shake'n'Bake chicken, lots of (American) beer, Magic Marker-and-stick-pin electoral maps. . . . AFSCME may now be made up of welfare caseworkers and teacher's aides, but the place was as jovial as Saturday night at the pipefitters' local. Standing behind a lectern, McEntee called off the results as they came in over the (perfectly audible) television set.

"*Guam* has gone for President *Clinton*," says Peter Jennings.

"*Guam!* Guam has gone for Bill Clinton!" shouts Jerry McEntee.

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The Palm Restaurant, 8:35 PM

Nearly every table is full, packed with the usual assortment of lobbyists and other permanent Washington types digging into blackened steaks and cuts of sea bass before heading off to one of the night's many election parties. The Palm first became famous in New York, where it was a meeting place for well-known figures from Broadway and the sports world. In Washington, of course, all the really glamorous people are involved in one way or another in politics, and the staff at The Palm respond accordingly. "Torricelli took New Jersey," reports one burly waiter in a white apron while refilling a water glass. "Helms is up in North Carolina, but it's going to be a while before the numbers from Prop. 209 in California come in." Maybe in New York the waiters can recite box scores.

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Conservative Central Party, 9:00 PM

Nobody swings like movement conservatives—why do you think they call them *movement* conservatives?—but the lowest voter turnout since 1924 manifests itself at the "conservative central" clubhouse, the Leadership Institute in Arlington, Va. It is apparently the place not to be. The invitation promised conservative stars galore, "spin doctors on call," but it's a Who's Who of no-shows. The American Conservative Union's David Keene wasn't there. Nor was Accuracy in Media's Reed Irvine. Poll cutie Kellyanne Fitzpatrick? On camera at CNN.

But the party does have its host, Morton Blackwell, the institute's founder and a sort of Baton Rouge-ish version of Jerry Falwell. He was asked to distill why Dole was flaming out, and he responded by offering free take-home handouts on The Ten Worst Mistakes of Losing Candidates, The Ten Worst Mistakes of Winning Candidates, The Eight Political Lessons Some People Never Learn (#4: "If people believe that the main reason you want to be elected is that you want to be elected, you're toast"), and The 45 [45!] Laws of the Public Policy Process ("Keep your eye on the main chance and don't stop to kick every barking dog").

Any number of the above apply to the Dole campaign. But the campaign's real big shortcoming, as Morton explains it, is that "I talked to a half-dozen top people in the campaign—I'd prefer not to identify them—and I offered repeatedly to take a leave of absence from day-to-day activities and try to put together a technologically proficient youth effort for Dole. Nothing ever happened!"

If only they'd listened!

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DLC Party, 9:10 PM

This is undoubtedly the most high-powered of the small Democratic celebrations—a party thrown by Bill Clinton's alma mater, the Democratic Leadership Council, at the Sheraton Carlton. A smattering of intellectuals is here (Seymour Martin Lipset is one), and like all intellectuals on Election Night, they're glued to the TV sets. The DLC people brim with a not-unmerited self-satisfaction, as Will Marshall talks with his friends about how much of a role the president's DLC-inspired welfare reforms had in his smashing comeback. Relatively conservative though

the DLC may be, these are all party regulars. There's unfeigned glee at the triumph of *every* Democrat, not just the DLC-model "moderates" running against southern troglodytes. When John Kerry, a decidedly *old* kind of Democrat, is proclaimed the winner over the decidedly moderate Bill Weld, the assembled moderates let out a communal *Heyyyyy!* and send up a forest of raised fists. Moderation isn't what it used to be.

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Jefferson Hotel, 9:30 PM

It's hard to know exactly how reckless Dick Morris must have been until you stand on the porch of Room 205, Morris's erstwhile suite at the Jefferson Hotel. This is the place—an open stone verandah clearly visible to dozens of hotel rooms above—where *Star* photographers caught the presidential confidant embracing his own confidante, Sherry Rowlands. Months later, the porch still smells of defeat, bad judgment (only a man with a professional death wish would carry on an affair in such a public setting), the crash of a successful, if sleazy, career. It is, in other words, the perfect vantage from which to watch the presidential returns on Election Night.

Republican media consultants Mike Murphy and Don Sipple have chosen Room 205, as well as—brace yourself for a blast of irony—the Presidential Suite on the eighth floor for their "It's Over" party. A couple of dozen consultants, reporters, and other wizened campaign hands sip drinks and chat as a television blares incoming results in the background. Others pose for pictures on the famous porch. Still others giggle and recline on what is said to be the actual Morris "foot couch." No one in the room doubts the Dole defeat is coming, of course, but somehow, viewed from the Hiroshima of Dick Morris's life, an ordinary electoral defeat doesn't seem like such a big deal.

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Conservative Central Party, 9:30 PM

In the absence of the promised conservative spin doctors, you can still get your ears bent at the buffet table by retired major general Jack Singlaub, the former contra-booster and all-around war hero. Buzz-cut and Perot-eared, still sporting his dogtags under an elegant spread collar, Singlaub is from the hoist-the-black-flag-and-begin-splitting-throats wing of the party, to which someone obviously forgot to circulate the memo on the New Civility.

If you ask Gen. Singlaub about Bill Clinton, you get: "He's such a professional fabricator, prevaricator, and liar that he could no doubt pass a polygraph." And on a second Clinton term: "He'll be indicted, or impeached at the very least." And why shouldn't he be? For if they don't nail Clinton for his actual criminal behavior, the major general says, he should be taken out for his defense cuts, Korea policy, foot-dragging on those Tailhookers' promotions—and especially for "this whole concept of putting lesbians and sodomites in the armed forces. It's terribly damaging."

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Dole/Kemp Defeat Party, 9:30 PM

The networks called it a half hour ago. No surprise, of course, but the mood here at the Renaissance Hotel is a mix of agony and relief, like the last rites for someone whose huge medical bills the insurance company won't be covering. No one wants to speak about the patient while he's on his deathbed, but everyone is relieved the end is near.

Indeed, an unsuspecting visitor wouldn't guess that this party marks Dole's defeat—what with all the freshly scrubbed Young Republicans exchanging glances, phone numbers, and sometimes more on the ballroom floor. Some senior Dole campaign staffers pass the time in the invitation-only "West Salon A," only to find a cash bar and cold cuts. The more entrepreneurial among them sneak their way into the VIP room, where at least the booze is free.

And from time to time, campaign chairman Donald Rumsfeld appears, to tell waiting reporters that Dole is still going to win.

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DNC Victory Party, 9:45 PM

Here is the big Democratic do of the evening, the Soccer Mom of All Election-Night Bashes, with thousands and thousands of guests in the half-dozen largest banquet rooms at the Capital Hilton. A madhouse, a mess—lines all the way down the corridor for the men's rooms and five deep at the phones. Everybody who isn't anybody is here: One mid-level DNC employee estimates the crowd at one-third labor volunteers, one-third Clinton/Gore volunteers, and one-third interns for various Democratic pols. All the good Clintonites are down in Little Rock.

You can, however, get a good sense of who makes up Democratic activists: Hugging, flamboyant gays make up probably a fifth (take that, Alfred Kinsey!) of the crowd. The entire middle rung of the District of Columbia's local government accounts for, say, another tenth, with all of them lining up for interviews with

Channel 8, the local all-news cable channel. Then there are the labor people, i.e., the welfare bureaucracy. If only the housewives in North Carolina who voted for Bill Clinton because "he represents people like me" could see it.

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Jefferson Hotel, 10:15 PM

With a Clinton victory finally confirmed, talk turns—as it inevitably does at times like this—to speculation about four years hence, to the Next Time. Who will be the Republican candidate? Christie Whitman? Fred Thompson? Lamar Alexander, who, smiling and relaxed in the corner of the room, suddenly looks more presidential than he ever did on the campaign trail?

One person the nominee will almost certainly *not* be is Jack Kemp. Kemp has, by almost unanimous agreement among those who have spent time with him recently, thoroughly discredited himself as a candidate. Sipping a drink, a campaign operative fresh from the Dole plane recounts how Kemp recently exploded in anger at his conservative critics. Such people, the staffer swears he heard Kemp say, have an insidious agenda, one that has nothing to do with Kemp's own lousy performance: "They just don't want to see more blacks in the Republican party."

Kemp regularly implies that he is the only Republican in America who doesn't secretly (or not so secretly) long for a return to segregated water fountains, so it's not hard to imagine him saying something like this. The explanation doesn't seem to have carried much weight with Dole, however, who is reputed to be angry with his running mate. During the final days of the campaign, the staffer says, Dole all but ignored Kemp's presence. "He only used the word 'Kemp' once in 96 hours."

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DNC Victory Party, 10:15 PM

The real line of demarcation among the Democrats in the ballroom of the Capital Hilton is between two types. There are those who are aware that the real bigwigs' parties—the ones where Democratic party chair Don Fowler and Senatorial Committee chair Bob Kerrey are holding court—are upstairs in the hotel suites. And there are those who are not aware. Downstairs are hot dogs by the bucket and chips by the garbage-bagful and mystery booze. One sozzled 19-ish labor intern squints past the barman towards the (a) Darnoc vodka, (b) Bull and Bear gin, (c) Moraga Cay rum, and (d) Mac Burns VSO (Scotch) Whiskey and mutters, with an air of expertise, "This is unbelievable. Have you ever *heard* of any of this stuff? There can't be a bottle on that shelf that cost more than a dollar forty-nine."

Most of the downstairs partiers are as camera-happy as Miami Dolphins fans, spending all their time negotiating with cameramen to get into shots so Mom can spot them back in wherever. Others jitterbug (but only

when there's a camera in the immediate vicinity) to the sad-sack washboard-and-cello quartet of someone called Les Cuje. These are the small fry, who pay only desultory attention to the video monitors: When a soundless ABC graphic shows that Bedford leads Sessions in Alabama by 55–45, the crowd goes berserk. No one reads the fine print: that this is the first tally of the night, and that the raw numbers, with 0 percent of precincts reporting, are 362 votes to 291.

Sessions later wins.

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Dole/Kemp Defeat Party, 11:30 PM

Armstrong Williams, a bald and black conservative talk-radio host who endorsed Steve Forbes during the Republican primaries, tries to energize the crowd at the Renaissance with a call-and-response routine that leaves the WASPy crowd wondering why this nice black man is shouting. Soon Dole emerges from behind the curtains to begin his concession. The speech itself is anodyne, apart from a harrowing joke: "Tomorrow's the first day of my life I won't have anything to do." He tries to quiet the rowdies in the crowd with an admonition he perfected during his last weeks on the campaign trail: "You're not going to get that tax cut if you don't be quiet"—forgetting, as no one else does, that he's no longer in a position to be promising tax cuts to anybody, no matter how well they behave.

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DNC Victory Party, 11:45 PM

Upstairs, away from the masses in the Capital Hilton ballroom, the mood is more adult. There are carving tables, malt scotches, chilled Perrier with copious limes, and a kind of lighter-than-air cream-filled rum sponge-cake bonbon, of which The Weekly Standard's correspondent consumes fourteen before he loses count. At the nicer parties, like the Chairman's Reception on the twelfth floor, hotel guards are posted at the elevators to keep the riffraff from wandering in. But most Democratic party activists look like riffraff, and if you tell the cops, "Yeah, the chairman invited me," how are they to know you're not Roger Clinton? The only party with any appreciable vetting is the DSCC's, four floors up from the ballroom. There, an ascetic and Lennon-lensed 39-year-old unlocks the door to a group of young donors' daughters who have wandered up, and asks them, "Are you invited here?"

"Uh, no," the kids stutter.

Slam.

Surprisingly absent upstairs is a level of political sophistication much greater than that of the kids downstairs. These are the movers and shakers, but they're also partisans, and it seems they've bought into the optimistic predictions of Dick Morris and others that the Dems are due to pick up, oh, 45 seats or so. These people are set for a rude awakening later in the evening. You can tell when a bunch of people camped in front of a 27-inch television at the Chairman's Reception watch David Brinkley interview George Stephanopoulos.

Brinkley begins, "Now that it looks like the Republicans will hold both houses of Congress—"

A couple of the loyalists positively snicker at Brinkley, and one of them snorts, "Yeah! . . . Right!"

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Jefferson Hotel, 12:15 AM

Lamar! hovers by the hors d'oeuvre table, praising the imported cheese spread and drinking Coke from a wine glass. A sloshed and uninvited guest notes the Coke and suggests that the former presidential candidate switch to the hard stuff, so they can head over to the Democratic party at the Hilton and "rustle us up a few broads."

Looking edgewise, Lamar! replies, "Thirty years ago I might have been stupid enough to do it."

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Dole/Kemp Defeat Party, 12:20 AM

Elvis-like, Dole has left the building—back to his two-bedroom apartment at the Watergate. The party is emptying out. Most of Dole's humbled senior staff mingle outside the hotel, enduring the half-hour wait to get a cab. For a while Scott Reed, Dole's campaign manager, mingles too, and then is whisked away in his chauffeur-driven taupe-colored sedan.

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Jefferson Hotel, 12:25 AM

Things are slowing down at the "It's Over" party. Maybe it really *is* over. Another guest sidles up to Lamar! and asks if he thinks you have to be a southerner or a movie star to be elected president these days. Pensively, Lamar! swallows another cheese log. "I think you have to be a nationally tested governor with a good disposition," he smiles, "with a conservative vision, a broad base of support, who knows the difference between Chopin and Hank Williams. *These* are the crucial things." ♦

Dorothy Lamour: An Elegy

Sophistication, Vulgarity, and the Sarong Girl

By David Gelernter

A perfect fact to remember us by, we "post-moderns" or whatever we are: When we say that entertainment is "adult," we mean it is infantile. The pictorial spelling-out of exactly what happens when a couple goes to bed is in the "Billy learns how to tie his shoes" spirit of edifying books for toddlers. Vulgar words and obscene pictures are the quintessence of teenage-boyness. Compared with the typical modern flick, Dorothy Lamour's best pictures have a paradoxical superiority: They are better for children, and vastly more adult.

She died September 23 at 81. It is a painful era for lovers of American culture—we are losing the remaining heroes and heroines of the golden age of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. A few months back, Gene Kelly, a wonderful song-and-dance man when he reined in his pompous, arty urges. Ginger Rogers last year; when you add up the crunchy wisecrack comedy (*Fifth Avenue Girl*, *The Major and the Minor*), the solid acting (*Stage Door*, *Kitty Foyle*), and the sublime art of her dances with Astaire, she was the greatest lady of American cinema—a fact the obituaries forgot to mention. As for Miss Lamour, she was no Ginger Rogers. But she had great charm, a certain grace, and the marvelous art of keeping things in perspective. A heroine she was, of the wonderful age when the movies were grown-up solid citizens instead of (as the mood dictates) sullen prima donnas, foul-mouthed children, or raving nut cases.

People remember her seven "Road" films with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope (from *The Road to Singapore* of 1940 through *The Road to Hong Kong* of 1962) as corny. And they are—corny and funny. Funny movies are still produced nowadays, but hers were more sophisticated than today's average comedy insofar as it is harder to be funny when you limit yourself to inoffensive words and inoffensive situations. Vulgarity has always been the shortest route to a cheap laugh. I don't claim there is no such thing as a modern-yet-sophisticated movie, or that Miss Lamour's pictures were sophisticated in absolute terms. No one called them sophisticated at the time. But the trend lines are interesting, and the sophistication trend is sharply down.

There is a wonderful, pure-essence-of-Lamour moment in the second worst *Road* movie, *The Road to Bali* of 1952. (*Hong Kong* is dead last.) She's a South Pacific princess, and Bing and Bob are adventurers who get lured to her island by a sneering bad guy who needs stooges to help him with his dirty work. She throws them a party. They sit cross-legged on the floor in kilts (never mind how the kilts got in there) on either side of her, and there follows a triple-decker, three-voiced fugue of a scene. The plot calls for the princess to demonstrate South Pacific sorcery, and so she makes a rope hang in air, a girl wriggle out of a vase. On top of that, the usual irrelevant Hope-and-Crosby clowning: "It's mass hypnosis!" "Where'd you learn a word like that?" "Don't listen to him, Princess, he got kicked out of kindergarten for cheating at finger painting." And superimposed on the whole thing is Miss Lamour's serene, priceless smile. In character she thinks these two adventurers are silly but sort of sweet. As an actress she thinks all three of them on that crazy set—Bing, Bob, and Dorothy—are silly but sort of sweet.

Her smile has the facts down perfectly. Bing is as unprepossessing a romantic lead as the movies ever produced. He *always* gets the girl (is the one-and-only actor ever to star with Astaire and get *Fred*'s girl), but the basis of his romantic appeal is cornball ballads and nice guyness. He mocks his own singing style and big ears. Hope is the only comedian ever to succeed in being funny on the basis of really, really trying. And Miss Lamour, supposed focus of double-barrel Hope-and-Crosby romantic passion, is herself no spring chicken circa 1952; she has (eh-hem) put on a few pounds, and happens to be got up in a headdress that looks like the large transformers you see outside power plants, except diamond-spangled. The whole scene is just micro-inches shy of ridiculous, but she rescues it with the sheer knowing sweetness of her smile; because of that smile it is not ridiculous at all but funny and even a little bit touching.

She was the sarong girl, her unvarying title at the height of her career in the first half of the '40s. Her early pictures (*Jungle Princess* of 1936, *Her Jungle Love* of 1938, among others) established the sarong theme in an age when a movie goddess was supposed to speak softly but carry a big shtick,

Homeric-epithet style. (Brunette-headed Dorothy, sarong-girl to the strong-greaved Achaeans.) With the first of the *Road* movies she hit her stride. These pictures, it is easy to forget, had substantial sexual content; it was no small responsibility being *the* sarong girl. They were deceptive cognac-filled bonbons compared with the shot-of-Thunderbird approach we favor today, and I would rate some of them higher in sexual-proof than the hauntingly subtle, mysterious allure of *Sharon Stone—Naked!!* or whatever they call movies nowadays. ("So don't miss *Watch Demi Moore Undress*, coming soon to a theater near you!")

We might talk about "the sexual sub-text of the *Road* shows," except that there is nothing sub about it. The sex is high-octane, more X than R. The first time you see Miss Lamour in *The Road to Singapore* she is wearing a filmy dress plus tasseled bra, and she is part of a nightclub act that also stars her nasty keeper and a horsewhip. As the act gets underway she holds a cigarette between her lips; he whips it in two. More neat tricks follow. She makes up to Bing and Bob, and when she heads off in their direction the bad guy slaps the whip round her belly and reels her in. She rolls her big eyes tragically and hustles out with the visiting Americans, follows them home, and later on lets her hair down and gets into her sleeping sarong for a nighttime-and-moonlight number. In case you missed the point, she launches her next *Road* picture (*Zanzibar*, 1941) by getting sold as a slave. This time she has the sarong on from the start (what else would you wear to a slave sale?), a tattered little off-the-shoulder number; her hands are manacled and she glances round the room in tiny peeps like an anxious kitten. The sale turns out to be a scam—she and a girlfriend induce gullible romantics like Bing and Bob to buy her in a phony auction and set her free, and the ladies split the take with the auctioneer. But who cares? The audience got what it paid for. "She seems so unconscious of her deshabille," said the *New York Times* review of *Singapore*, "you just know her director and camera man were not for a minute."

Photofest

Yet it was all harmless; if pornography happened, it was only in the privacy of your own mind—a place that, so far as today's Hollywood is concerned, doesn't even exist. Miss Lamour provoked not lust so much as wistful desire. During the war she was "the girl," E.B. White reported, "above all others desired by the men in Army camps." She was busy during the war; she had more on her plate than being desirable. She toured the country selling war bonds. She was so good at it, the government put a private railcar at her disposal. She sold 300-odd million dollars' worth and got a commendation from the Treasury Department twenty years late, in 1965. Flogging bonds wasn't fun-and-games—"a typical day for Miss Lamour," said a news story, "embraces about ten hours of war work." But when she showed up at the Martin Airplane factory in Baltimore, the management refused admittance and she had to make her pitch out front. No insult intended, the company explained; just that "when any good-looking woman walks through the plant it

costs us 1,000 man-hours of labor. Dorothy Lamour might cost us half a bomber." Understood. "So she stepped aside," the story reports, "like a good patriot."

E.B. White, I would judge, had a thing for her. He analyzes the universal truths of maleness in terms of her status as Number One Dreamboat—tongue in cheek, but with acute interest. "If you know what a soldier wants, you know what Man wants." Which is? "A beautiful, but comprehensible, creature who does not destroy a perfect situation by forming a complete sentence." (She speaks with "studied native-girlishness," noted the *Times* reviewer, quoting Miss Lamour's remark about a rival for Bing's affection: "She is ver-ree prit-tee, no?")

"Man's most persistent dream," White continues, getting serious, "is of a forest pool and a girl coming out of it unashamed, walking toward him with a wavy motion, childlike in her wonder, a girl exquisitely untroubled, as quiet and accommodating and beautiful as a young green tree." We are not supposed to write like that anymore. Now we have revoltingly vicious, wildly obvious rap songs, patronized by suburban youth and defended by yammering morons in the name of art. Is that a good swap? Satisfactory? Swinish obscenity is okay, disgusto-puko pornography is okay, but polite society is scandalized by the word "girl." Hence movie titles like "Pretty Woman," which hit home with the overwrought phoniness of Victorian euphemism run amok. The oblivious headline of a recent news story about female reporters: "The Boys on the Bus Are Women."

A constant and besetting phoniness—our whole society rings with it like churchbells. In abolishing the idea of flirtatious or sensitive or shy or graceful or delicate or romantic or girlish femininity, replacing it with the lie of the manly woman, we have made our culture—look around you!—hideous. Joyless. Graceless. Ugly as sin.

Miss Lamour's best movies were no masterpieces; they were merely lovely and still are. "Casual and refreshing spontaneity" said a reviewer of her work in *Zanzibar*, which is exactly right. In *Singapore*, she races into a village square, Bob chases after and grabs her.

Bob: "Why, she's *got* it!"

Dorothy (tragic, sobby): "I have not!"

Bing, wrestling Bob to free her: "*What* has she got?"

Bob: "She's got . . ." And all three break into "An Apple for the Teacher," a song-and-dance number. Turns out idea was to draw a crowd and gyp some money out of them. Dorothy hams it up between the two hams-in-chief with her angelic-suave-arch smile that always looks as if she is about to burst out giggling. In *The Road to Utopia* of 1945, the best of the series, she sings a little number that became a hit—*Don't tell me I'm smart, tell me how you like my personal-it-tee*. . . . She is supposedly a vampy femme fatale, which she realizes is ridiculous, given her always-considerable difficulty not giggling in people's faces; and once again her smile takes it all in, so knowing and yet so sweet. An interviewer asked her if she had ever studied acting or music. "No," she said, "can't you tell?" In her graciousness she achieved lasting dignity, and we will remember her as a woman who did her country good. Sold a bunch of bonds, made fine, funny movies, cheered us up, heartened us, brightened the dreams of a lot of lonely GIs.

Bob Hope survives, though evidently his health is not so hot. I wish I could meet Hope and tell him he meant a lot to us; that my young boys love his *Road* pictures and we watch them together all the time. I won't ever, but it's gladdening to think that other people have told him. And her friends, I am sure, told Dorothy Lamour the same thing.

A survey discovered that, nowadays, "movie star" is the bottom-ranked career American parents want for their children. Today's stars are richer and a lot more self-important than Dorothy Lamour, but the sense of having buoyed the country just a little is a thing all their money will never buy them. ♦

Fiction

The Passion of (and for) Patrick O'Brian

By J. Bottum

No one ever loved Graham Greene, though many thought him as fine a novelist as we've had these last 50 years. No one ever made a shrine of Erich Segal's boyhood home, though his 1970 *Love Story* sold in the millions. Adoration from readers does not belong to authors to command, and neither acknowledged greatness nor demonstrated popularity is quite the same as love. May Sinclair's mostly forgotten works may have been better written, and Charlotte Yonge's utterly forgotten novels were certainly more popular in the 19th century, but it is the Orchard House of

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* in Concord, Mass., that literary pilgrims continue to visit.

For almost 30 years now, the Irish novelist Patrick O'Brian has been publishing historical tales of Captain Jack Aubrey and Dr. Stephen Maturin fighting the Napoleonic sea-wars. From an almost unnoticed beginning in 1969 with *Master and Commander*, the series—now in its 18th volume with the publication of *The Yellow Admiral* (W.W. Norton, 262 pages, $24)—has come to receive serious attention and lavish praise from fellow novelists as diverse as Robertson Davies, Mary Renault, A.S. Byatt, and Iris Murdoch.

It's easy enough at this point to identify the features that make O'Brian's books seem so good. It's even possible to discern the features that put each new installment instantly on bestseller lists. What's hard, however, is to describe what has led to the formation of O'Brian clubs in several cities, has made the first editions of his books worth a lot of money, and has kept his publisher's website a much-visited stop on the Internet. Patrick O'Brian is indeed both very good and very popular. But after all the booming encomiums and talk of sales, there remains the question of what makes his Aubrey-Maturin novels the first books since J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy to awaken deep stirrings of that strange extra-literary phenomenon, a reader's love.

The answer lies, I think, in what O'Brian's literary admirers have been at some pains to downplay: the extremely traditional origins of his work. "It's no 'Boys Own Paper,'" a British reviewer assured readers about the series in 1981. "To say that his books are a cut above the average historical novel is to miss the point," Terry Teachout recently wrote of *The Yellow Admiral*. And yet the Aubrey-Maturin series *does* descend in a

straight line from the Boys-Own-Paper brand of serial adventure and from the old-fashioned historical romance. This is escapist fiction as unyieldingly conventional as Agatha Christie's mysteries, Louis L'Amour's westerns, or Robert Heinlein's science fiction.

O'Brian writes in an extremely strict sea-novel genre suggested in the 18th century by Tobias Smollett in *Roderick Random*, established in the 19th century by Michael Scott's *Tom Cringle's Log* and Capt. Marryat's *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, and formalized in our century by C.S. Forester's ten tales of Horatio Hornblower. His books, like Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, and the neglected 20th-century adventure novelist Rafael Sabatini's *Scaramouche* and *The Sea Hawk*, fall squarely within the highly stylized category of popular historical fiction.

It's true that with his literary skill and vast learning about sailing, medicine, music, science, and art, O'Brian towers above all our other popular writers. The point, however, is not that he does what he does so much better than anyone else. The key to what O'Brian has managed with his Aubrey-Maturin novels lies rather in the fact that he writes within such a narrow set of inherited conventions. For the first time since Dickens and Trollope in the middle of the Victorian age, we have a major artist working, without any ironic intent, in a popular, rigorous, and intensely conservative literary form. With Patrick O'Brian, we have found the opposite (and the answer) to the modernist insistence that real artists forge with their art utterly new, utterly unique forms for expressing their utterly new, utterly unique truths.

O'Brian is able to paint a compelling and completely satisfying picture of some very old truths about courage, luck, and honor—about how men live both with and without women—about the impossible demands placed on all those who go down to the sea in ships and do business on great waters. And he is able to do so by working within a frame in which readers are willing to accept such instruction—a leisurely narrative of the naval wars between the British and the French at the beginning of the 19th century.

As *The Yellow Admiral* opens, the year is 1814 and the war is coming to an end. Wellington is advancing on France from the Spanish peninsula, Napoleon reeling in defeat from the disaster on the Russian front. Captain Aubrey, who has been assigned to blockade duty in the English Channel, is well aware of the Navy's coming (shall we say) downsizing and fears his impending promotion will landlock him and cause him to be "yellowed"—that he will be made an admiral in title only, "without distinction of command." Meanwhile, his longtime friend and ship's surgeon—a half-Irish, half-Catalonian secret agent, Stephen Maturin—is not merely engaging in espionage this time out; he has become part of a plot to free Chile from Spanish rule.

In between the boredom of blockade work and Aubrey's troubles ashore, the oddly matched Aubrey and Maturin manage to play their usual ration of violin and cello duets, see most of the old friends and family readers will recognize from earlier volumes, and carry on their curious and dangerous sea-bound life as they await Napoleon's final defeat.

Though O'Brian has left himself the possibility of carrying on post-Napoleonic adventures in the South American rebellions against Spain, the series is clearly winding down. The hardest part of a popular series with continuing characters is finding a way to end it. Financial and artistic temptations alike—as writers from Charles Dickens to Arthur Conan Doyle have discovered—conspire to induce the author to bring them back, again and again, for one final star turn. But O'Brian seems to have a clear idea of the value of what he has created and the responsibility he owes it.

Now 82, the novelist is unlikely to complete many other volumes. And as a result, he is unwilling either to sacrifice a major character (as Jack's first lieutenant, James Dillon, was killed in the first volume) or to withdraw any character from the series (as Jack's parson, Nathaniel Martin, was surprisingly dismissed to recover in South America from mercury poisoning in 1993's *The Wine-Dark Sea*). Though O'Brian does allow one new midshipman to plummet to his death, the boy seems from the beginning a lamb marked out for slaughter. The familiar characters are being preserved lovingly by their author as he brings the war to its conclusion. Altogether, *The Yellow Admiral* is more a continuation of the series than a coherent book in its own right; it isn't really the right volume to begin with if you are interested in beginning a reader's affair with O'Brian.

Long little-known and very private, O'Brian provided a biographical blurb for his first book, *The Last Pool and Other Stories* (1950), that read only:

> The *Spectator* for 1 March 1710 begins, "I have observed, that a reader seldom peruses a Book with much Pleasure, till he knows whether the Writer of it be a dark or a fair Man, of mild or choleric disposition, Married or a Batchelor. . . . " To gratify this curiosity, which is so natural to a reader, we may state that Mr. O'Brian is a dark man, choleric, and married.

He has become more forthcoming about his life and working techniques in recent years. After service

with British intelligence during World War II, he settled in France to eke out a living as a writer and translator. (He translated 28 French bestsellers into English between 1961 and 1978, the best known of which is Henri Charrière's *Papillon*.) The American publication of a novel, *Testimonies,* in 1952 led to a succession of writing assignments in which he gradually demonstrated a mastery of subjects as various as botany, music, late-18th-century medicine, British naval history, and the religious disagreements of English Protestantism—all of which would become recurring themes in the Aubrey-Maturin series.

Part of what makes the series work so well is O'Brian's compulsively readable style, featuring a prose technique in which the voice of the last character who speaks or thinks continues to influence the narrative voice for several sentences. This pulls the reader along, as in this passage from *The Ionian Mission*:

> "It does my heart good to see her," said Jack. She was the ship he loved best, . . . he knew her through and through, . . . a true thoroughbred, very fast in the right hands, weatherly, dry, a splendid sailor of bowline, and a ship that almost steered herself once you understood her ways.

And then there is the sheer joy O'Brian takes in using all the glorious vocabulary of wooden ships. The novelist is not without his *longueurs* in this regard; early in *Master and Commander,* he gives a two-page description of the swaying up of a sloop's mainyard that conveys almost no meaning. But usually he hits it right, giving enough clues that the reader can puzzle it out in a kind of triangulation from known words and context.

What contributes most to making the novels work, however, is their richness of life. Historical fiction is often thin, the author's knowledge limited to a well-defined field and an occasional odd fact outside it. But O'Brian manages to suggest the entire historical world that surrounds his adventures and provides an astonishingly vivid frame for his moral pictures. The series is at its best when it deals with men and morals: the study of leadership in *The Mauritius Command*, the study of professionalism in *The Ionian Mission*, and the study of diplomacy in *The Thirteen-Gun Salute*.

The series begins on April 1, 1800, and concludes, for now, with Napoleon's flight from Elba on February 26, 1815. It is no accident (as others have remarked) that O'Brian's present popularity comes at the same moment Jane Austen's novels have undergone an enormous resurgence. (O'Brian admits a continuing fascination with Austen, and the naval officers in her *Persuasion* would surely recognize a shipmate in Jack Aubrey.) There was a moment in England, at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, when many things seemed possible and life was as rich as it has ever been. Common wisdom had not yet been divorced from specialized knowledge, nor art from science, nor communal bonds from industrial relations.

Much of that was poisoned by the French Revolution, by the equivalent English Revolution that never quite happened, and by 20 years of Napoleonic war. And even at its best, this way of life existed among iniquities, brutalities, and discomforts we cannot imagine bearing today. But exist it did. And in Jane Austen's clear-eyed girls and Patrick O'Brian's commonsensical sailors, there is a vanished world of sweetness and light (as Matthew Arnold put it) we need very much to recover. ♦

Books

Two Cultures Still

By Saul Rosenberg

The British novelist and scientist C.P. Snow famously suggested nearly forty years ago that the West had unfortunately developed not one intellectual culture but two. On one side were the scientists, who could not distinguish Jane Austen from Agatha Christie; on the other, the artists, ignorant of such fundamental notions as the second law of thermodynamics—and never the twain could happily meet again.

Since then, the march of specialization has only intensified. If, to become deeply versed in superstring theory, a physicist today might have to forgo a thorough grasp of other branches of physics (let alone a working knowledge of literature), professional literary academics have returned the compliment with a vengeance by disappearing into the obscurities of "cultural materialism" and the like and leaving Chaucer and Shakespeare to the creative-writing classes. All the more reason, then, to welcome Roger Shattuck's *Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography* (St. Martin's Press, 368 pages, $26.95), a meditation on the moral limits of intellectual inquiry ranging so freely over the entire sweep of Western literature and modern

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scientific discovery that it is as if Snow had never spoken.

Shattuck's particular concerns are, first, the irresponsible celebration by literary critics of the violent pornography of the Marquis de Sade and, second, the appropriateness of research into genetic engineering and weapons of mass destruction. Shattuck, a professor of French literature at Boston University at the end of a laureled career, worries that "curiosity strikes us far more as the beginning of wisdom than as the beginning of sin"—and that this may not bid fair for our cultural health.

In seeking to bring a lifetime's literary study to bear on the moral challenges inherent in society's astonishing technological advances, his effort is much to be commended. It is only a shame that his discussions of science and public policy are as disordered and unsatisfying as his treatment of the theme of "forbidden knowledge" in Western literature is elegant and rich.

"Are there," Shattuck opens by inquiring, "things we should *not* know? Can anyone or any institution, in this culture of unfettered enterprise and growth, seriously propose limits on knowledge? Have we lost the capacity to perceive and honor the moral dimensions of such questions?"

He begins the search for answers with an account of the idea of forbidden knowledge in Greek literature (Prometheus' theft of fire from Zeus) and the Bible—Adam and Eve eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the builders of the tower of Babel seeking to make themselves equal with God, and Lot's wife looking illicitly on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In each instance, curiosity is destructive. Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden. God confounds the language of the Babel-builders and they fall into dissension, their tower in ruins. And visitors to the Dead Sea in Israel may still see a pillar of salt—the very one into which, as tradition has it, Lot's wife was transformed.

Shattuck then pursues his cautionary tale into detailed literary case studies of masterpieces of the Western tradition in which "forbidden knowledge" is given definitive treatment. *Paradise Lost*, *Faust*, *Frankenstein*, and other works remind us that the question of limits on human inquiry has always been at the center of Western culture.

PROMETHEUS

Shattuck is a fine storyteller, and so the retelling of great stories from our tradition is enjoyable for its own sake. His greater contribution, however, comes when he gets properly outside his subject and demonstrates that the tradition is as blind to the problem of forbidden knowledge as it is aware of it. Many of us know of Prometheus, who illicitly gave fire to man, and Pandora, who brought grief and evil into the world. Few know that, in the original, the two episodes were connected: Zeus sends Pandora to earth *in retaliation* for Prometheus' insubordination. This part of the tale was excised from later tellings of the Greek myths, to parlous effect. For Prometheus without Pandora is truth without consequences, and Shattuck's whirlwind tour through the great overreachers and disobeyers of Western civilization demonstrates that a kind of blindness about the consequences of forbidden knowledge shadows the progress of the tradition from its very beginnings.

Shattuck makes a similar point in his discussion of Faust, the necromancer who sold his soul to the devil in return for unlimited knowledge. Comparing Christopher Marlowe's treatment in the 1590s with those of the German playwrights Goethe and Lessing two centuries later—in which Faust is *not* damned, but saved by God's grace—Shattuck shows us how the Enlightenment's faith in man's ability to penetrate the world's mystery greatly diminished the sense of absolute limits on knowledge. In his last case study, "Guilt, Justice and Empathy in Melville's *Billy Budd* and Camus's *The Stranger*," Shattuck shows how the empathy that can disable moral judgment must also be considered forbidden knowledge. To understand is to forgive, as the proverb goes, but perhaps we can't afford to understand—and must merely condemn—the frame of mind of Camus's protagonist Meursault as he shoots a man unprovoked.

It's a shame Shattuck didn't leave his book there, for it would have been a very fine book. But Part II

begins, and the book begins to fall apart. There are two essays here. The first takes up the moral implications of the atom bomb and new developments in recombinant DNA that suggest eugenic possibilities beyond the dreams of Hitler. The second addresses questions of art and censorship through the horrific writings of the Marquis de Sade. And each essay is a mess, in which Shattuck circles hopelessly around his subject rather than addressing it.

The essay on science begins with the "tragic hero" J. Robert Oppenheimer, the "frail, fedora-wearing Prometheus [and] . . . chastened Frankenstein" who masterminded development of the atom bomb. Shattuck's emphasis on Oppenheimer's racking sense of guilt and a casual remark in the foreword suggest he believes the bombing of Hiroshima may have been unnecessary—but he develops no argument to persuade us of this. When he takes up recombinant DNA and gene-mapping, Shattuck solemnly emphasizes the medical and moral risks implicit in any eugenics program, only to observe that the Human Genome Project will, on the other hand, contribute "welcome therapies for cruel diseases." This is to do no more than formulate, somewhat inarticulately—certainly not to answer—the question at hand: *Given* that science can so powerfully alleviate certain miseries hitherto attendant on the human condition, how do we determine which expressions of that power are appropriate?

The essay on pornography is no better. Shattuck's bugbear is Sade's intellectual rehabilitation by French literary critics. This is essentially a parochial quarrel with (admittedly depressing) trends in Shattuck's particular corner of academia: It's hard to get excited about the ready availability of cheap editions of a pretentious and hifalutin 18th-century pornographer in a world where it's easier for a minor to buy a copy of *Hustler* than a pack of cigarettes.

Shattuck doesn't even set out the questions basic to a serious discussion of the issue: Can one's behavior be corrupted by fiction? How do we distinguish between pornographic and erotic art? The Bible has sexually stimulating passages: Should it be banned? Irving Kristol dealt trenchantly with these questions 25 years ago when he wrote that pornography's "whole purpose is . . . to deprive human beings of their specifically human dimension"—and that pornography could therefore corrupt one's humanity as surely as the great books can enrich it. You don't have to agree with Kristol to have an intelligent view of pornography's dangers. But you do have to recognize the questions.

All said, *Forbidden Knowledge* does no more than suggest—elegantly, at times—that we have a problem. Perhaps Shattuck offers no solution because he does not speak from a perspective that can provide one. In the stories he tells, man transgresses again and again a limit set by God, or gods: It is clear that no vision of the human project can hope to restrain human ambition and curiosity unless it has a religious perspective. Whether the Enlightenment and the 200-year departure from a religious worldview it ushered in has brought us, thus far, more good than ill is an open question. Certainly, its secular vision cannot help us with "forbidden knowledge," and perhaps, because it is all he appears to have to work with, neither can Shattuck.

Or perhaps Shattuck, a literary man, has merely failed to make himself expert in science or the ethics of science, or in the history and philosophy, if there is such a thing, of pornography. Which is a shame: *Forbidden Knowledge* should have proved C.P. Snow wrong, and it has proved him right. ♦

Movies

O for a Muse of Fire!

By John Podhoretz

When the plays of Shakespeare are brought to the screen, directors usually take liberties with the text. They cut and rearrange scenes, set them in a place Shakespeare never intended and in a time centuries after his death. The movies are like *variations*; the language, the soaring poetry, the *music* are all Shakespeare's, but the key and meter are the province of the director.

Two new variations have just opened. One of them, an MTV-inspired *Romeo and Juliet*, is a calamity. The other, Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*, is a glorious piece of work, and one that brings to mind a heretical question: Is it perhaps the case that the cinema is the ideal medium for Shakespeare?

Consider: Stage actors tend to strike poses and go back and forth declaiming Shakespeare's poetry in a singsong that barely sounds like English. By contrast, the intimacy of film allows actors to speak in conversational tones, which makes the poetry more comprehensible and far more beautiful.

What's more, the movies offer directors an unparalleled opportunity to enhance and clarify the sometimes sketchy relationships between Shakespeare's characters. The tiny gestures that film shows so well—an exchange of glances, one hand touching another in secret—are nearly impossible to pull off on stage, where they must be performed broadly so the audience can see them. But a theatrical audience has to wonder: If it can see such gestures and glances, how do they escape the notice of characters who are standing right there on the stage?

The movies are made for the effortless transmission of character and detail through cross-cutting and close-ups. These techniques also make it far easier to stomach one of Shakespeare's most annoying devices—the way he advances the plot by having his characters overhear important conversations by happenstance or spy on one another in the most obvious ways. These moments always play awkwardly on stage—if *you* can see actors hiding, it's difficult to believe that the characters standing three feet away can't. But on film characters really *can* hide out of sight in a closet, or behind a hedge; they can walk down a corridor as an important conversation comes wafting to them in an echo.

And only special effects can capture the most imaginative examples of Shakespeare's poetic vision. The climax of *Macbeth* features a bizarre supernatural occurrence—a forest advancing like an army on Macbeth's castle—that could only be realized on film. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* are rife with real magic, and magic is never more real than in the movie theater. (Imagine how effective it would be for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'s Bottom to morph into a creature with a donkey's head instead of simply having a Halloween-style costume placed on his noggin!)

In all these ways, Shakespeare was made for the movies.

Now, before you convict me as a philistine corrupted by our cultural wasteland, let me call Shakespeare as a witness. In the prologue to *Henry V*, Shakespeare bemoans the shortcomings of the theater as a medium for a play whose settings are as far-flung as England and the Continent. He calls the stage "this unworthy scaffold," even insults it: "Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France?" He entreats his audience to engage their "imaginary forces" and somehow bring themselves to see the horses, kings, and million men at arms he wishes he could place before them. And when he calls for a "muse of fire" to bring to three-dimensional life the scenes that had to remain stage-bound in his own time, he almost sounds like he had a movie in mind.

Shakespeare's other plays span continents, cities, forests, godforsaken islands, the heavens, and the earth. Years pass; seasons change; nature itself is a living, breathing presence. He may not so openly plead for a muse of fire, but the greatest of all writers simply could not limit himself to the physical confines of the stage.

Most plays, most great plays, do limit themselves. That is why they usually turn into rotten movies; they were conceived and written to be played in a contained space and no manner of cinematic trickery can transform them. Despite dozens of attempts, only one good movie has come from a Chekhov play (*Vanya on 42nd Street*), only one from Shaw (*Pygmalion*). What of Molière? Sheridan? Congreve? The Greeks and Romans? Forget it.

But there have been many notable Shakespeare films. There are the four movies Laurence Olivier made: *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, and *Othello*. Not to mention two other *Hamlet*s, one with Nicol Williamson and another with Mel Gibson. (No, I'm not kidding. Rent it.) Ian McKellen's *Richard III*, Orson Welles's *Macbeth*, and Paul Scofield's *King Lear* are all unforgettable. And then there is Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V*, one of the very greatest movies ever made.

To this list we should add the

new *Twelfth Night*. It is only the second notable movie from Trevor Nunn, whose work with the Royal Shakespeare Company established him as the foremost interpreter of the Bard in our time. His *Lady Jane* was stiff and stagey, like most movies made by men of the theater. But *Twelfth Night* is so fluid and well-conceived that Nunn seems to be possessed by the very "muse of fire" Shakespeare sought.

Truth to tell, *Twelfth Night* can really set your teeth on edge. A shipwreck separates an inseparable brother and sister. Each thinks the other is dead. The sister washes up in a hostile country and disguises herself as a boy. She falls in love with the local duke, but he thinks she's just an innocent young boy. He enlists her as a surrogate suitor in his desperate pursuit of a lovely local noblewoman.

The noblewoman is in mourning because of the death of *her* brother. She immediately falls in love with the transvestite sister and proposes marriage. The sister flees in horror. Then her brother arrives; he is his sister's spitting image. The noblewoman meets the brother. Naturally, she thinks the brother is the boy she loves. The brother does not quite understand why this woman he has just met is so wild for him, but he accepts her marriage proposal anyway. The lovelorn duke is furious. He thinks the boy has betrayed him.

What follows is a scene during which the brother exits and the sister enters, and the sister exits and the brother enters, and everybody thinks they're the same person. People say things to the siblings, and they have no idea what is going on. It takes them about 20 minutes to figure it all out, and those 20 minutes are so frustrating you feel as though you're going to have an anxiety attack. Finally, everybody pairs off. The curtain falls.

Twelfth Night is usually played as a knockabout farce, but Nunn has been struck with a brilliant insight—that *Twelfth Night* is actually a play about *yearning*. The transvestite sister yearns for her brother and for the duke. The duke yearns for the noblewoman. The noblewoman yearns for her dead brother and for the cross-dressing sister she thinks is a boy. Even the play's comic roustabouts, who live with the noblewoman, are sick with longing. Her maid longs for the love of the noblewoman's drunken cousin, who longs for the maid as well. The butler longs for the noblewoman, as does her permanent houseguest. Only the noblewoman's omniscient Fool is free from the hunger that ravages the *dramatis personae*.

> A HERETICAL THOUGHT: PERHAPS MOVIES ARE THE IDEAL MEDIUM FOR SEEING AND LISTENING TO SHAKESPEARE.

The melancholy extends even to these roustabouts, who engage in the kind of vicious practical joking that characterizes Shakespeare's comedies. They trick the insufferable butler into believing that the noblewoman returns his love. She is disturbed by her servant's flirtatiousness, and seeks her cousin's counsel. The cousin says the butler has gone mad and locks him up in a pig sty outside. By the time he is let out, the butler is a broken man whose grief, rage, and shame cast a pall over the joyous conclusion.

By making clear the consequences of this practical joke, Nunn brings out Shakespeare's most awe-inspiring quality—his ability to present an almost infinitely shaded series of perspectives. An admirable character is sure to do or say something ignoble; devious creeps like Polonius and demonic villains like Iago speak the most basic truths. Every Shakespeare character gets his say; every character is allowed to make his case.

Nunn uses some very subtle cinematic devices to quiet the play down and bring the melancholy romance to the fore. A close-up on the transvestite sister's face when she is close to the duke brings out both the love of his proximity and the pain of her predicament. Two scenes are combined into an exquisitely edited expression of the way in which sister and duke and noblewoman pine for one another. The nighttime revels of the comic sidekicks move back and forth between a dreary kitchen and a musty living room; only by degrees are they able to throw off the shackles of their drunken depression and find the high good humor that eludes them as dawn begins to stream through the windows.

Nunn's casting is flawless. A wonderfully gloomy Ben Kingsley presides over the production as the Fool, whose deep understanding of the human condition pleases him not a whit. Imogen Stubbs (Nunn's wife) is enchanting as the cross-dressing sister. Nigel Hawthorne, so masterful in *The Madness of King George*, is heartbreaking as the silly butler.

There are a few good performances in the newly released *Romeo and Juliet* as well—Pete Postlethwaite's Friar Laurence and Miriam Margoyles's Nurse—but Baz Luhrmann's clamorous movie is an atrocity. Just because film is the ideal medium for Shakespeare doesn't mean the plays won't be subjected to all the breathless illiteracy and disrespect Hollywood can muster. But then, Hollywood's illiteracy and disrespect are no worse than the illiteracy and disrespect with which the plays are usually staged these days. ♦

Song of Myself

by William Jefferson Madison Monroe Jackson Wilson Roosevelt Clinton

Actual Excerpts, in Free-Verse Form, of the President's Victory Speech on Election Night 1996

CANTO THE FIRST

I'm ready if you are.
I want to say to all of you here and to all of the American people, no words can convey the gratitude I feel tonight for the honor that has been given to me.
Today I went down to the train station.
I took Chelsea to the ballot with me.
I thanked God that I was born an American.

CANTO THE SECOND

I thank the members of my wonderful family.
I thank the friends of my lifetime.
I thank the people of my beloved native state.
I thank you for staying with me so long.
I thank the finest Vice President the country has ever seen.
I thank Tipper for her friendship.
I thank the members of our Administration.
I thank all those who are part of the permanent service to the President.
I thank especially my Secret Service detail.
I thank the leaders of our party.
I thank all those who stood for what we believe in.
I thank you all and wish you Godspeed.
I want to thank the employees of the nation's government.
I thank those who served this Administration and our cause who are no longer here tonight.
I must thank my pastor.
I thank them all for bringing me closer to God and to the eternal wisdom without which a President cannot serve.

CANTO THE THIRD

I would like to say a special word of thanks to Senator Dole.
I ask you to join me in applause.
I thank Jack Kemp.
I had a good visit with Senator Dole.
I thanked him for his love of our country.
I applauded the campaign that he fought so bravely.
I thanked him for the work we did together to advance the common cause of America.
I wish him well and Godspeed.

CANTO THE FOURTH

I vowed to turn our country around with a strategy to beat our challenges.
I thank you from the bottom of my heart.
I will do all I can.
It is hard for me to believe that it was 23 years ago when I first began to go to the people of Arkansas to ask for their support.
I believe this and I have tried to live by it.

CANTO FINALE

I was born in a summer storm to a widowed mother in a small town.
I have worked hard to serve.
I did not get here on my own.
I got here tonight, my fellow Americans, because America gave me a chance.
I ask you to join me.
I say again, let us resolve to run our country the way we try to run our lives.
I am more grateful than I can say.
I will do my best.