IS THERE REALLY A GAY GENE?
CHANDLER BURR & CRITICS

the weekly Standard

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WHAT NOW?

The GOP Congress, Act II

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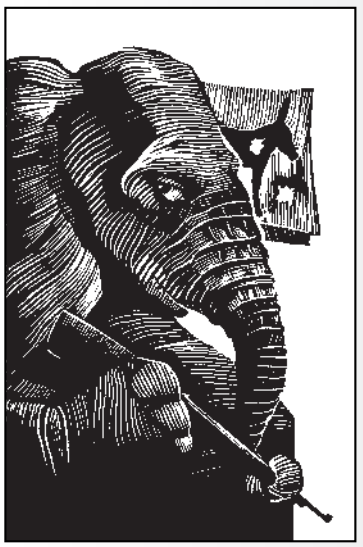
WHAT NOW?



Kevin Chadwick

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While You Were Away . . .

Like a company announcing its bankruptcy in the back of the classifieds, the *New York Times*, when forced to make public amends for past mistakes, does so as inconspicuously as possible. Over the holidays, the *Times*'s editors seemed to be using the absence of their many vacationing readers to dump all the most embarrassing articles they had stockpiled and—for one reason or another—could not bring themselves to dispose of privately.

First there was Duke University English professor Stanley Fish's day-after-Christmas op-ed. Fish ruefully admitted it was hard to argue for affirmative action in principle. His solution: Discard principle. "Let's stop asking, 'Is it fair or is it reverse racism?'" Fish wrote, "and start asking, 'Does it work and are there better ways of doing what needs to be done?'"

Three days later, the *Times* did a follow-up on its voluminous sky-is-falling "Downsizing" series of last spring, and found that most of those cast from their jobs, ostensibly by the cruel hand of global competition, have—out of the blue, according to the article—found new jobs at similar pay. One unfortunate, whose woes were chronicled in the series, is still trapped in his six-figure chief-financial-officer post, to which he commutes by private plane. As for the man whose broken-down car brought Pulitzer winner Rick Bragg close to weeping, the *Times* reassures us now that "the transmission on James E. Sharlow's Mercedes does not slip anymore."

That same day, Patricia J. Williams of Columbia Law School loudly defended "ebonics," but warned of one serious problem: the inability of white teachers to speak black. What troubles Williams about the Oakland proposal is "the reported plan to teach the city's teachers not only the structure and history of ebonics but also how to speak it. Imagine having teachers who speak standard classroom English flailing about in some really bad version of a standardized black English. If they end up speaking ebonics as badly as teachers who learn a little 'professional Spanish,' I cringe to think of the consequences."

Bravely, however, Williams suppressed her doubts and urged that, on the chance the federal government could be snookered for a few million, the Oakland school board should just "go for it."

The New Sheila Burke

Congressional Republicans say tax relief will be a top priority this year. And as always, the most important work will be carried out by the staff. That has ardent tax-cutters in the party fretting over the résumé of Lindy Paull, staff director of the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee. Though her boss Sen. William Roth was the Senate's first supply-sider, snipers say Paull's Capitol Hill tenure puts her outside the free-market tent. She previously toiled for Bob Packwood, a longtime moderate, and was a close ideological ally of Bob Dole's moderate chief of staff, Sheila Burke (the two collaborated in 1995 to help scotch some of the welfare-reform proposals supported by conservatives). Paull also successfully lobbied (with a few others) for a temporary Medicare premium increase during last year's budget showdown—a "good government" proposal that congressional Republicans now point to as one of their most misguided efforts of the past two years. No one doubts Paull's expertise on fiscal issues, and it is precisely her mastery of the tax code and her institutional memory that may allow her to adversely influence internal debates. Roth recently moved to provide some balance on the committee by appointing two conservatives, Frank Polk and Joan Woodward, to senior Finance Committee positions.

The New Haley Barbour

Outgoing New Hampshire governor Steve Merrill—the only major contender for the Republican party chairmanship who is not a member of the national committee— is pursuing a "gubernatorial" strategy to round up the support of the 83 members needed to win the RNC's Jan. 17 vote. His success with this approach is less than complete. RNC members are being summoned to the mansions of their respective governors, where they are finding not just their own governor but Merrill, there to lobby for himself. In states where the committee member owes fealty to the sitting governor, this has garnered some new commitments. However, in many states the committee member's tenure precedes the governor's, and the committee member doesn't like the surprise meet-

Scrapbook

ing. Several members have drawn the conclusion that if Merrill wins, the governors will be consulted first on political decisions by the RNC, not the state chairmen.

To thwart Merrill, talks continue between the self-described "outsider" campaigns of Texas chairman Tom Pauken, Ohio chairman Bob Bennett, and Michigan committeeman Chuck Yob about an alliance. An attempt is also being made to add Colorado committeeman Jim Nicholson to this group. These four candidates have enough committed delegates to put together the necessary votes to elect a new chairman. The stumbling block is that each candidate sees himself as top dog, and none wants to back out.

Woebegone Lake

The nomination of Anthony Lake as director of the CIA is in big-time trouble. And the word is that President Clinton won't fight too strenuously for confirmation. How come? The CIA was merely a convenient dumping place for Lake, whom Clinton no longer wanted as his national security adviser after four years. Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama, the new chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, suspects as much, though he says he won't decide on Lake until after confirmation hearings. But Lake shouldn't get his hopes up. Shelby told Fox News Channel that integrity, independence, and "being forthcoming and not duplicitous" are what a CIA director needs. Lake may fall short of Shelby's standards on all three. He didn't inform Congress when the administration winked at Iranian aid to Bosnia. He's tied to the White House. Making matters worse, Lake recently declared he's not sure whether Alger Hiss was guilty.

They're Back . . .

"Defund the Left!" was the rallying cry of conservatives in the early Reagan years who had high hopes of taking out the Legal Services Corporation—a high-minded-sounding federal agency that had veered from low-glamour work like representing the indigent in divorce court to the more exciting challenge of using class-action litigation to achieve left-wing political goals that the electorate had mulishly refused to approve legislatively.

Anyone under the mistaken impression that the conservative crusade ever got anywhere should note the latest suit of Texas Rural Legal Aid (TRLA). This local chapter of the Legal Services machine has shamelessly gone to court for two Democratic politicians who lost elections in which absentee ballots from military personnel provided the margins of victory. Last November, a couple of Republicans were elected county commissioner and county sheriff in the Texas precinct containing Laughlin Air Force Base. One won by 113 votes, the other by 267 votes; about 800 absentee ballots came in from servicemen. The TRLA has challenged the results in federal district court on grounds that the absentee military ballots were somehow improper. Texas Republicans are understandably exercised over this, since the tentacles of the Legal Services Corporation are supposedly prohibited from extending to partisan activity. George Washington Plunkitt, however, would not have been surprised. As one of his Tammany Hall cronies said: What's the Constitution among friends?

Casual

Don't Rescue This Rainforest

"You have to see it to believe it," said my wife. She had just returned from one of her trolling sessions at our nearby mall, and what I had to see to believe was a new restaurant—a "theme restaurant," called Rainforest.

Theme restaurants are nothing new, of course. From my own childhood I remember one with a cheesy plaster-of-Paris volcano in the center of the room that would periodically belch smoke and sparks. Another featured a Punch and Judy show. Puppets, volcanoes: nothing terribly elaborate; the idea—a wise one, as it turned out—was to pacify the antsy children and distract their parents from noticing the quality of the food.

But now we live in the age of perpetual uplift. Every story must have a moral, every amusement a higher purpose. If you've seen any children's television programming lately, you know what I mean. Barney the dinosaur isn't content to sing catchy ditties; they must simultaneously instruct the brats to brush their teeth, eat their vegetables, and look kindly on the cultures of other lands. In the age of perpetual uplift, everyone's a hectoring schoolmarm, even purple dinosaurs, and you can't escape the nagging.

In the same way, while it fills your belly and lightens your wallet, Rainforest the restaurant aims to raise your consciousness. The immediate theme, you needn't guess, is the rainforest and the impending destruction thereof, due to the profligate tendencies of unchecked consumption. The rainforest, as patrons of a certain age will recall, was once known as the jungle, a dismal swamp of darkness and danger best avoided by all but the most intrepid explorers. Now it's a burger joint, happy, frolicsome, air-conditioned, and bug-free: "an environmentally conscious family adventure," as the menu instructs.

Bogus foliage sprouts from the walls and dangles from the ceiling. A large waterfall is lit with a neon sign: "Rescue the Rainforest." Animatronic wildlife is everywhere. Fake macaws swing on their perches and squawk. At five-minute intervals, life-size gorillas begin to beat their breasts, rubber elephants raise their trunks and waggle their ears, drowsy leopards growl. The effect is deafening, not least because the uproar incites dozens of children to leave their tables to catch a better glimpse, hurtling themselves into the busboys and expectorating excitedly into your food.

When you are handed the menu, the uplift begins in earnest. Like so much environmental paraphernalia, the menu is an exercise in self-flattery and moral preening. It is printed—again, needless to say—"with environmentally friendly soybased inks" on "10 percent recovered fiber paper." As for the burgers, "no beef was used from countries that deforest rainforest land to raise cattle." The restaurant boasts that it uses "only line-caught fish big enough to have reproduced before it was harvested." And the pizza? "Deep in the rainforest, the tribal experience was a communal offering of food. To assist in your experience, we have cut our pizzas as was done in the rainforest." Yes, my son, whenever the Tasaday would phone Domino's. . . .

Normally, strenuous efforts at New Age uplift are enough to send me spiraling into a funk, but I was unexpectedly un-depressed by Rainforest. By the time my meal was over, in fact, I was almost exhilarated. For stripped of its eco-pretensions, Rainforest is still, reassuringly, a tasteless family restaurant in the American style.

Around the tables the *norteamericanos* waited impatiently for their food, the jowly dads bursting the seams of their relaxed-fit Levi's, the moms spilling out of their track suits, the plump kids fidgeting with smeary faces. The food itself comes in heaps, served on platters the size of Brazil. Here as elsewhere, lard seems to be the essential ingredient. And Rainforest operates on the principle central to all family restaurants: awesome waste. A single serving of dessert could keep the defensive line of the Detroit Lions in sugar shock for a week. The burgers weigh in at an inedible half-pound, and no one weeps for our bovine brothers and sisters who gave their lives that we might have a pointlessly large portion of their shanks, served on a toasted sesame-seed bun.

As you wobble out of the restaurant a rope line guides you into a retail shop offering all kinds of Rainforest-brand ticky-tacky: finger puppets, perfume, sweaters, T-shirts. Clerks swarm about like tsetse flies, dispensing wisdom about the rainforest and entreating you to buy, buy, buy. I made this discovery with enormous relief: Rainforest the restaurant is just another consumer con! Its proprietors might say they want to raise consciousness, but they really want to raise cash. The market overtakes all, conquers all, subsumes all—so that even anti-consumerism becomes an occasion to consume. This is not, I admit, a particularly uplifting message, but it's better than the alternative.

Andrew Ferguson

Selling Out to China

I was very glad to see "Selling Out to China" (Editorial, Dec. 23). I wonder where some of my fellow conservatives have stored their principles regarding human rights, human freedom, and personal liberty when it comes to writing and speaking about the totalitarian regime of mainland China.

Elizabeth Whitaker
Bethune, SC

The Clinton administration's shift in strategy on China policy, from public pressure and confrontation to engagement and cooperation, has all the appearances of a cave-in, but the choice should be welcomed—and not just by the business community. If current policy, which is far from perfect, is "constructed of faulty logic and gangrenous morality," your editorial is the product of ignorance and dogmatism.

While China is obviously still authoritarian, it is far from totalitarian. Introduction of a market economy may have preserved the Communist party's rule, but the preponderance of the evidence points to the erosion of the CCP's Leninist system and to the greater importance of bargaining and negotiating in the policy process. The market economy not only has raised the standard of living for the vast majority of Chinese, it has left people with greater room in their lives to pursue their own private interests and thoughts. Current policy is not based on "anti-anti-communism," but on a recognition of such change.

What is most galling about your editorial is that while you criticize the conventional wisdom, you do not provide any alternative. I would guess that, to you, "restoring honor to American foreign policy" means that not only should the United States stop engaging in trade and mutually beneficial relations with the PRC, it should do everything in its power to bring the regime down and replace it with a democratically elected one. If that's what you think, by all means come out of the closet and say so. Then, please let us know how you plan to cut off China's economic, cultural, and security ties with the rest of the world so that we can squeeze it until it collapses.

Squeezing China until it cries "Uncle" may make you feel good, but it won't bring the desired result. China is unlikely to democratize any time soon, but there are changes within its system that we can continue to encourage that are consistent with more humane governance domestically and more peaceful ties internationally. An effective approach requires nuance, endurance, and a willingness to accept—and recognize—incremental progress.

Scott Kennedy
Washington, DC

Not So Parochial

John J. DiIulio, Jr.'s description of the now defunct West Catholic High School for Boys brought back fond memories ("Parochial School Days, Golden Rule Days," Dec. 23). DiIulio contends that the discipline enforced by the likes of Brother Greg (as DiIulio calls him) in the 1970s is desperately needed in today's public schools. This thesis cannot be disputed.

By 1975, however, the year I graduated from West Catholic, the school was experiencing more '60s fallout than DiIulio's sources seem to remember. The worst of this was drug abuse, but gun-toting students were also making their first appearance around this time. The school uniform no longer included a blazer and a tie, but was downgraded to dress pants, dress shirt with collar, and dress shoes. This may still sound strict, but anyone who remembers '70s fashion can imagine the outlandish costumes that such a dress code permitted.

Modernization of the curriculum took place as well. Many courses in traditional disciplines had become electives (foreign languages and math were not required after sophomore year). This was because some of the instructors employed by the school in the early to mid '70s were baby-boomer radicals fresh from '60s college campuses and Vietnam. I will always remember a senior level English course called "The Other Sex in Literature" taught by this new breed of instructor. Our primary text was an anthology of *Ms.* magazine articles, many of which advocated gay rights and abortion. Writing assignments often concentrated on how we, as 17-year-old males, were coming to terms with feminism and female sexuality.

Many of the Christian Brothers who ran West Catholic High School were themselves young, progressive baby-boomers looking to change the face of education. True, they enforced the Golden Rule, but they were not so very parochial.

Tom Masciantonio
Philadelphia, PA

Debating the CPI

In "Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics" (Dec. 23), Irwin M. Stelzer recounts the Consumer Price Index debate as provoked by Michael Boskin. About halfway through the article, Stelzer asserts, "If the Boskin commission is right, and it most certainly is . . ."

Whoa! Not so fast. Martin A. Armstrong, head of the Princeton Economics Institute, makes a powerful argument that inflation is actually much higher than the CPI. This is because the CPI does not include the cost of government or its debt. It is neither a "cost of living index" nor a "purchasing power index." But government is the highest growth sector of our economy, and neglecting its impact distorts true inflation.

Armstrong's figures show that the annual cost of the federal government has increased by an average of 20 per-

Correspondence

cent since 1988. Total federal spending has been rising at 4.5 percent per annum and is set to explode in 1997.

The CPI may say that we do not have much inflation, but the players in the capital markets know better. That is why we see the contradiction between climbing stock prices and "low inflation." Stock prices are tracking real inflation, he claims, when one accounts for the growth in the cost of the government and debt service.

The corrective action should not be to ratchet down the CPI figures. It should be to switch to an index that shows both private- and public-sector costs. Reducing the CPI figures to make it easier to balance the budget is in no one's interest.

Bruce Crawford
Fountain Valley, CA

No Term Limits for Judges

The editorial "It's Time to Take on the Judges" (Dec. 16) contained The Weekly Standard's usual good sense in recognizing the extraordinary scope of judicial usurpation. But I fear one of the proposed cures may worsen the disease.

Term limits may rein in the courts to some extent, but judicial term limits will actually end up justifying judicial activism. The single most important argument for judicial self-restraint has always been the clearly undemocratic structure of the judiciary: It is not elected, and judges serve for life. Judicial term limits will allow activists to argue (1) that there is, in fact, a turnover of judges, (2) that there are always new appointments when political alignments change, and (3) that judicial activism is not so bad after all.

The alternative is not so easy, but it is the only real answer: As The Weekly Standard so often says, conservatives must eschew pusillanimity. In the early 1980s Republicans quailed before accusations that they were using *Roe* v. *Wade* as a litmus test for judicial appointments and consistently (and, as the results showed, apparently sincerely) denied this. Democrats like Bill Clinton, of course, proclaim that *Roe* v. *Wade* is a litmus test and get a free ride.

Republican presidents and Republican senators should use cases like *Roe* v. *Wade* and *Romer* v. *Evans* for a litmus test. They represent lousy constitutional law, and Republicans should be committed to intellectually defensible constitutional law.

Christopher Wolfe
Milwaukee, WI

Classification Woes

In "My Color 'Tis of Thee" (Dec. 16), Dinesh D'Souza expresses bewilderment at the Census Bureau's division of all humanity into six and only six racial classifications. Had D'Souza known the reason for this bureaucratic inanity, his bewilderment would have increased exponentially. The explanation is computer punch cards.

When the federal government started keeping labor statistics by racial category in the early 1960s, the information was stored on computer punch cards. The cards were 12 holes wide. There could be a maximum of only six racial categories for each sex. Even though computer punch cards have been obsolete for decades, their technological limitations continue to shape public policy.

John Sullivan
Baltimore, MD

In his commentary about racial classification and the U.S. census, Dinesh D'Souza refers—briefly but incorrectly—to an initiative by the Arab American Institute about ethnic measurement.

Although it fits nicely into his argument of "racial scams" that proliferate around the issue of classification, we do not—and never did—support a separate affirmative-action category for persons of Arab or other Middle Eastern descent.

We did respond to the OMB's request for comment on Federal Directive 15, the government's guidelines for measuring race and ethnicity. We stated that for some immigrant populations, racial categories were inadequate and confusing. In many cases, persons from the Middle East/North Africa region do not understand their racial classification or disagree with it, but most agree that the classifications relate more to ethnicity than to race.

It was in this context, and assuming that the race categories would remain mandated by law and federal program requirements, that we proposed a way to collect more accurate data—and only data—on our community. Neither jobs nor benefits nor even anthropological sophistry are at play here: simply a way to improve the system as it is currently operating.

As it turns out, there will be no new categories—racial, ethnic, or otherwise—in the 2000 census. The Arab American Institute is fighting to keep ethnic measurement, regardless of racial classification, a part of the U.S. census. Apparently we are not alone: A network of organizations representing most American ethnic constituencies—Italian, Irish, German, Hungarian, Armenian, Chinese, Greek, Polish, and French—is ready to go to bat to keep ancestry measurement a part of the census.

Helen Hatab Samhan
Arab American Institute
Washington, DC

Dinesh D'Souza responds: ***I am willing to take Helen Samhan at her word, but I am still unclear about what her letter actually means. The classifications used by OMB under Federal Directive 15 are precisely the ones that govern affirmative-action allocations. So if the status of Arab Americans is changed, possibly by giving Americans of Middle Eastern descent a new category of their own, obviously race-based privileges will be affected.***

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Stand By Your Man

The week between Christmas and New Year's, usually a dead time for punditry, sprang to political life when Newt Gingrich found himself in trouble yet again. For the media and the Democrats, the situation is simple: Newt bad, Newt forced to admit error, Newt dead.

Meanwhile, Republicans and conservatives are divided and ambivalent. Some on the right have devised ultra-sophisticated analyses of the ways in which the GOP would be better off if Gingrich were ousted as speaker of the House: Republicans would have a more solid platform from which to attack Bill Clinton for *his* fund-raising scandals; Gingrich is poison with independent voters; support for Gingrich now will cost Republicans in 1998. Other Republicans have equally sophisticated analyses of why Gingrich should stay: There would be a period of chaos if Gingrich were removed; a successor like Dick Armey would be just as unpopular as Newt in two months' time; only Newt can hold the moderate-conservative coalition together.

WHAT NOW?

TO HELL WITH STRATEGY. CONSERVATIVES SHOULD FOLLOW THEIR GUT AND DO WHAT'S RIGHT: NEWT GINGRICH MUST BE SUPPORTED.

There's merit in all these arguments, and we've been batting them back and forth as much as anybody else in Washington this week. And we now say: To hell with it.

To hell with complicated and cynical calculations of strategy when nobody knows what the real consequences of a Gingrich ouster would be. In fact, to hell with strategy altogether. It's time for conservatives to follow their gut and do what's right.What's right is clear: Newt Gingrich must be supported. And given the character of the assault on Gingrich by Democrats and the media, two short words provide all the guidance we need:

Screw 'em.

Whether or not Gingrich's ouster would be bad for the GOP, it would be bad for the country. It would make a hash of the basic principle that the punishment should fit the crime. Gingrich's alleged misdeeds are far less serious than Travelgate, Filegate, or any single one of the Whitewater tributaries. They pale in comparison with the misbehavior that led to the resignation of Democratic speaker Jim Wright in 1989. And they are orders of magnitude less sleazy than the foreign-donations scandals now engulfing the White House.

If Gingrich is forced out while Bill Clinton and Al Gore stay, we'll have ripped the blindfold off Justice. The lesson will be that abrasive guys who look bad on TV get punished for small sins while charming guys get away with big ones. If Republicans in the House dump Gingrich, they will have accepted and enshrined the principle that conservative Republicans with hostile media relations get judged by one standard, while Democrats are judged by a far looser one.

Gingrich appears to be guilty of sloppiness in the way he followed the tax laws governing not-for-profit organizations. If he were a private citizen and the IRS caught him doing what he purportedly did, his auditor would tell him not to do it again and send him home. That proves the real issue in the Gingrich controversy is not this ethics baloney. Gingrich's real crime is that he is unpopular.

Republicans, who sometimes like to laud political courage as a virtue, are proving to be divided on the issue of whether unpopularity should be a hanging offense. They need to stand firm, for they ought to know that Gingrich's unpopularity rests at least in part on the fact that he is a leader feared and disliked by the media and the liberal establishment.

Despite steady opposition from these quarters, the party Gingrich leads has come very close to being a

majority party. And the definition of a majority party is that it doesn't use its opponents' criteria to measure its own success. People on the right cannot let people on the left decide who speaks for conservatives, or who leads them.

Conservatives have difficulty with this. Conservatism has long suffered from an inferiority complex: As Richard Brookhiser once put it, "In their hearts, they know they're wrong." Remember those Reagan revolutionaries who looked to the editorial pages of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* to see whether they were doing a good job? Weren't the elections of 1994 supposed to have ended all that?

Kevin Chadwick

Being in the majority means that you stand by your leaders, though they are flawed, when they are under assault from your opponents. If their transgressions are of the magnitude of Gingrich's, you don't hem and haw and drag out the scrutiny process. You stick by your man and you tell his implacable enemies like David Bonior and the *Times* to stuff it. That's what being in the majority means, because the assault on Gingrich is an attempt to reverse the decision of the real majority—the voting majority of the United States.

We just had an election. The American voters decided to return a Republican majority to the House *knowing* that Gingrich would be speaker. So of course the Democrats are trying to use Beltway social pressure and national media pressure to overturn the results of the election. Of course they are seeking to use their cultural power to discredit Gingrich and thereby retroactively discredit the results of 1994. We trust that Republicans and conservatives will not allow themselves to be intimidated in January by an assault that failed in November.

If House Republicans decide at some future date that Gingrich doesn't offer the right leadership for them, then it will be perfectly appropriate for them to seek a different helmsman. But Gingrich should not be ousted when, as now, his enemies and the party's enemies would have forced the decision.

It may be true that, in the short term, dumping Gingrich could lift a PR burden from GOP shoulders. Media opponents would be deprived of a juicy target. But we also know that parties that behave in a cowardly manner lose the respect of the public. We know that parties that are intimidated by their opponents quickly and deservedly come to be held in contempt.

We know this because we can look across the Atlantic to see it. In 1990, the British Conservative party ousted Margaret Thatcher. There were realpolitik reasons to replace her; the Tories had far stronger reasons to get rid of her than the Republicans do to get rid of Gingrich. She'd had a run of 11 years, with all the accumulated scars. She'd made major policy errors. She had broken permanently with a large section of her party over Britain's role in Europe.

So the Tories dumped her. And they went on to win the next election (against a weak opponent). But now they wander around at night trying to wash imaginary blood from their hands. The Conservative party is at war with itself. It is a diminished party, and its leaders look small. Thatcher was abrasive, but she was large. The men who ousted her now appear to be weasels.

Even as the British economy is booming, Tory prospects are bleak, and the public holds a once-respected party in vague contempt. Meanwhile, Thatcher lingers in the national consciousness, sometimes annoying, sometimes shrill, but nonetheless personifying principle, while the men who replaced her, who are decent at heart, reek of opportunism. The party lives with a devastating legacy of that 1990 crime, which, at the time, was so easy to justify on the grounds of sophisticated political strategy.

The Republican party should learn from the Tories' mistake. Forget the fancy strategic footwork. Stick to the basics. Newt Gingrich's enemies are in full cry, demanding his removal. Give them the only appropriate response: Nuts. ♦

Stick It to the Democrats

By John Podhoretz

War, as Clausewitz said, is the continuation of politics by other means, but what happens when you live in a country whose opposing factions no longer take up arms against each other? Law becomes the battlefield, and its weird nooks and crannies become the terrain where the battle is fought. And the media become the central weapon of a war of attrition, in which shots are fired whose purpose is not to destroy, but to wear down, to demoralize, and to humiliate. We don't exile great men with whom we have profound differences to far-distant islands. No, we try to exile them from government buildings—unless, that is, those buildings happen to be jails.

This is the only way to understand the woes besetting Newt Gingrich right now. For 25 years, Democrats and liberals have used a set of ethics rules and laws they created (and reserve the right to amend at any time) as a partisan tool against Republicans and conservatives. When Republicans ran the executive branch, the Democratic ethics regime was ruthless and remorseless in pursuit of them through independent counsels and congressional committees. Some crimes were indeed committed, for example at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. But when there was no crime, nor even a violation of ethics, new violations were quickly dreamed up to make it look as though there were. Remember the "appearance of a conflict of interest," a category that, by its very name, admitted that there was no offense?

Now, with Republicans in control of the Congress, the Democrats have brilliantly shifted focus. Using a process that Newt Gingrich himself deployed to nail real, honest-to-God violations of ethics—Jim Wright's skirting the law by getting outrageous royalties on a so-called book, the conversion of the House bank and House post office into check-kiting and money-skimming playgrounds—they began a war of attrition with Gingrich's rise to power in 1995 that has now broken out into total war. The problem is that this warfare, in the Congress at least, has been one-sided.

It is time for the Republicans to fight back, and the battle plan should be simple: tit for tat. Democrats file an ethics charge, Republicans file an ethics charge. Democrats call for a special counsel on the slightest pretext, Republicans do the same. If a Republican is going to have to pay $250,000 in legal fees defending himself against mendacious allegations, so should a Democrat. If the Republican leader in the House is going to find himself perpetually distracted and demoralized by legal consultations and news stories, so too should the Democratic leader in the House. Dick Gephardt, by the way, owns a summer home more expensive than it would appear he can afford, while David Bonior kept a girlfriend on his payroll until he married her. Sounds like things that need to be looked into, don't you think?

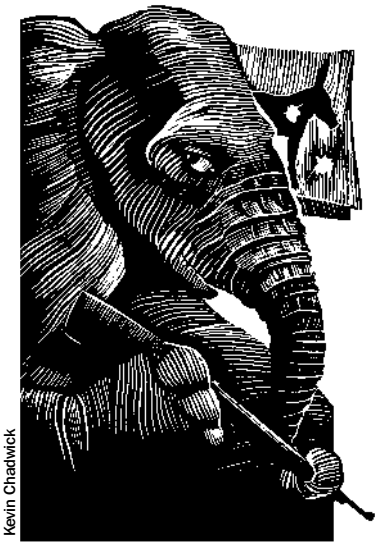
WHAT NOW?

IT IS TIME FOR THE REPUBLICANS TO FIGHT BACK, AND THE BATTLE PLAN SHOULD BE SIMPLE: TIT FOR TAT.

Let's assume that what Gephardt and Bonior did was perfectly kosher and that the ethics charges against them have no merit. All the more reason for a tit-for-tat strategy, since the Democratic ethics assault on Gingrich has been *utterly* without merit. Only the fact that the Democratic leadership and their friends in the media seem to think Newt Gingrich belongs in jail, solely for the crime of being Newt Gingrich, spares them from the charge of contemptible mendacity and outrageous opportunism. But precisely because they actually believe in what they're doing, they ought to be punished for it so that they learn never to do it again. The only way to end an unjust war is to engage, to repel the attacker and put him back in a box so that he no longer violates basic standards of decency and civil behavior.

In two years' time, the Democrats in the House have generated 74 separate ethics charges against Newt Gingrich. Two of those charges—two of 74!—now

threaten his political career. Since there is such high dudgeon in the media about what Gingrich actually did wrong, let's spell out the specifics. In two letters, he said his political action committee had no role in promoting the college course he taught. That was untrue, but there was nothing remotely illegal about GOPAC's relation to "Renewing American Civilization." The ethics committee said Gingrich should have consulted a tax lawyer—but a tax lawyer couldn't have helped. Only a savvy political consultant or a Nostradamus could have foreseen a time when a) Gingrich would be speaker and b) a Democratic minority would be out for his blood. If you go looking for criminal behavior in the actions of any man, as King Lear saw, "who should 'scape whipping?"


Kevin Chadwick

The tit-for-tat strategy offers a way out of the ethics morass, because it will affect the politics of Washington in the same way the independent-counsel statute has. The unjust persecution and prosecution of scores of Reagan and Bush administration officials (among them, full disclosure requires me to state, my brother-in-law Elliott Abrams) brought not a peep of protest from Democrats or the mainstream media. But now that the Clintonites have fallen prey to an independent counsel, suddenly it's no longer out of bounds to question the ethics regime's effect on the executive branch of government. This is a bit galling to many of us, since it is yet another example of the ways the media seem systematically to dehumanize people with whom they disagree yet proffer heartfelt sympathy to those they support. It is also galling because the charges being investigated by Kenneth Starr, for one, are far more serious and far more deserving of careful pursuit than anything Lawrence Walsh looked into.

But somehow, we always understood that only when Democrats felt the sting as badly as Republicans would we be able to find common ground in the dismantling of the ethics regime—that only when they sued for peace would peace be possible.

The same is true of the ethics regime in Congress. There is nothing more contemptible than using the law as a partisan weapon, not only because there is no real means of appeal but because such behavior devalues law itself. The only way to stop the manipulation of the law for unjust ends is to turn its full force on the manipulators. When they feel the sting of fire, when they have to suffer what Gingrich has suffered, they may call for a truce. ♦

The Speaker and His Friends

By Fred Barnes

Republican congressman Michael Forbes of New York says he agonized for days before deciding to oppose Newt Gingrich's reelection as House speaker on January 7. "I've had an upset stomach," Forbes says. "I haven't slept well." Some of his House colleagues are dubious. They attribute his sudden conversion to the anti-Gingrich camp to a Sunday morning editorial in *Newsday*, the Long Island newspaper. It extolled GOP congressman Peter King of New York, who has repeatedly criticized Gingrich, while dismissing Forbes contemptuously as "a Gingrich sycophant." Within hours after the editorial was published on December 29, Forbes was telling the *New York Times* that he wouldn't vote for Gingrich. The Forbes story got front-page, above-the-fold treatment in the *Times* and was a big item on TV news shows as well.

The most dramatic impact of Forbes's defection was on Gingrich and his supporters. Before compla-

cent, worried only about thwarting House Democrats, they began feverishly lining up Republicans to prevent opposition to Gingrich from spreading. Their aim was to isolate Forbes as the lone GOP renegade. The Gingrich forces mounted the most crisply organized Republican campaign since Congress was voting on the Contract With America in 1995. "It goes from 7 in the morning to midnight," moans Forbes. "They fax everything they have to every office. They're doing everything they can to hold on." The contagion was mostly, though not entirely, contained. "As Forbes goes, so goes Forbes," sneered a Gingrich ally. But it's not that simple. Gingrich probably will be elected speaker again, though an end to his troubles is nowhere in sight.

By December 30, the day after Forbes bolted, the save-Gingrich operation was in full swing. It included the full GOP leadership in the House, the 20 Republican committee chairmen, the staff of the National Republican Congressional Committee (headed by representative John Linder of Georgia, a Gingrich pal), and the Republican National Committee. Ed Gillespie, the just-resigned communications director of the RNC, was put back on the payroll to aid the Gingrich cause. He drafted talking points for his boss, party chairman Haley Barbour, which were distributed to Republican governors, members of Congress, and RNC members. The chief point: Democrats are trying "to win by perversion of the ethics process that which they could not win at the ballot box: control of the U.S. House of Representatives."

In a conference call that day to 130 (of 227) GOP House members, majority leader Dick Armey stressed the same point. The drive to depose Gingrich over ethics violations is a "Democratic conspiracy," he said. If that didn't stir partisan Republican juices, representatives Bill Paxon of New York and Chris Shays of Connecticut tried a different tack. They dissected—and belittled—the two ethics counts to which Gingrich has admitted. "It was done in a very sophisticated, detailed way," says King, who intends to vote for Gingrich despite misgivings about his ability to lead effectively. Paxon and Shays cited questions the media might ask about the Gingrich case and suggested appropriate answers. Later, Armey and Paxon spoke to the 20 committee chairmen in another conference call.

Gingrich had hoped the House Ethics Committee would dispose of his case in time for the vote for speaker on January 7. When the committee put off action until later in January, Paxon and Linder got the two Republicans on the ethics subcommittee that examined the case against Gingrich to release a letter of support. Congressman Steven Schiff of New Mexico says he and Porter Goss of Florida never discussed the letter with Gingrich. "I am not an insider with Speaker Gingrich and never have been," he insists. What Paxon and Linder "wanted to get out was as much information as possible" to persuade wavering Republicans. And it had to be "legally and ethically done," says Schiff, which meant they couldn't discuss the ethics case directly. So Schiff and Goss merely stated in the letter their intention to vote for Gingrich's reelection as speaker.

WHAT NOW?

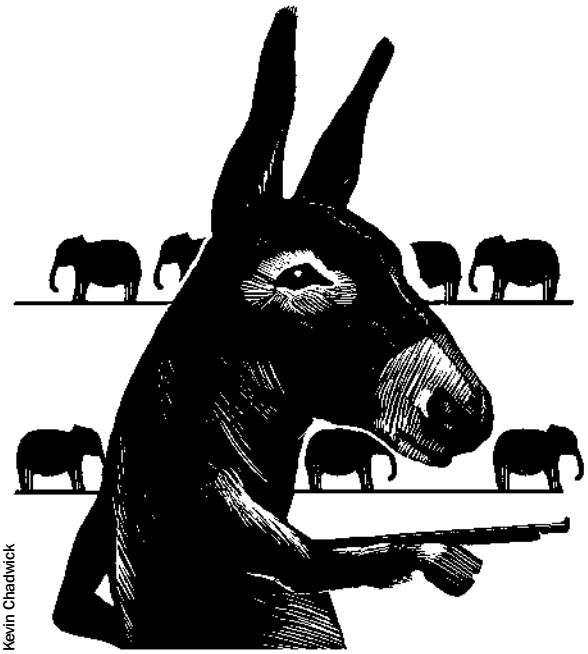
THE GINGRICH FORCES MOUNTED THE MOST CRISPLY ORGANIZED REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN SINCE THE CONTRACT WITH AMERICA.

The letter helped. Paxon keeps a master chart showing where Republicans stand on Gingrich. All the movement by uncommitted members was toward Gingrich. Of the two dozen or so Republicans who told reporters they hadn't decided, Gingrich's allies counted only a half-dozen as truly undecided. Some of the others claimed they were studying the case, a tactic that kept the media from hounding them. Gingrich was especially attentive to GOP moderates, many of whom represent districts where he is overwhelmingly unpopular. In the end, he figures moderates will prefer him to the more conservative alternatives, Armey and whip Tom DeLay.

With Republicans, there was another potent argument for sparing Gingrich censure, which would force him to step down as speaker: Democrats had gotten far milder treatment. "The last censure cases that I've heard about involve having illegal sex with 16-year-old pages in the House," says Schiff. Ethics charges against House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt (for giving false or incomplete information in House financial disclosure statements) and Martin Frost, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (for dispatching an aide to protect his district in reapportionment deliberations in the Texas legislature), were dismissed. Gephardt was chastised in a letter from the ethics committee and Frost was forced to reimburse the U.S. Treasury for some of the aide's salary, but neither was officially reprimanded. Since the cases are similar to Gingrich's, he should not face far stiffer punishment, pro-Gingrich Republicans

argue. When Democrats condemn Gingrich during the January 7 debate, "we intend to talk about Gephardt, Frost, and Barney Frank and Studds," says Paxon. Frank and Studds were involved in homosexual scandals.

Once Gingrich is reelected, the Democratic drive against him is "done" and Gingrich's problems are over, says Gillespie. No way. Just look at the schedule, starting with three events in January. The Gingrich case will be argued January 7, then special ethics counsel James Cole will outline the evidence against Gingrich at a public (and no doubt nationally televised) hearing, then the proper punishment for Gingrich will be debated on the House floor. Assuming Democrats lose, they're likely to demand investigations of Gingrich by the IRS and the Justice Department, and they're likely to get them. So the matter will drag on. "This is not going away, not in six months, probably not in two years," says Forbes.



Kevin Chadwick

Worse for Gingrich is the growing apprehension among Republicans about his ability to perform as their leader. On January 2, the Gingrich forces wanted to showcase a group of uncommitteds ready to back Gingrich publicly. They couldn't find any. Even some of those ideologically aligned with Gingrich are anxious. Forbes, after all, didn't split with Gingrich lightly. He agrees with Gingrich on virtually every issue, but worries that Gingrich won't be able to function as a national Republican spokesman. Sure, he got good press in New York for defecting, but that wasn't his only motive. Only a few weeks earlier he'd stood in the front row at the House GOP conference cheering Gingrich as Republican leader. Then just before Christmas, he read the 22-page report of the ethics subcommittee and was shocked. Since then, he says he's talked to two dozen other House Republicans who "are praying Newt will step down." King, also a conservative, thinks Republicans will be "disadvantaged" with Gingrich as leader. "We'll lose the ethics issue against Clinton" and maybe more, King says. "In this business, especially with Newt, you never know what will come out." ♦

An Agenda for the 105th Congress

By William Kristol

Now is the winter of Republican discontent, and it won't be made glorious summer by dumping Newt Gingrich. Nor, in truth, will it be made glorious summer simply by rallying behind Gingrich, though such a show of political courage would help. For the true cause of Republican discontent is the party's lack of a compelling national agenda. Fix that problem, and Republicans will do fine. Fail, and the prospects for fundamental Republican realignment could be dealt a devastating blow.

An agenda is an ideological impulse made practical and concrete. Vigorous, successful political movements always have agendas. For two generations, from the New Deal through the Great Society—even for a

couple of decades thereafter—the liberal wing of the Democratic party had many things it wanted to do. As a result, America experienced a lengthy period of liberal dominance. Sometimes the liberals tried to do too much, and often they tried to do things that were politically foolish. But try they did.

Republicans, too, have made mistakes these past two years. But you can't move forward if you don't try, and if the country is basically with you, you usually succeed—or make some progress, at least. There is nothing in politics more startling today, a mere two years after the huge Republican breakthrough in 1994 and a couple of months after the sustaining election of 1996, than the spectacle of Republican timidity and defensiveness now evident on Capitol Hill.

THERE IS NOTHING IN POLITICS MORE STARTLING TODAY THAN THE SPECTACLE OF REPUBLICAN TIMIDITY.

These weaknesses are sometimes disguised as shrewdness and self-confidence. "Let Clinton go first," Republicans on the Hill advise. "Make him submit his budget, which will entail 'cuts' in Medicare that approach the proposals of the last Republican Congress. Let Clinton stew in his own juices for a while, and then we'll take the credit."

This approach is not without appeal as a short-term tactic. But as a real strategy, it reflects a dangerous underestimation of Clinton and an overreaction to the errors of 1995. The fact is that hanging back could simply help Clinton move ahead in his project of building a New Democrat majority. At best, it would preserve the political status quo. But stasis is bad for an insurgent, new-majority party. Republicans lack the entrenched insti-

tutional advantages enjoyed by the Democrats, and so they need to be constantly on the move. We are debating Newt Gingrich's ethics today in part because we are not arguing about 20 different Republican assaults on the welfare state. As one Republican strategist acknowledged to me last week, "Right now, we're saying nothing to the American people." But there is plenty to say, and plenty to do.

One of the things Republicans should *not* say is that they are going to govern America from Capitol Hill. They cannot. One true lesson of the 104th Congress is that you can't govern against the president with a narrow majority in Congress. You can govern in tandem with the president, but if you do only that, you risk muddling what should be a stark political and ideological contrast. Congressional Republicans will obviously have their successes, and that's well and good, but they should let the 32 Republican governors show how Republican governance really works.

WHAT NOW?

ONE OF THE THINGS REPUBLICANS SHOULD *NOT* SAY IS THAT THEY ARE GOING TO GOVERN AMERICA FROM CAPITOL HILL.

What the Congress can do, above all, is frame key differences between the two parties, thereby laying the groundwork for a big victory in 1998 and a governing mandate in 2000. I suggest three areas of focus: the courts, school choice, and China. All three are important. All three have the advantage of sharply differentiating the Republican position (or what ought to be the Republican position) from the Clinton administration's. All three relate to basic American principles—self-government, opportunity at home, and liberty abroad. And all three bring together the various strands of the conservative coalition—except for big business, whose reaction to a con-

servative offensive on these issues will range from unenthusiastic to horrified. But then, what winning Republican issue in the last two decades has had the support of the business community? Not supply-side tax cuts, not Reagan's reversal of détente, not opposition to gays in the military, not unequivocal rejection of the Clinton health-care plan. Business discomfort will be a sign that the GOP is behaving as a majority party, and not simply as a vehicle for commerce.

The Courts

In the past two years, the pace of judicial abuses and usurpations has picked up, and matters will only get worse unless a vigorous counterattack is launched. Having lost popular support, liberalism now seeks to advance by stealth, under cover of tendentious constitutional interpretation. With four more years of Clinton judicial appointments on the way, it is time for a serious political effort aimed at putting the courts back in place. On this, virtually all conservatives agree, and the issue will allow Republicans to rally popular support on behalf of the elevated principle of self-government—indeed, the constitutional self-government that the courts now frequently subvert.

An effort to curb the courts would unite all of those who have been affronted by judicial decisions on abortion, gay rights, term limits, quotas, crime, assisted suicide, and other areas of political and social engineering. While many of these issues will have to be fought on their own substantive grounds, a comprehensive attack on the courts is a way to frame the issues—the social ones particularly—in the context of self-government. It is a way to channel moral fervor into an agenda both populist and constitutional.

There is a whole menu of possibilities for curbing the courts, from the very broad (constitutional amendments) to the relatively narrow (technical modifications of law and jurisdiction). What is needed first is a serious political and strategic discussion of the possibilities.

But a broader debate on judicial overreach is also necessary, for it offers an opportunity to define something like a conservative vision for America—one strikingly different from liberalism's vision. As Justice Antonin Scalia noted in *Romer* v. *Evans*, the effect of judicial intervention in recent cases has been "to take the victory away from traditional forces" in society. An attempt to tame the courts would allow Republicans to make clear they are confident that such self-government would lead to a better America—one with fewer abortions, stronger families, term limits for politicians (if the states so decide), no racial preferences, and a legal system that deals effectively with crime.

Given that there will be a rash of judicial activism to combat, scores of nominations to scrutinize, and a Clinton Justice Department to oversee, there will be no shortage of opportunities to highlight the Republican judicial stand,

and a myriad of chances to pick the ripest fights and advance the cause.

School Choice

Nothing was more appalling in the recent presidential campaign than the way Republicans lost the education issue to Bill Clinton. After all, the Democratic party is unambiguously the party of a failed education establishment, while Republicans are the advocates of education reform. Those reforms, as Chester E. Finn, Jr. recently argued in these pages, need to go beyond parental choice of schools to a broader agenda of standards and expectations. But school choice is the key, especially when it comes to offering opportunity to the poor. Many of us already have some school choice—we buy houses in areas with decent public schools or we send our kids to private ones. But poor parents have no such alternatives, and the best thing government can do for them is to encourage competition by allowing parental choice, so that the schools in which the poor are trapped will of necessity get better.

When the president's former domestic policy adviser, William Galston, writes (with Diane Ravitch) that big-city school districts are too often "job programs for adults at the expense of the children they are supposed to serve," Republicans should not hesitate to use this Democratic testimony to assail the defenders of a rotted status quo.

The most dramatic thing Congress can do is to address the problems of the one city over which it has constitutional jurisdiction. In Washington, D.C., the congressionally appointed financial control board has declared the school system a total failure, "an absolute F." Congress can insist on fundamental reform in Washington, including choice. Let the Democrats explain why poor children in the nation's capital should be stuck in unsafe and educationally disastrous schools simply because the teachers' unions and the education establishment—bulwarks of the Democratic party—are terrified of change.

China

Here too the Republicans can capture the moral high ground. Relations with China now constitute what may be our most important foreign-policy issue, and the Clinton administration has embraced a policy of constructive engagement that is virtually indistinguishable from appeasement. It is hard for Congress to make foreign policy (and sometimes unwise), but Congress can at least assure real public debate on all aspects of the Clinton administration's China policy—on issues ranging from Hong Kong to human rights, from China's nuclear proliferation to her military build-up. Republicans have a chance to tie together moral and strategic arguments for a tougher policy on China, and thereby recreate a Reaganite foreign-policy agenda that has been sorely and conspicuously lacking over the last few years. Reestablishing such an agenda may require a raucous fight with business interests that seek profits by pandering to the Chinese Communists. But such a fight would be healthy for the GOP, just as the Reaganite assault on Kissingerian "realism" vis-à-vis the Soviet Union 20 years ago proved good for the party, the nation, and the world

WHAT NOW?

LET THE DEMOCRATS EXPLAIN WHY POOR CHILDREN IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL SHOULD BE STUCK IN EDUCATIONALLY DISASTROUS SCHOOLS.

As with the courts and school choice, Republicans can pick occasions and venues most advantageous to making their case on China. They will have to make tactical choices, for example about where and how to link trade and moral concerns. But here there will be some liberal allies in the fight, along with the refreshing opportunity to craft arguments that transcend expedience and allow Republicans to doff the green eyeshade for once and talk about freedom and international standards of morality

All three of these issues have the strongest elements of the Republican coalition and populist force behind them, and all provide the opportunity for genuine political leadership. It would be nice if Trent Lott and Newt Gingrich took the lead on these issues, but it is not essential for the titular heads of the Republican caucuses in Congress to do so. In the late '70s, it was backbenchers Jack Kemp in the House and Scoop Jackson (a Democrat, no less) in the Senate—and for that matter Kemp's colleagues Lott and Gingrich—who helped a then-out-of-office Ronald Reagan frame an agenda for conservatives and the Republican party. Are there not today comparable political entrepreneurs who understand Machiavelli's teaching that, in politics, fortune favors the bold? ♦

Health Care: Beware the "Little Fix"

By David Frum

In President Clinton's first term, the Democrats had a vision: a sudden and dramatic takeover of the nation's health-care system that would upend the nation's economy and transform its politics. The plan was candidly megalomaniacal, grandiose, and preposterous. Unsurprisingly, the Democrats were clobbered.

Now, for Clinton's second term, the Democrats again have a vision: a series of opportunistic little interventions, each of which can be described as "modest" and "incremental," that will over time prepare the way for . . . a sudden and dramatic takeover of the nation's health-care system. This time nobody can credit them with candor.

We already have a law mandating a 48-hour hospital stay for new mothers; soon we will have a law mandating a 48-hour stay for women recovering from mastectomies. President Clinton favors a law to compel health-maintenance organizations to describe to subscribers the most expensive possible treatments for their ailments. He wants to oblige employers to maintain the health insurance of workers even after they are fired, and he wants the federal government to ensure health-insurance coverage for everyone under the age of 19, as well as all new mothers.

Unlike the 1993 plan, the president's health-care proposals do not add up to a coherent (if cuckoo) whole. Instead, they represent a series of calculated attacks on what remains of private markets for health insurance, and their effect will be to make private health insurance even more expensive and difficult to obtain.

It may be that the proponents of these suggestions do not mind that outcome. They may believe that the health-care village must be burned down if we are to save it. The more costly and inaccessible they can make private health insurance, the more quickly they can rebuild a constituency for . . . a sudden and dramatic takeover of the nation's health-care system.

But whatever the intentions of the proponents of these incremental steps in the wrong direction, Republicans need to be wary. Consciously or not, health-care reformers are pushing America toward a marketplace in which private insurance becomes increasingly unaffordable and more and more Americans depend on government to finance their medical needs. In a future like that, government spending will rise uncontrollably, valuable innovation will be stifled, and quality of care will inevitably deteriorate.

WHAT NOW?

THE PROBLEM WITH BILL CLINTON'S HEALTH-CARE PLAN WAS THAT IT WENT IN ENTIRELY THE WRONG DIRECTION. SO DO HIS NEW PROPOSALS.

Unfortunately, Republicans are failing to muster sufficient resistance to this grim outcome. If the private market is to be given a fair opportunity to show what it can do to deliver high-quality medicine to all, Republicans will need to think their way to an understanding of health-care reform radically different from that favored by the president and the congressional Democrats. The problem with Bill Clinton's 1993 plan was not that it went too fast, but that it went in entirely the wrong direction. Moving "incrementally" in the wrong direction may be an improvement over rushing to perdition; but it isn't a very big one.

Nobody would deny that America's health-care system suffers serious and seemingly intractable problems. The worst of these problems is that at any given moment some 30 million Americans, including almost 6 million children under the age of 11, have been uninsured for a year or more. These people are not the very poor; the very poor are covered by Medicaid. Typically they are low-wage earners whose employers will not buy insurance for them and who cannot afford to buy it for themselves. Should they get very sick—should they be hit by a car or suffer a stroke—they will probably find an emergency room to care for them and hide the expense in the bills of the paying patients.

But when it comes to more routine care, and especially preventive care for themselves and their children, they too often go without.

What these folks need is an inexpensive, uncomplicated health-insurance policy that will cover basic needs at a reasonable price. Right now, health insurance for a family or a membership in an HMO begins at $3,000 a year, a ruinous price for a worker bringing home, say, $18,000 in wages.

Bizarrely, virtually every idea that goes under the rubric of "health-care reform" would raise those prices even higher. Suppose America's working poor were having terrible difficulty affording clothes. It would hardly make sense to pass a law compelling them to shop only at Neiman Marcus or Saks Fifth Avenue. Suppose car prices were rising fast. Who would propose outlawing the sale of used cars? But that, essentially, is what the president's "incremental reforms" do.

Kevin Chadwick

In the last session of Congress, Republicans enacted and the president signed the first of these reforms, the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill. Kassebaum-Kennedy said that *if* employers purchase health insurance for their employees, they must be sure to include an ever-growing list of mandated benefits: equal coverage of mental illness, portability of benefits, and so on. But Kassebaum-Kennedy left employers a second option: declining to buy insurance for their workers at all. And obviously, some portion of employers will do just that. In fact, every time some posturing congressman dreams up some new mandated benefit to impose on employers, he is almost certainly guaranteeing that thousands or tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of marginal workers will lose their insurance altogether.

That is precisely what happened in the 1980s. Despite generally rising wages and benefits over the decade, the proportion of the labor force covered by private insurance actually shrank, as various state legislatures imposed their own local versions of Kassebaum-Kennedy. If Congress and the state legislatures really worried about access to health insurance, they would be taking precisely the opposite course: They would authorize insurers and health-maintenance organizations to sell cheap, stripped-down policies.

Instead, while ClintonCare 1993 aimed to outlaw plush policies, and then to confiscate and redistribute the money thus "saved," ClintonCare 1997 aims to make demagogic points by outlawing cheap policies. He's zero for two. Both sets of restrictions are dangerous and improper. Why shouldn't a software company competing for scarce talent be allowed to compete for workers by offering lavish benefits? How does it serve the public interest to tell a packing company that it must buy its $14,000-a-year workers either a $4,000 policy or nothing at all?

ClintonCare 1997 will do worse, however, than induce employers to cut off the care of their most vulnerable workers. It threatens to stifle improvements in the quality of care for everyone.

When Clinton first took up the cause of health-insurance reform, he was motivated as much by a desire to control rising health-care costs as by concern for the uninsured. The 1993 Clinton plan was festooned with the usual mechanisms for restraining costs: global budgets and price controls and dozens of other nasties that the designers of the Carter energy plan left behind in the basement of the Old Executive Office Building. Without these mechanisms, it was foretold, health-care costs would go on rocketing upward forever—for just like energy prices in the 1970s, health-care prices were presumed to move entirely independently of the laws of supply and demand.

In fact, the rise in health-care costs was coming to an end even as the Clinton plan was being drafted. Costs to employers have risen at a clip of less than 4 percent over the past three years, very largely because

employers—in a stunning example of the creative potential of the marketplace—have switched en masse from traditional insurance to health-maintenance organizations.

All of this must have been intensely embarrassing to the Clinton people. The very thing they believed the country needed was being done—and without them. So they changed tacks. Instead of imposing managed care on the country, they would *save* the country from managed care. Just as the health-care market was said three years ago to be indifferent to price, so today that same marketplace is said to be indifferent to quality. Which failure is the justification for Clinton's "anti-gag-rule" plan to impose a new federal regulatory scheme on health-maintenance organizations.

Again, nobody would deny that managed care has its faults. But what's also clear is that this brand-new industry is an intensively competitive and dynamic one. The airwaves are already full of advertisements offering different measurements of the "quality" of plans. In time—probably not in very much time—the marketplace will begin presenting consumers with clear indicators of the price/quality tradeoff offered by their different health-care choices. If the market fails to do so, government intervention might well be called for. But the sort of intervention in the managed-care industry envisaged by President Clinton has a much more grandiose—and counterproductive—goal in mind. Instead of alerting consumers to the price/quality tradeoffs of the different plans, President Clinton's anti-gag-rule law would force all HMOs to make one single price/quality tradeoff—a tradeoff that would again tend to drive the cheapest health-care alternatives off the market.

The president is making in the area of health care the same fatal decision that earlier generations of liberals made in the housing market: the decision to knock down cheap housing without worrying too much where the former occupants would go. And he's making these decisions because in the back of his mind he believes in the same ultimate solution that the old slum-clearers believed in: The government should do it.

A vast expansion of the federal government's power over health care will not require Ira Magaziner to devise some vast intricate plan from scratch. This might come as a surprise to most Americans, but the fact is that Congress has already constructed a national health-insurance program. It's called Medicaid, and it's simply waiting for someone to flip its on switch. Until 1986, Medicaid covered only people on some form of welfare: either Aid to Families with Dependent Children or the Supplemental Security Income program for the old. That year, Congress gave the states permission to expand the program's reach—at federal expense, since Washington pays between 50 percent and 83 percent of the states' Medicaid bills.

First, states were permitted to use Medicaid to insure children (that is, people under 19) in families whose incomes fell below the poverty line, whether their parents took welfare or not. In 1990, Washington *required* states to provide Medicaid coverage to all poor children by the year 2002. States were left free to go further still, and some have: In Vermont, children in families with incomes more than double the local poverty line are insured by Medicaid.

WHAT NOW?

WHEN AL GORE AND BILL CLINTON TALK LIGHTLY ABOUT INSURING ALL CHILDREN OR ALL MOTHERS, THEY ARE REALLY PLANNING TO EXPAND MEDICAID.

When Al Gore and Bill Clinton talk lightly about insuring all children or all mothers, they are thinking of expanding Medicaid even further. It must be clearly understood how frighteningly expensive that project would be. In 1986, when Congress authorized the expansion of Medicaid to non-welfare recipients, the program cost a little more than $27 billion a year. This year, the program will cost $105 billion. By 2002, when the mandate to extend Medicaid to poor children is fully imposed, the program will cost more than $133 billion. These are staggering costs too easily breezed by in a campaign speech's applause line.

For while the expansion of Medicaid may seem an uncomplicated and uncontroversial reform, the money must come from somewhere, and the people from whom the money comes will have to cut back on something else—quite possibly including the health-insurance purchases they were contemplating for their own families. Ironically enough, it is the working poor—the people who are having the greatest difficulty obtaining health insurance—on whom the burden of financing health care falls most heavily. The very poor get Medicaid. The better-off have their health insurance purchased by employers as a tax-deductible expense and receive it as a tax-free fringe benefit. But waitresses and mechanics, part-time students and shoe

salesmen must purchase what health insurance they can purchase with after-tax income. Like Canadian tourists in New York, they're trying to buy something that's already expensive with dollars worth only 75 cents.

American health care is being tugged in two completely opposite directions. Some want to take it further along the road to total state control; others trust that freer competition will improve quality and control costs. Ultimately, there can be no compromise between these two points of view—the reforms that each seeks to implement are (or should be) unacceptable to the other.

For those who believe in free markets, two reforms should have top priority:

First, ensure that the tax treatment of health care is the same for everyone. For executives to receive health insurance as an untaxed fringe benefit while their cleaning ladies scrape together after-tax nickels to enroll in a cheap HMO is both irrational and unjust.

Second, seek out and eliminate regulatory impediments to the sale of cheap, basic health-insurance policies. These impediments are especially common at the state level, where chiropractors, psychologists, and acupuncturists have had great success persuading legislators to require employers who offer health insurance to purchase plans that cover their services. True health-care reformers must resist, no matter how uncomfortable the fight, all the guaranteed minimum treatments that cynical Democrats will introduce in Congress after their success with the 48-hour maternity stay. Down that road lies health insurance so expensive that nobody except the most affluent can afford it.

James Blaine once joked that when Samuel Johnson called patriotism the last refuge of a scoundrel, he overlooked the possibilities of the word "reform." Seldom has that quip been truer than in the case of President Clinton's incremental health "reforms." Regulating and hobbling private health insurance until it collapses—leaving national health insurance as the only solution—may be a cunning political strategy for politicians desperate to find some new justification for Big Government. But to call it "reform" you would have to be a very great scoundrel indeed. ♦

Four Steps to a Smaller Washington

By Stephen Moore

As congressional Republicans reload for a new round of budget battles with the White House, they might well take the advice that critics used to give John F. Kennedy: less profile, more courage.

The revolutionary rhetoric of the early days of the 104th Congress far outdistanced that Congress's fiscal achievements. Shortly after the 1994 election, Newt Gingrich triumphantly declared that Republicans would "radically transform the way government works by Easter." The question now is, Easter of which year? To be sure, the GOP did grind out some impressive work. It cornered Bill Clinton into committing to a balanced budget by 2002, thus (one hopes) limiting Democratic wish lists for new spending. It cracked welfare reform. And its 1996 budget produced the lowest rate of increase in federal spending in nearly a generation. The $107 billion deficit that resulted is nearly $100 billion less than Clintonomics would have wrought.

But unfortunately, this progress may prove to be short-lived. Even with the slightly better numbers forthcoming from the Congressional Budget Office, the deficit is expected to gallop in the wrong direction for years to come, hurdling the $200 billion mark by 2001 and the $250 billion mark by 2005. (Clinton's veto of Medicare and Medicaid reforms explains much of this increase.) It's a good bet that, without a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution, the present $107 billion deficit will be the low-water mark for at least the next decade.

So where do Republicans go from here? Right now, their strategy is hopelessly timid and adrift. Outlined below, therefore, is a four-step game plan for the 105th Congress.

Stephen Moore is director of fiscal policy studies at the Cato Institute.

1 Whenever and wherever the president offers specific proposals for domestic-spending reduction or tax cuts, Congress should instantly snatch them up. The rope-a-dope strategy of letting Clinton go first on spending cuts, Medicare, and tax relief makes sense in the aftermath of the 20-month-long blitzkrieg of demagoguery from the White House and the union bosses. So, the day after Clinton releases his budget, the House and Senate should immediately approve all of his proposals to make government smaller or less costly, then send them back for the presidential signature. Bipartisan agreement that government is too big and costs too much is a good thing. And even an Olympic-caliber contortionist like President Clinton would be hard-pressed to explain a veto of his own budget recommendations.

Be warned, however: This tactic promises only small, symbolic victories. For the past four years, the Clinton administration's budget submissions have been flimsy. The Institute for Policy Innovation recently discovered that Clinton is the first president in a quarter-century to propose higher spending than the level later approved by Congress. To expect a stockpile of useful ideas in this year's Clinton budget is to believe that, just this one time, Lucy is going to hold down the football for Charlie Brown.

When asked during the campaign to list federal programs that America might live without, the administration identified a grand total of three: the Tea Tasters' Board, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and a dairy farm owned by the Naval Academy. The total savings? Twenty-million dollars—about what Medicare spends in a half-hour. We can expect from Clinton's January budget what this administration always produces: a high, spiraling punt back to Congress. After that, Gingrich, majority leader Trent Lott, House budget chairman John Kasich, and the rest are going to be left with the heavy lifting. Which leads to the second step.

2 The balanced-budget amendment must be preeminent in the political fight over the budget. The amendment is one of those rare issues around which smart politics and sound policy coincide. Yet it is a strange fact that the Left appreciates the implications of the amendment to a far greater extent than do many on the right. The Children's Defense Fund, the labor unions, the education establishment, and countless Keynesians moan that the balanced-budget amendment would mean the slow fiscal strangulation of domestic programs. They may well be right. For at least the past three decades, deficit finance has been the mother's milk of government's bloating.

The decision by Gingrich and other GOP leaders unilaterally to forge ahead with a detailed plan to balance the budget by 2002, despite the one-vote defeat of the balanced-budget amendment in the Senate, was an honorable one. But it led to a political dead end, because it allowed the Democrats to block tax cuts and rail relentlessly against spending reductions without having to propose a serious agenda of their own. Indeed, the absence of a balanced-budget amendment permitted the Clinton administration to bully Republicans into adding nearly $15 billion of deficit spending in the waning days of the 104th Congress. Trying to balance the budget without the moral and legal weight of a constitutional amendment behind such an effort will forever be an act of futility. A balanced-budget amendment is imperative because, without it, the political system will retain its heavy bias in favor of borrowing over the will to cut programs.

Republicans need to announce to the public the cold fiscal reality: Unless the balanced-budget amendment is enacted, there probably will not be another balanced budget out of Washington in our lifetimes. Any political effort to achieve one—by deficit-hawks in either party—will fail. So we first have to fix the rules of the game.

3 Get business off the dole. For more than two years, this issue has been nicely teed up, just waiting to be whacked out of the park. And the Republicans keep whiffing.

Imagine how differently the debate over the budget might have gone if, back in April 1995, Republicans had first targeted, not school lunches, but the Export-Import Bank, which provides cut-rate insurance to America's Fortune 500 companies. Or the Advanced Technology Program, which channels techno-pork to politically well-connected firms like General Electric, Texas Instruments, and Motorola. Or sugar subsidies to multi-mullion-dollar plantation owners. A high-profile attack on these giveaways would have discredited the Left's caricature of conservatives. Admits Sen.-elect Sam Brownback of Kansas, "We need to prove that we're willing to gore the ox of taxpayer-funded Republican constituencies."

But so far, they have not. Even though a flood of tax dollars is poured down the corporate-welfare rat hole each year, less than 15 percent has been cut since the Republicans assumed power in Congress. The price of spending programs for business—inside the Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, and Labor departments—exceeds $70 billion a year, enough to

halve the budget deficit *and* still have enough left over to "pay for" a cut in the capital-gains rate and the elimination of the inheritance tax. Reducing the deficit and erasing those anti-growth taxes would do far more to benefit American industry and U.S. global competitiveness than asking the likes of Sens. John Chaffee and Carol Moseley-Braun to pick industrial winners and losers.

Defunding big business would be political pay dirt for one other reason: Although there is no scarcity of corporate statists inside the GOP, it turns out that, on balance, liberal Democrats are the fiercest supporters of industrial pork. There are some prominent Democrats who have tried to reduce aid to dependent corporations—Sen. Russ Feingold, for one—but they are exceptions. In the 104th Congress, when Kasich forced up-or-down votes on many corporate-welfare poster children—the Overseas Private Investment Council (run by Ruth Harkin, Sen. Tom Harkin's wife), the Export-Import Bank, the USDA Market Access Program—Republicans by a nearly two-to-one margin voted to pull the plug, while Democrats by the same margin voted not to.

Kevin Chadwick

And much of this support for subsidies was rallied from the White House, the chief defender of the corporate safety net. For example, the rescue of the Commerce Department, the command-and-control center of the corporate welfare state, has become a Clintonite crusade. Exposing the Clinton White House and congressional Democrats as hypocritical defenders of business handouts, and Republicans as adversaries of such handouts, would only be a PR bonanza for the GOP. As Sen. Fred Thompson says, "All that is lacking is the good political sense to capture the issue."

4 Terminate a select group of vulnerable spending programs—particularly those that directly fund the Left. Apart from the House barber shop and the Consumer and Homemaker Education program, after two years of GOP control of Congress, there isn't much of consequence that the government was doing two years ago that it isn't still doing today. For a half-century, Democrats proved expert at creating a plethora of agencies, boards, and bureaucracies. One of the critical reasons voters lost confidence in the Democrats is that even some fervent believers in the New Deal and the Great Society don't imagine that these programs should be afforded eternal life.

Clinton's successful MMEE campaign mantra (Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment) has probably taken these four areas off the cutting board for the next two years. But that's fine. By singling out these as sacrosanct, he has tacitly acknowledged that everything else is in play.

Which leaves some big game for the 105th Congress to start hunting. The egregious Davis-Bacon Act, for example, requires union wages to be paid on federal construction projects and is estimated by the General Accounting Office to cost taxpayers $2 billion a year in inflated costs. These dollars flow directly into the political war chest of Big Labor. So, an end to this '20s-era program is a no-brainer: It saves taxpayers a bundle and goes to the jugular of the AFL-CIO. If Republicans don't have enough sense to stop aiding and abetting their mortal enemy, they deserve to have another $35 million times two spent against them by labor in 1998.

Consider also the Legal Services Corporation, which gift-wraps $300 million in taxpayer dollars each year to left-wing legal-aid groups. Much of the money is now used for class-action political advocacy—to fight welfare reform and tax reduction, to defend rent control and free public services for illegal aliens—rather than to represent poor people in small-claims court.

So, the 105th Congress needs to create a graveyard of obsolete federal programs. The tombstones should have epitaphs that read,

National Endowment for the Arts—1965-1997
For more than a generation, it spent $2 billion on offensive, obscene "art," assaults on American culture, and opera for wealthy suburbanites.

Federal Transit Administration—1968-1997
For nearly thirty years, it played Santa Claus to America's mayors. It is survived by the $2.5 billion Miami "metrofail" subway system and the Detroit People Mover, a trolley that carries virtually no one to virtually nowhere.

All of this is to say that the next Congress should set achievable priorities to shrink the federal government. Get results. Produce some body bags. Given the increasing fiscal conservatism of the electorate—voters in post-election polls indicated by a more than two-to-one margin that they favor less government and lower taxes—statists cannot possibly defend every inch of government's vast terrain.

"This time around, we clearly need to pay more attention to style points," concedes Sam Brownback. "When we cut government spending, we should do it in a friendly way."

Or, to put it another way: Speak softly, but carry a big ax. ♦

The Bad News About 1998

By Michael Barone

Many Republicans are taking it for granted that they will make big gains in the congressional election in 1998. The president's party, they like to say, usually loses big in elections in his sixth year. Speaker Newt Gingrich likes to quantify it: The party out of power, he says, has gained an average of 41 House seats in sixth-year elections. But Republicans should not be too quick to count their chickens. Big gains are possible, but they are not automatic—and Republicans might not gain at all.

Why? Go back and look at the reasons "out" parties have made big sixth-year gains. One reason: recession. The in-party was shrewd enough to get the economy to soar during the fourth year, when the president had to run for reelection. But then the economy tanked in years five and six, and voters switched. This helps explain why the Democrats made huge gains in 1974 and 1958 and why the Republicans kicked the stuffing out of the Democrats in 1938.

WHAT NOW?

REPUBLICANS ARE LICKING THEIR CHOPS OVER THE PROSPECT OF BIG CONGRESSIONAL GAINS IN TWO YEARS. IT'S TOO SOON TO CELEBRATE.

Another reason: hubris. After a successful reelection, the president felt he could advance all those causes he really wanted to push all along but hadn't dared to because they were politically unpopular. Thus Franklin Roosevelt, reelected in 1936, proposed to pack the Supreme Court and push the centralizing programs of his Third New Deal—and lost big in 1938. Thus Lyndon Johnson, after his 1964 landslide, pushed through Great Society and anti-poverty programs, formulated by professors but with little support from either politicians or voters, fought the Vietnam war with no strategy for victory—and lost big in 1966. Thus Richard Nixon, reelected in 1972, decided to fire his entire cabinet, to zero-out government programs after campaigning as an almost bipartisan centrist, and to keep covering up the Watergate burglary—and lost big in 1974.

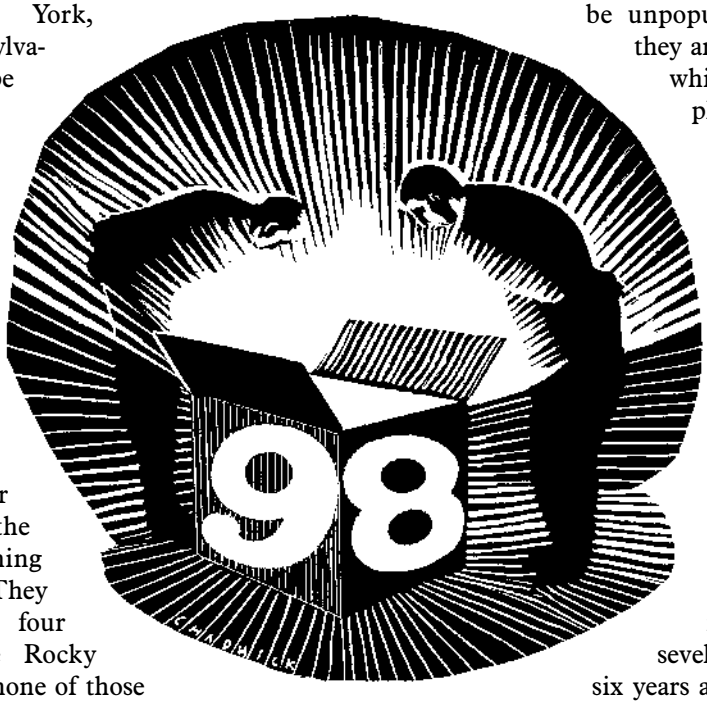
But neither hubris nor recession may be present this time. There may be a recession in 1998; there may not. Who knows? A lot of Republicans thought that a recession would help their presidential nominee in 1996. Unfortunately for them and fortunately for the country, it didn't happen. Nor is Bill Clinton waxing hubristic these days. His first post-election appointments—Erskine Bowles, Madeleine Albright, William Cohen—suggest a more centrist administration. It is left-wing Democrats, not middle-of-the-road voters, who right now can legitimately claim to have been ignored by him.

It may very well be that Bill Clinton's moment of hubris came in 1993 and 1994, when he pushed

Michael Barone is senior staff editor at the Reader's Digest.

through a tax increase, failed to pursue welfare reform, and allowed the first lady to propose a statist health-care plan. In other words, it may very well be that the Republicans won their sixth-year gains—52 seats in all—in the second year of the Clinton administration.

Nor do the realities of 1998 look all that great for Republicans. Democrats have some pretty clearly vulnerable Senate seats up next time, in California, South Carolina, and Illinois, and, depending on possible retirements, maybe in Arkansas, Kentucky, and Louisiana. But Republicans have some pretty clearly vulnerable Senate seats up too—Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Washington, maybe Georgia, Indiana, and Iowa. One can imagine Republicans losing Senate seats as well as gaining them.



Kevin Chadwick

In the House it's pretty easy to identify 30 seats held by each party the other party could conceivably take away. The problem for Republicans is that the environment is beginning to be less target-rich. They already hold all but four House seats in the Rocky Mountain states, and none of those four is likely to switch. In the South, the number of seats Republicans could pick up—seats where popular conservative Democrats might retire or where more liberal Democrats might be vulnerable—isn't very large. In the Deep South, I count only four, none an automatic pickup to judge by November's results. There are maybe four more such targets each in Virginia, North Carolina, and Texas, a couple more in Arkansas, and one apiece in Tennessee and Kentucky. And there are Republicans from the region who may be picked off, which would offset any gains.

Bob Dole carried the row of Great Plains states from Oklahoma to North Dakota, but these states are now so reliably Republican that there is only one—one!—Democratic congressman in the entire area. Not much room for gain. And in Iowa and Washington, two volatile states, Democrats hold only two seats Republicans could conceivably win. To make matters worse, Republicans have little or no chance of picking up seats in in the Northeast, where Newt Gingrich and the southern cast of the party hurt badly in November. That means significant Republican gains, if they come, must be made in the industrial Great Lakes states and California, and something new will have to happen for that to occur.

Only one thing can be said with much confidence: It is not likely that Republicans will suffer significant losses. The dynamic that has prevented the party in the White House from gaining in off-years will almost surely continue to hold. The president's party is stuck with all his positions, some of which will be unpopular somewhere even if they are all popular nationwide, while the other party is completely free to adapt to local terrain. It can be said with some confidence that the Republicans will not lose control of either house of Congress.

But there could be little change in 1998. It's happened before in the sixth year. The Republicans did not lose large numbers of seats in 1902, six years after William McKinley's victory, or in 1906, Theodore Roosevelt's sixth year, or in 1926, six years after the ticket of Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge swept to a huge victory. In all these cases, there was no recession, no hubris, no big losses for the party in power. Nor did Republicans suffer significant losses in 1986, Ronald Reagan's sixth year. True, they did lose control of the Senate, but that was less an expression of popular will than it was a matter of luck: In 1980, the Republicans had won 11 of the 13 closest Senate races, but in 1986 they lost five of the seven close ones. The public's response to Reagan was expressed more accurately in House results, in which Republicans lost only five seats.

As Bill Clinton consciously modeled his 1996 campaign on the 1984 Reagan campaign, it is possible that 1998 will follow 1996 as 1986 did 1984. Republicans would be foolish to assume that some basic rule of politics will automatically produce the results they desire in 1998. Only the old-fashioned way will they win big: They'll have to earn it. ♦

Special Correspondence

An Exchange on Chandler Burr's "Why Conservatives Should Embrace the Gay Gene"

Chandler Burr states in the Dec. 16 issue that conservatives are "unaware of the clinical research—all but universally accepted among biologists—showing that homosexuality is a biological trait." Contrary to what he asserts, there is no universal acceptance of this notion because most biologists have no vested interest in ideology and so can understand the complexities of the issue.

Burr dismisses or disregards the criticisms of Dean Hamer's "discovery" of the gay gene. Consider, for instance, the findings of George C. Ebers, a professor of neurology at the University of Western Ontario, whose

group has failed to replicate Hamer's findings. "We've been collecting families that have more than one gay person for five years," Ebers says, "and we've gone through something like four hundred pedigrees. In those [families] there is really no support for the idea that male homosexuality is X-linked [linked to the female sex chromosome]. The DNA tests that were done didn't even support [Hamer's] idea a bit. There wasn't even a trend toward increased sharing of haplotypes down there at Xq28" [the gay gene].

Hamer's research has also been called into doubt by articles in the journals *Science* and the *The Scientist*, which reported "not only . . . arguments over his interpretations of the data, but also . . . allegations of misconduct."

If Burr had been better informed or less ideologically committed, he might have informed his 38-year-old correspondent that he was misinformed about psychotherapy and that rather than only a slim chance of being helped, he had one chance in four of converting to heterosexuality. In a recent report of the treatment of 814 male homosexuals who were conflicted about their sexual orientation, 80 percent of the patients improved clinically and about 24 percent actually changed their sexual orientation. This is consistent with a large systematic study done in 1962 in which 27 percent of the patients were able to change from homosexuality to heterosexuality.

Such results might be improved if it were possible to discover what factors are associated with mutability. But for political reasons, research of that nature is virtually impossible today. Both of these reports are methodologically imperfect, but they are powerful enough to raise serious doubts about the immutability of homosexuality.

Contrary to what Burr believes and implies—that homosexuality is merely a matter of sexual orientation—homosexuality is a set of extremely varied behaviors ranging from pedophilia to transvestitism. Both clinicians and geneticists agree that the cause of this complex and varied behavior is both polygenic and multifactorial—a fancier way of saying both nature and nurture.

Yale Kramer
New York, NY

Contrary to what Chandler Burr asserts, American morality comes not from religion but from the Declaration of Independence, which guarantees, as an inalienable right, *the pursuit of happiness*, which unquestionably includes Homosexual conduct. It goes on to declare that "to secure [this] right, governments are instituted among men." Thus, there is an obligation upon American governments to provide active and affirmative support, encouragement, promotion, and protection of Gay people and our Homosexuality. That is our American morality.

I note that neither Burr nor anyone else that I know addresses the question of the origins of *hetero*sexuality. No valid answers will ever be found as to the causes of Homosexuality until we also know the causes of heterosexuality. Is there a heterosexuality gene, on which chromosome is it located, and how does it work? And why is no one asking?

Franklin E. Kameny
Washington, DC

Chandler Burr's article is cruelly deceptive on two counts. The first is his claim that there is "clinical research—all but universally accepted among biologists—showing that homosexuality is a biological trait." A gene that causes men to desire male partners has not been found, and it is highly unlikely that any such gene exists.

The real problem with the article, however, lies in the effect such talk about a gay gene has on men like the one who wrote to Burr hoping that some type of gene therapy could convert him from homosexual to heterosexual. If this man really wanted to change, his chances would be good to excellent. Over the past 30 years, I have been able to help homosexuals become heterosexuals. My success rate has been about 35 percent, and an additional third of my patients are now able to control their previously uncontrollable impulses towards same-sex sex. This is a modified form of success since in the age of AIDS this may save their lives.

Charles W. Socarides
New York, NY

As Chandler Burr states, there is no longer any doubt that heredity plays a crucial role in the causation of homosexuality. However, to call homosexuality "hereditary" conflates two possible etiologies that differ in a crucial way.

Burr tends to see the biological as *determinative*, as necessary and *sufficient* to cause homosexuality. This view considers homosexuality as equivalent to basic skin color: The genes determine everything. Now, he may very well be correct. But there is a second possible "hereditary" etiology that sees heredity as a necessary condition that *must be complemented* by some environmental condition (whatever it turns out to be) that is *also* necessary.

Science at this point can't tell us which of these two possibilities is correct. If it is the second, and I hope this doesn't happen, we will be back to square one for all discussions of whether acceptance of homosexuality by society at large will increase the number of homosexuals, whether such

acceptance will have deleterious (but not orientation-altering) effects on pubertal heterosexuals, and the like.

STEVEN GOLDBERG
NEW YORK, NY

As a conservative who has long thought there is a genetic predisposition toward homosexuality, I was happy to see Chandler Burr's article fleshing out the implications of this idea. There is one idea he may have overlooked: The genetic basis for homosexuality supports an argument for its social suppression. Rather than being a "defective" gene, the predisposition for homosexuality may have some beneficial role our limited knowledge cannot divine. Yet this trait might wither away if homosexuality is socially accepted, since bearers of this trait, free to consort among themselves, would then be less likely to produce children.

On the other hand, social suppression encourages latent and self-restrained homosexuals to join traditional society and have children, thereby preserving the trait. Ironically, preserving the genetic foundation of homosexuality may require the suppression of homosexual behavior.

ROBERT S. STEIN
WASHINGTON, DC

Chandler Burr isolates one of the double-edged double helixes tied to the hypothetical gay gene. If amniocentesis would allow expectant parents to identify future homosexuals, how many would abort their fetuses rather than raise gay sons or daughters? For the devoutly religious, which would be the greater sin, abortion or bringing more gays into the world? This certainly will create dilemmas galore, not just for pro-choicers but for some pro-lifers and conservatives who, Burr says, are "unremittingly hostile to homosexuality."

I'm astonished that Burr, a self-described "gay person," analogizes gay genes with "rancid-yellow cancerous lesions" in rats and describes in awe the idea of doctors with syringes "loaded with millions of engineered viruses" performing "genetic surgery" on gay men. Let's hope that Chandler Burr's chilling visions remain nothing more than the offspring of his twisted mind. After a calamitous century of left-wing social engineering, it would be nice to avoid a new century of right-wing genetic engineering.

DEROY MURDOCK
NEW YORK, NY

Chandler Burr's call for heterosexuality on demand gave me the creeps; his fantasy sounds like a cross between *The Boys in the Band* and *The Boys from Brazil*. But my principal reservations are based on the law of unintended consequences. Aren't conservatives supposed to be the ones who remember that when we meddle with structures whose complexity eludes our understanding—like markets and DNA—even with the best of intentions, we can produce monstrous results?

One need not be a Freudian to suppose that sexuality is mixed up in many unsexy parts of our thoughts and behaviors—indeed Plato suggests as much in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Burr, however, seems to suppose that changing one's sexuality is about as deep an operation as changing one's socks; he certainly does not trouble himself with the idea that a transformed sexuality might set the stage for unforeseen transformations in other quadrants of the soul. Witty, homosexual conservatives, for example, might awake one fine morning to discover that they have become boring, straight . . . liberals.

THOMAS PEYSER
RICHMOND, VA

Chandler Burr's article is the slickest piece of sabotage since the Trojans fell for the "gift" of the horse.

There is no "gay gene," any more than there is an "adultery" gene, a "pornography addiction" gene, a "premarital sex" gene, a "greed" gene, or a "theft" gene. The homosexual researchers whose work has been publicized have been far too cautious to make the claim that Burr repeats throughout his article. On the other hand, several reputable scientists have concluded that there may be a genetic predisposition to the type of personality that is vulnerable to the environmental factors that may produce homosexual desires, such as lack of bonding with the same-sex parent.

Burr ignores the devastating refutation of gay studies in an article in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* by two Columbia University psychiatrists. Burr also cites Dean Hamer's "gay twins" research at the National Institutes of Health, but fails to mention that a colleague of Hamer's has charged him with distorting data.

As for Burr's estimated 5 percent figure for the incidence of homosexuality, more than 30 surveys from the United States, France, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and other nations indicate that the figure is closer to 2 percent for men and 1.5 percent for women. Since there are more women than men, this places the overall incidence at less than 2 percent. The Kinsey-derived 10 percent figure has been thoroughly discredited, but homosexual activists are steadily trying to push the estimate to 5 percent or more. Given the pro-gay propaganda on television and in the public schools, they are on the way to achieving a higher incidence in fact, as more youth are seduced into experimentation.

Finally, Burr defines conservatism as "a philosophy holding that the environment has little to do with outcomes." Come again? Why are conservatives trying desperately to maintain a family-friendly culture, reform welfare, reduce the tax burden, and fight the scourges of pornography and illicit drugs? Societies that allow homosexuality to flourish ultimately self-destruct. In twisting biology to suit the purposes of homosexual activists, Burr seeks to hasten the day when all resistance to this well-orchestrated and vicious agenda is crushed, leaving religious opponents chained in silence. It's that serious.

ROBERT H. KNIGHT
FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, DC

While Chandler Burr offers a well-constructed game plan for conservative reaction to proof of genetically determined homosexuality, he skirts the real issue, which lies not with conservatives, but with homosexuals themselves. The possibility that science can find a way to reverse homosexuality poses a devastating threat to the political house of cards constructed by gay activists.

If Burr, a (self-described) homosexual, continues to report prominently and favorably about a way to zap the "gay gene," he may emerge as the Ward Connerly of this debate—bravely defying the powerful minions of political correctness while craven Republicans cower on the sidelines, in mortal fear of being branded bigots or homophobes.

O.M. Ostlund, Jr.
State College, PA

Chandler Burr responds:

There are two main discussions in the responses above. I'll deal with the scientific debate first, then the politics.

Yale Kramer makes a fundamental mistake: He doesn't distinguish between sexual "orientation" and sexual "behavior." An orientation is a basic biological instinct like hunger, which strongly directs us toward a behavior, eating, but which doesn't always produce the behavior—for example, during a low-fat diet (voluntary) or a famine (involuntary). Nor does Kramer understand the difference between clinical (phenotypic) data, all of which clearly point to sexual orientation's being a biological trait (this is what is accepted by biologists), and the (genotypic) search for the genes underlying that trait. Nor does he seem to realize that if current genetic understanding should prove faulty, the scientific reaction will be: Hmm, well, it wasn't this gene, let's look for another.

Kramer's line of attack is as fruitless as Frank Kameny's. Aside from criticizing the article for not addressing the "straight" gene (the article discusses it on page 23, right column), Kameny contends (in effect) that *any* person should enjoy the unfettered pursuit of happiness, no matter how sick or deviant; in other words, faced with Kramer's misinformed contention that homosexuality is equal to pedophilia (the scientific literature has demonstrated for years that tranvestitism, pedophilia, transsexualism, and sexual orientation are all discrete traits with completely different clinical profiles), Kameny would ignore the very research demonstrating that this is not so.

As for Kramer's claim, forcefully echoed by Charles Socarides, that therapy turns a homosexual orientation (not homosexual behavior) into heterosexual orientation (not heterosexual behavior), my response is the same as that of therapists, clinicians, and biologists for half a century: Show me the data. To repeat what has been repeated thousands of times, every one of these so-called conversions submitted to independent verification has proven to be behavioral change, the equivalent of forcing a left-handed person to learn right-handed behavior (writing, for example) and then claiming, "I have converted this person to being a right-hander."

Steven Goldberg and Robert Stein, in contrast, are both standing on solid scientific ground. If there is some "environmental condition," such as Goldberg describes, no one in a century of research has discovered it. This is not to say there couldn't be one. But the data indicate that if it exists it would be approximately as strong as the "social influence" in becoming left-handed (i.e., negligible at most). Stein's argument revolves around what geneticists call pleiotropy. His speculation is quite interesting and, I admit, disturbing to me as a gay person. If (and this is the big *if* here) the gene (or genes) are passed down through homosexuals themselves, conserving both an unnecessary pleiotropic "side-effect" (homosexuality) and some evolutionarily necessary primary effect, then societal acceptance of gay people leading to fewer biological offspring could indeed create problems for the species—which argues against such acceptance. I don't like it, and I hope the gene's transmission is otherwise, but we will eventually find out. And when we find out, Deroy Murdock will see that the ultimate effects of this research are not, in fact, the offspring of my twisted mind but rather the collision of the science of molecular genetics with political and moral beliefs. It is quite clear that, medically, genetic testing/engineering could conceivably lead to the elimination of homosexuality, which I don't support (Thomas Peyser is correct in warning us about the dangers of meddling with complex things we don't understand, particularly our genes). It is equally clear that, politically, this research is producing one of the most devastating contradictions of the far-left view of human nature ever, which I applaud. And oh yes: The modern age has taught us that it is always best to side with the facts.

This, in the end, was the crux of my article. Conservatives are dangerously misled by social engineers like Robert Knight who call themselves conservative but are really authoritarians engaged in a desperate defense of the notion that homosexuality is a lifestyle. O.M. Ostlund easily discerns the immense political opportunity that Knight cannot see in front of his face. Knight's letter is a catalogue of scientific errors (and like Kramer he hasn't done his homework; Dean Hamer has already been vindicated of the charges that the two of them repeat).

I was hoping Knight would actually quote from the *Archives of General Psychiatry* paper that the Family Research Council has been spending its money mailing across the country. It was written by neuroanatomist Dr. William Byne and is a brilliant critique of the genetic research. Yet Knight and the FRC are so baffled by science (or so indifferent to it) that they do not even realize this paper they are avidly promoting is not saying sexual orientation isn't biological; Byne believes sexual orientation *is* a biological trait. And this is a scientist who is on record and in print saying so.

Byne and other biologists find this use of his work by FRC amusing, but conservatives should not be amused. A replay of the Church's reaction against Galileo is the last thing we need.

Charles Darwin wrote, "We are not here concerned with hopes and fears, only with the truth as far as our reason allows us to discover it." It bears noting that Kameny and Knight, at opposite extremes of the political spectrum, care only for hopes and fears. Both hate the research. Knight does not want to recognize a reality that contradicts his own and Kramer refuses to recognize a reality that limits what he feels should be his unlimited freedom to grant an ever-expanding number of rights to himself and anyone else, no matter how dangerous or destructive they might be.

Conservatives should pay heed and not feel that the only place to make their stand is against science. They should instead face reality, make honest adjustments in their theories where science demands it, grab new opportunities where research provides them, and come out stronger. ♦

Homosexualizing Henry James

By Donald Lyons

Henry James spent his life avoiding sex and contriving in his fictions strategies of reluctance and shyness in its regard. But the age of Daisy Miller has yielded to that of Diana Spencer, and the Jamesian repressed has returned with a vengeance. A recent biography of James, *Henry James: The Young Master* by Sheldon M. Novick, presents itself as a chronicle of the writer's erotic life, and a new film of his great 1881 novel, *The Portrait of a Lady*, by filmmaker Jane Campion thrusts into visibility the story's sexual subtext.

Sheldon M. Novick
Henry James: The Young Master
Random House, $35

Novick, the author of a biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes, is clear enough in his preface about what he is up to: He is going to imagine James's emotional life. "I have taken it for granted that Henry James underwent the ordinary experiences of life: that he separated himself from his enveloping family, that he fell in love with wrong people, that his first sexual encounters were intense but not entirely happy." And these sexual encounters were with "young men. . . . James's sexual orientation, as we now say, has been an open secret for a hundred years." Novick also frankly announces his intention to strip-mine the novels for sexual/emotional autobiography: "When James described some experience with apparent firsthand knowledge, when he evoked with stunning sensuality the experience of being kissed by a man or the memory of a successful seduction, his raw materials—as he always insisted [did he?]—most likely were his own memories." Fair warning.

Biography reflects the biographer's culture as much as that of its subject, and there is a feeling abroad that the time may be right for a new consideration of James's life. Leon Edel's five-volume life, which appeared from 1953 to 1972, was an attempt—noble, solemn, stiff, ponderous—to understand James according to the lights of a dogmatic Freudianism. If too eager to read this or that in the fiction as a function of James's unconscious (visible to Edel), the work was a great accomplishment and deserves more than Novick's sneers about homophobia and "giggling" (if anything, it was Edel's book that made clear the depth of James's later attachments to younger men). The 1990s being what they are, it was inevitable that we should see a biography fixated on James the gay. But the bulldozing crudeness and clumsiness of Novick's enterprise are staggering nevertheless. He recently told the *New York Times*, "Henry James writes primarily about, and for, women and gay men, which means he wrote about the majority." If Edel spoke from the Eisenhower-Stevenson age, this vision of novel-writing as canny, Dick Morris-like coalition building marks out Novick as the Clinton of James biographers.

James's early life was wonderfully interesting. He was born in New York in 1843 to an eccentric and nomadic rich family that roamed about Europe before it settled in Newport. His odd father scribbled articles and gave public lectures about a home-brewed religion that combined the crackpot utopianisms of Fourier and Swedenborg. Henry spent the Civil War years in Cambridge, Mass., at first as a student at Harvard Law School and then as a budding writer for journals in Boston and New York. He spent the rest of his twenties and his thirties learning to know and love three of Europe's sweetest cities: Rome, Paris, and London. He got to know everyone there, everyone in the creative line anyway, and not just Americans. And he read everything. With rigorous industry, he began to produce what is still arguably the richest oeuvre achieved by any American writer.

Novick tells this story—and much more of his own flamboyant invention—in the excited key of a Harlequin romance or an old twilight-love-that-dare-not-speak-its-name paperback. At 18, James was reading Balzac; in Novickese, this becomes: "Alone in his room, Harry wandered in Balzac's landscape. He observed the pure strong force of which marital love and the most dissolute and abandoned sexual passion were only different aspects. . . . Most fascinating of the men and women of Balzac's Paris was the squat, powerful, perversely attractive Vautrin: lover of boys, seducer, . . ."

Donald Lyons is theater critic of the Wall Street Journal.

Dissolve to three years later, to 1865: "In that epochal spring, in a rooming house in Cambridge and in his own shuttered bedroom in Ashburton Place, Harry performed his first acts of love." Sex was just what the doctor ordered to juice up Harry's writing: "The element that had been missing from his work was the strong force that binds people together, that confers on the imagination the power to give meaning to experience." So much for the old notion of sublimation; the new *People*-style bio insists that the pen must be lubricated by sex. And Harry wrote a lot. QED.

And his sex partner? None other than Oliver Wendell Holmes, then a young Civil War vet and womanizing pal of Henry's brother William. The evidence for this unlikely dalliance? A passage from a 1905 journal entry by James that speaks opaquely of his "*initiation première*" in 1865. As Millicent Bell has shown in the *Times Literary Supplement*, James in 1905 was talking of his long-ago *literary* initiation, of getting his first articles published. And the fact that Holmes, too, never made the faintest allusion to a mad springtime of taboo passion with Harry, Novick blithely brushes aside by saying that "the encounters with Henry James . . . evidently were not of great importance to Holmes." Don't bother Novick with evidence; he's hellbent on romance. His way with truth comes out in another reference to "that spring of 1865" when "an actor, John Wilkes Booth, during the performance of a play in a Washington theater, leaped from the stage into the boxes and fired a revolver at the president, killing him." Of course, this acrobatic absurdity is the reverse of what actually happened. Here too, Mr. Novick gets his facts ass-backwards.

Novick chases his simplistic theory of literary creation—Character A=Real-life Person B—through all the early novels. Cruisy James, it seems, had an active and constant sex life but, because of the cruel "Victorian strictures" of the day, couldn't write about it directly and so pretended he was a series of girls. *The Europeans* is a little comedy about a pair of European sophisticates visiting a Puritanical Concord (not Cambridge, as Novick thinks). According to Novick, James "took Longfellow's house, and clapped Lowell into it; and turned Howells into a plump, handsome blond parson. James himself peeped out from the grey eyes of his heroine, Gertrude, with disconcerting intelligence." *Washington Square* is the story of a cruel father, a mousy daughter, and a handsome fortune-hunter; for Novick, it is somehow about Henry James, Sr., and Alice James, the gifted but ailing daughter. There are problems with this reading: The imagined heroine, Catherine Sloper, was the "opposite" of Alice, while the fictional father was "the reverse" of Henry James, Sr. But never fear. The objections themselves become, with Alice-in-Wonderland logic, proof: "Perhaps even for this reason . . . it became a parable of a daughter's unhappy disappointment and her father's selfishness that might have been Alice's tale as well as Catherine Sloper's." Then there's a Novick tactic to which Millicent Bell has called attention: He weaves into his supposedly nonfiction prose phrases from James's fiction. Thus, some twenty pages before discussing *Washington Square*, Novick says that Alice's illness was "somehow" directed at her father and that "something in the mainspring of her affections had been injured." This, as readers of *Washington Square* will recognize, is a vulgarization of James's words about his Catherine: "The great facts of her career were that Morris Townsend [the suitor] had trifled with her affection, and that her father had broken its spring." Thus, in a circular and sly manner, Novick first abuses a phrase from a novel to analyze James's family and later uses his own analysis to interpret the novel.


Henry James

Chas Fagan

In Paris in 1877, James began an intense friendship with a curious Russian artist, Paul Zhukovsky (who later became part of Richard Wagner's entourage near Naples). James, in the fashion of the time, employed warm language in writ-

ing to his family about his new friend. Novick scents blood and is soon in full cry. Some time after meeting Zhukovsky, James took a brief, solitary vacation at a Normandy beach. Here is Novick's embroidery: "James took long walks on the seashore and along the downs. . . . He felt himself happier than he had been in a long time. The feeling of happiness came upon him somewhat to his surprise, and for a while he savored it and examined it without quite understanding why he should be so happy. One evening, he stood on the beach looking at the sea outside the casino. The sea looked huge and black and simple; everything was vague in the unassisted darkness. An immense conviction came over him, abruptly. It was like a word spoken in the darkness: He was in love." To confect this purple passage, Novick cannibalizes a description of a character in James's novel *Confidence*. But the icky language—as if *Death in Venice* were being adapted for *Melrose Place*—is prime Novick.

It should come as no surprise that James's greatest early novel, *The Portrait of a Lady*, gets similar treatment. Every place and person in the book is declared to have been bodily lifted from life: James's friend Mary Temple was "transmuted into" heroine Isabel Archer. Gilbert Osmond, a cold aesthete, "might have been" Paul Zhukovsky. And James, although in a sense every character, was especially villainess Madame Merle: "Deeply attractive . . . she was Juno, a goddess—old, old indeed. . . . Costumed as Madame Merle, James performed his greatest impersonation." And with this travesty (quite literally) of the creative imagination of a great writer, we may take leave of Sheldon Novick.

The Portrait of a Lady is the story of a young American woman in Europe—James's great theme. Isabel Archer hesitates among romantic possibilities: the noble Lord Warburton, the fraternal Ralph Touchett, the importunate Caspar Goodwood, the exquisite Gilbert Osmond. She makes a disastrously wrong, imprisoning choice and then tries to regain a measure of autonomy within the prison of her choice. The novel is a consideration of such Emersonian

topics as the infinite possibility of personality, the ecstasy and danger of life seen as omnivorous openness to experience. The story has, inevitably, a sexual/psychological subtext, but it is not clear how explicitly James wished readers to bound his tale in such terms. One of his subtlest critics, Richard Poirier, wrote that "*The Portrait of a Lady* would be a greater accomplishment if some of its psychological implications were made a firmer part of the whole design. James had a very tenuous and unorganized sense of the connection between sexual psychology, on the one hand, and, on the other, the desire for freedom and death. He had a very clear and conscious idea, however, about the relationship between freedom and death."

Jane Campion's brilliant film brings into the foreground the Jamesian subtext of Isabel's hesitancy before/pull toward/fear of sex. She opens with contemporary Australian girls talking about romance; cut to Isabel in an arbor refusing Warburton—"because he is too perfect," as she tells the ailing Ralph, her tenderly platonic lover. "You don't at all delight me," she says to her insistently phallic suitor, Caspar. In a usual plot, these two, sparring and angry and sexually charged, would be the destined pair. It is just possible that they are so here. Alone in her bed, Isabel caresses her own face, runs her forehead against the canopy's fringe, and finds, in a hot dream, her three possible loves on the bed with her, kissing or watching.

But it is the subterranean demon of the id, Osmond, who—in an underground Italian grotto, as pale light falls from an open cupola on high and a parasol nervously twirls—does master her with a serpent's kiss. It is the triumph of the sensual over the affectionate, a sadistic, bold wiping out of scrupulous hesitation. Isabel takes a trip to the East to contemplate Osmond's eerie possessiveness; during this trip—in an audacious image not in the book—Campion has beans in a frying pan repeat Osmond's words, "I'm absolutely in love with you."

Madame Merle, the evil arranger of Isabel's fate, is seen here (in the unsentimental but sympathetic portrayal by Barbara Hershey) as an earlier Isabel, a tragic first sketch of an American girl in Europe. Isabel grows tougher and smarter—more like Merle—in the marriage-jail, as the chiaroscuro images make clear. Sculpture—tombs of happy medieval couples succeeded by giant fragments in a scrap yard—traces her downfall, too. Grainy black and white is reused, after the trip East, for a final journey to England. Once green with promise, the country house is now white with snow. Crawling into Ralph's bed of death and cuddling the dying man, Isabel finds a "happiness" and a "love." Back in the arbor where she began, she squirms away from Caspar's enveloping maleness, runs in slow motion toward a French window that she does not open but is frozen against in indecision in literal and metaphorical "freeze frame." Death and sex, stasis and motion are held in final equipoise.

The performances are fine where it matters: Nicole Kidman's vulnerable straightforwardness as Isabel; Martin Donovan's wise frailty as Ralph; Viggo Mortensen's unapologetic strength as Caspar. The Osmond problem that has always bedeviled *Portrait*—How could she marry such a creep?—is not solved but rather exacerbated by the casting of the audacious but creepy John Malkovich in the role.

I've not been a fan of Campion's and thought her last film, *The Piano*, a clumsy piece of sexual psychologizing vitiated by overwrought symbolism and heavy-breathing humorlessness. (The *Saturday Night Live* parody called *The Washing Machine* nailed much that was silly in *The Piano*.) She needed, perhaps, the encounter with James to find an objective correlative and so to manifest a careful, clever, delicate artistry. She has here crafted a visual language adequate to a darkly sexual reading of the book. Campion's is not the only possible approach to *The Portrait of a Lady*, but it is an invigorating plunge into a subtext left unswum by James. ♦

Books

The Profound Hack

By J. Bottum and John Wilson

The science-fiction writer Philip K. Dick was a madman, an agoraphobic amphetamine addict periodically hospitalized for mental problems and profoundly psychotic for the last eight years before his death in 1982 at the age of 53. He was a clumsy prose stylist, whose disorganized, maniacal, and slipshod work was unsuitable for a generation of writers like John Updike and J.D. Salinger—masters of the meticulous and the careful. While they thrived under the patronage of the *New Yorker*'s fastidious editor William Shawn, Dick made a hard-scrabble living by hacking out pulp as fast as he could type. Between 1952 and 1960 alone, Dick pub-

Contributing editor J. Bottum is associate editor of First Things. *John Wilson is managing editor of* Books & Culture.

lished 89 stories in magazines like *Astounding*, *Worlds of If*, *Galaxy*, and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, as well as a half-dozen novels. He wrote 40 books in all, most of them out of print at the time of his death.

Philip K. Dick was also brilliant, and in the 15 years since his passing, he has proved a more influential writer than his meticulous and careful contemporaries ever were. Ask a young would-be artist or a garage-band guitarist what he thinks of Updike and the rest of the old *New Yorker* crowd, and you're likely to get a blank stare. Ask about Philip K. Dick and be prepared for a long conversation.

Dick's novels are as current as the latest issue of *Wired* and contribute to the cultural vocabulary at the end of the millennium in a way that the meticulous short stories of the 1950s can't. All of Dick's books are back in print. Several movies have been adapted from his stories and novels, most notably *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*. "Cyberpunk," a fiction genre dedicated to the idea that a new human consciousness is being created by computers, has simply taken Dick's atomic-age obsessions and transferred them to the world of the Internet. What's more, some of the most-discussed (and longest) American novels of our time, from Jonathan Franzen's *The Twenty-Seventh City* to David Foster Wallace's mammoth *Infinite Jest*, read like Talmudic glosses on ideas explored in more interesting ways in Dick's hack work.

As technology blurs the distinction between the human and the artificial, the real event and the simulated, Dick seems like a prophet to his fans. Why? Because his writings center on the idea that the universe itself is a conspiracy, a cosmic scheme to keep us confused and misdirected. "Often my characters have this feeling," he told an interviewer, "that they're being watched probably by something that's going to get them." That's putting it mildly. In *Time Out of Joint*, a small-town ne'er-do-well makes a meager dollar by winning a peculiar newspaper contest every few weeks. Over time, he realizes that he is, in fact, a mad genius being housed in a Potemkin village, his contest entries actually plans for Earth's war against invaders. He begins to uncover the truth when he has a series of experiences in which the surface of reality begins to dissolve before his eyes—a bus, for example, is actually two-dimensional, like a cardboard cutout on a stage, and his hometown is itself an elaborate stage set.

Such an idea may typify paranoid delusion, but in Dick's work, it is the only evidence of sanity. So it makes sense that Dick's worldview has become popular at a time when Oliver Stone is considered an American historian of note and lunatic Internet conspiracy theories are promoted into front-page news by the one-time press secretary to President Kennedy.

And yet the contemporary craze for Dick misses what lies at the center of his fiction, and what makes him an American original. For while Dick wrote prose that was serviceable at best, and devised plots so ridiculously sloppy that you could fall through the gaping holes, he had gifts many technically superior writers lack. His best work is shot through with a wondrous empathy for the petty troubles and small glories of everyday life, a bone-deep sympathy for marriage, domesticity, and long-term relations between men and women. And there is something deeper at work as well, something that gives his writing a timeless resonance: an ability to understand, and portray, the power of the religious impulse in the lives of ordinary folk.

Science fiction, Dick once

observed, takes as its true protagonist an idea rather than a person and thus differs from other fiction by deliberately "dislocating" the world rather than trying to reveal it. Dick's leading characters share an inchoate intuition that there has been a deep dislocation in their universe and a feeling that some unfathomable power is experimenting with them. In the universe of *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, things literally disappear when the characters stop looking at them. In *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, the insane populace of a planet that serves as a psychiatric hospital develop their own stable, if crazy, culture after they are abandoned by their caretakers.

Dick was writing about what a theologian would call "fallenness," the sense that there is something innately skewed about human life. "There is evil! It's actual like cement," exclaims a character in *The Man in the High Castle*, his most celebrated novel. "It's an ingredient in us. In the world. Poured over us, filtering into our bodies, minds, hearts, into the pavement itself."

His characters are aware that all is not well in their world, that they live in a skewed universe they are incapable of changing. Yet they soldier on, living their lives as best they can, and in some way discover that they are being offered a gift in their suffering and confusion. They are offered hints and tokens, cryptic messages and mystical signs, of a divine explanation for their plight, a divine justification for human suffering. They have reason to believe that they are in the hands of an all-knowing and unknowable intelligence.

From early novels like *Solar Lottery* and *The World Jones Made* to his more complex works of the late 1960s, Dick actually invented religions for his characters. His finest such creation is "Mercerism," the religion in the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (the source for the movie *Blade Runner*). The characters in the novel live in an increasingly infertile and lifeless world. Their pets are artificially engineered; they are finding it increasingly difficult to tell themselves apart from the human-like robots they have invented. They spend years saving up to buy a real goldfish—the insanely wealthy can actually afford a goat or a sheep—and then devote themselves to tending the little life they think themselves deeply fortunate to possess. Many find solace in the empathy they achieve through Mercerism: Gripping the handles of a "Mercer box," the communicant experiences "fusion" with the thousands of others who are performing the rite at the same moment. In its very conception, Mercerism shows the kind of religious impulse Dick's best science fiction was able to capture. But Dick's own religious impulses were to prove his undoing.

Born in 1928, Philip K. Dick was raised by his divorced mother in Washington, D.C., and Berkeley. At 14, he wrote his first novel and began his lifelong flirtation with psychoanalysis in therapy for agoraphobia and other psychological troubles. Married for the second time at age 22, he settled in Berkeley and became a professional writer, taking amphetamines to maintain the output of 60 pages a day he needed to support his family. In the 1960s, he turned almost exclusively to novels, producing 20 books in a decade. And in one of them, *The Man in the High Castle*, published in 1962, he found the proper match of novelist and subject.

Set in 1960s California after the

Japanese and Germans have won World War II, *The Man in the High Castle* portrays the social and political crisis created when someone writes a science-fiction novel in which England and the United States have won the war instead of the Axis. It becomes clear, by the end of the book, that the science-fiction novel has told the truth and that the reality we have been reading about is the lie. In other major novels of the 1960s, like *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Ubik*, and *Now Wait For Last Year*, Dick finds a way to describe "fallenness" such that it is written into the very structure of the universe, just as he does in *The Man in the High Castle*.

By 1971, the period of his best writing had come to an end. He was still taking huge quantities of amphetamines, his fourth wife had left him, he attempted suicide and was involved in a series of paranoid incidents (including a break-in he may have staged himself). To read the novels he wrote during this time is to experience the unsettling sensation that their author is in real danger, keeping himself from a psychotic break only by an enormous act of will.

A break finally came in February 1974, when a delivery girl from the local drugstore arrived at his door with a painkiller for his toothache. He asked her about the fish-shaped pendant she was wearing, and she explained that it was the "ichthys" symbol of the early Christians. For several weeks afterward, Dick believed he was living simultaneously in 20th-century California and 1st-century Rome: "The girl was a secret Christian and so was I. We lived in fear of detection by the Romans. We had to communicate in cryptic signs. She had just told me all this, and it was true."

After hanging an ichthys symbol in his own window, Dick began to see its reflections of sunlight as coded divine communication and claimed the coded beams of light showed him how to do everything from obtaining overdue royalties to adjusting the margins on his typewriter. His confidence in his revelations was strengthened when "tutelary" voices issuing from his unplugged radio at night told him that his son needed immediate surgery for an undiagnosed hernia. Rushed to the hospital, the child was discovered to be in real danger and was operated upon the same day.

Philip K. Dick

Chas Fagan

For years, Dick scribbled night after night on a manuscript that exceeded a million words by the time of his death. Its title—*THE DIALECTIC: God against Satan, & God's Final Victory foretold & shown to Philip K. Dick, together with AN EXEGESIS: Apologia Pro Mia Vita*—is an indication of its author's condition. The manuscript is a low-rent version of William Blake's mad, late work. But where Blake conversed with Isaiah, Michelangelo, and the angel Gabriel, Dick received revelations from a "transcendentally rational mind" he came to call VALIS (a "Vast Active Living Intelligent System").

VALIS was an attempt to unite all his mad, mystical experiences under a single sign, and he wrote a trilogy of novels on the subject—*The Divine Invasion*, *Valis*, and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. They were the last things he published and are so profoundly bizarre it is hard to imagine that any editor could have read them without despairing at how unhinged their author had become. Even though religion dominates the trilogy, it is a self-created religion that could make sense only to its creator, Dick himself. It is as though Dick had come to believe his own fiction and thought he could invent a religion that would be true in *this* world. Some grasp of an orthodox religious discipline might have prevented his worst excesses. Indeed, Dick's late muddle of mysticism, theology, and comparative religion makes an excellent example of the kind of thing orthodoxy exists to save us from.

The *Valis* trilogy makes for painful reading, and probably should never have been published at all. But when Vintage began in 1991 to publish oversized paperback editions of his works, the first volume the firm released was . . . *Valis*. Crazy and dark, psychotic and paranoid: That's the fashionable Philip K. Dick, the supposed icon and prophet. In the world of his self-proclaimed children—the brilliant stone-cold hipness of William Gibson's cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer*, the slick techno-fan-

tasies of *Wired* magazine—there are no ordinary people, there is no ordinary life. Everything small and human and domestic is stripped away, replaced instead by a grandiose and antinomian libertarian vision of humankind.

It seems that the very people who have made Dick a posthumous icon have misunderstood his work completely. The movie that first made him famous, Ridley Scott's visually staggering *Blade Runner*, got it all wrong even as it began the creation of the Philip K. Dick myth. *Blade Runner* begins with the protagonist Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) living the solitary life of a sexually twisted Philip Marlowe in a gorgeously hellish Los Angeles slowly disintegrating in a constant flow of acid rain.

Now look what Dick does in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*: He begins with Deckard and his depressed wife quarreling about her dependence on the feel-good device called a "Penfield mood organ" and concludes 24 hours later with an exhausted Deckard asleep as his wife, "feeling better, fixed herself at last a cup of black, hot coffee." The Deckard we meet at first is unable to grasp the emotions of anyone, even his wife. But at book's end, he is experiencing an empathy so capacious that it extends down to an artificial toad he has found on a dusty road.

The author's contemporary fans have a vision of human life strikingly false to Dick's own. For when he was not in the grip of madness, when he was not writing solely to produce words for money, Dick was able to show his readers that life could go on even in a "dislocated" universe. In the worlds of Philip K. Dick, dislocated or not, there will always be quarrels between husbands and wives, small betrayals and reconciliations, modest pleasures and simple love—just as there will always be hints and tokens of the complex love of God. ♦

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Parody

Advertising

Stuart Elliott

Kinsley Cyberzine Breaks New Ground Again

WHEN wunderkind editor Michael Kinsley teamed up with **Microsoft** last year to produce an online magazine called **Slate**, the magazine world braced itself for surprises from the daring Mr. Kinsley. But industry insiders are still reeling from his latest bombshell.

In a bold announcement yesterday, Mr. Kinsley said that Slate will now be printed with ink on paper. The printed paper will then be folded into "pages," stapled, and mailed to "subscribers"—a word coined by Mr. Kinsley to describe readers who have actually paid to receive the magazine.

"The time has come to think outside the dots—and frankly that's what I'm paid to do," Mr. Kinsley said in a press release hand-delivered to reporters. "Some people will say we're going too far too fast. But I think paper is something worth trying."

Paper is a porous material produced from trees.

Reaction was swift from the online magazine industry. "The industry has known for some time that online magazines have problems," said Larry Swork, a Seattle-based magazine consultant. "Just to take one example: Nobody wants to read them except guys with high-water pants and bad skin. With this paper idea, Kinsley leap-frogs the whole problem. And then putting ink on the paper—it's an elegant concept."

Mr. Swork was particularly admiring of Mr. Kinsley's decision to use mail. "Bringing the post office into the equation is sheer genius," Mr. Swork said. "Here you've got this huge postal service—trucks, planes, mailbags, the works. There's hundreds of thousands of employees with nothing to do but wear those goofy shorts and spray each other with automatic weapons fire. A visionary like Kinsley sees this and says: 'Hey, I can use these people.'"

In his statement, Mr. Kinsley said several readers had complained about the difficulties of reading Slate's longer articles on a computer screen. He cited the recent editorial exchange titled "If a Tree Falls in the Forest and Nobody's Around, Can You Hear It or What?" The dialogue, between contributors Bob Shrum and Paula Abdul, ran to 197,000 words.

Slate reader Paul Gofer, of Seattle, is delighted with Mr. Kinsley's innovation. "I can't afford a laptop," he said, "so if I want to read Slate on the bus to work, I have to unplug my monitor and the modem and the hard drive, schlep the whole thing down to the bus stop, try to find somewhere on the bus to plug it all in, then boot up—it's terribly inconvenient. And the bus drivers get mad as hell. Now Mike's solved my problem in one swoop. Who else but Kinsley would come up with such an idea?"

Mr. Kinsley said his staff supports his bold move, since several of them have recently succumbed to nervous collapse trying to access the magazine on their home computers. "Fortunately, the health benefits here at Microsoft are great," he said.