the weekly Standard

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DID BRUNO BETTELHEIM REALLY DO WRONG?
PETER D. KRAMER

BILL CLINTON LIAR LIAR

Carl M. Cannon runs through the litany of amazing excuses the president has been offering for his conduct in the campaign-finance scandal

The Revolt Against Self-Esteem
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the weekly Standard

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Cover by Kent Bain

Books & Arts

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Who Muscled Jesse Helms?

Why has Jesse Helms suddenly softened his opposition to the chemical-weapons treaty? The Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, thought to be an implacable foe of the controversial treaty, has now indicated he might allow it to come to the Senate floor for a ratification vote. He made the announcement the same day he was cavorting in North Carolina with his pal Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who wants the treaty ratified.

The official Helms explanation is that he's reached agreement with Democrats on most of the treaty's outstanding issues. But there's another explanation behind the startling announcement: threats from Senate majority leader Trent Lott.

For months, Helms had indicated that unless there were major changes in the treaty he would keep it bottled up in his committee and thus prevent the full Senate from voting on it. Democrats responded by threatening to block Senate action on a number of other measures if Lott couldn't promise consideration of the treaty by April 29, the date it goes into effect. So Lott dispatched one of his foreign policy aides, Randy Scheunemann, to the Senate parliamentarian's office to see if there was a way to spring the treaty out of the committee without Helms's consent. Yes, said the parliamentarian, it's possible. Lott then announced that the treaty would come to a vote once the Senate returns from its recess on April 7.

Helms has opted for now not to break with his leader. And with Helms's staff alarmed about being rendered irrelevant in the treaty-ratification process, many observers expect the Foreign Relations Committee to approve a resolution of ratification. But it's still possible that Helms will call Lott's bluff. After all, threatening to go over the head of a committee chairman in support of the administration is a bit of a risk for Lott. Getting approbation from the editorial pages of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* may not be worth it. And if Helms hangs tough, it's unclear Lott would dare to end-run him.

A Witty New Ad for School Choice

In this recent ad in a Milwaukee paper, the public school system manages to misspell 2 words out of 21. B+!

Scoundrel Time, Indeed

Shortly after Anthony Lake withdrew his nomination to become the CIA director, Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* wrote an extraordinary column, titled "Again, Scoundrel Time," in which he accused senators who opposed Lake's confirmation of McCarthyism. In describing the unraveling of the nomination, Lewis wrote—using the passive voice, though the piece was harshly ad hominem—"Then it was suggested that Mr. Lake was unpatriotic because he had resigned from [Henry] Kissinger's staff over the 1970 invasion of Cambodia." Who, we wondered, made such a suggestion?

Reached on the telephone, Lewis said that he had in mind Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, who had questioned Lake about the resignation, and perhaps the committee's chairman, Sen. Richard Shelby of Alabama. Did we doubt that Lake's patriotism had been impugned, the columnist asked? Well, yes we did. Lewis responded that a reading of the transcript would confirm the justice of his charge.

It does not. Shelby did not discuss the resignation, and Inhofe brought it up, not to call Lake a traitor, but to probe whether Lake's "strongly, even passionately held policy views" made him fit to act as a neutral purveyor of intelligence to the president. Inhofe also mentioned that Lake had written that he had

Scrapbook

joined a demonstration against the war on the day before he resigned; Inhofe added, "I [myself] demonstrated on different things." The context suggests that Inhofe was accusing Lake, not of treason, but of advocacy.

Oh, by the way, *Scoundrel Time* was the late Stalinist Lillian Hellman's deeply dishonest and self-serving memoir of the 1950s.

Transspotting

The "reinventing government" initiative that Al Gore launched in 1993 has begun to reward *all* sorts of reinvention. His National Performance Review Board has just recognized Richard Green of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, who wrote a computer program to streamline OSHA compliance. Last Friday the programmer accepted the award—as Jewelia Margueritta Cameroon, the woman into whom the former Mr. Green is reinventing himself.

He/she sent a letter to the *Washington Post* to inform them that by the time they read it, he'd be someone else. "I am in the process of changing my legal name to Jewelia Margueritta Cameroon and my legal gender to female." So, although Green/Cameroon wrote the program as a man, he/she would accept the award as a "transgendered female," on behalf of "me, other transpeople, and America." A similar letter went to Vice President Gore, imploring the veep to attend, since the award ceremony would be "greatly enhanced if either of you would congratulate me personally and shake my hand." Green/Cameroon a onetime Navy submarine crewman, didn't want to overplay his/her hand. "I understand," he/she wrote, "how your staff might be wary of allowing America to see an image of you or Ms. Gore touching me."

Not Again!

The *Washington Post*'s Reliable Sources column reported gleefully last week that a prominent Democrat received a fund-raising letter from the Republican party! The prominent Democrat was the campaign consultant Bob Shrum—and the wonder of it all isn't that one partisan ended up on the mailing list of the opposing political party (it happens all the time), but that the *Post*, or anyone else, thinks such commonplace anecdotes still make a cute story. Trust us: They don't. Enough already. We're sick of it. So sick of it, in fact, that this is the second time we've issued a ringing denunciation of the obnoxious journalistic trope. We don't want to have to do it a third time.

Casual

Miracle of the Mundane

Something strange happened to me the other day: I got a flat tire. And even stranger, I changed it. I am still dizzy with amazement.

I had always feared I would get a flat tire, but had never gotten one. That particular misfortune happened to other people. I would see them on the side of the road, doing their thing, and think, "That hasn't happened to me. It might. I should rehearse, because I haven't the foggiest idea what to do. I should really address it someday." But I never did.

So there I was, driving from Washington to Williamsburg to play golf, when I heard something. I was listening to a Bach cello suite. I turned up the volume. But I still heard something. I looked at the cars on either side of me and figured the noise had to be coming from one of them. My car was relatively new and in fine shape. But the noise persisted, louder. It was me. I pulled over and slowed the car to a jog.

I didn't know much about cars, but I knew I had a flat tire. There was an exit—the "West Point" exit, 20 miles from Williamsburg—and I took it. The sign said an Exxon was near. I determined to get to it, even if it meant totally ruining the tire, because I wanted, needed, people nearby when I stopped. If I couldn't get there, I would hitchhike, then call a friend, already in Williamsburg, to tell him that I'd miss that afternoon's round and that I required his help.

Understand, now, that up until then you could sooner have asked me to assemble a spaceship than change a tire. That had been the rap against me—humanist, you know, without an ounce of practical sense. A co-worker at a golf course once said, "That boy may read a lot, but he doesn't know to come out of the rain." Another friend said, describing a certain appreciation of comfort, "Jay's idea of roughing it is going a day without *MacNeil-Lehrer* and Nestle's Chocolate Quik." The stigma was not undeserved.

I limped into the Exxon and came to a halt. This wasn't a "service station"—those seem to be extinct—but a convenience store with some pumps outside. I approached the woman at the counter: "I have a flat: Can someone here help me?" No. "Well, is there any place around that could help?" Not on Sunday. She asked whether I had a spare tire. I blushed to answer, "I don't know, really. I don't think so. But if I do, do you have a jack?" No.

I then remembered the car salesman's giving me a tour of the vehicle. I thought he had shown me a spare. I looked. Do you know that there is a compartment underneath your golf clubs that contains a spare tire? Of course you do, because now that I do, everyone does. And not only that, there was a jack—brand new, apparently standard issue.

Great. Now that I had the necessary parts, all I had to do was find someone to change the tire and pay him. Only there was no obvious candidate. And self-reliance called. A spooky determination settled over me: I was going to change that tire—me, no one else—and furthermore I was going to do it well.

There were instructions on the compartment cover, and I was actually excited, grateful for the chance to prove something. The wrench unfolded as it should have, and I got the hubcap off. Step One, finished. Loosening the bolts came next, and then it was time to raise the car. The instructions here were murky—the illustrations as poor as the text—but I got daylight between the tire and the asphalt. The flat came off, and I rolled it to the side. Merit badges were due. I was cocky, greasy, and fired with mission. With time, I slid the spare on, tightened the bolts, and lowered the car to the ground, pulsing with accomplishment.

I strode into the store, smiled at the lady ("Yes, turned out I had a spare and a jack, ma'am—no problem"), bought a root beer, and went on my way—unflummoxed, undeterred, and unhelped, except by God, and a desire to be rid of a hindering suggestion of inability. I was close to smug, having undergone a rite of passage that conferred a new virility and a new confidence.

It's nice to translate a Petrarch sonnet, sure, but it's nicer to master the elementary and not to have to depend on the kindness of friends or access to professionals. Truly, I could not have felt more satisfied—not if I had been invited to join the French Academy, not if I had won the Masters (well, attended the Masters). I had gotten a flat, taken care of it, and proceeded. I want to do it again.

Jay Nordlinger

Alec Loves Newt

I am writing in response to Andrew Ferguson's "Starstruck Republicans" (Mar. 31). I would like to specifically comment on the references made by Ferguson to an interview I personally gave months ago to the entertainment magazine *US*.

The arts are a serious issue of national public policy and economic concern and have a great impact on the citizens of this country. Knowing of the House leadership's intent to eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts this year, I became involved in this issue. While negative rhetoric is sometimes flung too quickly between people, what is important to note here is that I was impressed with House speaker Newt Gingrich regarding this issue after meeting him on Arts Advocacy Day. I applaud the speaker for his interest in beginning what he called a "genuine dialogue" about future funding and public policies related to the arts. I look forward to my next meeting and the continuation of a cordial working relationship with the speaker and other members of the House leadership.

Alec Baldwin
President, The Creative Coalition
New York, NY

Newt Stays Solid

Between William Kristol's "Time for an Insurrection" (Mar. 10), Andy Ferguson's "Newt's Collected Works, Vol. 1" (Mar. 17), and now Major Garrett's "Newt Melts" (Mar. 31), conservatives are being led to believe that there is no problem with liberalism in this country and, instead, all our problems stem from Newt Gingrich's approach to solidifying a conservative majority for the 21st century.

It was once said that liberals tend to eat their own. Now that conservatives are in charge in Congress and are close to attaining a majority in the country at large, The Weekly Standard has adopted the tactics of old liberals: finding fault with their leaders and criticizing the agenda rather than addressing the key issues.

For the record, most of the agenda items raised in "Time for an Insurrection" (Mar. 10) were unveiled in the Republican agenda of Mar. 6—four days after the issue hit the stands. Our agenda, developed under the speaker's supervision and with the full cooperation of all 13 Republican committee chairmen and the full House Republican leadership, is well underway and proves there is no need for an "insurrection."

The Republican agenda is not a mere wish list; it is being enacted. Ending partial-birth abortions? It passed the House with a veto-proof 295-136 margin on Mar. 20. Allowing display of the Ten Commandments? Mr. Istook's Religious Freedom Amendment is fully supported by the Republican leadership, as are other initiatives designed to ensure that our fundamental rights are protected. The House Judiciary Committee has already held hearings on judicial activism, and legislation will be in committee this spring.

China? The House hearings on Clinton campaign fund-raising will examine this issue further, and the Republican majority voted to fully fund this effort. But the larger issue is how we bring China under the rule of law, respectful of human rights, through an engaged trade policy that does not inflict onerous economic burdens on American workers. Cold War rhetoric is not the best means to nudge China into recognizing its citizens' civil liberties.

Regarding the speaker of the House, we have come full-circle. Before he took office, Newt Gingrich was characterized as "Scrooge" and "The Grinch" by *Time* and *Newsweek*. And now, despite developing the strategy that returned a Republican House majority for the first time in 68 years, the speaker still faces a firing squad—this time from a conservative magazine.

Has the speaker made mistakes? He has, but unlike many politicians he has admitted them and moved on to the business of leadership. At some point, one must ask, Who are the enemies of the conservative movement? Do you seriously believe Newt Gingrich to be one of them?

Rep. Joseph R. Pitts
Washington, DC

Clergy and Critics

I was pleasantly surprised to find Matt Labash's excellent analysis of the way ordained homosexuals are flagrantly demeaning their church affiliations by ignoring, twisting, and misinterpreting the plain meaning of Scripture ("Coming Out of the Cassock," Mar. 24).

The only way Labash could improve his excellent review of these "barely penetrable thickets of pop theological assumptions" would be to actually cite the "12 references in 10 different books of the Bible (both Old and New Testaments), all of which [speak] as disapprovingly as Leviticus" on homosexuality. Aside from that one omission, I thank Labash and The Weekly Standard for their masterly, intelligent coverage of the current media obsession with this ever-downward trend toward social destruction.

Barbara W. Elliott
Columbia City, IN

Matt Labash's discussion of Peter Gomes gives the reader a nice caricature, but very little real information. Labash begins by lumping this serious theologian and establishment figure, fresh from celebrating 25 years of ministry at Harvard, with various clerics of lesser renown and (in some cases) conduct, as if their stories weakened Gomes's own moral and intellectual authority. Labash leaves his readers completely in the dark about Gomes's arguments about the Bible and homosexuality in *The Good Book* by assuring us that "the logic [is] too tortured to replicate here."

Gomes's point in this book is that people like Labash might benefit from putting their assumptions and modern translations aside long enough to understand the original context and social history of the Bible. Why, Gomes asks, should we ignore the Old Testament law on dietary matters and New Testament praise of slavery, but accept unquestioningly Leviticus's strictures on same-sex relations? Does it make any difference that the term "homosexual," referred to in many modern Bibles and concordances, is a 19th-century word unknown to the Jews, Greeks, and Romans writing the Bible, as Gomes points out? Or that physical affection between men in Biblical times was never voluntary, between equals, and part of a long-term romantic relationship?

Alas, in his haste to diminish Gomes, Labash discusses none of these, which is a pity. They are what make

Gomes's book worth talking about in the first place.

TREVOR POTTER
WASHINGTON, DC

EMERGING FROM RACISM

After reading Robert Weissberg's "White Racism: The Seductive Lure of an Unproven Theory" and Elena Neuman's "*Emerge* and the Lure of Racism" (Mar. 24), the reader is left with two conclusions: First, white racism is a figment of the imagination of most blacks and many whites, and second, the real problem is black racism—imbedded in the black middle class and gaining mainstream credibility.

We can all agree that the experience of every ethnic "ism," whether race- or gender-, or religion-based, is to some extent in the eye of the beholder. That does not invalidate the actual events that form a foundation for these beliefs. White racism may or may not exist, but slavery happened. Anti-Semitism may or may not exist, but the Holocaust happened. Weissberg is correct in saying that there is as much of a political element in the recognition of these "isms" as there is a scientific one. As much as it pains me, a fellow traveler in these conservative trenches, I have to ask, "So what?" If the fact that these "isms" are ideologically based is reason to dismiss out-of-hand the product of their existence, then what does this say for the conservative movement—often treated in the mainstream media as an entrenched minority—and by extension, THE WEEKLY STANDARD? Trying to deny the existence of something that is demonstrable is, aside from foolish, ultimately insulting.

Regarding "*Emerge* and the Lure of Racism," Elena Neuman's analysis is more than flawed, it is blatantly contradictory. On one hand, she asserts that *Emerge*, though a radical magazine, is actually reflecting the beliefs and viewpoints of its target audience. But then she quotes commentator Armstrong Williams, who notes, "The stuff *Emerge* is feeding its readers is poison. It's slowly killing people mentally. Making them hateful, resentful; making them feel like they're being kept down and they'll never prosper in this country. It's like keeping them mentally depressed. It's very dangerous." What comes first? Either *Emerge* is responding to the wishes of its audience or it is dumping poison on an unsuspecting populace.

Neuman's final conclusion is that black middle-class angst will "trickle down" into the cautiously optimistic underclass. The "cautiously optimistic underclass"? Is this to be considered an improvement? This may be the first time I have heard the "underclass" described as anything other than the fount of all that is destructive in the black community. It stretches the limits of credulity, however, to suggest that the black middle class, appropriately seen as the hope for the black community, is now apparently the primary threat to continued black advancement.

ROBERT A. GEORGE
WASHINGTON, DC

the weekly Standard

No Controlling Moral Authority

At an airport ceremony marking his arrival in Beijing last week, Vice President Gore made portentous use of an ancient T'ang Dynasty poem called "On Stork Tower." Bilateral relations between our "two great nations and civilizations," the vice president said, are "filled with many rivers, some flowing together, others flowing apart." In order "to see the currents of greatest confluence"—lest we be improperly distracted by dark, divergent streams—"we must continue climbing the steps of Stork Tower." That "is why I am here."

Aaah, soooo. The next day, Gore was still flying at stork altitude, where only pleasant sights are seen. He had a series of meetings with Chinese premier Li Peng. Human rights came up—sort of. The vice president was looking for "ways to communicate more effectively with China's leaders on this topic," he would later say, so he "repeated President Clinton's message that we seek real progress on human rights, not confrontation." Then Li and Gore had a long talk about China's Potemkin-style village elections, in which local councils are chosen under the close watch of Communist party officials and then allowed to decide where to sell their rice and beans. Gore called this development "remarkable" and said it promised a "significant advance in the process of democracy." Amazingly enough, no one laughed.

> THE VICE PRESIDENT'S TRIP MAKES ONE THING CLEAR. AMERICA IS GETTING ROLLED BY BEIJING. THE DEAL IS THIS: ACCESS FOR APPEASEMENT.

American reporters accompanying Gore did have one good laugh. Two "senior administration officials" (who, it turns out, were actually Gore's top national-security aide, Leon Fuerth, and Gore himself) flatly contradicted one another when asked what the vice president had told Premier Li about the "China money" scandal. It's clear what Beijing heard Gore say about it. The official Xinhua news agency ran an English-language story reporting that Gore had assured Li the U.S. government would "unswervingly follow" its current China policy. Xinhua said Gore promised that friendly relations "will not be interrupted by individual events at any time" and cited his visit to China as "the best demonstration of this pledge."

Xinhua was right. That's what Gore's visit demonstrates. His first day there, Beijing military officials leaked word that China was planning April war games off the coast of Taiwan and would soon complete construction of a new battery of missiles aimed at that island. Gore and Li did not discuss this problem—or anything else related to Taiwan. Nor was there "that much difference" between them on the question of Hong Kong, according to Fuerth—notwithstanding the fact that China plainly intends to disembowel that British colony's democratic legal and political system when it regains sovereignty on July 1.

In fact, no single issue was allowed to spoil the prevailing mood of idiotic good cheer in the American delegation. Not China's ongoing cooperation with Iran's nuclear program, which went unmentioned in any official communiqué. Not China's continuing defense buildup or exports of biological and chemical weapons components, which also went unmentioned. And not China's determination to rub out domestic dissent—though authoritative sources in Hong Kong had recently reported that Chinese preparations for Gore's visit included special, round-the-clock surveillance of suspected democracy advocates.

Instead, the vice president spent his time in the Middle Kingdom struggling for superlatives about his "Chinese friends and colleagues," celebrating "your many scientific discoveries" and "the majestic sweep of your history." China and the United States have had our differences, Gore several times stipulated without elaboration. But we now have much in common. "We are the two largest sources of greenhouse gases," for instance. And so, given unspecified bilateral "evi-

dence" of a "genuine desire to do better in the future," both countries' leaders must "learn to forgive the sins of the past." Some of which, Gore helpfully remarked, involve American guilt. In the nineteenth century, he told one Chinese audience, "we kept killing the buffalo, a magnificent animal that roved in the tens of millions across our continent, until it was almost extinct."

His Chinese hosts thought all this was good. Very good. So they rewarded the vice president with the only gifts he truly sought: contracts for a Boeing airplane sale and for construction of a Buick factory in Shanghai. But not before inflicting one final humiliation designed to make obvious to the world how completely they had brought the United States to heel. The Chinese invited Western reporters to witness Li Peng, in Al Gore's presence, issue a blanket criticism of America's counterproductive role in international affairs. And then they cornered Gore into a champagne toast with Li—the man who sent the tanks into Tiananmen Square.

Nothing that happened during Al Gore's big Beijing adventure last week was a surprise. In every important respect, the trip was *designed* to unfold this way, consistent with Clinton administration China policy. As State Department spokesman Nick Burns explains that policy, the United States embraces the Chinese politburo, no matter what, "because our long-term engagement with that country is so important to our national interest." Which national interest, exactly? Burns responds: "I think one of the prominent features of President Clinton's foreign policy has been this marriage of our national economic interests with our traditional—what one would characterize as traditional foreign policy interests."

It's a marriage in which U.S. corporations, salivating over the emerging China market, wear the pants. They want in. The Chinese are quite prepared to hold out the prospect of investment opportunities in the service of their own paramount objective: neutralizing the United States as a geopolitical competitor and critic. So the offered deal is this: access for appeasement. And the Clinton administration—in thrall to the business lobby and seconded by many Republicans—is willing and eager to take that deal. Al Gore's Buick and Boeing achievement, the president himself proclaims, is "a real validation for our strategy of engagement. . . . I certainly am very pleased." On this point, Beijing and Washington understand each other perfectly.

Having exhausted all the standard excuses, the president's aides have lately adopted a novel and revealingly defeatist spin on their China policy. It's not as bad as it *could* be, they say. "Engaging" with Chinese Communists, they insist, is not the same as "endorsing" Chinese communism. No, it's not—and what of it? Neville Chamberlain, history's most famous diplomatic doormat, never "endorsed" Nazi Germany, after all. He just got rolled by it.

As America is getting rolled by Beijing. To paraphrase Vice President Gore in another context, our China policy has no controlling moral authority at the moment. American foreign policies rarely survive for long in such a vacuum. A popular, bipartisan rebellion against "engagement" is brewing. Soon enough—before this summer's congressional vote on China's most-favored-nation trade status, we wager—that rebellion will reach a boil.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Al Gore, Scofflaw

by Matthew P. Harrington

"There is no controlling legal authority that says this was any violation of law."

—Albert A. Gore, March 3, 1997

Al Gore's lawyers and I must have had wildly different experiences in law school. For I have long labored under the misconception that the statutes of the United States are "controlling legal authority." I must have cut class the day we learned that one is not bound by a criminal statute unless it has one's name in it.

Vice President Gore's solicitation of funds from his White House office is governed by 18 U.S.C. § 607. Admittedly this is no model of clarity, but it is clear about one thing: You do not solicit funds for political purposes from government offices. A glance at the statute makes it quite plain that there is ample "controlling legal authority" to say that Vice President Gore violated the law when soliciting funds from his office. The statute says:

> It shall be unlawful for any person to solicit or receive any contribution . . . in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties by any person mentioned in section 603.

Section 603 prohibits any "officer or employee of the United States" or "a person receiving any salary or compensation from money derived from the Treasury of the United States" from making contributions to their employer if the employer is himself an "officer or employee of the United States" or a member of Congress.

Vice President Gore and his lawyers attempt to make much of the fact that the statute does not specifically mention the office of vice president and so suggest that it not applicable to him. Yet, the statute clearly applies to any "officer of the United States" and any person "receiving any salary or compensation for services from money derived from the Treasury of the United States."

At last report, Vice President Gore was an "officer of the United States," and he is apparently not working for free. His office and receipt of a salary from the public fisc place him within the class of persons covered by the statute. Indeed, this was exactly the opinion held by the Carter administration in 1979, when the Department of Justice concluded that the president would be covered by the statute.

More to the point, however, the vice president's feigned confusion is simply a red herring. A close reading of the statute demonstrates that the crime occurs whether or not the "solicitor" is a federal employee. What the statute forbids is the solicitation of political contributions *by anyone* on federal premises. That is to say, the occupation of a building by government employees makes those premises off limits to political fund-raising.

It is, therefore, not necessary that the "solicitor" himself be covered by the statute in question. And this makes sense when one thinks a moment about the purposes of the law. Such statutes are designed to ensure that the people's business is done on the people's premises. They prevent federal resources from being diverted to personal or political gain. Moreover, the statute ensures that federal employees are not pressured or threatened by solicitations from others in government. In other words, the statute ensures safe haven from partisan political activity: Government buildings should be devoted exclusively to government business.

Thus, in soliciting contributions from his office,

Vice President Gore is guilty of a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 607 simply because the White House is occupied by federal employees in the performance of their official duties. It is not necessary that he be named in the statute. No one may solicit funds in or from a White House office. To do so is illegal. Vice President Gore broke the law. Period.

Matthew P. Harrington is assistant professor of law at Roger Williams University, Bristol, R.I.

The Hill Rethinks China

by Matthew Rees

House majority leader Dick Armey is the kind of guy who sports an Adam Smith necktie and worships at the altar of free trade. In his 12 years in Congress, he's never opposed a trade-liberalization agreement, and he's always voted to renew most-favored-nation trading status with China. But asked how he intends to vote this year on MFN renewal, the usually decisive Texan says, "It's a close call." Armey is increasingly concerned about the hand-over of Hong Kong to China, about human-rights abuses, and about Beijing's alleged attempts to influence U.S. elections. In a recent conversation, Milton Friedman, who had just returned from Hong Kong, warned him about the Chinese government's hostility to true free-market principles. Armey now says that "China had better give us some signals before this [MFN] vote comes up in July."

The majority leader is the highest-profile Republican in Congress reconsidering his support for MFN, but he's hardly alone. Rep. Bill Paxon, former chairman of the House GOP campaign committee, a close ally of House speaker Newt Gingrich, and a vigorous champion of free trade, says he's likely to oppose MFN renewal for China. "This is always a difficult vote," he says, "in large part because of China's continued human-rights abuses and their more than occasional practice of unfair trade. This year, however, members are particularly concerned by reports of illegal attempts by the Chinese government to influence American elections." A colleague also mulling defection is House Budget Committee chairman John Kasich, who last year voted to renew but in earlier years had been an MFN opponent. House Republicans already against MFN include Susan Molinari (Paxon's wife and vice-chair of the House GOP Conference), Chris Cox (Policy Committee chairman), Ben Gilman (International Relations Committee chairman), and Gerald Solomon (Rules Committee chairman). Noticeably absent from this list is Gingrich, a long-time advocate of MFN.

Just how Gingrich's trip to China last week will affect his thinking on the issue remains to be seen, but the potential defections on MFN reflect a changed congressional climate. Indeed, for some on the Hill, China is beginning to assume a position resembling that of the Soviet Union: a threat to cherished Western traditions of liberty and democracy. Chinese transgressions bring together a vast array of groups: Religious persecution and forced abortion galvanize the religious Right; worker exploitation and the $40-billion U.S. trade deficit with China provoke protectionists and labor; arms proliferation and threats to neighbors alarm geopolitical strategists; and the possibility that Beijing attempted to influence U.S. elections mobilizes just about everyone else. Heightening suspicions is the purchase by companies close to the Chinese government of a disused U.S. naval station in Long Beach, California, and of two former American ports on the Panama Canal.

DICK ARMEY IS THE HIGHEST-RANKING REPUBLICAN IN CONGRESS TO RECONSIDER HIS SUPPORT FOR MFN. HE HAS A LOT OF COMPANY.

How many House Republicans will vote against MFN? Roughly one-fourth opposed renewal last year, and that figure could more than double. Big business will wage an expensive campaign to stem defections, doling out hundreds of thousands of dollars in political contributions. But the more the issue becomes a matter of embarrassing the White House, the less money will matter.

Republicans, of course, are only half the battle in the House. But the situation is equally fluid among the Democrats. Minority leader Richard Gephardt and whip David Bonior are both MFN opponents, as are three of the four chief deputy whips. And there's reason to believe more Democrats may vote against MFN this year than last. They are less beholden to the White House; support from labor makes them less dependent on business contributions; China hasn't cleaned up its act; and one of the administration's chief Democratic allies on the issue, Rep. Lee Hamilton, is a lame duck.

In the Senate, Jesse Helms will carry the anti-MFN flag. Tim Hutchinson, a freshman MFN opponent, senses an opening. "A lot of members who previously supported MFN are rethinking that support," he told me. In the leadership, Connie Mack is an MFN opponent, while most others, including majority leader Trent Lott, remain undecided. Among Senate Democrats, minority leader Tom Daschle is pro-MFN, but opposing him will be Russ Feingold, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, as well as liberal stalwarts Paul Wellstone and Ted Kennedy. Prior to Vice President Gore's trip to China, Wellstone wrote him a letter calling it "crucial that the U.S. back up its words with actions in order to maintain credibility with Chinese officials and with other governments."

Among senior senators, there are rumblings about a three-month suspension, or extension, of MFN. The idea would be to reopen the issue after seeing how Beijing manages the transition in Hong Kong, starting July 1, and what investigators uncover about China's attempts to influence last year's U.S. election. Among the reasons this proposal may be appealing to China critics, one stands out: It's unlikely the votes exist to defeat MFN. And even if the votes were there, President Clinton would veto the measure.

One result of the White House's blind commitment to MFN is that an impressive coalition of conservative activists and groups has mobilized to press for revocation. National Empowerment Television, the network led by conservative guru Paul Weyrich, will soon launch an anti-MFN campaign, while Pat Buchanan's columns and television appearances (including a persuasive performance on the March 23 *Meet the Press*) are increasingly devoted to China.

Leading the way has been the Family Research Council. The Washington-based group, led by Gary Bauer, is testing anti-MFN radio ads in California and has told its state affiliates to use the MFN vote when scoring members of Congress on pro-family issues. Bauer is also working with James Dobson's Colorado-based Focus on the Family. In the next few months they will distribute up to five million pieces of anti-MFN mail. All of this activity seems to find a receptive audience in Washington. Bauer recently had breakfast with 25 congressional Republicans to discuss revoking MFN. "Every time I go to Capitol Hill," he

says, "I get stopped by members who tell me they're rethinking their position on MFN." And conservatives may be able to link up with major labor unions to bolster the opposition to MFN.

The effort to revoke MFN is likely to fail this year, but it could still serve Republicans well. A determined GOP campaign using the MFN fight to highlight failures in the administration's China policy, and showcasing the connection between Chinese money and administration policy, could pay huge political dividends. The question is whether Gingrich is prepared to lead this fight. In a recent column, Pat Buchanan exhorted Gingrich to do so, warning that "to lead his party against the White House in a battle of political principle and high policy" is the only way he can remain speaker. Buchanan gets a lot of things wrong. This time, he may be right.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

A Gay Video for Schoolkids

by Robert H. Knight

READ THE RAVES! "Essential viewing . . . I can't recommend it highly enough," gushes Carolyn B. Sheldon, president of the American School Counselor Association. The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Caucus of the New Jersey Education Association dubs it "compelling . . . incredibly inspiring . . . creative."

Is it *Schindler's List*? *Shine*? No, the work in question is *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School*, a video produced by Helen Cohen and Debra Chasnoff. A co-founder of the magazine *OUT/LOOK*, the forerunner of *Out* and other glossy homosexual publications, Chasnoff won an Academy Award in 1992 for the documentary short *Deadly Deception: General Electric, Nuclear Weapons and Our Environment*. She also made a 1984 film called *Choosing Children*, which promotes the raising of children by lesbians. That theme is repeated in *It's Elementary*: On Mother's Day, youngsters in one class are introduced to a pupil's two lesbian moms. There is no mention of the missing father.

A STRIKING NEW EXAMPLE OF GAY-PRIDE PROPAGANDA MAY BE COMING SOON TO YOUR LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

It's Elementary's main cheerleader is openly lesbian California assemblywoman Sheila J. Kuehl, who arranged the showing in Sacramento and says she wants the video shown in all 50 states. Kuehl previously was known for playing the tomboy Zelda Gilroy in the 1950s sitcom *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*.

Set in six elementary and middle schools in San Francisco, New York City, Madison, Wis., and Cambridge, Mass., *It's Elementary* shows teachers and children discussing homosexuality and prejudice. There is no discussion of homosexual sex acts. In one scene, a fifth grader explains how the Nazis used pink triangles to distinguish homosexuals to put them in concentration camps. Another fifth grader remarks, "Some Christians believe that if you're gay, you'll go to hell, so they want to torture them and stuff like that." Biblical admonitions about homosexuality are either ignored or misconstrued. The only reasonable view presented is total acceptance of homosexuality, with any resistance portrayed as bigotry.

One student explains matter-of-factly that homosexuality "is in your genes." Children learn that a lack of acceptance of homosexuality is just like racial or ethnic prejudice. At one point, an eighth-grade girl disparages the notion that young children should be spared lectures on homosexuality. "If kids are too young to be taught about homosexuality, then they are too young to be taught about heterosexuality," she declares. If children are reading *Cinderella*, she says, then they should also read stories about a "prince and a prince, or a princess and a princess." A first-grade teacher at Hawthorne Elementary School in Madison says, "If parents are allowed to have their children opt out of gay and lesbian units, what will happen when we teach about Dutch culture or African-American history? It scares me."

In a San Francisco eighth-grade class, a man and a woman from Community United Against Violence (CUAV), a homosexual activist group, talk to students about their lives. They assure the students that "we are not here to recruit you at all," although the man later

says that they have been brought in "to be a role model for gay students."

In the CUAV training manual, speakers are told that when asked the question, "How prevalent is homosexuality?," they should answer that Alfred Kinsey "estimated that about 13 percent of the male population and 7 percent of the female population are exclusively gay or lesbian. This does not include the 35-50 percent of the population that have had a homosexual experience at least once in their lives." Kinsey, whose studies have been largely discredited, actually estimated that 4 percent of the male population was exclusively homosexual, with lesbianism at less than half that level. More scientifically sound surveys estimate homosexuality at less than 2 percent for men and less than 1 percent for women.

It's Elementary is the latest tool in a fast-growing campaign. A homosexual teachers group, Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network (GLSTN), has produced its own video, *Teaching Respect for All*, as part of its second annual "back to school" campaign. The 50-minute video is based on the staff training program created by GLSTN for the Massachusetts Department of Education under Republican governor William Weld.

The American School Counselor Association is carrying the video in its new catalog mailed to school counselors nationwide. Funded largely by the Columbia Foundation, the film also credits People for the American Way, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the California Teachers Association's Gay and Lesbian Caucus, Friends of Project 10, and many other foundations and individuals. The National Endowment for the Arts helped out via the Northwest Film Center of the Portland (Oregon) Art Museum, which received a $13,000 grant from the NEA in 1996.

It's Elementary has already been screened in Colorado Springs, San Francisco, New York, Montgomery County, Md., Salt Lake City, and other locations. It will probably come to a school near you if you don't do something about it.

Robert H. Knight is director of cultural studies for the Family Research Council and the writer/director of* The Children of Table 34*, a documentary video about Alfred Kinsey.

Bill Clinton's Pathetic Excuses

By Carl M. Cannon

President Clinton and the Democrats have responded to the burgeoning scandal surrounding their fund-raising methods with a symphony of defenses that sound plausible. At least at first.

We didn't invent the system of soft money, they say. The Republicans did. And in any case, nothing has happened in the Clinton White House that didn't happen during other presidencies. And anyway, there's nothing inherently wrong with mingling with your supporters and contributors. After all, there were no quid pro quos. Okay, maybe the DNC shouldn't have escorted Chinese arms dealers into the Oval Office, but new procedures have been implemented to prevent that from happening in the future. Not to worry, because no money was solicited on White House grounds, unless it was in the residential part of the White House. Finally, we'll be more careful. But after the devastating 1994 defeats, our party faced extinction in the face of a GOP fund-raising juggernaut; we had to act for the sake of the nation. Really, we're proud of what we did because it was necessary to save Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment.

These excuses have elements of the scene in *The Blues Brothers* when John Belushi ticks off to Carrie Fisher the reasons why he never showed up at his own wedding ("My car had a flat tire. . . . My car wouldn't start. . . . I was running late. . . . IT'S NOT MY FAULT!"). And like Belushi's character, "Joliet Jake" Blues, the president and the Democrats are not really telling the truth.

First, let's examine the fund-raising figures Clinton keeps talking about. He claims that from 1995 through 1996, the three major Republican party committees raised $549 million, while the Democratic committees raised $332 million. "We still fell over $200 million short of the money raised by the committees of the Republican party," Clinton said at a press conference on March 7. "But we are proud of the fact that . . . we worked hard to raise money so that we could get our message out there and we would not be buried—literally buried—by the amount of money that the other side had at their disposal."

This is a novel defense. It amounts to a claim that a sitting president can't get any ink or airtime unless he underwrites attack ads. Clinton first used it in 1995 when blasting Rush Limbaugh and other talk-radio types and was justly ridiculed for it.

The fund-raising numbers he cites are accurate—they come from the Federal Election Commission—but they are also misleading. For starters, they don't include the money spent by organized labor to defeat Bob Dole, marginalize Newt Gingrich, and help Democratic candidates coast to coast. AFL-CIO president John Sweeney pledged $35 million in ads for this purpose—a promise that apparently was kept. And that $35 million doesn't include the thousands of phone banks, get-out-the-vote organizers, and professional field operatives that organized labor paid for in 1996. Leo Troy, a professor at Rutgers University, estimates that this help would have cost 10 times as much as the AFL-CIO attack ads if the Democrats had had to pay for it.

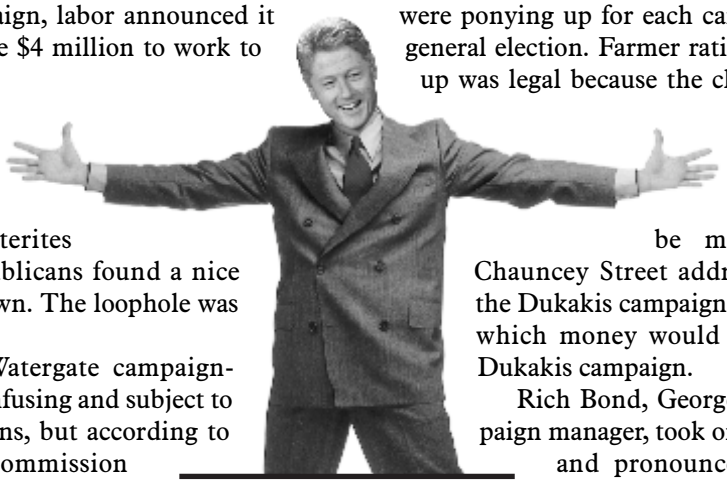
More significant, the president's numbers include "hard money"—campaign contributions of $1,000 or less from individuals and $5,000 or less from political action committees. The money now at issue is not hard money—nobody thinks there are any hijinks involved with hard money—but the huge "soft-money" donations to the national parties from fat cats and big business that have made a mockery of campaign-finance law.

A bit of historical context is needed here. One of the more disturbing images from the 1972 campaign was a briefcase stuffed with $1.8 million in cash given to the Committee to Re-Elect the President. The donor, Chicago financier W. Clement Stone, was a close friend of Richard Nixon's. Such contributions were then legal, but the public recoiled from the notion that one rich person could exert that kind of influence on a national election. The Democrats set

Carl M. Cannon covers the White House for the Baltimore Sun.

out to ensure it would never happen again. In 1974, Congress outlawed corporate giving, placed strict limits on individual contributions, and said even the political parties couldn't accept more than $20,000 per person.

A funny thing happened as the post-Watergate reforms took effect: The Party of Big Business turned out to have far more small donors than the Party of the People. This galled the Democrats, and they searched for ways to even things out. They found a big one—something now known as "in-kind" contributions—when they turned to organized labor for help. In the 1980 campaign, labor announced it was going to spend some $4 million to work to reelect Jimmy Carter.



In response, the Reagan campaign asked the Carter forces to renounce this money. The Carterites wouldn't, and the Republicans found a nice little loophole of their own. The loophole was soft money.

The original post-Watergate campaign-finance reforms were confusing and subject to conflicting interpretations, but according to the Federal Election Commission they capped an individual's total donations to federal candidates, PACs, and national parties at $25,000. Then in 1976, at a time when both parties were planning to construct party-headquarters buildings in Washington, Congress removed the limits for "Building Funds." The actual *party buildings* have long since been built and occupied, but the $20,000 limit on donations to national parties was never honored again.

IT'S RIDICULOUS TO MAINTAIN THAT A SITTING PRESIDENT CAN'T GET ANY INK OR AIRTIME UNLESS HE UNDERWRITES ATTACK ADS.

Thus, from the time the campaign-finance reforms were created, a pattern was set. The outgunned Democrats would look for ways to subvert the laws they had authored. Republicans would respond, in essence, that any law the Democrats bent, they could bend further by raising even more money. According to estimates by University of Southern California professor Herb Alexander, some $22 million in soft money was raised in 1984, most of it by the Republicans. This sum, which seemed staggering at the time, turns out to have been chump change. In the 1995-'96 cycle, the Democrats raised $122 million in soft money, while the Republicans raised $141 million.

For a time, each party maintained that contributors could give as much as they wanted to parties in every state as long as the money was used for "non-federal" purposes. In 1987, even this rule was broken when McDonald's heiress Joan Kroc gave a cool $1 million to the DNC, exactly $975,000 above the sum allowed by law.

In 1988, DNC fund-raiser Robert Farmer announced the formation of "Victory Fund '88," an effort to identify and dun wealthy Democratic donors to the tune of $100,000 apiece. Farmer's goal was $50 million—more than the $46 million the taxpayers were ponying up for each candidate in that year's general election. Farmer rationalized that this set-up was legal because the checks would be made out to different Democratic party committees. But the checks were to be mailed to the same Chauncey Street address in Boston where the Dukakis campaign was based—and from which money would be disbursed by the Dukakis campaign.

Rich Bond, George Bush's deputy campaign manager, took one look at this scheme and pronounced it "illegal on its face." Three weeks later at the Republican convention, Bush-campaign money man Robert Mosbacher convinced his boss that he could raise more money than Farmer using the same scheme. And indeed, Mosbacher's "Team 100" did outperform "Victory Fund '88." Together, the two campaigns raised more than $100 million in soft money.

In 1992, the watchdog group Common Cause asked the Democratic presidential candidates to take "the pledge" to do away with soft money if elected. Five of them agreed, including Bill Clinton. It's right there in *Putting People First*. American politics, Clinton's manifesto reads, "is being held hostage by big money interests . . . and cliques of $100,000 donors [who] buy access to Congress and the White House." His prescription was simple: "End the unlimited 'soft' money contributions that are funneled through national, state and local parties to presidential candidates."

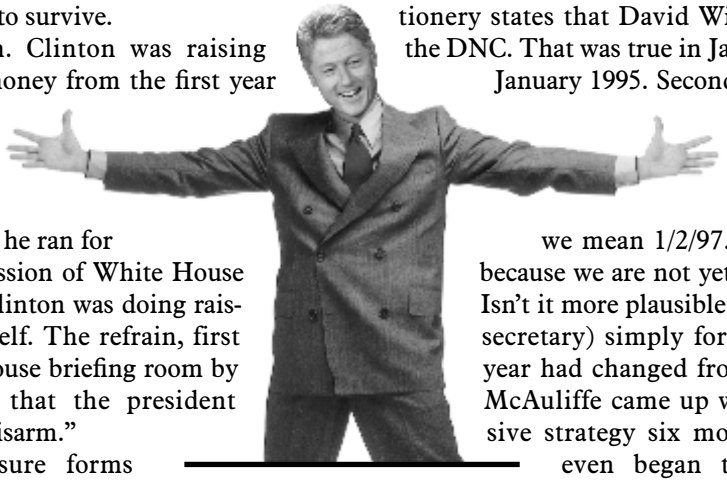
Reformers were happy when Clinton won reelection, and a campaign-reform bill was immediately sent to Capitol Hill. These days, Sen. Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, has been tagged

as the bad guy for stalling reform. But back in 1993 and 1994, when Democrats ran Congress, it was the House Democratic leaders who told the White House to back off—and campaign reform was quietly dropped as a priority.

The actual result of Clinton's victory in 1992 was that raising soft money became a perennial fixture of American politics.

Clinton has said that the 1994 elections, which swept Republicans to power in the House and Senate as well as in all major gubernatorial races, convinced him that the Democrats needed massive infusions of money just to survive.

This is revisionism. Clinton was raising huge amounts of soft money from the first year he was president. As early as 1993, reporters who had heard Clinton promise to end soft money when he ran for president asked a succession of White House press secretaries what Clinton was doing raising so much of it himself. The refrain, first uttered in the White House briefing room by Dee Dee Myers, was that the president wouldn't "unilaterally disarm."



But federal disclosure forms show that if there was an arms race in soft money, it was Clinton, not the Republicans, who led it. In the first 15 months after Clinton's inauguration, the Democrats outraised the Republicans in soft money $20.5 million to $8.7 million. By the time those supposedly fateful 1994 elections took place, the Democrats had raised $34.8 million in soft money. The two-year total for the Republicans: $31.7 million. This points to an interesting question: If Clinton is being honest when he says he needed soft money in the wake of the 1994 debacle, then why did he and the Democrats raise almost as much in 1994 as in 1995?

FEDERAL DISCLOSURE FORMS SHOW THAT IF THERE WAS AN ARMS RACE IN SOFT MONEY, IT WAS CLINTON WHO LED IT.

From early in his administration, Clinton's obsession with soft money was no secret. In June 1994, the liberal watchdog group Common Cause put out a report complaining about it. Though the group's president, Fred Wertheimer, is no one's idea of a conservative, he actually led a demonstration outside a Clinton soft-money fund-raiser on June 22 that year. Later he resigned his post in disgust, his dreams of banning soft money dashed by the party he thought was on his side.

In addition, documents confirm that the Democrats are fudging on the timing of their decision to seek big donations so aggressively. Take the memo from DNC finance director Terry McAuliffe calling on the White House to pamper big donors more and give them access to the president. This memo, which was released by the White House, is dated January 5, 1993. This date clearly is a mistake—Clinton wasn't even in office yet. The White House claims the correct date is January 5, 1995. But it seems more likely that the real date is January 5, 1994.

First of all, the letterhead on McAuliffe's stationery states that David Wilhelm is chairman of the DNC. That was true in January 1994, but not in January 1995. Second, we have all inadvertently misdated correspondence in January—writing down 1/2/96 when we mean 1/2/97. We do so, of course, because we are not yet used to the new year. Isn't it more plausible that McAuliffe (or his secretary) simply forgot that the calendar year had changed from 1993? If this is so, McAuliffe came up with the more aggressive strategy six months before anybody even began to imagine that the Republicans would triumph in the midterm elections.

There is a second document from a batch that had been in the files of deputy chief of staff Harold Ickes that outlines 10 perks big donors should get, such as rides on Air Force One and invitations to White House events. Its author is unknown, but the date it was faxed to Ickes is there on the sheet: April 28, 1994.

The Ickes documents also undermine another defense invoked by the president: namely, that the excesses of the Democrats' 1995-'96 fund-raising operation were somehow committed by a rogue Democratic National Committee.

In press conferences and interviews, Clinton routinely refers to the DNC and its officers as "they" and "them." A couple of times he has mentioned "that other campaign," ignoring the fact that under DNC bylaws he is not only the titular head of the organization but the person who selects its leaders. Moreover, the material released from Harold Ickes's files by the White House shows the following:

• DNC co-chairman Don Fowler virtually reported to Ickes on fund-raising and other matters.

• Clinton himself took a keen interest in fund-raising, even to the point of micromanaging the effort. He edited DNC fund-raising appeals, and in his own handwriting he broached the notion of inviting $50,000 and $100,000 contributors to spend the night in the Lincoln Bedroom.

• The infamous Map Room "coffees" were described in writing as fund-raisers by both DNC and White House officials. Moreover, estimates of how much money was to be raised at each event were put in writing. Afterwards, the president was regularly briefed by Ickes on how much was raised.

In answering pointed questions about the propriety of these coffees, as well as the Lincoln Bedroom overnights, Clinton press secretary Mike McCurry and other officials have invoked the Democrats' fourth line of defense: No money was ever solicited by White House officials or anyone else while on government property.

"We do not solicit contributions here at the White House," McCurry said on February 20. But these assurances have not proven to be strictly true. Vice President Al Gore subsequently admitted making 50 solicitation calls for soft money from his White House office. The same week, it was revealed that Margaret A. Williams, Hillary Clinton's chief of staff, had personally accepted a $50,000 donation from businessman Johnny Chung while on White House property.

The White House counsel's office sought to minimize the legal problems both these transactions would seem to present (see story, page 12). Gore insisted that his lawyer's reading of the law barring solicitation of money on public property was that *both* parties had to be in a government building—not just the one making the call. (Never mind that the relevant statute was written before the invention of the telephone.)

In the Maggie Williams case, the counsel's office argued that since the $50,000 was going to the DNC and not the Clinton-Gore campaign, Williams's acceptance of the check didn't constitute a "receipt" of money, which would be illegal. (Even though the regulation they cited to protect her seemed to have been aimed at secretaries who *inadvertently* find campaign contributions while opening their bosses' mail.) Nor did Williams's suggestion to Chung that he make out such a donation to the DNC constitute a solicitation, White House officials maintained.

But Gore then amended his story in a way that underscored the central reality of soft money—the fact that the DNC and the Clinton-Gore campaign were really one and the same. Originally, the vice president had told reporters that he'd made the calls on a DNC credit card. Turns out it was a Clinton-Gore credit card instead. Oh well.

On to the "they all do it" excuse: Actually, they all didn't.

The Lincoln Bedroom is of hallowed historical importance because it is the place were the 16th president agonized over the carnage of the Civil War and where he unveiled the Emancipation Proclamation. The common reaction from historians and veterans of previous administrations alike was astonishment that anyone would think of renting it out.

Down in Houston, George Bush released the entire list of those who had stayed overnight in the White House residence during his tenure. It was a much smaller list than Clinton's. To be sure, some GOP donors were on it, but a Bush spokesman emphasized that as far as Barbara and George Bush could recall, no one was on that list who hadn't entertained the Bushes as overnight guests in *their* homes first.

Out in California, Nancy Reagan was even more steamed. No list was available, but old Reagan administration hands such as Mike Deaver said that with the exception of Bob Hope, they couldn't remember *anyone* who wasn't a member of the family crashing in the Reagan White House overnight.

A former social secretary in the Kennedy administration recalled that Jackie Kennedy wouldn't let anyone sleep in the Lincoln Bedroom, ever, but that her husband overruled her—once—to let Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley and his wife sleep there. George Christian, a press secretary to Lyndon Johnson—and someone who actually lived in an upstairs bedroom on two occasions—said Johnson never talked about fund-raising and barely talked to officials at the DNC about anything.

George M. Elsey, a young naval aide to both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, personally told Mrs. Clinton about the significance of another hallowed, soon-to-be-commercialized spot, the Map Room. This is where FDR pored over maps charting the progress of the Allied troops during World War II. When he was president of the White House Historical Association, Elsey actually presented to the Clintons the last wartime map commissioned by Roosevelt before he died. It hangs there today. Asked for his reaction when he heard the Clintons were using that room to host political fund-raisers, Elsey paused

a long time and then said diplomatically, "I was a little surprised."

The penultimate Clinton excuse is that even if some of this fund-raising activity seems tacky, it didn't hurt the country because none of these donors ever really got anything for their money. "I can tell you categorically that there was no influence," Clinton said on November 8, 1996.

On March 7, the president scaled back his "categorical" vow. In the interim, we had learned that soft-money donors were granted such favors as seats on government planes during trade missions, $250-million no-bid housing contracts, and various shifts in administration policy (including one that would allow Guam to set up non-union sweatshops with imported foreign workers).

Now the White House line is that no decision benefiting a contributor was made "solely" because the person gave money. With this one well-chosen word, Clinton set a breathtakingly lax new standard: Granting favors to contributors is improper only if the contributor is unqualified to receive them.

Thus did the president redefine the whole idea of what constitutes a quid pro quo. "People who help you, you try to stay in touch with them," Clinton said. "So you're more likely to know if they want to do something than you are people who didn't help you. . . . The instructions that I gave were, if someone who helped us wants to be considered for an appointment, they ought to be considered for the appointment, but they shouldn't get it unless they're qualified for it. . . . That's the way I felt about the trade missions. If someone wanted to go on a trade mission and was qualified and could make a contribution, they ought to get to go. But if they would never get to go in a thousand years, that no one would think they should have any business on a trade mission, and the only reason they were going to get to go was because they contributed to us, I didn't think they should go."

The president was saying that if cross-dressing pro-basketball star Dennis Rodman gave $100,000 and then got his dream job of ambassador to France, that would be a quid pro quo. But if Pamela Harriman gave that sum (actually, she gave more) and then got the job, that would be just fine because she speaks the language. Using this logic, if the Bechtel Corporation gave $100,000 and then got anything it asked for, that would be fine too, since it does have the expertise to build anything anywhere in the world. Under this standard, only a stupid president could ever be accused of giving out improper favors.

There was one more excuse yet to come, however, and in some ways it has proved the most diabolical of all. That's because although it is not pretty, it is the truth.

In his new movie, *Liar Liar*, comedian Jim Carrey plays a lawyer who cannot tell a lie for one day. The truth is often unpleasant, though. It scares people, and it can make the truth-teller sound like an arrogant cad. And so it is with the final Clinton alibi for the Democrats' soft-money excesses.

"I would remind you just that we knew that we had a very stiff challenge," Clinton said on March 4. "We were fighting a battle, not simply for our reelection, but over the entire direction of the country for years to come, and the most historic philosophical battle we've had in America in quite a long time over the direction of the budget, over our commitment to education, over whether we would dismantle large chunks of our environmental regulations and our public-health regulations. It was a significant thing for America and we knew that we were going to be outspent and outraised, but we knew we had to do everything we could to at least be competitive enough to get our message out."

After acknowledging that "some changes [are] in order," Clinton continued: "But I don't regret the fact that we worked like crazy to raise enough money to keep from being rolled over by the biggest juggernaut this country had seen in a very long time. And I think it would have been a very bad thing for the American people if that [Republican] budget had passed. . . . I'm glad we stood up to it. I'm glad we fought the battle of '95 and '96 and I'm glad it came out the way it did. And we had to be aggressive and strong."

There is little doubt that Clinton believes this. He believes that the stakes were high for the United States in the last election and that he, and not the Republicans, was on the right side of history. There is a problem with this explanation, though: It is perilously close to saying that the ends justify the means. It's a defense that makes even some of Clinton's allies deeply uncomfortable, especially those of a certain age. For this is the exact rationale employed by a previous president who got into trouble over campaign financing. He, too, thought the results of the election in question were so important for the future of the country that he was permitted to take shortcuts. He also believed he had the right to act as he wished because others had done it before him. The one concession his enemies were willing to make was that the president sincerely believed both these things. Nixon was the name. ♦

Springtime in the Masochist Cafe, or, The Revolt Against Self-esteem

By David Brooks

You're in your twenties, born into the age of self-esteem. From your earliest childhood, television characters from Mr. Rogers to Big Bird have been lovebombing you with messages about how special you are. At school, entire curricula have been established to enhance your sense of self-worth. You've been named Star of the Week, Student of the Day, Kid of the Millennium. You have been encouraged, appreciated, and applauded.

So when it comes time to rebel—if you are the sort who does rebel—it's going to be self-esteem itself you rebel against.

You'll go in for self-mutilation; you'll drive a metal rod through your face and call it body piercing. You'll get some lowlife with a needle and a drinking problem to engrave a tarantula tattoo on your chest. You'll uglify yourself, with scruffy chin-sproutings, baggy prison pants, oily hair, and that abused-hooker look you see in the fashion magazines.

The market being what it is, whole industries will spring up to cater to your rebellion against self-esteem. If only to establish your own independence, you'll go through a period of stylish self-denigration and self-mortification. And, at least for a time, you will join the masochist economy.

The easiest way to signal your rebellion is through your appearance. When you begin to investigate, you will find that the fashion designers have marshaled their mighty energy to help you look as ugly and disreputable as possible. It began a few years ago when British stylists started taking their fashion cues from the very epitome of self-mutilators, heroin addicts. Photographers like Corrine Day and Craig McDean were shooting these hollow-eyed anti-fertility goddesses, cold and clammy with the junkie sweats, sometimes with their left sleeves pushed up to their elbows. The rock singer Courtney Love popularized an American version of the junkie look. Then came the Broadway musical *Rent* and the Scottish movie *Trainspotting*. And now, if you want to see high-priced models with the I-Just-Overdosed-in-My-Underwear look, you can open the fashion magazines or turn on a rock video and there they are.

The mavens keep declaring the look dead, but *Detours* magazine recently ran a fashion spread that showed a bunch of bruised, catatonic, barefoot men lying on seedy motel-room floors wearing Gucci suits. Giorgio Armani ads feature women with matted oily hair, bony anorexic chests, and sunken dark eyes that give them the pallid self-congratulatory demeanor of somebody who has just initiated a spectacularly successful suicide attempt.

> IT TAKES HOOKERS YEARS OF HEROIN AND ABUSE TO ACHIEVE THE LOOK THAT HAS NOW TAKEN OVER EVERY BOHEMIAN NEIGHBORHOOD.

The ugly look has now spread to bohemian neighborhoods everywhere. Recently in Silverlake, an arty Los Angeles neighborhood east of Hollywood, I saw a young woman who could have served as a model for sexy masochists everywhere: skin paler than death, blank Sylvia Plath eyes, proudly post-hygiene hair, and a body as stretched and sickly as a Soviet chicken. Her baggy brown jeans hung so low you could see the top of her black underwear and a touch of pelvis (a protruding pelvic bone is the height of eroticism for today's emaciated avant-garde). Her brown-and-black tank top clung tightly, leaving no rib to the imagination, and her black bra-straps dangled loose over her shoulders.

It takes hookers years of heroin and physical abuse to achieve this happening, hopeless style, but with some money and fashion sense, any bohemian can perfect the image in just a few months. Remember, you're not only rebelling against the official self-esteem

David Brooks is a senior editor of The Weekly Standard.

authorities, like teachers, but also the whole army of social hygienists who preach self-enhancement. So you'll start smoking compulsively, preferably in places with bad air circulation so your eyes can keep up that red-rimmed, teary look. Your shaving will be irregular, as if you were trying to gain admittance into His Majesty's Order of the Scraggly Goatee. And you'll layer your hair coloring, blond highlights on top, black underneath—to suggest cavernous greasy depths.

Poor skin tone is the foundation of it all. It helps if you bruise easily, but if you don't, you'll want to show wide expanses of blotchy epidermis that brings to mind the tortured consumptive look of your 19th-century progenitors. Helmut Lang, whose clothing line is available at Barney's and other high-end stores, is running ads showing a paler-than-pale woman with lifeless blond hair in a ripped, misshapen white tank top. Of course she is wearing no makeup, so the drab colorlessness she projects is just right for an afternoon spent lounging around the state mental hospital.

Her boyfriend will buy shirts several sizes too large so they can hang off his cadaverous frame. And he'll keep them unbuttoned to the mid-chest level, so everyone can see the randomly spaced splotches of chest hair and the bones protruding from his sternum. He will never button his sleeves. The loose cuff enhances the emaciated look, and it gives a suggestive glimpse of the blue veins of his forearm.

The only makeup that appears in the masochist ads is blue or black around the eyes (for both men and women). It gives just a hint of death pallor.

If there's anything original in this pose—and probably there isn't—it is that its aficionados are not blaming society for their alienation. There is no rage at the class structure, or at racism, or the generation gap, or uptight social codes. This is a lost generation with no one to blame but themselves. They want to project a heroic image of rugged dysfunctionalism.

Clothes are allowed to have color, of a sort. If you go to a club or coffee shop in a neighborhood like Silverlake or in the East Village in New York City, you'll notice immediately that black clothing is out. Most people look good in black. Brown and orange are in. Most people look terrible in brown and orange. They are the ideal hues for uglification.

After I saw the perfect masochist trudging across the 7-Eleven parking lot in Silverlake, I suddenly felt the need for a snack, so I crossed the street to the Back Door Café, where the regiments of the demimonde were drinking cappuccinos out of beer mugs. Most of the locals seemed to work in the music industry—doing quite well, as a matter of fact—and their apparel was fashionably hideous.

One young man wore baggy brown overalls with brown leather straps. Another wore shorts with brown and yellow checks. A woman wore a dark slip with a fraying hem. T-shirts that zip partway down the front, one of the excrescences of the excruciating 1970s, were also back in evidence.

The masochist look has signaled an important shift for the demimonde. Traditionally, white hipsters have aspired to be black. From Norman Mailer to Jack Kerouac to Mick Jagger to early Madonna, blackness has represented a superior world of liberation, soul, and risqué fun. But today's masochists don't try to mimic black culture. They've crafted a hipness for post-O.J. America, an age of racial separatism in which whites are stuck with their own pathetic whiteness. And what could be more conducive to self-hatred than that?

The white-trash look has inspired a lot of the sartorial self-mutilation of the hipsters. K-Mart clothes, purchased secondhand at Goodwill, are the very thing a heroin addict might be seen in on a bleak Tuesday afternoon. It's not for nothing that the band U2 recently announced their world tour at a K-Mart, while wearing polyester shirts and vinyl jackets. The Gap now advertises a line of checked shorts your grandfather wore with knee-high black socks while mowing his lawn in the early 1960s. Chic designers like Yohji Yamamoto now design rayon trousers perfect for a $2.99, all-you-can-eat family smorgasbord circa 1971 (although the Yamamoto pants carry a $450 price tag).

But the masochist look is not just a shallow matter of fashion and appearance. It's not just about denigrating yourself on the outside. It's also got an important spiritual dimension. To be part of this counterculture, you must distinguish yourself from all those self-indulgent baby-boom hedonists who now teach English at the high school. You have to practice anhedonia and perfect your inability to experience pleasure in any form. Thus, you'll not only want to look like a veteran of hundreds of porn movies, you'll want to act that way too. You'll want it known that things that are pleasant for other people, like sex, are for you nothing more than boring forms of self-abuse.

But unlike the punks or the grunge rockers before you, who were vaguely anti-sex, you'll want to be sexy and have sex—only in a way that is utterly degrading. So you'll spend a lot of time talking about the scene in *Flirting With Disaster* in which Patricia Arquette has some guy lick her armpits. You may get your clothes designed by Chandi Lancaster, the creator of the depressingly erotic fashion line C—t Clothing. And if you are a mid-level rock or movie star and you are

photographed in a hip magazine, you'll want to show plenty of skin, but in a spirit of sleazy ennui. You'll want to be overlit so that your features are bleached out, and underdressed so that none of your moles goes unnoticed. Bijou Phillips, who was one of the models in the seminal Calvin Klein kiddie-porn ad campaign, poses in ripped tacky underwear in a seedy hotel room for her profile in *Arena*. Model Amy Wesson shows off her concentration-camp shoulders while downing a large can of beer at an industrial loading dock in her photo shoot for *Surface*. Sandra Bullock poses on the toilet for *Detour*.

And music must also be robbed of its joy. On my foray into L.A.'s heart of hipness, I stopped by several clubs including the Viper Room, the Sunset Boulevard club where River Phoenix overdosed. The Viper Room now caters to kids from the Valley as much as to the people the Valley kids are aping. But even the wannabes have mastered the masochistic attitude of utter boredom. The band, called "It," launched into a set with a sound that could be called "mainstream alternative," and everybody in the club just stopped and stared in the manner of zombies watching television. Up front, three or four groupies tried to bounce to the music, but the rest of the crowd was utterly immobile. Between songs there was some desultory clapping, but mostly people just stood there, cigarettes dangling from lifeless fingers. If you can yawn big, you'll never go home alone.

Further out on Sunset Boulevard is a place called Toi's, allegedly a Quentin Tarantino hangout, that deserves an ad campaign of its own: Absolut Boredom. It's a restaurant with overly spiced Thai food that tries to look like a dive. The tables and chairs have been beat up and the filthy carpet has been splattered with paint. But the air of pure *ennui* derives from the memorabilia on the wall. The whole heroin canon is depicted here: from Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground to the Sex Pistols and now the Primitive Radio Gods. It shows the parade of youth revolt reduced to a musty tradition, a Lenin Museum of the counterculture. It allows diners to sit in a cul-de-sac of alienation, making the same rock-rebellion gestures as their big brothers and sisters, as their parents, as their grandparents. They can punish themselves with the parched sameness of it all.

The masters of the masochist style have achieved such self-abnegating perfection that they will not even leave any residue when they are gone. Every bit of clothing and every artifact is derived from the past—from '60s thrift shops, from *Saturday Night Fever*, from mod or glam or punk or skaters or zoot suiters or *The Brady Bunch* or Bing Crosby or bowling leagues or the Little Rascals (in one club I even saw a woman bringing back the Gertrude Stein look, with a dumpy dark sweater and a long wool skirt). The whole derivative stew is blended into flavorlessness, each of the suberas stripped of its distinctive meaning, before being served to the young masochists at room temperature, to their complete non-satisfaction.

The self-esteem movement had to spawn this sort of reaction. The authority figures of self-esteem grew up on New Age mush and social libertinism; they took all the illicit fun that used to be countercultural and made it mainstream. Their message was that each of us possesses an Inner Wonderful. And no matter what we do—drugs, adultery, illicit fund-raising—nothing can mar that Inner Wonderful. You can always feel good about yourself because that's the real you.

This put the next generational rebels in a bind. Since the countercultural terrain has been drained of liberation and self-love, the only way to rebel is to grasp the Inner Miserable.

You have to pretend that deep inside you there is this awful dysfunction, that no matter how many platinum records you make or successful fashion shows you put on, you still have this Inner Miserable that signals your rebellion against the sunbeams working in the guidance counselor's office.

And it doesn't matter if you actually live in an upper-class suburb like Silverlake. You still have to nurse your Miserable just to keep up your creative-rebel bona fides. Even though you never actually do heroin, you have to appropriate the look. And even though you are beautiful, you have to work arduously at being ugly. And if you are ugly, you still have to work at being ugly, because in this world those who are effortlessly ugly get no credit.

The underground types used to stand for pleasure in their revolt against the repression of bourgeois life. They used to stand for freedom in the revolt against the restrictions of the establishment. But now to revolt against "Free To Be You and Me" and the MTV mainstream, the rebels have to side with dysfunction. To rebel against mainstream self-indulgence, they have to stand for masochism. Suddenly the demimonde is having less fun than the regular monde.

Yet one has to admit it's a cool form of non-fun. In their junkie-inspired stupor, the masochists are actually snobs; they look down on people higher up the social scale. In their hopelessness, there is hipness. And in their revolt against self-esteem, they have actually created a perverse form of self-love. ♦

Sexual Perversity in Washington

The Brave New World of Norma Cantu

By Richard Starr

Norma V. Cantu, head of the Clinton Education Department's Office for Civil Rights, is a left-wing litigator, a veteran of the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund, who has never met a racial quota she didn't like. She is the forgotten second royal in Clint Bolick's famous "Clinton's Quota Queens" op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal*, the piece that helped torpedo Lani Guinier's nomination to be Cantu's counterpart at the Justice Department. Cantu is also a sexual-harassment radical who wants federal regulation of boy-girl contact from pre-school through grad school. Most strikingly, it appears that Norma Cantu is above the law. Or at least her office is. Or at least she says they are.

LOOK OUT, GEORGIE PORGIE: THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WANTS TO STAMP OUT WHAT IT CALLS "PEER SEXUAL HARASSMENT."

Did the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit strike down racial quotas for university admissions in its historic *Hopwood* v. *Texas* decision last year? Not according to Cantu. In a March 18 letter to Texas legislators, she threatened to cut off federal funding to any university that complies with the *Hopwood* decision by making its admissions policies colorblind. As the *New York Times* reported, "not only can race be used as a factor in admissions, universities 'have a clear legal obligation to do so,' . . . Ms. Cantu's letter said."

Did that same court last year rule that school districts can't be sued if one student sexually harasses another? Most people who pay attention to such things think so, but not Cantu. Her office has just published in the Federal Register its new guidelines for stamping out "peer sexual harassment." The footnotes delicately allow that the relevant "law is evolving," but then comes some not-so-veiled advice to any school bold enough to follow the lead of the federal court. "The better practice is . . . to follow the Guidance" of Cantu's office, the guidance itself states. And in case there is any lingering confusion, Cantu elaborates: "The existence of Fifth Circuit decisions that are inconsistent with [Department of Education] policy does not prohibit schools in these States from following the Guidance."

Richard Starr is managing editor of The Weekly Standard.

Obey me, she explained.

So far there has been nary a peep about any of this from Congress, which would hardly be overstepping its authority (though it might get called nasty names in a Frank Rich column) should it ask Cantu some simple questions. Indeed, the new sexual harassment guidelines promulgated over Cantu's signature are a subject ripe for hearings, since their effect will be to extend the reach of the law far beyond what Congress envisioned when it forbade sex discrimination in federally supported education programs 25 years ago.

For it appears that the Office of Civil Rights is using that legislation—known as Title IX—to take the country towards a public-education regime in which schools will have to maintain a bureaucratic apparatus that can catalogue, investigate, punish, and prevent so-called sexual harassment of students by their peers to the satisfaction of federal overseers.

Kevin Chadwick

And the existence of such an apparatus, tasked with receiving the reports and then appeasing the grievances of the harassed, will in fact multiply the myriad frustrations and unhappinesses of ordinary lives into more grievances rather than fewer. This is what formal "grievance procedures" are in truth designed to do when they are widely publicized to potential victims—which is what the new federal guidelines on sexual harassment call for.

When Congress first drafted Title IX and made it law in 1972, its purpose was to expand opportunities for girls and women. Most controversially, this meant creating and funding athletic programs for girls that were the equal of what boys enjoyed. But it also meant abolishing scholarships limited to one sex or the other; admitting men and women to professional schools without preference for one sex or the other; ending single-sex classes, including gym and sex-ed; even getting rid of curfews on campuses, so that girls could sleep around on an equal basis with boys.

The Title IX enforcers of the past dreamed that by destroying the barriers thrown up by custom and traditional sex roles, they would midwife the birth of a hardy new unisex species—boys who learned to cook and sew in home-ec class, girls who could add superchargers to their hot-rods in the high school auto shop, all of them playing rugby together after school, or even wrestling one another in organized competition. To give them their due, you might say that the first generation of enforcers had a theory of success and a vision of how to achieve it (get the artificial barriers out of the way).

Today's enforcers, on the other hand, have nightmares of oppression and failure and a theory of how to stave it off (bring federal muscle to bear on behalf of the weak and vulnerable). They claim to be sexual egalitarians, but their nightmares are peopled almost exclusively with girls (and the occasional homosexual boy) who are victimized by a jockocracy of cocky males. In the absence of federal oversight, these young perps run amok, winked at by school administrators who are always chuckling to themselves the rarely heard phrase "boys will be boys."

This is the vision that undergirds Norma Cantu's new sexual-harassment guidelines. Don't take my word for it: Call up the Department of Education and ask for a copy of their new pamphlet, "Sexual Harassment: It's Not Academic." This is the everyday summary of the new enforcement guidance.

There are many memorable features of this brochure, not least of them footnote 3, which refers readers in pseudo-scholarly fashion ("Winship, Beth, Ask Beth, San Francisco Chronicle") to a newspaper column offering advice to children. But let's be charitable and consider only the following quotation, which

appears in the pamphlet in bold type as an example in a section on what a student can do when "confronted with sexual harassment."

> "A guy in my chem class kept following me around, staring at me, and asking me out. At first, I told him I was busy, or not feeling well. Eventually, it got so bad that I just had to tell him that I didn't want to go out with him, period . . . and, once I told him, he stopped! And, if he hadn't, I knew exactly who to report it to!" [ellipsis in the original]

This passage, too, is footnoted, and careful researchers will learn by checking the reference that "this quote is a composite drawn from different OCR cases." Which means a couple of things. One, some fairly senior civil servant at the Office of Civil Rights made up the quote; and two, since the dialogue is invented, this must be how the Title IX enforcers hope people will be talking under the new sexual-harassment dispensation. Let's deconstruct their Utopia.

Guys (especially guys in chem class) who follow girls around and stare at them and ask them out more than once are potentially dangerous. They haven't learned that the way to get a date is to ignore girls they're interested in, or at least apply to the Department of Education for permission to look. And they haven't learned to read minds. It's really bad of them the way they don't take a hint when a girl lies to them and says she's not feeling well. It's terribly unfair, even scary, that she's forced to just come right out and say, "I don't want to go out with you." There ought to be a law!

And there is.

And now, thanks to the new guidelines from the Office of Civil Rights, the law is clearer than it has ever been. There shall be an official "grievance procedure" and at least one employee designated to coordinate the school's "efforts to comply with and carry out its Title IX responsibilities." If that clod in the chem class fails to cease and desist with his "unwelcome" attention even after you report him to the designated officials, or if the officials fail to apply the official "disciplinary procedure," or even if they fail to resolve the complaint in a "prompt and equitable" fashion, you can have the school district investigated by OCR. And if that doesn't work you can sue.

All sarcasm aside, it's plain that what Norma Cantu's guidelines are designed for is to be an engine of social change. The "peer sexual harassment" guidelines are not really about sexual harassment as laymen understand the term. They are not about a form of extortion or blackmail, occurring between boss and worker or teacher and student, where there is something of value—favors or raises or grades—to be exchanged or withheld as the case may be. That's what sexual harassment once meant, but innovative lawyers and judges have refined the concept to include the actions of supposed equals, fellow workers or fellow managers, and even to take account of the "environment"—the atmosphere or tone of personal relations that management either imposes or allows to prevail. One of the special features of this area of the law is that it allows the victims to define what is permissible behavior and what is not, to their own satisfaction, after the fact. If you declare that an environment is "hostile" to you, you have a case.

This is an expansive legal concept indeed, and the legal substance of the new Education Department guidelines is their assertion that the prevailing law of the workplace is also the law of the classroom, the school bus, and the playground. One student's horseplay can be another student's "hostile environment," which can "adversely affect a student's education," which may be a form of discrimination by sex, the elimination of which was the purpose of Title IX.

This is how the Education Department now interprets the law. If a 6-year-old Georgie Porgie kisses the girls and makes them cry ("unwelcome behavior"), he is the equivalent under the law of a longshoreman who pins up *Playboy* centerfolds that make a female coworker uncomfortable. And the school district is as liable for not taking seriously the actions of our harassing Georgie Porgie as the longshoreman's boss would be for not controlling what is pinned to his bulletin board.

It so happens that a real-world Georgie Porgie, 6-year-old Jonathan Prevette of Lexington, N.C., made national headlines last fall when he was punished by his school for kissing a classmate. His mother understandably raised a fuss, and a spokeswoman for the school district explained that "a 6-year-old kissing another 6-year-old is inappropriate behavior. Unwelcome is unwelcome at any age."

Jesse Helms, running for reelection and with a nose as good as anyone's for sniffing out a political opportunity, embraced young Jonathan on the campaign trail. Figuratively speaking, Norma Cantu now seeks to embrace Jonathan as well, thereby disguising her social revolution as a reasonable and commonsensical application of the law.

When she released the final draft of the Office of Civil Rights Sexual Harassment Guidance on March 13, it was with the announcement, swallowed whole by a gullible media, that the guidelines declared Jonathan Prevette innocent of harassment. The AP story set the tone for the coverage that followed: Under the headline "Education Department clears

young kisser," the wire service explained that "Jonathan Prevette, the first-grader who was punished last year for kissing a girl at school, can put his mind at ease" because the Clinton administration has declared that "a peck on the cheek by a 6-year-old falls short of sexual harassment." What's more, the story went on, the department "called upon 'the judgment and common sense' of school officials when fighting harassment."

Now it is literally true that the guidance asserts these things in its introduction. But the other 22,000 or so words in the document put the lie to this sunny assessment. Because it was politically convenient, Norma Cantu's office decided to impugn the judgment and common sense of local school officials. But if those local school officials have lawyers with common sense, they will be crazy not to crack the whip when 6-year-old boys kiss their classmates, especially if the classmates complain. What the North Carolina official said last fall—"unwelcome is unwelcome at any age"—is as apt a six-word summary of Norma Cantu's federal guidance on the subject as any. It's well and good for the Department of Education to invoke judgment and common sense. But those are precisely the qualities that no prudent local official reading the new guidelines has any grounds to imagine he will find in Washington.

> IF STUDENTS ARE PREYED ON IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS, IT'S BECAUSE OF GENERALIZED DISORDER, NOT SOME SEXIST PLOT TO FAVOR BOYS.

Sexual harassment guidelines are an especially powerful engine of social change because it takes courage for a politician to stand up and call them legally mischievous, if not fanatical. Someone will certainly accuse him of being on the side of the rapists. But of course, he is no such thing. True patriarchs never said "boys will be boys." To them, rape was a capital crime. By the same token, no one really believes that American public schools—which are bastions not of unreconstructed male chauvinists but mainly of professional women—are cavalierly allowing girls to be preyed on because responsible federal oversight has been lacking till now. If students are preyed on in the American educational system, it's because of generalized disorder and eroded authority, not some deep-rooted sexist plot to favor boys that only federal power will suffice to exterminate.

But unless someone contradicts the Norma Cantus on this point, they will prevail. It will turn out that, in fact, assistant secretaries of education *can* overrule the considered opinions of U.S. circuit court judges, either by personal letter or via guidance documents duly published in the Federal Register over their signature.

And who will contradict the Office for Civil Rights? Certainly not Cantu's superiors in the Clinton administration, who have never publicly expressed anything but the deepest satisfaction with an office that keeps the Left happy at no cost whatsoever to the administration's reputation for amiable, bumbling, corrupt, Keystone Kops centrism.

There are a few federal judges who will do so, but judges eventually get tired of upholding the law unless they receive some aid and comfort from the lawmakers themselves. Only Congress is left. The Office of Civil Rights is known to favor informal proceedings and a quiet resolution of differences when it audits school districts for compliance with federal anti-discrimination law, so the House leadership could take a similar approach and delegate a staffer to call Cantu's office for a chat: "What's up with the assistant secretary on sexual harassment and *Hopwood*?" they could ask one of her aides. "We were just looking over your enforcement budget for the next fiscal year and wondered what exactly you would be enforcing. The laws Congress has passed? As interpreted by the federal courts? Or did you have something else in mind?"

It would be healthier, though, if the Republican congressional leadership summoned up the fortitude actually to hold public oversight hearings on Norma Cantu's reign. For one thing, on a purely practical level, the new guidelines make it likelier that public schools which don't manage to control the boorish and vulgar impulses of children to the satisfaction of litigious parents will find themselves contending with a new and expansive tort liability. A Congress that has made reining in torts a front-burner issue might want to find out from school administrators and their lawyers across the country how much they expect to be shelling out to insure themselves and otherwise defend against this expensive new risk.

More fundamentally, it is still supposedly the case that Congress is the federal legislative body, not the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education. If Congress doesn't check Norma Cantu's runaway leftism, it won't really be fair to complain that she holds herself above the law. Congress will have decided: Ms. Cantu is the law. ♦

The Battle over Bettelheim

The Psychoanalyst's Legacy Under Fire

By Peter D. Kramer

The creation of the myth of Bruno Bettelheim begins in the American Midwest during the Second World War. A recent immigrant from Nazi Europe, Bettelheim applied for a position at Rockford College in Illinois, using an impressive, and in those years unverifiable, curriculum vitae. It said he had studied for 14 years at the University of Vienna, earning summa cum laude doctorates in philosophy, art history, and psychology. He had done original work under the leading artists at the Vienna Kunstgewerbeschule; had excavated Roman antiquities; had run the art department of Lower Austria's library; assisted at the Kunsthistorisches Museum; and published two books in the field. Bettelheim claimed this much and a good deal more (music studies under Arnold Schoenberg!) to land a two-day-a-week post in a small-college art department. By the time he aimed for the University of Chicago, the résumé had been further improved with training in psychology, experience raising autistic children, and personal encouragement from Sigmund Freud.

There were snatches of truth in the tall tale, but not many. Bettelheim had earned a non-honors degree in philosophy, he had made acquaintances in the psychoanalytic community, and his first wife had helped raise a troubled child. But from 1926 to 1938—the bulk of the "14 years" at university—Bettelheim had worked as a lumber dealer in the family business.

Lumber dealer or no, Bettelheim was a true Viennese intellectual. Though dishonest, the fabricated c.v. was an apt way of communicating to Americans, with their focus on credentialing. Bettelheim proved to be as advertised: the most cosmopolitan faculty member Rockford College had ever seen and a charismatic teacher. As for Bettelheim's subsequent career as a "psychologist," he brought a comprehensive knowledge of the Freud canon, a talent for identifying salient issues in the profession and in individual lives, and a passionate dedication to the care of mentally ill children. Given his remarkable competency, there is something at once pathetic and grandly funny in Bettelheim's forging (in both senses) an identity. Here was someone who understood America, a credulous nation where a man can remake the self.

Richard Pollak
The Creation of Dr. B
A Biography of Bruno Bettelheim
Simon & Schuster, 478 pp., $28

The more serious issue is the use Bettelheim made of this new self. He became a man of parts. In such popular books as *The Informed Heart*, *The Children of the Dream*, and *Love Is Not Enough*, he weighed in on everything from the character of concentration camp victims to parenting styles on kibbutzim and in American families. Bettelheim's standing arose from his renown as the wise and forbearing principal of the University of Chicago's Orthogenic School, a residential facility for disturbed children that he ran from 1944 until the early 1970s.

The Bettelheim myth suffered after his suicide in 1990. Former patients came forward to testify to his violence toward children under his care. Now the journalist Richard Pollak has interviewed over 250 witnesses and read reams of documents in a painstaking effort to demolish every element of the legend. In *The Creation of Dr. B*, Pollak charges that Bettelheim was an inveterate liar, bully, plagiarist, and hypocrite. Pollak's brother Stephen died in 1948 while on leave from the Orthogenic School; Bettelheim arbitrarily labeled the death a suicide and blamed the boys' mother for Stephen's mental illness. A proposed memoir about Stephen turned into a catalogue of Bettelheim's acts of duplicity. Pollak succeeds in his main task; he proves that Bettelheim mistreated children and misled the public on numerous issues. Still, Pollak is so unsympathetic to his subject—he is, for example, not at all amused by Bettelheim's outlandish CV—that he may inadvertently push readers back into admiration for Bettelheim, who was a survivor as well as a fraud.

Bettelheim reorganized the Orthogenic School on lines influenced by psychoanalysis and his own profound experience as a prisoner in concentration camps. In 1938 and 1939, Bettel-

Peter D. Kramer, the author of Listening to Prozac, *is clinical professor of psychiatry at Brown University. His next book,* Should You Leave?, *will be published in September.*

heim had spent over ten months interned at Dachau and Buchenwald. Pollak denigrates Bettelheim's standing in the hierarchy of sufferers: These camps were not yet death factories, and Bettelheim was protected by bribes paid by his family. But even Pollak concedes that Bettelheim's experience was "hellish."

Bettelheim's reputation as a psychologist began with the publication in 1943 of his observation of behavior in the camps, "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations." Bettelheim contended that his survival had been due to his psychological skills, particularly his ability to continue to see his captors as individuals. At the same time, he concluded that regression was a normal response to overwhelming trauma that threatens the integrity of the self.

Drawing a parallel with his concentration-camp experiences, Bettelheim understood schizophrenia and autism to arise from extreme situations within the family. To counterbalance these noxious influences, he placed children in a "therapeutic milieu"—a permissive setting built on empathic understanding of their behavior. A child who provoked by taking a bite out of one sandwich after another was not punished; he would discover that freedom to enact psychic needs is more important than the enforcement of good manners. A wild child who toppled furniture might return to his room to find the tables and chests bolted to the floor, a creative solution meant to prevent him from doing harm without punishing or restraining him.

Pollak attacks Bettelheim as a Svengali who created his therapeutic milieu by dominating impressionable young women counselors through "dynamic supervision"—in essence, requiring staff to take on the role of patient. Bettelheim did hire a cohort of inexperienced women at the Orthogenic School; it is they who would spend long hours with difficult children. A number of those women went on to positions of leadership in the helping professions.

Dynamic supervision is very susceptible to abuse; but such supervision, whose goal is to make caregivers aware of their own blind spots, was once standard in psychoanalytically oriented institutions. Bettelheim believed that a counselor could respond effectively to disturbed children only if she grasped their motivation through the methods of psychoanalysis and a new tool: empathy.

Kent Lemon

Bettelheim understood empathy much as psychotherapists do today—as vicarious introspection, a way of knowing the other through examining the self. When he was good at teaching empathy, Bettelheim was very good. Bettelheim would get a counselor to respond not to her own feelings but the child's, even when the child had smeared feces on the counselor's blouse. Empathy is so common a concept today that it is hard to appreciate the novelty of Bettelheim's approach. In his 24 volumes of writing, Freud made only one substantive comment on empathy, and that comment is ambiguous. It was Bettelheim and, more vigorously, the psychologist Carl Rogers who brought empathy to center stage.

Though it has precursors, the therapeutic milieu was also innovative. Bettelheim looked past Freudian drives to the patient's actual experiences—again, this is the concentration camp history put to use. The real parents counted, as did the real rehabilitative setting. The emphasis on the social "surround" puts Bettelheim in a tradition of American and American immigrant theorists—such as Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Viktor Frankl, and Erik Erikson—who created a line of psychotherapy that attends as much to social reality as to unconscious fantasy. To sustain the milieu, Bettelheim worked tirelessly as an administrator, raising funds, building, conceptualizing. His success was grounded in a personality style common among successful administrators: energetic, arbitrary, demanding, and not a little sociopathic.

In the service of fund-raising—and self-promotion—Bettelheim misdiagnosed patients and then inflated his therapeutic success rates. The Ford Foundation was willing to

underwrite innovative treatments for autistic children, so Bettelheim labeled his children autistic. Few actually met the definition of the newly minted syndrome. But at mid-century, medical diagnosis coexisted with a psychoanalytic system that relied on broad categories—psychosis and neurosis. Bettelheim considered madness a universal capability; he was, after all, a man who claimed to be able to empathize with his tormentors at Dachau and who required his staff to discover what was autistic within themselves. Nor were psychoanalytic outcomes behavioral. Success was measured in terms of enhanced self-understanding, which was presumed to offer protection from further injury. This method had grave problems; but it was the system that would have been most familiar to an art historian-philosopher after World War II. That being said, Pollak demonstrates that Bettelheim gave an impression of the school's efficacy that no subsequent examination has supported.

Bettelheim's contributions—his celebration of empathy and his insistence that the social environment matters—create a standard that makes inexcusable his violence toward patients. Pollak's account leaves no doubt that behind closed doors Bettelheim could be explosive. He hit children to control them in the midst of self-destructive acts, and he hit them when he himself was out of control. Residents describe episodes of slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, and verbal attacks. Pollak reports accusations by two women who claim that, when they were at the school in their teenage years, Bettelheim fondled their breasts as he apologized for inflicting beatings. In Pollak's account, Bettelheim, who lectured mothers on the harm that violence does, was the perfect hypocrite.

All along, Bettelheim's colleagues had found his descriptions of the Orthogenic School hard to believe; in their experience, treatment of profoundly disturbed children sometimes required physical coercion. In private correspondence, Bettelheim said that force—slapping around—has a role in child-rearing: "Of course I cannot afford to say that out loud, because it runs against all child psychology. But I know: boy does it feel good to be once in a while mistreated by a parent." He believed he needed to overstate the case against violence in order to make an impression on American parents. In this limited sense, Bettelheim was aware of and comfortable with his hypocrisy.

To Pollak, Bettelheim's violence completes the picture of the (ersatz) psychologist as monster, and this conclusion may seem the only one possible. But much the same ground was covered by the French journalist Nina Sutton, to quite different effect. Sutton's *Bettelheim*, which appeared in English last year, has a political-psychoanalytic agenda that may seem strange to American readers. But Sutton, more than Pollak, seems intent on wrestling with Bettelheim's contradictions. She sees the violence as a tragic flaw in a man with heroic qualities.

BETTELHEIM COULD BE EXPLOSIVE. HE HIT CHILDREN TO CONTROL THEM, AND HE HIT THEM WHEN HE HIMSELF WAS OUT OF CONTROL.

Sutton is painstaking in documenting instances when Bettelheim attacked children merely because he felt insulted; some former patients claim to have been crushed by Bettelheim's tyranny. Sutton interviewed others who were hit by Bettelheim but still consider the Orthogenic School a magical place. Before reading either book, my impression, based on stories that circulated in the profession, was that Bettelheim could lose control and hit children, but that he was not systematically cruel. Sutton's conclusions are along these lines; Pollak's are harsher. But even Pollak tells of interviewees who seem to have benefited from Bettelheim's combination of empathy and authoritarianism.

What are we to make of the grand old men of psychoanalysis? Jung takes a patient as a mistress, Freud ignores patients' accounts of incest, Ferenczi cannot decide which patient to marry, the mother or the daughter. Bettelheim's case is ongoing—three additional biographies are rumored. Surely these will need to take into account Pollak's monumental research. Pollak does a service by demonstrating how dangerous hero-worship and psychoanalysis are in combination.

But, finally, Pollak's book seems to me part of an unhelpful trend, self-congratulation masquerading as mature judgment, vendetta in the guise of biography. Pollak layers accusation and innuendo; the reader barely has time to consider one failing of Bettelheim's before another is piled on. The accumulation creates a picture of a habitual liar who preys on others while aggrandizing himself. This view may not be wrong—certainly there are witnesses who saw Bettelheim in just this way. But there is a peculiar ahistorical quality to the presentation of the evidence. Often Bettelheim is judged according to the scientific or social standards of a subsequent era. Bettelheim's genuine contributions are never gathered together. The well-documented abusive behaviors are put on the table with other less easily verified charges, like the sexual molestation. In the end, while it is clear that Bettelheim was no saint, it is hard to have confidence that the figure Pollak depicts

resembles the man under study.

To my taste, the exercise lacks any wistfulness, any sense of what is lost. Because along with Bettelheim's reputation, his contributions are in eclipse. In the era of brief hospital stays, few psychiatric institutions can maintain a therapeutic milieu. These milieux were liable to abuse (in particular, long and unjustified stays for rebellious adolescents) but with the right leadership they could be powerful tools for redirecting the course of an illness. In general, there remain few settings in which the expectation is that great effort and cleverness will be applied to the problems of disturbed children. For the most part, the helping professions have given up on remaking damaged personalities, except for those aspects of temperament that respond to medication.

Nina Sutton is keenly aware of the loss. She notes reforms at the Orthogenic School: Physical violence and dynamic supervision are banned, autistic children are not admitted. She asks:

> But in this new irreproachable institution, what had happened to psychoanalysis, to empathy, to the fantasies and phantoms that made living so unbearable for the children? To those awkward, not-so-presentable feelings? . . . Once Bettelheim had left, the Orthogenic School stopped seeking out and confronting hidden "killers." Instead, it tried to lull them to sleep.

Sutton condemns the new conformity as "covert violence," presumably to children's authentic or potential selves. This argument may sound a bit over-the-top. But even on the most pragmatic level, there are reasons to limit our self-satisfaction at the toppling of the icons.

With the therapist's loss of authority and grandeur, psychoanalysis has become safer, but it has also lost much of its power to perturb. Even empathy has been degraded. The term once referred to a resonance with every aspect of a person, even what is most shameful and disturbing; in the brief psychotherapies available in modern health care, empathy has been reduced to niceness and general encouragement—cheerleading. And in our consciousness, as members of the post-Freudian culture, the human potential for violence is ignored or marginalized; it has become a pathological trait that appears in sick "abusers." One does not have to be a devotee of analysis to wonder whether, as regards the darker aspects of human nature, our society and its caregivers are not in a self-righteous state of denial.

Bettelheim is a figure who ought to inspire wonder, at the juxtaposition of genius and fraudulence, wisdom and lack of control, public good and private shame. The effort to understand those dichotomies might be part of a larger project, to make sense of the confusing legacy of psychoanalysis, a movement that has shaped much of our culture, from the way we raise children to the way we demand forthrightness of one another, but whose history appears to be peopled almost exclusively by tainted giants. ♦

BGA

Vive Le Roy Ladurie

A Peasant Boy's Journey Through War and Plague

By Kenneth R. Weinstein

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie is a master of the *annales* school of history, whose adherents have been criticized for shunning politics and focusing instead on demography, social history, and various other minutiae. Le Roy Ladurie himself is best known for his work on artisans, witches, the Languedoc peasantry, and the climate of Europe since the year 1000, nearly all of which have become, incredibly enough, bestsellers in France.

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie
The Beggar and the Professor
A Sixteenth-Century Family Saga
Chicago, 407 pp., $29.95

But unlike his colleagues, Le Roy Ladurie is also a noted political historian, which makes him a natural guide to a subject that has fascinated historians for generations: the diaries left by the Platter family of 16th-century Basel. These German texts include the first autobiography ever written by a man of peasant origin and one of the few pre-Enlightenment accounts of childhood.

Thomas Platter, the family patriarch, was born in 1499 of illiterate parents in southern Switzerland. Left fatherless at 6, he began work as a goatherd. At the unbelievable age of 10, malnourished and bored with the idiocy of rural life, Platter walked out of his village, barefoot, in search of schooling. Over the next decade he would wander through central Europe, from Franconia to Bavaria, Saxony, and Silesia, traversing Germany several times, begging or working for room and board, and living on onions, crabapples, and raw turnips. Platter dodged mountain snows, highway robbers, murderers, famine, lice, pestilence, and wars. After dozens of odd jobs and false academic starts from Ulm to Dresden to Munich, he learned to read at the age of 21. By 25, he was so versed in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew that he could teach them.

Kenneth R. Weinstein directs the Government Reform Project at the Heritage Foundation.

Yet, almost as soon as he became a learned man, Platter abandoned the Catholicism of his youth, converting to Protestantism in 1522, just five years after Luther posted his 95 theses. Platter soon took his place among the Protestant humanists who sought to use ancient history and Biblical exegesis to separate "true Christianity" from the "pagan rites" of Rome. Married in 1529, he made his career in Protestant Zurich and Basel, where he saw the horrors of the wars of religion firsthand. What's more, the plague made many visits to Switzerland, where it would take four of Platter's children.

With Protestants dying in religious warfare, Catholic priests in flight, and many on both sides killed by the plague, social mobility (for the survivors) increased dramatically, and Platter moved quickly from a job as ropemaker's assistant to set himself up as a printer. (He would publish John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.) He also took in dozens of students as boarders, and his renown as a lecturer on Aesop, Homer, Cicero, and Erasmus spread across Europe. At 45, he was appointed headmaster of the Basel gymnasium.

With Thomas Platter fully ensconced in Basel's intelligentsia, Le Roy Ladurie turns his attention to the life of Thomas's son, Felix, born in 1536. The younger Platter's early years could hardly have differed more from his fathers. His earliest memories were of distinguished guests, including Calvin, who visited in 1541. Thomas wanted Felix (1536-1614) to become a physician. And Felix, whose appetite ran to the macabre, gladly accommodated his father's wishes. He would gaze intently as butchers removed the entrails of slaughtered animals, and spent much of his childhood dissecting insects and mice. Later, as a medical student, he and his colleagues would rob graves to obtain cadavers for study.

At 16, Felix Platter, like his father 43 years before, crossed Europe in search of learning. Danger was ever-present: The plague struck that year and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V besieged Metz with an army of 60,000 men. Yet Felix, unlike his father, was able to travel by horse, in respectable clothes, to a great university: the medical faculty of Montpellier. And on the 450-mile journey from Basel, he saw a radically different world from that which his father had seen. The Reformation had taken hold, the churches of Lausanne had been "depapalized," and Geneva was now Calvin's fortified city. But in Avignon, Felix was surrounded by Catholics, whom, to his great surprise, he found sympathetic. On the road to Montpellier, Felix encountered both Catholics friendly to Protestantism and Protestants on their way to being burned at the stake—although it would be two decades before the Protestants of Paris were rounded up and massacred in 1572.

Felix, who had no desire for martyrdom, made no effort to inform anyone that he was a dissenter. Yet he courageously avoided mass and refused to dissect Protestant cadavers. He had no qualms dissecting dogs, whose cadavers he kept in the closet. After all, as Felix himself noted, one of his professors, a certain Monsieur Rondelet, had honored his first wife and his stillborn son by dissecting them shortly after their funeral masses. After five years of medical discovery and Mediterranean climate, Felix graduated from Montpellier in January 1557. The night before his departure, Felix's German classmates held a going-away party at which they mischievously served pâté prepared from a cat they had skinned.

Felix traveled home through Toulouse, Bordeaux, Poitiers, Tours, Orleans, and finally Paris—already famed as Christendom's most populous city (with 350,000 residents) and as the site of Notre Dame and the Louvre (which François I had recently transformed into a stately palace). Felix spent much of his time in the Latin Quarter, visiting its bookstores and the great medical scholars at the College Royal, now the College de France. (The Sorbonne, alas, was too overrun by Papists.)

By May 1557, Felix returned to Basel to marry and pass his doctoral exams. Thanks to Felix's passion for collecting skeletons, bone fragments, stuffed animals and shells, the Platter household became one of Europe's most impressive natural history museums. One frequent visitor was the mother of an executed man whose cadaver Felix dissected, and whose bones he exhibited.

Le Roy Ladurie has produced a fascinating history that reads like a novel. His account of the travels of Thomas and Felix makes the reader feel the fear of highwaymen, the joy of finding rare flowers, the excitement of entering the walls of Paris. Aside from brief interludes on 16th-century politics, Le Roy Ladurie has tailored the text to modern sensibilities. And yet in this very eagerness to accommodate, he has short-changed his most interesting subject: the difficult intellectual questions faced by the Platters, who, after all, lived in the midst of the great theological and political ferment of their day. Le Roy Ladurie provides us with no adequate understanding of the spiritual difficulties Thomas must have faced in leaving the Catholic Church. Nor does he explain why Thomas was so dedicated to his Latin, Greek, or Hebrew masters. Likewise, he fails to explore the intellectual links between anti-religious skeptics, scientific materialists, and Spanish marranos (Jews publicly professing Catholicism)—all of them part and parcel of Felix's world at Montpellier. By avoiding these deeper questions, Le Roy Ladurie gives the reader a more comfortable journey, but a less edifying one. ♦

College Is a Rip-Off

And P.C. Is the Least of Its Problems

By Shawn Miller

For the greater part of the past decade, discourse—both learned and unlearned—on the state of American higher education has exhibited an obsession with the phenomenon of "political correctness." Initially the intellectual property of conservatives who saw the ideological chickens of the 1960s coming home to roost on campus (and who, basking in the sunset of the Reagan-Bush dynasty, had little else to complain about), political correctness evolved into a thoroughly undefinable stock phrase for all that is wrong with academia.

Anne Matthews
Bright College Years
Inside the American Campus Today
Simon & Schuster, 288 pp., $23

So it comes as a shock to finish Anne Matthews's *Bright College Years* and realize that the author has not once referred to political correctness. Matthews, who teaches journalism at New York University, liberates her readers from sexual and racial politics, and instead concentrates on the basics: What exactly is college for? Who should go to college? What does a campus do? Is education worth the price? In exploring—though never feigning to answer—these questions, the author takes a fascinating snapshot of the knowledge business in the United States today.

Structurally, *Bright College Years* focuses on the three-way tug of war between students, professors, and administrators, each wanting more than the other two are willing to give. At the root of these conflicts is, of course, money. Even though the average tuition for the nation's 2,125 four-year campuses is rising at twice the rate of inflation, all but the most heavily endowed wallow in dire financial straits. The problem is not a lack of consumer interest. In what can be seen as a triumph of egalitarianism (though not, some would argue, common sense) two out of every three high school students in the United States will go on to higher education, compared with one out of ten in France and Japan.

The problem is that not enough of these students are both smart and rich.

Simply stated, campuses need to attract students who can pay full tuition and help defray the costs of students who cannot. A recent study at Trinity University in San Antonio shows that of those who take the Scholastic Aptitude Test, only 5 percent have both scores above 1050 (out of 1600) and a family income over $70,000. Competition among schools to enlist these students has thus become, in the words of one recruiter, an "arms race." High-ability, low-need applicants are beginning to appreciate their own value, and to bargain for their services. This, in turn, has forced many colleges to discount in order to stay competitive. According to Matthews, some private liberal arts colleges will offer price reductions of up to 40 percent to attractive applicants. The American Council on Education estimates that some schools discount to such an extent that they keep only 10 percent of any yearly tuition increase, a situation likened to "chewing your own tail."

For those high-need applicants who cannot wrangle concessions from their schools, the only alternative is to take out a loan. More than half the seniors graduating from American campuses have gone into debt in order to obtain their degree, with outstanding federal college loans closing in on $30 billion. Not that students don't have good reasons for investing heavily in their education: A male college graduate earns 80 percent more than a male high school graduate. But nor does a degree provide any guarantee, the laws of market saturation being what they are. One third of the pizza deliverers in Washington, D.C. come equipped with a Bachelor of Arts.

Such monetary pressures seem to have had a dampening effect on the intellectual aspirations of American undergraduates. It is difficult to imagine many graduating seniors exclaiming, as an F. Scott Fitzgerald character once did, "God! Haven't we raked the universe over the coals for four years?" Most students seem content to let the universe lie unraked and concentrate on the bottom line. "I love history," notes one of Matthews's subjects, "but fear majoring in it will limit my career options exceedingly. I need at least $80,000 a year to be happy." Matthews cites a survey in which fewer than half of today's students expect college to help them develop a philosophy of life, while 85 percent anticipated such an epiphany in 1968. "At these prices," comments the author, "speculating and exploring are not cost-efficient."

And what of the professors, whose duty, one would assume, is to assist the student in the area of speculation and exploration? Despite, or perhaps because of, her own place in the profession, Matthews's overall assessment of her peers is generally glum and at times cynical. Her thoughts on the incentive-killing side effects of

Shawn Miller is co-author of Business and Society Today: Managing Social Issues *(West).*

the tenure system are sure to win her the enmity of some of her NYU colleagues, and her caustic appraisal of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's "genius grants," two-thirds of which go to tenured professors, assures she will never be considered for that prize. "Fifteen years after [its] launch, no great books have come out of this creativity experiment," she notes. "Millions of fellows' dollars have been mundanely spent, on patios and tuitions and silverware, on new cars and old debts."

Treated more sympathetically are the administrators, the "designated grown-ups of higher education." During the 1960s, students angrily insisted on being treated like adults; today, *in loco parentis* is flourishing. Brown University alone has offered Dean on Call, Chaplains on Call, Women on Call, and Psychologists on Call twenty-four-hour hotlines. One college president laments the frequency with which parents drop their child off at school, drive home, and immediately get divorced, leaving the freshman "a total wreck." In addition to these parental duties, administrators are faced with a more hostile legal environment: The president of William and Mary has been cited for serving sherry to staff members on state time, while Pace University has been successfully sued by several undergraduates who felt that a computer course was too difficult.

To her credit, Matthews refuses to hold the present hostage to the standards of the past, a staple of P.C.-based academic commentary. For example, she follows her description of modern campus nightlife—a Gomorrah of sex, violence, drunkenness, and hooliganism—with a historical overview of academia in which it becomes obvious that such behavior is not unique to our own era. During the 1300s, European undergraduates were given to excessive drinking and hazing, and student riots between ethnic groups lasted for days. In the late 18th century, a Harvard professor complained of being pelted with "tea cups, saucer, and knife," while a Princeton colleague remarked at the stink caused by students emptying chamber pots out of dorm windows.

Stylistically, *Bright College Years* could easily serve as a textbook for Matthews's journalism students. Speckled with interviews and exhaustively researched, the book provides its readers with enough ammunition to take their own shots at American higher education. The author provides a generous enough selection of targets. ♦

Howard Beached

Stern On-screen Is a Shadow of His Radio Self

By John Podhoretz

Saturday, March 1. Howard Stern, whose success has been based on his unwillingness to stand for celebrity sanctimony, has now turned sanctimonious, and therefore he must be destroyed. I walk out of *Private Parts*, his autobiographical movie, in a state of bewilderment. It's a nice, unmemorable little movie. Stern proves a remarkably adept physical comedian, and there is an astounding comic turn in the last hour by the young actor Paul Giamatti that is alone worth the price of admission.

— MOVIE DIARY —

Private Parts
Howard Stern

Waiting for Guffman
Christopher Guest

Donnie Brasco
Johnny Depp

Absolute Power
Clint Eastwood

The Devil's Own
Brad Pitt, Harrison Ford

And yet *Private Parts* is appalling, and not for the reasons you might think. The movie says it's about the life and times of Howard Stern, the most notorious radio personality of our time. It stars Howard Stern, the most notorious radio personality of our time. And yet *Private Parts* gives you no sense *why* Howard Stern is the most notorious radio personality of our time—why anybody would listen to Howard Stern, why anybody would like Howard Stern, or why, for that matter, anybody would really hate Howard Stern. Instead, it turns Howard Stern, the only remaining spokesman for the defiantly "unevolved" American male, into Tickle-Me Howard.

The bowdlerization is all the more remarkable because Stern has deliberately done it to himself. In the relentless prerelease publicity for *Private Parts*, Stern and his team retailed a line of bull Stern himself would find intolerable if anybody else tried it. The movie is a love letter to his wife, Alison, Stern says. His producer, Ivan Reitman, describes *Private Parts* as the story of a Woody Allen-ish nerd who found his true calling by speaking truth on the radio.

Stern is the most fearless celebrity interviewer the world has ever seen, and if he were paying a promotional call to the "Howard Stern Radio Show," Howard the radio personality would never let Howard the movie star get away with it. Howard the

John Podhoretz is deputy editor of The Weekly Standard.

radio personality would force Howard the movie star to admit that *Private Parts* is a deliberate effort to file off the rough edges that make him interesting, to soften him. Howard the radio guy would try to provoke Howard the movie star by telling him that any man who spends as much time publicly protesting his love for his wife must have a chick on the side. And Howard the radio personality would make fun of Howard the movie star for making cynical use of his three children as softening devices when he isn't brandishing them as weapons in his battle against those who initiate million-dollar proceedings against him with the FCC. (Stern claims he doesn't let his daughters listen to him on the radio. How could he know whether they're listening or not, since he's not in the house when he's broadcasting?)

There is something horribly disheartening about the idea of Howard Stern changing sides in this fashion—that a man who became famous for his defiance of modern liberal politesse now cravenly becomes yet another suck-up to the Soccer Moms.

It is a great pleasure, a few weeks after my bewildered viewing of *Private Parts*, to discover that Stern's gambit has not paid off. After a big opening weekend and an unbelievably generous critical response (Howard Stern gets overpraised? Howard *Stern*?), *Private Parts* has fizzled at the box office. Maybe the Soccer Moms aren't so stupid after all. Or maybe his fans heard Stern's spin and decided to punish him for his betrayal by staying away. Either way, justice has triumphed. Stern may not have been destroyed, but he's not going to be a movie star.

Sunday, March 9. What's this? A sophisticated, left-of-center audience in Washington's Georgetown neighborhood laughing at (I'm sorry to be cruel, but I don't know any other way to put this) fag jokes? That is what is happening as I watch *Waiting for Guffman*, a funny, deeply patronizing comedy featuring the prissiest sissy since the character actor Franklin Pangborn swished his way through the Hollywood of the 1930s and 1940s.

Waiting for Guffman is a mock documentary set in a small Missouri town called Blaine that was once the Stool Capital of the World. Blaine is celebrating its 150th year, and the local theater impresario is asked to stage a musical tribute to the town called "Red, White and Blaine." His name is Corky St. Clair, and he is a spectacularly untalented former chorus boy whose musical version of *Backdraft* led to a fire that burned the local community theater down. No matter. Everybody in Blaine is sure Corky is a genius and a fine fellow—though he speaks of a wife whom no one has ever seen and goes to great pains to seek out a local muscle boy to play one of the parts in the show.

HOWARD THE RADIO STAR WOULD MAKE FUN OF HOWARD THE MOVIE STAR.

Corky resigns in a huff when the town council won't give him $100,000 to fulfill his vision of "Red, White and Blaine," but he quickly gets over his hissy fit. And when a New York talent agent responds to his letter by promising to come to the opening, Corky and the cast—a local dentist, a Dairy Queen server, and married travel agents Corky calls "the Lunts of Blaine"—prepare themselves for greatness.

There hasn't been a movie this biting about small-town morons in many years, and *Waiting for Guffman* does seem annoyingly superior to its characters at times. But it is often hilarious nonetheless, and director/co-writer Christopher Guest plays Corky in a performance so daringly fey that it serves as yet another reminder what a wimp Howard Stern proves to be on film. Evidently, you can still get away with this. I wouldn't have thought you could.

Monday, March 10. Johnny Depp is the best American actor under the age of 40. There can be no question after watching his stunning performance tonight in *Donnie Brasco*. He can do anything, and he will do it, moreover, without a trace of vanity. The weird, ethereal hero of *Edward Scissorhands* gave way to the crushingly burdened young man in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, which then was superseded by his amazing transformation into the insanely chipper transvestite movie director in *Ed Wood*. And now, in *Donnie Brasco*, he shows us the way in which a college-educated FBI agent finds himself slowly changing into a crude, lowlife gangster when he is called upon to infiltrate a mob family. He is riveting, and heartbreaking, and he makes you fear and worry for his character's spiritual health as well as his physical well-being. Among his contemporaries, only Daniel Day Lewis is his equal.

Depp is also a remarkably generous performer. He is willing to stand aside and allow his co-stars to do the flashier work that gets the attention. In *Gilbert Grape*, Leonardo DiCaprio got an Oscar nomination for playing a retarded kid when Depp offered a far more challenging and memorable depiction of a young man slowly suffocating from the responsibilities placed on him by God.

In *Ed Wood*, he slipped so artfully into the skin of a cheerful hustler that he helped Martin Landau win an Oscar for his flamboyant portrayal of Bela Lugosi. And now in *Donnie Brasco*, he gives the entertaining scenery-chewer Al Pacino renewed gravity and purpose. Pacino has the showy turn in *Donnie Brasco*, playing

a Mafia flop who will never rise from the third tier for the same reason he never suspects the man he has brought under his wing is a cop. This is a part Pacino could have phoned in; with Depp at his side, he has to work. And he does. *Donnie Brasco* is terrific, even though it makes no sense; an hour was cut out of it before its release, and if you wanted to follow the plot in the last half, you would be unable to. But the atmosphere, the writing (by Paul Attanasio), and the acting make it easy to overlook the confusion.

Wednesday, March 12. Sometimes, it's fun to walk out of movies. Take *Absolute Power*, the new film starring and directed by Clint Eastwood. I hightailed it out of there as soon as I noticed my fiancée had fallen asleep waiting for yet another endless shot of Eastwood walking down a hallway, or up a staircase, or across a sidewalk, to end.

There's a lot of talk about how Eastwood is a no-nonsense director who brings movies in under budget, likes to work fast, and knows what he's doing. But why doesn't anybody point out that he's a really horrible director with no sense of pace, timing, casting, or character? (The movie for which he won an Oscar as best director, *Unforgiven*, had one of the best screenplays of the last 20 years, and though he almost ruined it, David Webb Peoples's writing masked Eastwood's incompetence.)

How did Clint Eastwood, of all people, become critically sacrosanct? What could be the explanation? The guy is so cheap he won't even turn on all the lights when he's filming! Did anybody see *Bird*, his movie about Charlie Parker? I did, unfortunately, or rather, I didn't; there was nothing to see except a black screen and occasionally the mild glint of a saxophone piercing through the darkness.

Oh, and by the way, he's been a movie star for 30 years now. Do you think he could maybe recite a line without taking a weird pause in the middle like he's trying to remember the next word?

Thursday, March 27. Sometimes, you feel noble for walking out of a movie. Two weeks after decamping from *Absolute Power*, my fiancée and I walk out of *The Devil's Own*, the new Brad Pitt-Harrison Ford movie about the Irish Republican Army. You know the IRA. It's the gang of murderous terrorists who deserve to be treated with all the scorn and contempt liberal democracies can express toward those who take up arms against the principle of majority rule. Needless to say, *The Devil's Own* is a paid commercial announcement for the IRA, and therefore offensive on its face.

But that's not why we find ourselves leaving after an hour. We look at each other and stand up and go because the movie is so bad Corky St. Clair of *Waiting for Guffman* could have directed it. And the prospect of having to continue listening to Brad Pitt speak his dialogue as if he were doing the voiceover for the leprechaun from the Frosted Lucky Charms commercial—I almost expect him to start singing "Stinger shoulder-launched missiles, they're magically delicious!"—is enough to make *me* consider checking into Maze Prison for a nice, long, restful stay. ♦

Closure for Clinton

By JASON DE PARLE

LAS VEGAS, January 19, 2008—Inspired by George Bush's 1997 parachute jump from an airplane, former President Bill Clinton announced today that he would like another chance to make a pass at Paula Jones at a Little Rock hotel room. "I'm searching for closure," Mr. Clinton said, referring to the bungled incident a decade and a half ago. "I made a promise then and there that I would someday nail that—complete the mission I had set for myself. It's rankled ever since."

Ms. Jones, who became chief operating officer of American Spectator Enterprises after the company acquired TimeWarner, could not be reached for comment.

"My technique was all wrong," the former president said from behind the buffet bar at Huge Boy Restaurant and Casino, which abuts his presidential library. "In the first place I sent the wrong trooper. I believe Officer Danny Ferguson came on too strong in his initial encounter with Paula. And of course I dropped my trousers too early."

Mr. Clinton's announcement comes among a spate of closure-seeking moves by former presidents. Last year, former President Jimmy Carter took time off from mediating a dispute between Staten Island and Manhattan to announce that he had always wanted to beat the crap out of Teddy Kennedy for launching a 1980 primary challenge. Mr. Kennedy, who is no longer able to move owing to his weight problem, was an easy target when President Carter came after him with a canoe paddle.

But it is Mr. Clinton who has been most promiscuous in seeking closure. The Paula Jones attempt will be his fourth in the last six months. His previous effort ended in tragedy when Mr. Clinton attempted to enlist in the army, fight a war in Vietnam, and inhale mari-

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George Bush's jump was meant to achieve "closure" after his harrowing World War II episode, his spokesman said.

—News item