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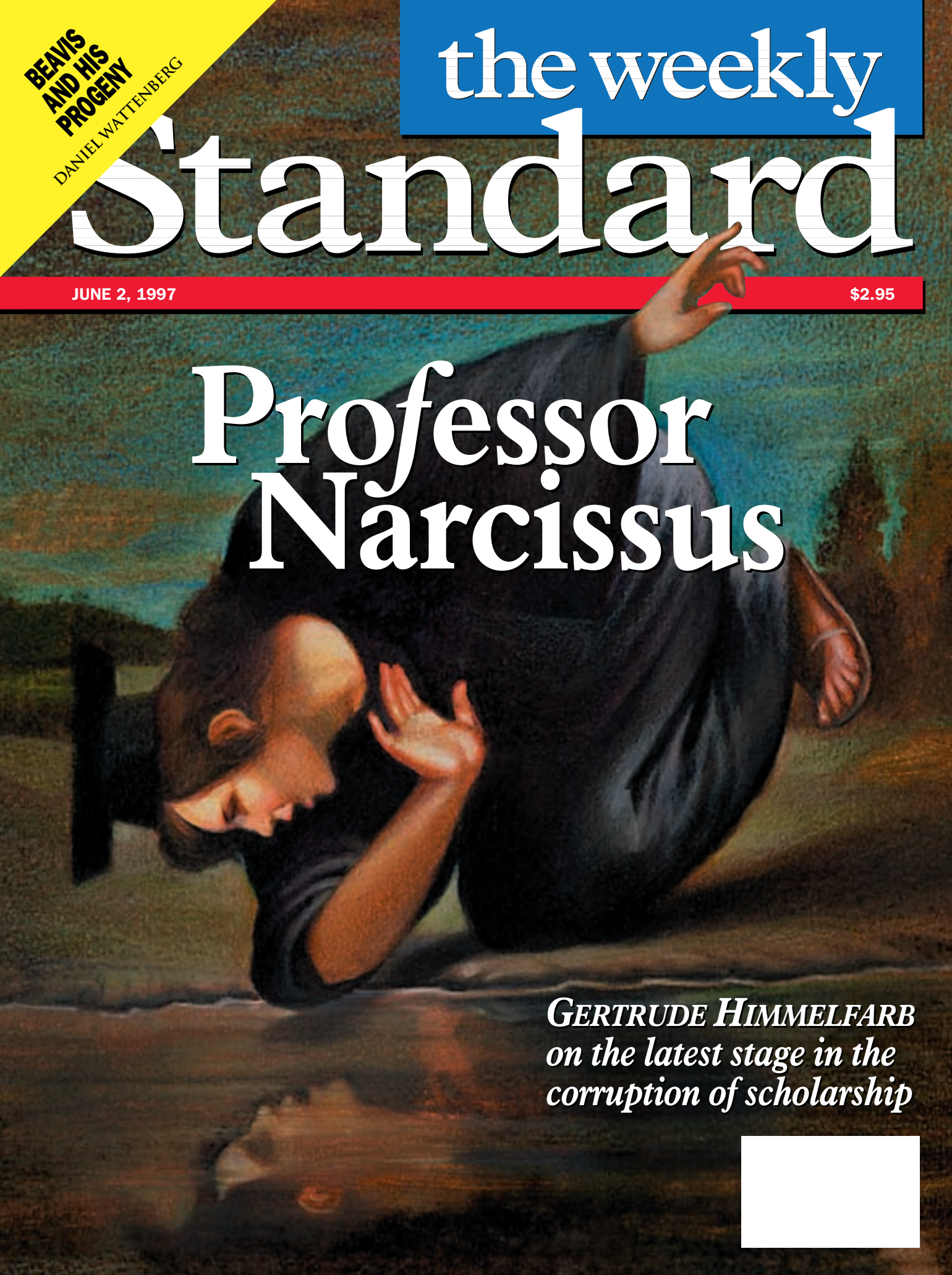
BEAVIS AND HIS PROGENY
DANIEL WATTENBERG

Professor Narcissus



GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB on the latest stage in the corruption of scholarship

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Cover by Kevin Chadwick

Books & Arts

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David Brock's Hobson's Choice

Irascible gumshoe Gary Aldrich was in the news again this week, when *New Yorker* writer Jane Mayer quoted the former FBI agent and bestselling author as saying that some of the allegations he made about President Clinton in *Unlimited Access* were "hypothetical" and "not quite solid."

Aldrich denied it and threatened to sue—probably ill-advisedly, since Aldrich himself told *Newsweek* last year that many of his stories were "only allegations that needed to be further investigated."

The Mayer-Aldrich spat presented a problem of allegiance for conservative investigative journalist David Brock. Last summer, Aldrich revealed Brock as the source for his most controversial "allegation": that President Clinton had sneaked out of the White House for a tryst, hidden in the back of a station wagon. Brock promptly denounced Aldrich, countering that he had merely *asked* Aldrich about the story during an interview.

The result was an exchange of heated accusations of mendacity and some bizarre hate-mail from the pen of Aldrich. So Brock would clearly—

But wait: Mayer co-wrote (with onetime *Wall Street Journal* colleague Jill Abramson) one of the most negative (and in Brock's view, dishonest and self-interested) reviews of his account of the Hill-Thomas affair, *The Real Anita Hill*. When Mayer and Abramson wrote their own Hill-Thomas book, *Strange Justice*, Brock replied in the *American Spectator* with a devastating catalogue of factual errors that stretched to 22,000 words.

So whom to believe when liars call liars liars?

"Regnery [Aldrich's publisher] and the conservative media outlets that embraced the book," Brock told the *Washington Post*, "are going to have to give the public an explanation or an apology."

It's Mayer by a (held) nose.

Clinton's Wimpy Sanctions

Last week, after four years of repeated Chinese sales of chemical-weapons components to Iran, the White House finally acted. It imposed sanctions on five Chinese citizens and three minor Chinese companies for the next 12 months—depriving them of about $2 million in business with the United States. The Clinton administration took no action against broader Chinese industry groups or the Beijing government and continued to warn Congress against revoking China's most-favored-nation status. "We have to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time," a senior State Department official explained. "Cutting off MFN would be counterproductive."

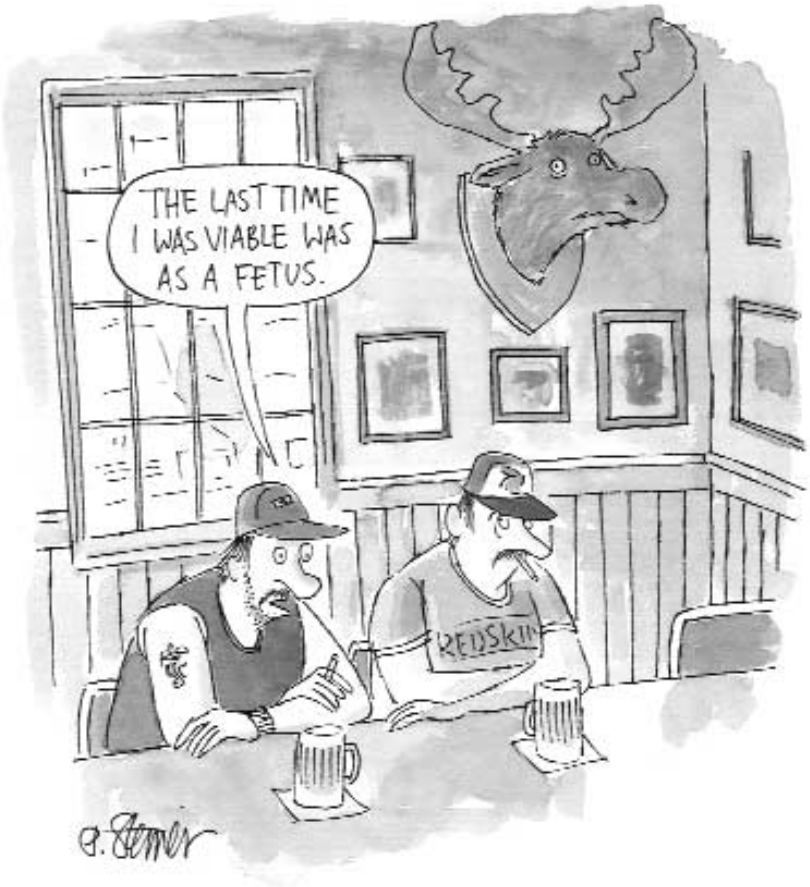
Needless to say, the Clinton administration ignored Chinese chemical-weapons proliferation until the Chemical Weapons Convention (which China signed) could be squeaked by the Senate. And with this action, the administration avoided sanctioning any large state entity (because "we have no evidence that the Chinese government was involved").

The point of this latest announcement was to make the White House look tough on Chinese proliferation without doing any damage to the Clinton administration's favorite trading partner. But wait until the MFN debate is over. Then the administration plans to approve billions of dollars of Westinghouse and Bechtel nuclear-reactor sales to China. How will they justify this? They're planning to say that the sale will keep China from selling other, *more* dangerous weapons components to Iran. After all, Beijing must be rewarded. And if not us, who? If not soon, when?

Big Think Revisited

The state of the State of the World Forum is good, we are delighted to report; it thrives; it flourishes. You may recall that the Forum is the project of New Age gadfly James Garrison and the otherwise

Scrapbook



unemployed Mikhail Gorbachev, who hope to create a "global brain trust." The first Forum, chronicled in our Oct. 16, 1995, issue, drew such heavy hitters as George P. Shultz and Jane Fonda, Zbigniew Brzezinski and John Denver, Ted Turner and (needless to say) Shirley MacLain. For three days each year, they "deliberate together concerning the great issues pertaining to the future of humanity." It's a giant wonkathon, in other words, for the pompous and the privileged—the flotsam of the international celebrity-intellectual swamp. These people have way too much time on their hands.

This year's Forum—to be held this fall, as always and where else, in San Francisco—will begin with "A Walk Through Time: From Stardust to Us," which the program describes as "a mile-long walk (one foot for each million years of time) to highlight the major events and themes of the evolution of life on earth." This will be followed by a "Guided Meditation on Interconnectedness," and then a dinner to discuss "The Sweep and Future of Human Civilization." All in a day's work! Looking through the program prospectus, we were most struck by the list of invited participants. You sort of expect Alan Cranston and Marian Wright Edelman, but Ed Feulner of the Heritage Foundation? (We are told he has declined.) Jesse Jackson, sure, but Lynne Cheney? Rob Reiner and George Gilder? And—holy smokes! —Georgia's own Newt Gingrich, whom the program lists as a dinner keynote speaker, divagating on "Priorities for U.S. Foreign Policy." We all know that Newt is engaging in vigorous outreach these days, but we hope he'll draw the line somewhere.

Touch Me Not

Two weeks ago, our reporter Pia Catton gave a number of reasons for disliking the new memorial to Franklin D. Roosevelt, starting with its misrepresentation of the man's character and his politics. Here's another reason: Besides memorializing ineptly, it panders ineptly.

In an effort to placate advocates for the disabled, upset that FDR would not be depicted in his wheelchair, the memorial incorporated Braille in one of its sculptures, spelling out for the blind to feel the alphabet soup of New Deal agencies—WPA, CCC, and so on.

The problem? As a *Washington Post* headline last week put it: "FDR Memorial's Braille Lettering Is Too Large to Be Legible." One blind visitor explained to the *Post*: "The dots are about five times normal size." Another, after fruitlessly running his fingers over the bas-relief, said, "It must be a fake."

As always with such blunders, the most entertaining part of the story was the sculptor's effort to avoid saying he had goofed: "My concept of that piece," said Robert Graham, "was to have Braille as a kind of invitation to touch, more than anything. . . . Nothing is life-size in the piece, so you very much have to adjust yourself to the scale." In other words, you Braille-readers should grow yourselves some bigger fingers.

Casual

Homeophobia

I'd been sick for a couple of weeks: sniffle, tickle in my throat, blocked-up ears. I figured I'd been taking the wrong antihistamine. So the other day I walked into a yuppie drugstore and rang for the pharmacist. A chubby little guy with a flat-top haircut appeared behind a window.

I said, "What do you recommend for me? I've got a sniffle, a tickle in my throat, and blocked-up ears."

All I wanted was a brand name, but the guy said, "I'll be right with you." He scampered out from behind his window and leered at me like a bouncer outside a strip-joint. I swear he was rubbing his hands. "How adventurous are you?" he asked.

I didn't like this, not one bit, but the fellow was, after all, a drug dealer of sorts, and that brought machismo into play. "Very adventurous," I said.

So he did a bit more scampering, over to a nearby shelf. "Ever tried homeopathy?" he asked.

That sounded like what Jeffrey Dahmer and John Wayne Gacy did. "Definitely not," I said.

"Here." He plopped a box in my hands that said "Oscillococcinum." He himself said, "Oscillococcinum." It wasn't a pretty sound. I'd take Afrin, Advil, Sudafed, Actifed, whatever. I wasn't going to take Oscillococcinum nohow.

"Um . . . oh, look here," I said. "It reads 'fever, chills, body aches.' And since I don't have fevers or—"

"Here." He handed me an almost-identical box that said "Coldcalm," which was obviously just oscillococcinum without the fever medicine.

"If this is similar to Sudafed," I said, "then maybe I'd be better off just getting the—"

"Sudafed is *shit*!" he said indignantly. He clearly took me for an accomplice now and was oblivious to the other customers in the store. "It makes your heart race! It makes you nervous!"

"Doesn't make *me* nervous," I said.

"It *ravages* your body," he said. "Homeopathic medicines rely on the body's own defenses to defeat your cold naturally!"

The other customers were drifting out the door. He looked fiercely at me and began to explain that the rotten allopathic medicines, like penicillin and aspirin, relied on foreign bodies to attack germs. ("This turns your body into a . . . a *battlefield*," he spluttered.) Homeopathic remedies used harmless trace amounts of noxious natural substances, mostly plants, to induce the body's own defenses to kick in.

This led me to wonder why my cold itself wasn't inducing the body's defenses to kick in. "Is this from a reputable—"

"It's made in France! It's the fruit of centuries of medical tradition—"

(Like leeching, I thought.)

"—that avoids noxious chemicals and relies on the body's own . . ."

Thirty seconds and ten dollars later I was out on the sidewalk with 30 pellets of Coldcalm. What a name! This, I thought, must be the medicinal equivalent of Celestial Seasonings tea, which, if you say to yourself "It's tea, it's tea, it's tea" often enough, winds up tasting like tea. So I looked to see what was in it.

What a pleasant surprise. This was no placebo but an Elizabethan suicide kit! Coldcalm included belladonna, the aphrodisiac that medieval prostitutes used to dilate their pupils. There was nux vomica, nature's most potent source of strychnine; gelsemium sempervirens; apis mellifica. One of these was described as a "deadly nightshade." Granted, there was very little of each of them: only .5 x 10^{12} mg of belladonna, for instance. Nonetheless, this looked like real medicine, so I launched into my druidic cure.

Alas, the following morning my cold was still very much with me and I was all out of pills. You'd think you'd get a lot of strychnine for ten bucks—at least a lethal dose!—but since the instructions called for 2 tablets every hour, I was going to have to shlep down to the drugstore and get a whole new box.

And then I decided that homeopathy didn't make any sense to me, that it defeated the inner logic that had always allowed me to progress through a cold with optimism. I realized allopathic drugs were one of the pleasures of having colds as an adult—just as huge glasses of ginger ale and peanut-butter-toast-cut-in-four-pieces and schooldays in bed watching "The Three Stooges" had been as a child. I liked feeling that help was on its way, that my body had allies that the virus hadn't reckoned on when it came a-knockin'. I didn't want to *fake the cold out*. Any pansy could do that. In my allopathic hubris, I wanted to defeat this cold, bloody it, rub its face in the dirt, and then taunt it.

So I went to my doctor. He prescribed an antibiotic. I asked if he could charge it to my prescription drug card.

"Sure," he said. "You know the pharmacies hate those things. They've cut the profit margin on drugs to practically zero."

"So they're struggling, huh?"

"Naw. They're steering people into other stuff where the profit margin is huge. . . . Ever heard of homeopathy?"

Christopher Caldwell

The Real and Unreal Gore

I read Tucker Carlson's devastating exposé "The Real Al Gore" (May 19) with mixed feelings. I say mixed not because I doubt the accuracy of Carlson's well-written article, but because I used to be a Gore supporter. I was a democrat until mid-1994. As an activist, I enthusiastically supported Gore for president when he ran in 1988. I really believed the positive image he has so cynically, albeit skillfully, created for himself.

In light of Carlson's article, I am profoundly embarrassed to publicly admit I ever supported Gore for anything—but there it is. On the other hand, if I ever have any doubt that I did the right thing by switching to the Republican party, all I need to do is consider that, thanks to the Democratic party, we now have Al Gore as the heir apparent to Bill Clinton, another terribly flawed Democrat .

This is pretty depressing, and I have a lot to live down. But I hope Tucker Carlson can take a small measure of comfort in the fact that at least one former Gore supporter has turned over a new leaf and is now a committed Republican activist.

John Erthein
Royal Oak, MI

Tucker Carlson's article is certainly convincing. Even measured against other American politicians, Al Gore is a consummate phony and chameleon. But his article barely touches on Gore's zealous pseudo-environmentalism, anti-science, and anti-technology views—not to mention the damage they have wrought in public policy.

Gore's influence has been palpable in domestic and foreign-policy issues that have scientific, technological, or environmental components. Domestically, the vice president has led an assault on entire sectors of American industry, such as pesticides and biotechnology.

The Environmental Protection Agency's licensing of new chemical pesticides has shrunk to a trickle while the agency has placed regulatory roadblocks in the way of biotechnology research and development that could provide biological alternatives.

In April the State Department published a major policy statement, *Environmental Diplomacy*, the theme of which is that environmental issues are of such importance that they are now equal to national security and economic issues. It reflects Gore's worldview, revealed in *Earth in the Balance*, that the rescue of the environment must be "the central organizing principle for civilization."

According to *Environmental Diplomacy*, critical issues for U.S. foreign policy now include other countries' balancing "the competing goals of protecting a forest against providing additional croplands." The decisions by sovereign governments, we are told,

"have social, environmental, and economic implications, which in turn affect our foreign policy." But will Americans approve of U.S. troops deployed to enforce limits on carbon-dioxide emissions? What will be the international response when Washington launches cruise missiles at a Chinese dam because it alters the local ecology?

Gore's deep antagonism toward science and technology is well documented in his own writings. In *Earth in the Balance*, he repeatedly uses the metaphor that those who believe in technological progress are as sinister and evil as the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Our civilization is "dysfunctional," according to Gore, who believes we have created "a false world of plastic flowers and Astroturf, air conditioning and fluorescent lights, windows that don't open and background music that never stops, days when we don't know whether it has rained or not, nights when the sky never stops glowing, Walkman and Watchman entertainment cocoons, frozen food for the microwave oven, sleepy hearts jump-started with caffeine, alcohol, drugs, and illusions." Gore analogizes this to "Nazi Germany [where] dysfunctional thinking was institutionalized in the totalitarian state, its dogma, and its war machine." Whew.

Gore disdains the scientific method, feeling that science needs to be tempered by religion. "But for the separation of science and religion, we might not be pumping so much gaseous chemical waste into the atmosphere and threatening the destruction of earth's climate balance." (But for the separation of science and religion, we would still be burdened with the pre-Copernican notion that the sun and the planets revolve around the earth.) Gore seems sorry the Dark Ages ever ended.

One can only hope that in January 2001 Gore will be able to assume the job for which he seems to have been preparing all his life: instructor in "creation biology" at West Tennessee River Delta Junior College.

Henry I. Miller
Stanford, CA

Tucker Carlson's article put a lot of meat on the bones of what I knew about Al Gore. It also confirmed my existing summary: "An empty cab stopped and Al Gore got out."

Richard E. Hall
Palm Bay, FL

I enjoyed Tucker Carlson's Al Gore exposé. I have one comment: Why did he omit the Armand Hammer connection? The late Comrade Hammer was president of Occidental Oil and a Soviet mole, who bankrolled the senior Senator Gore to gain Washington access. He also directly or indirectly financed young Al's expensive education.

Donald R. Holm
Port Townsend, WA

Regarding Tucker Carlson's "The Real Al Gore": The implication that Al Gore gave campaign speeches

Correspondence

and interviews on the same day and possibly after his sister died is inexcusable. Carlson says that "it is not clear" whether Gore was campaigning before or after his sister's death that day.

It is clear in my memory, however, because I was his advance person and driver during that campaign. He was in East Tennessee when he was notified that his sister, Nancy, had taken a turn for the worse. He immediately returned to the hospital in Nashville to be with her. He arrived late in the afternoon and she died that night.

She had been sick for some time and was in and out of the Vanderbilt Hospital for a period of months and also stayed at her parents' house in Carthage, Tennessee. Al made time to visit with her often in the hospital and when she was in Carthage. We would drive from one end of the state to the other to get back to Nashville or Carthage so he could spend time with her. When I was too tired to drive, he would.

The last thing Nancy would have wanted was for Al not to run for the Senate because of her sickness. He admirably tried to balance the demands of the campaign while making time to be with her. His commitment to her was that of a loving brother to a sister, and for Carlson to imply otherwise is despicable.

GEORGE J. PHILLIPS
ALEXANDRIA, VA

TUCKER CARLSON RESPONDS: ***Inexcusable or not, Al Gore was campaigning on the day of his sister's death, as records of both his interview and his speech that day make clear. But that's hardly the point: Weeks by her side in the hospital would not make up for the cheap way he treated her memory at the Democratic convention last year.***

TRICKS OF THE *TIMES*

The "Negative Reporting" noted in the Scrapbook (May 19) is not the innovation in *New York Times* reporting you think it is. Non-news has been fit to print for a long time at the *Times*. Back at the height of the Iran-Contra controversy, the *Times* ran a front-page story on the fact that nobody had called for President Reagan's impeachment. When no bandwagon materialized, the *Times* editors abandoned the effort.

CLAY EDMUNDS
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

A MAD DOCTOR?

I wonder weather Peter D. Kramer ("The Battle over Bettelheim," April 7) would let someone operate on his child's brain tumor if the surgeon had no formal training or experience? Of course not. The subtitle of his article is "The Psychoanalyst's Legacy Under Fire," yet he accepts, in his opening paragraph, the author's evidence that Bruno Bettelheim had neither an academic degree or any other training before proclaiming himself a psychoanalyst and working on children's psyches in this country.

Why are those smooth-talking con men who are caught posing as surgeons, internists, etc., sent to prison, while men like Bruno Bettelheim, who artfully pull the cloak of psychoanalysis over their shoulders, are able to garner the admiration of writers like Kramer who grovel before their reputed "genuine contributions"? Exactly what were the "genuine contributions" that Bruno Bettelheim made to combating autism (the understanding of which he set back 20 years). What were Bettelheim's "heroic qualities" that Kramer so admires Nina Sutton is commenting on in her biography?

The truth is, as Richard Pollack's book *The Creation of Dr. B.* points out, that Bettelheim's persona and "contributions" were all part of the same con game. There was no substance to Bettelheim, other than the success he achieved in conning American academia, the intelligentsia, and the media into thinking he was a great child psychologist, when in fact he was just the insecure son of a well-to-do Viennese lumber seller.

WILLIAM BLAU
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

THE STARS AND BARS TODAY

Congratulations on the excellent study "Confederate Nation" (May 19) by Noemie Emery. She logically and powerfully expressed the great philosophic differences that beset our nation. This article should be a must-read for every American-studies class. I'm afraid it won't be.

HAROLD FREED
TEANECK, NJ

I strongly protest Noemie Emery's article "Confederate Nation." I am writing because I am insulted not as a liberal, but as a southerner. Emery's comparison is woefully inaccurate. She completely missed the point of the Confederacy, and distorted it horribly in comparing it to modern liberalism.

First, liberals thrive on the division of certain peoples within our country. The separation of these groups is not to enhance their individual cultures or heritages, but to keep every group small and hostile enough so as not to take power away from those in charge. While the institution of slavery, and the concept of racial superiority, held by some southern thinkers in the past are wrong, they cannot compare to the segregation perpetuated by those in power today. Those in charge, when I last checked, were still in Washington, D.C..

Second, the founding fathers of the Confederacy, as well as the Constitutional Union known as the United States of America, never intended that any central government should attain enough power to dictate what "tribes," "ethnic groups," "minorities," or "special interests" would receive preferential treatment or protection. What has arisen since the War Between the States is precisely what John C. Calhoun, et al., opposed: a central, all powerful government dispensing "freedom" and "equality" at its whim.

JIMMY DALE WEAVER
IRMO, SC

THE WEEKLY STANDARD

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the weekly Standard

A Partial Victory

In strictly legislative terms, it looks as if the congressional effort to abolish the unconscionable practice of partial-birth abortion has fallen short. The House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed such a ban on March 20. The Senate approved a nearly identical bill on May 20. The two measures will be merged into one, and President Clinton will then veto it—for the second time in two years. Once more, he will probably be sustained. Though the partial-birth ban gained several votes from last year, in the Senate it remains three votes short of the two-thirds majority necessary for overriding the veto. Four pro-choice Republicans—John Chafee of Rhode Island, Jim Jeffords of Vermont, and Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe of Maine—are the margin of difference. Will any of these four, or any of 32 just-as-obstinately pro-choice Senate Democrats, have a change of mind?

How could they? They have already passed up every chance. When the question of partial-birth abortion was first raised, in 1995, the automatic response of professional abortion advocates was denial. It was not true, said Kate Michelman of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, that living infants were being extracted from their mothers' wombs, feet first, up to the neck, and then killed by forced removal of their brains. A vacuum tube was not the murder instrument in these abortions, she and others claimed; in every case, the babies had long since been dispatched, *in utero*, by deliberate overdose of anesthesia. But the testimony of Dr. Martin Haskell, the nation's leading partial-birth abortionist, soon made clear that at least two-thirds of his patients' children *were* still alive—and moving on the operating table—until he punctured their skulls with scissors and inserted a suction catheter through the wound.

Well, insisted Planned Parenthood, at least the anesthesia prevents the fetus from feeling any pain during all this ghoulishness. Not so, replied the nation's anesthesiologists. Well, partial-birth abortion is nevertheless the "only" medical intervention that can preserve the lives and future fertility of "a few hundred" women each year, President Clinton then argued as he vetoed the ban. Since that first veto, it has become clear that there are many thousands of such abortions each year, not just a mere "few hundred." And that the vast majority of them are purely elective, performed in the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy, with no maternal-health or fertility complications involved. And that partial-birth abortion is not a therapeutically preferable surgery for any woman in any situation, but is instead, in the crushing recent judgment of the American Medical Association, "a procedure we all agree is not good medicine."

No one, in other words, can continue plausibly to suggest that partial-birth abortion, per se, is even remotely defensible. And, as it happens, very few of the 36 senators who voted "no" on the partial-birth ban actually bother to defend the procedure. Indeed, many of them are eager to admit that the questioned surgery is "horrific" and "abhorrent." But Congress cannot entirely prohibit that horror, the Senate's pro-choice purists maintain, without fundamentally undermining the legal standing of abortion *generally*.

This is an astonishing development. It means that the *argument* against partial-birth abortion has already succeeded beyond the pro-life movement's fondest dreams. That argument has succeeded so completely, in fact, that it has exhausted its immediate context and metamorphosed into something vastly larger. The entire abortion *status quo*—as both political issue and social phenomenon—is finally very much in play, at long last center stage, nearly 25 years after *Roe* v. *Wade*.

In *Roe* and the companion case of *Doe* v. *Bolton*, the Supreme Court discovered an absolute right to abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy. In the second trimester, the court permitted only such state regulation of abortion as would be reasonably related to maternal health. In the third trimester, the court theoretically allowed states to restrict or even proscribe abortion so long as exceptions were granted for cases involving a mother's life or health. But "health" was defined to include all factors "relevant to the well-being of the patient": "physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age." In practice, the court established a regime of abortion on demand through all three trimesters.

In 1992, deciding *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, the justices slightly altered this regime. The trimester system was formally abandoned, in favor of a two-stage legal test. Fetal "viability," the vaguely defined point

in gestation when a baby's development is sufficient to sustain medically assisted life outside the womb, became the dividing line for permissible abortion laws. Before viability, a state may not impose an "undue burden" on the exercise of a woman's right to abortion. After viability, a state may outlaw abortion—provided it continues to make exceptions for life- and health-endangering circumstances. But the health exception remains so broad as to allow any abortion sought by any woman for any reason.

The law in 41 states now purports to ban post-viability or third-trimester abortions. And yet nationwide, every year, there are about 15,000 abortions performed on women 20 or more weeks pregnant, most of them for purposes having nothing to do with "health" as that word is commonly understood. In fact, late-term abortions like these are themselves a positive danger to health. By the twenty-first week of pregnancy, abortion carries a 1-in-6,000 risk of maternal mortality. Childbirth is more than two times safer. By the twenty-third and twenty-fourth week, incidentally, between a quarter and a third of all prematurely delivered infants survive—and the survival rate rapidly approaches 80-plus percent thereafter.

Most Americans appear to have no idea what our abortion law really is and what sort of surgical procedures it really protects. They are joined in their blissful ignorance by some of the nation's elected officials. During floor debate on the partial-birth ban May 15, Democratic senator Patty Murray of Washington suggested that non-emergency late-term abortions are a figment of pro-life imagination. Indeed, she said, the Supreme Court has effectively "prohibited" such abortions. In today's United States, she went on, it is "illegal" for a "healthy woman," post-viability, "to terminate a healthy pregnancy simply because she no longer wants to be a mother." This is fantasy, of course.

Revealingly, Murray and 27 other senators felt the need to cloak their defense of the status quo with advocacy of a Post-Viability Abortion Restriction Act, a federal version of those 41 toothless state statutes governing late-term procedures. For show, at least, we are all (sort of) pro-life now. On behalf of a larger group of pro-choice senators, 36 in all, Democratic minority leader Tom Daschle proposed a more interesting alternative. His bill, the Comprehensive Abortion Ban Act of 1997, would have banned every abortion of a viable fetus unless "termination of the pregnancy" was "medically indicated" to prevent a threat to the mother's life or a "grievous injury" to her "physical"—*not* mental—health. This, on the surface at least, was a significant restriction of the health exception.

Unfortunately, Daschle's proposal was one big gaping loophole. True, "termination of pregnancy" is "medically indicated" in an array of circumstances implicating a mother's health. But with a viable fetus, why not simply deliver the baby (and make every effort to save it)? By allowing abortion in lieu of delivery in all such cases, Daschle would have prevented abortion in almost none of them.

Unlike most of his party's caucus, however, Daschle wound up voting for the partial-birth ban to symbolize his disgust with the procedure. This despite the fact that the ban the House and Senate have approved contains no health exception whatsoever, which both Daschle and the bill's opponents always argued was unconstitutional.

We think they're wrong. The partial-birth abortion ban is a ban on partial-birth abortions alone. It would leave other abortion procedures available—through the ninth month of gestation—to any woman who might want one, for any reason. So the ban wouldn't really abridge the *Roe-Casey* abortion right at all.

Which points up the biggest limitation of partial-birth abortion as a pro-life crusade. The issue has had an invaluable effect on public understanding. It has been a political "winner." But there are maybe 5,000 partial-birth surgeries in the United States each year, representing less than half a percent of the nation's 1.4 million abortions. The rest of those abortions are equally hideous; fetal dismemberment is the most common practice. And those abortions, as a whole, *are* protected from significant legal restriction by existing Supreme Court jurisprudence.

So how best to limit those abortions, which has always been the central question? The all-out Human Life Amendment to the Constitution hasn't anywhere near the popular support it would need to pass Congress and be ratified by the states. Incremental steps are needed for purposes of public persuasion. Which ones? In a series of post-*Roe* cases, the Supreme Court has judged various peripheral abortion restrictions constitutional at the state level: waiting periods, informed consent rules, required fetal-viability tests. Those would be a nice addition to federal law, but they would still be peripheral. There are pro-life stalwarts who believe a more rigorous, no-health-exception version of Tom Daschle's post-viability ban is an attractive idea. That would, for the first time, actually protect an entire class of unborn children. It would also invite a serious constitutional challenge, which would be a good thing if it prompted reconsideration of the fundamentally flawed *Roe* v. *Wade*.

We are not sure what precisely the pro-life movement should do next to build on its stunning success with partial-birth abortion. We do know the pro-life movement must consider its next strategic moves with care—and must continue to join political astuteness to moral principle.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Least Favored Nation

by Fred Barnes

THE DAIS WAS LINED WITH American exports (various types of grain) and Chinese imports (toys, baseballs, sneakers) when the Business Coalition for U.S.-China Trade convened a meeting in early May in the Rayburn House Building. The issue: extending most-favored-nation trade status to China for another year. The purpose: stir enthusiasm among attendees, mostly Republican House members and corporate lobbyists. They didn't stir much. GOP representative Jennifer Dunn of Washington said they needed to come up with answers to "the excuses" offered by House members who oppose MFN. And Republican John Shimkus of Illinois dampened the mood by noting ominously that many of his GOP freshman colleagues are under enormous pressure to oppose MFN. The crowd looked worried.

They have reason to be. The list of prominent foes of MFN is growing. Now it includes John Kasich, chairman of the House Budget Committee and one of the most influential Republicans in Congress. Kasich voted for MFN in 1996 in hopes it would lead to improvements in human rights in China. But he "has not seen the improvements," says Kasich aide Bruce Cuthbertson, and thus will vote against MFN. Henry Hyde, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, is also expected to oppose MFN for the first time. And majority leader Dick Armey, another advocate of MFN in the past, is reconsidering his support. Whatever he decides, Armey says, "the vote will be very close." Last year, MFN was approved in the House 286-141.

Armey is the pivotal figure. If he jumps, six of the top 12 Republican leaders in the House will be against MFN. Rep. Bill Paxon of New York, who chairs the House GOP leadership meetings, switched and joined MFN opponents on May 12. Neither Kasich nor Hyde has publicly announced his opposition, but Chris Cox of California, who heads the House Republican Policy Committee, and Gerald Solomon, chairman of the House Rules Committee, are longtime critics of normal trade relations with China. Armey would be the most important MFN foe because of his clout with wavering Republicans. "A lot of people will follow Armey," says House majority whip Tom DeLay, who favors MFN. "He gives them cover. The Christians may get him. They've been putting on a big push."

Gary Bauer, who runs the anti-MFN drive among religious conservatives, has twice talked to Armey. His hunch is Armey will vote against MFN. Certainly Armey knows the case against extending MFN again. In an interview, he volunteered a list of Chinese abuses—human rights, Taiwan, "their antics in American politics," religious persecution, Hong Kong. But Armey says he continues to believe "freedom of enterprise brings prosperity and fosters further freedom. Frankly, history is on the side of that model." That, he says, is the strongest argument for renewing MFN.

Whatever Armey decides, foes like Bauer and Solomon insist they have a shot at defeating MFN in the House. (Winning in the Senate, then overriding a Clinton veto, is considerably less likely.) Bauer, who heads the Family Research Council, says he's talked to a dozen Republicans who've already decided to switch and oppose MFN, plus "at least 25" more who backed MFN last year and are rethinking. While Bauer leans on Republicans, organized labor and the U.S. Catholic Conference are lobbying against MFN among Democrats. Both Jeff Fiedler, president of the Food and Allied Service Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, and John Carr of the Catholic Conference appeared with Bauer at a press conference on May 21. Their alliance has alarmed pro-MFN leaders. "The coalition of opponents for the first time has coalesced and is fairly well knitted together," says John Boehner, who heads the House Republican Conference.

President Clinton's pro-MFN allies in the House GOP leadership aren't giving up yet. After flinching briefly, House speaker Newt Gingrich declared his backing for MFN on May 19. DeLay, who's never wavered, says, "If you're looking to export freedom around the world, you don't start by taking away freedom from Americans." Boehner contends the "best way to deal with religious persecution and lack of democratic reform is through open trade, access to the West, and the policy of engagement." Bob Livingston, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, argues that "if we cut off MFN now, we wouldn't have any leverage when Hong Kong becomes a part of China" on July 1. Bill Archer, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and Dunn, secretary of the House Republican conference, strongly support MFN.

To defeat MFN in the House, opponents must pick up 70 votes. And neither Paxon nor Armey will help attract them. "It was a tough call," says Paxon, explaining his decision to oppose MFN. "I'm not leading the charge." Were he to, it would land him in a bitter fight with the business community, with which Republicans are normally allied. Eastman Kodak, for example, is a major presence in Paxon's district in upstate New York and favors MFN. For his part, Armey says he probably won't announce his vote until he actually casts it. All isn't well on the Democratic side of the anti-MFN coalition either. Representative Nancy Pelosi of California recently chastised labor for doing

too little to squelch MFN. One reason is some labor leaders are leery of crossing Clinton and Gore. "Bauer and his people have done a good job among conservatives," concedes a labor official. "It's our job to do a similar job with the so-called liberals."

Shimkus personifies why persuading Republicans to oppose MFN is difficult. "I'm pro-MFN for three reasons," he says. "I'm from an agricultural district and it's critical we continue to expand our markets. Secondly, I'm a believer in international trade. I'm a free-market guy." Thirdly, Shimkus cites a constituent who adopted a Chinese baby. Without MFN, "they wouldn't be proud parents of a 13-month-old baby." Yet Shimkus understands why other Republicans may vote against MFN. Christian conservatives—"and I am one"—have helped create an anti-MFN environment, he says. "With their outcry, it's causing people to take a second look." And maybe cast a no vote.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Still Bloom-ing

by Pia Catton

Chicago

CULTURAL CRITICS PRONOUNCE, almost daily, that America is going to hell in a handbasket. But no one has done so as memorably, or as successfully, as Allan Bloom did in 1987 with *The Closing of the American Mind*. Bloom told America that her professors and parents had been so corrupted that the young were being left to wallow in unexamined relativism and soft nihilism. And Americans—more than a million of them—made the book the unlikeliest bestseller of the decade, considering that learned disquisitions by University of Chicago professors, even when they are witty and graceful, don't ordinarily make a sensation at Barnes and Noble.

Allan Bloom

Chas Fagan

To mark the tenth anniversary of the book's publication, Bloom's friends and colleagues convened last week at the University of Chicago for three days of discussions of it and its author, who died almost five years ago. The conference divided into ideological camps similar to the ones that greeted the book on its release. Professors in Bloom's camp celebrated *The Closing of the American Mind* and analyzed its arguments with both great sobriety (Frank Kermode's panel was titled "Is There a Case for Teaching Literature?") and rollicking wit (Paul Cantor led "Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*: Generation X goes to Shakespeare"). Antagonists (Ira Katznelson, with "The Left and the Liberal University") found Bloom an elitist hopelessly out of step in a pluralist society.

As interesting, though, were the students at Bloom's beloved Chicago, whose manners and morals (or their lack) had been the subject of his book. Now, a decade later, the story seemed to be the same. Maybe worse. At a panel on "The Character of Generation X," one young woman emerged from a pack of students in dirty T-shirts and sneakers to rebuke the panel: "I don't sense despair in my peers," she said. "I have hope. Finding out what works and what doesn't is exciting." In other words, there are no lessons to be had from the past, and everything is up for grabs. The students at the conference generally showed a cheerful willingness to discount excellence when it would be too threatening, courage when it would be too demanding, and honor when it would produce inequality—just as Bloom warned.

It was, of course, Bloom's attack on rock music and popular culture that helped make *The Closing of the American Mind* a sensation: "Young people know that rock has the beat of sexual intercourse." And yet the panel dedicated to the subject stirred few passions. Martha Bayles, literary editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*, challenged what she called Bloom's "blanket condemnation of rhythm." The University of Virginia's Cantor stepped in for the opposite side. "There is a certain hostility to high culture by popular culture. I am going to repay that today." And

indeed he did. Spurred by one of his students, who said, "I loved *Romeo and Juliet*; I just don't know why it had to end so sadly," Cantor denounced the recent film version of *Romeo and Juliet* and its music. "What the student had experienced was a cleverly packaged refashioning of the old play, a sort of MTV version, in which pounding music and rapid-fire visual images in effect deconstruct and displace the poet's text—in short *Romeo and Juliet* reduced to a series of slickly produced music videos, fleshed out around the bare bones of Shakespeare's plot."

The panel's last speaker, Stanley Crouch, dismissed the microphone, stood up, and gave an audience-winning ramble through popular culture. "What we have now is an audio safari. A hundred years ago, if you wanted anything this dangerous, you had to get inoculations, guns, and guides. Now all you need is $12.50 at Tower Records." His depiction of MTV and its reception among young people was accurate and amusing, and forceful enough to still the students.

But at the discussion on "Feminism and Identity in the Academy," the students raised the temperature. Emory University professor Elizabeth Fox-Genovese put the charge vehemently: "Feminism represents the most radical assault on everything Bloom cherished." She acknowledged that feminism had allowed great strides by women, but that did not keep one female student from challenging Fox-Genovese with the now-clichéd response: "But I wouldn't be here if it weren't for feminism." Another graduate student bedecked in grunge-wear and little-girl barrettes afforded an example of feminism's decline into identity politics. "People will first encounter me as a woman, and I have some experience with this since I'm in graduate school here. It's the first thing people notice. Sexuality will be read back onto us." Fox-Genovese retorted, "If identity is the most important thing to you, then you probably don't belong in politics."

This exchange angered the same professors who were incensed by Harvey Mansfield's philippic against political correctness, an attack that included criticism of liberalism, feminism, and multiculturalism. During the panel "The Academy and the Polity," Mansfield shared the stage with Columbia University's Katznelson, who made the case for the affirmative-action, multiculturalist university. In the question and answer period, the composed Mansfield reiterated that waves of equality have not produced better results for faculties or students: "Clubs for gentlemen are now clubs for non-gentlemen."

This is not to say that the conference was simply a battleground. The participants shared a sense of satisfaction in knowing that the topics they were discussing were no longer on the margins, reserved for intellectuals. And for that, they had their old colleague, and his remarkable book, to thank. The chance to air arguments that had animated Bloom clearly pleased his friends. It was an exercise in the good life, and one that Bloom would have relished. In the last session, someone in the audience asked what Bloom would have thought of the conference. A woman who worked with him for years answered that Bloom would have enjoyed the scholarly tone of the conference. Nathan Tarcov, a close friend and colleague, did not want the last word to be so solemn: "The food," he said, "would not have been up to Bloom's standard."

Pia Catton is a reporter for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

DEFENSIVE MEDICINE

by Matthew Rees

IN 1994 SEN. PHIL GRAMM OF TEXAS vociferously opposed the Clinton health-care plan. "Anything I can do within the rules of the Senate to prevent the government from taking over or controlling the health-care market," he declared, "I'm going to do, and I'm going to do it proudly." Gramm was key in defeating Clintoncare. But in April 1997, the same Sen. Gramm proposed a bill that would double federal funding for maternal and child-health block grants, while doing little to promote free-market reforms such as medical savings accounts or to address a fundamental problem in health care: the tax code.

Senate Republican leader Trent Lott says Gramm's proposal is "better than anything else I've seen." That fact reflects the GOP's new squishiness on health care. After successfully resisting the Clinton administration's proposal in 1993-94, Republicans have lost their moorings and mostly capitulated to the Democratic argument that coverage for the uninsured—particularly children—is best achieved through an expanded role for government. The trend began last year, when Republicans approved mandates requiring health insurers to treat mental disorders the same as other ailments and to cover at least 48 hours in the hospital for new mothers. It has continued this year. "We seem to want to offer scaled-down Democratic initiatives instead of our own innovative proposals," says Matt Salmon, a second-

term House member from Arizona.

The problem for Republicans is simple: Healthcare issues are potent. A recent Pew Research poll showed affordable health care to be the country's leading source of anxiety, ahead of crime and job security. But after being pilloried for a year and a half over their laudable attempt to slow the growth of Medicare, Republicans are inclined to take a pass. They're especially reluctant to fight an incremental health reform to be paid for with a tax on cigarettes. It's hard to blame them: An NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll found 72 percent support for raising the cigarette tax to pay for health coverage for uninsured children—the centerpiece of the major Senate initiative proposed by conservative Republican Orrin Hatch and liberal Democrat Ted Kennedy. Who wants to vote against that?

But the issue isn't going away. While the budget agreement contains $16 billion in new spending for uninsured children, congressional Democrats aren't stopping there. Kennedy says providing health coverage for uninsured children "is the most important program for this Congress to enact," and minority leader Tom Daschle says if Republicans don't acquiesce Democrats will offer their health-care proposals as amendments to other bills, as they did this week to the budget resolution. There's a high potential for demagoguery here. AFL-CIO president John Sweeney has warned that if Republicans "don't come around, we'll use children's health the way we used Medicare, and that's a promise and a commitment."

One problem for Republicans is that many of the questionable proposals come from their own ranks. Sen. Arlen Specter wants to create a $10 billion trust fund for block grants to the states to pay for health-insurance vouchers. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato wants new regulations on HMOs. Sen. Jim Jeffords, the Labor and Human Resources chairman, is expected to introduce a sweeping health-care bill sometime this year (Jeffords was the sole Republican cosponsor of the Clinton health-care plan).

And then there are the proposals of two other Republicans, Sen. Olympia Snowe and Rep. Susan Molinari. Snowe wants to require health insurers to cover contraceptives. Molinari wants to make them cover the duration of a woman's post-mastectomy hospital stay, as determined by the physician and the patient; the insurance company, in other words, is cut out of the picture except to foot the bill. An indication of how hard this will be to vote against: Lauch Faircloth is supporting it. He's one of the most conservative Senate Republicans, and he's up for reelection next year. Even Lott concedes that while these mandates "are expensive and very questionable," some of them "may be defensible or appropriate."

The other big problem for Republicans is Hatch. In cosponsoring a bill with Kennedy, he's pushed the discussion dramatically leftward. And he's not allowing fellow Republicans much room to maneuver. When he announced his support for the Kennedy bill at a Children's Defense Fund conference in March, he said he wanted to prove the Republican party "does not hate children." Having established that his opponents are misanthropes, Hatch then asked, on the ABC program *This Week*, "You mean we can't do anything about health care because it might involve the government and might involve raising some monies in order to pay for health care for kids?" He's been relentless in his efforts. Last week, he and Kennedy introduced their bill as an amendment to the budget agreement. The amendment failed, as Lott forced Clinton to oppose it for the sake of getting the budget resolution passed, but Hatch promises to "press forward at every opportunity."

These proposals wouldn't be so worrisome except that Republicans are offering few alternatives. Salmon has a bill to lift all eligibility restrictions for medical savings accounts, and Rep. Harris Fawell of Illinois proposes to allow the pooling of small businesses that are otherwise unable to provide affordable health insurance. But because these bills have only lukewarm support from the Republican leadership and will encounter fierce Democratic opposition, they're given much less chance of passage than are the mandates extending coverage.

"Republicans are fighting on the wrong terms," complains Mike Tanner, a health-care analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute, "responding to a problem that doesn't exist." Tanner and others note that while 10 million children may be uninsured, up to 15 percent of them are in families earning more than $40,000 annually, and another 30 percent qualify for Medicaid but have failed to enroll. Yet few Republicans want to argue against expanding Medicaid eligibility, even though such expansion creates incentives for families and employers to drop their private coverage and rely on government. Similarly, few Republicans are talking about a reform that would reduce the number of uninsured: changing the tax code to give health coverage for the self-employed (and the unemployed) the same tax break as employer-provided health care. "There's been no conservative leadership on these issues," says Carrie Gavora of the Heritage Foundation.

If Republicans are going to avoid turning health care into a political liability, they have two options. The first is to continue down the present path, which means conceding the Democratic argument for government provision of health care and then working to minimize the damage. But that could get expensive. "When there's a bidding war, Republicans lose," says Tanner.

Conversely, Republicans can highlight the flaws in the Democratic proposals and introduce market-oriented reforms of their own. Haley Barbour, the former party chairman, recalls that among the reasons Republicans succeeded in defeating the Clinton plan in 1993-94 was that "they refused to let themselves be seen as against health care. They were for affordability and portability. That's what they have to do this time as well." Barbour also notes that notwithstanding Medicare, the single most Republican age group in last year's congressional elections were voters 65 and older.

Which way are Republicans leaning? One clue comes from an event sponsored by the House GOP leadership on May 22. Gathered on a lawn outside the Capitol to showcase their commitment to children and families were representatives Deborah Pryce, Kay Granger, Anne Northup, Molinari, and House majority leader Dick Armey. There was lots of soothing talk about the GOP's family-friendly policies on subjects ranging from tax relief and crime to juvenile justice and education. But in the midst of all the public-policy cheerleading, two words never passed the Republicans' lips: health care.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

FOREIGN AID THAT WORKED

by Gregory Fossedal

LEADERS IN AMERICA AND EUROPE will spend the next two weeks celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Marshall Plan, the American effort to lift the economies and the spirits of our allies at the dawn of the Cold War. But should they? As a standard critique of U.S. foreign aid has it, the Marshall Plan merely coincided with Western postwar revival. Some even argue it retarded European recovery, with significant growth coming only as the Marshall funds began running out.

For example, in a well-researched account of the plan's economic impact, George Mason University economist Tyler Cowen calls the "perceived successes" of the Marshall Plan a "myth." He denies that the plan was "a significant factor in West European postwar recovery" and that it encouraged "free enterprise and sound economic policy." If Cowen is right, the Marshall Plan would seem to have been a costly failure—deservedly cited as a prize exhibit in the conservative indictment of foreign aid.

In fact, however, there is a strong case to be made that the Marshall Plan was effective; even that it realized its central, animating purpose: to rescue Europe by encouraging policies conducive to economic growth. The Marshall Plan, in this view, worked not because it was an act of generosity, an extension of the New Deal. It worked because it fit with the other great postwar free-market economic reforms—the liberalization of commerce under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and the stabilization of currencies through the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates. A study of the economic performance of participating countries gives a nuanced picture.

First, economic growth was not directly proportional to Marshall Plan dollars received. Countries that received more aid per capita than the Marshall average—such as Sweden, Britain, and Greece—experienced relatively weak economic recovery (from 1947 through 1955, GNP rose 39 percent in Sweden, 31 percent in Britain, and 21 percent in Greece). Countries that received less aid—notably Germany and Italy—grew faster (148 percent and 57 percent respectively; Germany's impressive growth, by the way, was not just a recovery from the devastation of war but a 96 percent increase over output in 1938).

Second, trade was clearly beneficial. Countries that received Marshall Plan aid and also joined the GATT significantly out-performed those that only received aid. Five countries that both received significant foreign aid and joined GATT—Germany, France, Japan, Britain, and Sweden—enjoyed annual average GNP growth of 8.3 percent from 1947 through 1955 and average unemployment of 2.6 percent. Another four countries that received significant Marshall aid but remained outside GATT for much of the period—Italy, Denmark, Austria, and Greece—had GNP growth of 3.7 percent and 7.6 percent unemployment.

Finally, the stabilization of currencies was a turning point. After significant devaluations in the early postwar years, the key European countries, starting with Germany in 1948, succeeded in adhering to the discipline of the Bretton Woods system. It was at precisely this point that each of their equity markets—an excellent daily monitor of how market actors judge the likely future output of a nation's capital—began to soar. Some six months later in each country, production surged as well.

Revisionists cite the indisputable importance of

trade and monetary policies to argue that the Marshall Plan didn't matter; that the Europeans' own reform of their domestic economic policies is what did the trick. The problem with this argument is that the Marshall Plan encouraged just such reforms and enabled fragile governments in war-shattered countries to enact them. When Will Clayton—architect not only of the Marshall Plan proposal of June 5, 1947, but also of the ensuing European Recovery Plan and the first GATT agreement—was asked which piece of the scheme was most important to Europe's recovery, he answered, "I find it impossible to talk about them separately." The European Recovery Plan and GATT were both adopted by the participating countries in October 1947. The Bretton Woods framework had been in place since 1945 but began to be seriously implemented only with the German monetary reform of 1948. This came just as the Marshall aid began to flow.

In the weeks after Secretary of State George Marshall's announcement of America's intention to formulate an ambitious new aid plan—"a great big carrot" to promote policy reforms in Europe, as Clayton put it—a series of telling events transpired. France and Italy ejected the Communists from their coalition governments. Russia, which had received U.S. assistance under Lend-Lease and had played a sometimes disruptive role in administering United Nations relief in 1945-47, took itself and its satellites out of consideration for Marshall Plan aid, leaving the West a free hand. And Austria began to spin free of the Soviet orbit, establishing a government not accepted by Stalin and ultimately holding free elections.

In the Europe of 1947, the "fabric of civilization" was about to unravel, as Clayton, a self-made billionaire investor who knew something about markets, saw. It is all very well to praise the European reforms of 1948-53 for launching the continent's recovery; even accurate, up to a point. But would there have been democratic governments capable of enacting such policies without the Marshall Plan?

Ludwig Erhard, father of the German monetary and tax reforms of 1948, has been called the "real" author of European recovery. Yet Erhard himself, icon of the libertarian revisionists, deemed the Marshall Plan "absolutely essential" to the monetary reform that ensued. "Currency reform and the Marshall Plan," he told an audience in April 1948, "are both contributory factors of economic recovery . . . and must operate simultaneously, if they are to be fully effective." He continued: "Thanks to the aid we received, we could take the safe road of systematic reconstruction and recovery." The two, he said, "are inextricable." The plan provided a flow not only of money and imports, "but also of confidence, . . . preparing the ground for new capital to be raised." This capital helped produce an average annual rate of growth in German stocks of 47.9 percent from the summer of 1948 through December 1955. It would not have happened without the Erhard reforms; but the Erhard reforms, according to Erhard, in turn depended on the plan.

What is the Marshall Plan's relevance today? By some standards, Russia, Poland, Ukraine, and the rest of Central Europe are better off than Germany, France, and Britain were in 1947. All, in fact, have some industrial base and a work force that performs well on standard math and science tests. There has even been some Western aid, though as a share of current U.S. output it pales beside the Marshall Plan's eventual $15 billion.

What is missing this time is a vigorous Western policy of promoting economic growth among our former enemies. Trade integration with Western Europe has been sluggish. Aid has been mostly contingent on fiscal conditions laid down by the International Monetary Fund that have imposed burdensome income tax rates, crushed industrial production, and stimulated a mafia-based economy from Moscow to Kiev to Budapest. Foreign-aid critics of both right and left would do well to concentrate less on the cost and moral hazard attached to aid and more on the issue that matters most: what sort of policies our dollars are promoting.

Today, IMF policies are too often associated with high taxes, inflationary currency devaluations, and the slow or even negative economic growth they bring. This is especially so in the two regions where democratic capitalism is perhaps most fragile: Central and Eastern Europe and Africa. To its credit, the IMF participated in pro-growth tax relief in Latin America in the early 1990s, and it has contributed to currency stabilization in Eastern Europe recently. But even this latter achievement is imperiled by the fund's inability to help Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and other major clients to enact low-rate, base-broadening tax reforms.

Fifty years ago, under conditions less auspicious than today's, Americans launched a daring initiative that helped support democracy and economic freedom for hundreds of millions. Fortunately, no emergency effort on such a scale is necessary now. But certain efforts are appropriate, and it would be useful to apply the lessons learned—just as it is right to respect a great act of free-market statecraft: one that made the world safe for the mistaken baby-boomer view that "foreign aid never works."

Gregory Fossedal, author of **Our Finest Hour**, *a history of Will Clayton and the Marshall Plan, is chairman of the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution. Peggy Garvey, a researcher at the institution, assisted with this article.*

Professor Narcissus

In Today's Academy, Everything Is Personal

By Gertrude Himmelfarb

Not so long ago, it was TV talk shows that were being excoriated for their wanton exhibitionism as they competed for the honor of producing the most brazen or degrading revelation of the month. The award surely goes to the show (never aired but highly publicized) where one man confessed to being a "secret admirer" of another and was then murdered by the unsuspecting object of his affections. The victim, a "talk-show freak," as he described himself, received a fitting eulogy from a friend: "Scott had a troubled life, and all I can think now is that he's got to be happy. He's probably looking down and saying, 'I knew I'd make it on TV.'"

Then it was the turn of the publishing industry, which has been churning out a series of bestselling memoirs by people whose only distinction is some unfortunate affliction (AIDS, alcoholism, anorexia, drugs, child abuse, mental illness) or perversion (incest, pedophilia, bestiality, sado-masochism, obsessive promiscuity). This genre reached its climax with *The Kiss*, an autobiographical account of the prolonged and voluntary affair between a young woman and her minister-father. By way of anti-climax, her husband proceeded to write an article sympathetically commenting on the affair and endorsing his wife's decision to publicize it (this in response to those who were churlish enough to suggest that it might have an unfortunate effect on their two young children).

Now it is the universities that are displaying the same self-absorption, self-indulgence, and self-revelation—all decked out in the latest theory proclaiming the personal mode a higher form of scholarship than the impersonal "footnote voice" (the term is used pejoratively, of course). This is not an entirely new phenomenon. For years now, women's-studies programs have been dedicated to two propositions: "Everything is political" and "The personal is the political." The result, as even some of their supporters admit, is the degeneration of all too many of these programs into glorified rap sessions, in which orgasms and menstrual periods alternate with the marginalization of women and the hegemony of the patriarchic order as the proper subjects of class discussion.

What we are now witnessing is the emergence of the logical corollary of these propositions, "Everything is personal," and its extension to all fields of study and academic activities. Those weather vanes of academia, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Lingua Franca* magazine, have published articles within months of each other bearing such titles as "Dare We Say I?," "The I's Have It," and (by one disaffected commentator) "Sick and Tired of Scholars' Nouveau Solipsism." Where the "I's" had previously been confined to the preface of a scholarly work (commenting on the occasion for the writing of the book or expressing thanks to spouse and colleagues), they now intrude into the body of the work itself. Thus the scholar's personal life—or what would once have been regarded as such—permeates a study of Japanese society, or the life of a Mexican peddler, or an analysis of a French painter, or a comparison of primitive and Western cultures.

"George Eliot, *c'est moi*," announces the biographer Phyllis Rose, who has created an Eliot in the likeness of a properly liberated late-20th-century American woman. And the influential literary critic and theorist Frank Lentricchia, who makes much of his working-class Italian-American background, writes an essay entitled "My Kinsman, T.S. Eliot." The academic journals are full of such titles: "Me and Not Me," "Me and My Shadow," "Reader, I Married Me," "Who Do I Think I Am?"

The form has been given various names—"personal criticism," "autobiographical criticism," "confessional criticism," the "personal voice," the "personal turn" (echoing the "linguistic turn" of postmodernism). A symposium on "The Place of the Personal in Scholarship," in a recent issue of the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, opens with an essay by Michael Bérubé who tells us that he has done a

Gertrude Himmelfarb's The De-Moralization of Society *recently received the Templeton Foundation's Outstanding Contemporary Book award.*

word count of the first-person-singular pronoun in his writings in the previous six years. "I" appeared 7,300 times, not including, he wryly observes, the six times in the first sentence of his present essay. One enthusiast has compiled a bibliography of book-length works (not mere essays) on this theme; it runs to seven single-spaced pages. Although the personal turn is most conspicuous in literary criticism, it is by no means confined to it. History, philosophy, classics, art, anthropology, sociology, jurisprudence, even the sciences, have all been affected by it. (Among French historians, it goes by the name "*égo-histoire*.")

ONE WRITER PRAISES CONFESSIONAL CRITICISM AS A "PERFORMATIVE" EVENT AKIN TO PERFORMANCE ART, AND THUS A FORM OF "EROTICA."

Within the past year, Routledge (the trendiest of commercial publishers) has issued a volume of essays originating in sessions at the American Philological Association and the British Classical Association. The contributors to *Compromising Traditions: The Personal Voice in Classical Scholarship* describe the intimate relationship between their analyses of particular classical texts and their personal lives: alcoholic parents, depression and mental breakdown, feelings of inadequacy induced by a male-centered profession, a woman's memory of her sexual arousal as a teenager, a man's consciousness and practice of his homosexuality. Another Routledge volume, *Confessions of the Critics*, includes some dissenting voices, but is dominated by the celebratory tone of the editor, H. Aram Veeser, who describes confessional criticism as a "performative" event akin to performance art, and thus a form of "erotica." He explains: "Theatrical, sexy, flashing their bodies between the folds of theory, they could hardly stand further from the neutered 'third sex of Ph.D.s.'"

That "third sex of Ph.D.s"—referring to the "white mainstream feminism" that consciously sought to depersonalize feminism—comes from one of the founding texts of this movement, Nancy K. Miller's *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts* (published, again by Routledge, in 1991). The final essay of that book, "My Father's Penis," almost literally carries out Veeser's promise of "flashing their bodies between the folds of theory." Recalling childhood memories of her father walking about the house in his pajamas with a telltale gap in the fly, Miller, 40 years later and sharing an apartment with her ailing father, finally has the opportunity to touch his penis as she helps him urinate and then, while he lies naked and asleep on a hospital bed, to examine it more closely.

Miller does not deny the voyeuristic element in her behavior, but she gives it a large theoretical significance by comparing the penis with the "phallic" mode of traditional literary criticism. She wrote the essay, she explains, "in the aftermath of an intensely charged academic performance in which the status of 'experience' in feminist theory had been challenged with a certain phallic—what would a better word be?—insistence. . . . Born of the troubled intimacies of the autobiographical penis and the theoretical phallus, [the essay] had unexpectedly come full circle back to feminist revision."

If the other critics take Miller as their model, Miller herself pays tribute to another influential feminist critic, Jane Gallop, whose essay "Phallus/Penis: Same Difference" was reprinted in *Thinking Through the Body* (published in 1988). This volume was also made memorable by another essay dedicated "Aux hommes de trente-six ans," a tribute to the series of 36-year-old "unavailable" men with whom she had had affairs. The book jacket features a photograph taken by her husband of Gallop giving birth to their child.

Gallop, the Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, has just published another book that takes the personal/erotic mode beyond the realm of literary theory into the heart of academic scholarship and pedagogy. *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* (published not by Routledge but by that most modish of university presses, Duke University Press) is an account of the charges brought against her by two of her female students. The students claimed that Gallop tried to have sex with them and then, when rebuffed, retaliated by giving one of them poor grades and refusing to write a letter of recommendation for another. Gallop denies both charges, while admitting (indeed, boasting) that her relations with these students, as with others, had always been "personalized and sexualized." But this, she argues, does not constitute sexual harassment because harassment, properly understood, means discrimination, and a feminist like herself cannot be said to discriminate against women. What she did do, on the particular occasion cited in the charge, was to engage in "flirtatious banter and frank sexual discussion."

That occasion was a gay and lesbian student conference at her university in 1991, in the course of which she announced that "graduate students are my

sexual preference." In retrospect, Gallop finds nothing untoward in that comment, for it merely testifies to her passion for her students and her conviction that "you couldn't separate the intellectual energy from the sexual." She herself was not disconcerted when, later in the evening, a student from another university complimented her on her legs and invited her to her hotel room. She was "flattered but graciously declined" the proposition, which she felt to be in keeping with the sexual atmosphere of the conference. In the same spirit, at a lesbian bar later still, she bade goodnight to her own student (who later brought the charge against her) with a dramatic embrace and a "torrid kiss." That "brazen and public" display, as she describes it, seemed to her then (and still seems to her now) an appropriate finale to a conference bearing the title "Flaunting It." "To my mind, our student-teacher kiss enacted a fantasy of lesbian pedagogy: women together tasting from the forbidden tree of knowledge."

If Gallop finds little to apologize for, it is because she was only doing what she had always done—and what she had always preached. Indeed, she was doing far less, on this occasion, than she had done in the past. From the beginning, when she first encountered feminism as an undergraduate in 1971, she had found in it a double liberation—a liberation of "ideas and lust." Feminism, she says, "turned me on, figuratively and literally." She had "the hots" for the other young women in her circle (only a few of whom, she assures us, she actually slept with), while from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* she learned the pleasures of masturbation. Her previous sexual experiences with men, she now realized, had been "awash in romance and passivity." Now she was "energized"—for schoolwork (her grades instantly improved), for political activity (as a feminist), and, of course, for sex.

The most memorable event in that *annus mirabilis* was a "women's only" dance that culminated in an orgy of bare-breasted dancing. "Our breasts were political," Gallop recalls; if bras were "a metaphor for women's bonds," bare breasts signified women's liberation. But, she continues, "our breasts were not just political"; this was sex, pure and simple. So too, she realized, the spectacular appearance earlier in the evening of her women's-studies professor accompanied by one of her students was political—and more than political. The professor was wearing a dress, the student a man's suit, their carefully staged entrance a public declaration of their affair. It was also a public assertion that women would not be bound by conventional sexual roles, any more than they would be bound by the constraints of bras. Nor would they be bound by the conventional roles of professor and student; this too was part of their liberation. Nor would knowledge itself be bound by convention; that professor of women's studies was affirming a new kind of knowledge, a feminist knowledge, that was "more egalitarian and more alive" than the old.

These lessons carried over into graduate school, when Gallop made a systematic effort, she tells us, to seduce two of the professors on her dissertation committee. After being repeatedly turned down, she finally succeeded in having sex with both of them, "each separately, to be sure, but oddly, coincidentally, in the same week." She desired them, she says, because of their power over her—not, she hastens to add, their institutional power, but their intellectual power, their brilliance. Just as her original initiation into feminism made her a better student, so "screwing these guys" energized her intellectually and made it easier for her to write her dissertation (on the Marquis de Sade). This was the "heady atmosphere" of the academy as she had come to know it: "I learned and excelled; I desired and I f—d my teachers." (One of these teachers, later asked to write a blurb for the present book, did so by apologizing for having been "unprofessional, exploitative, and lousy in bed." The publisher did not use the blurb.)

When Gallop herself became a teacher, she assumed a new role. Now it was the professor who seduced and slept with her students. In her first two years, she had affairs with a graduate male student, an undergraduate male, a woman student in a "classic one-night stand," and another one-nighter with the former lover of that woman. These came to an end in 1982, not, she tells us, because of any change in her views of teacher-student liaisons, but because she got married. Since that time, she says, she has not slept with a student. She still, however, has personal relations with her students, some (as with those who accused her of sexual harassment) "intense complicated, and sticky," but most, she is confident, productive for her students and for herself.

GALLOP, NOW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, RECOUNTS SEDUCING TWO MEMBERS OF HER DISSERTATION COMMITTEE.

Gallop does not deny that she has violated the university prohibition against "consensual amorous relations" between professor and student. But this regulation, she protests, is itself a violation of feminism, which is meant to empower women personally and

sexually as well as politically and professionally. By the same token, it is a violation of scholarship, which, as she understands it, entails a passion that is personal, intense, and never far removed from sexuality.

In the final paragraphs of her book, she carries the argument a step further. Just as she had deliberately made a spectacle of herself in that kissing scene, she explains, so she was now deliberately making a spectacle of herself in writing the book, publicizing it (and herself) and giving it that sensational "tabloid title." For it is precisely a sensation that she is seeking, "the best kind, where knowledge and pleasure, sex and thought play off and enhance each other."

This is "sexual politics" as not even Kate Millett (the author of that famous phrase) anticipated it. If this book does create a sensation, as Gallop hopes, it would be a shame if the salacious sexual details obscured the larger issues implicit in her story. Not all feminists carry the idea of sexual "empowerment" into the academy as she does, and many demur to the sanctioning of sexual relations between teacher and student. But a good many feminists (indeed, many academics in all disciplines) now subscribe to a view of scholarship and pedagogy that is only once removed from hers—not as insistently sexual, perhaps, but quite as insistently personal.

Narcissism knows no limits—in the academy, as in the media. It is odd to find Professor Gallop, in her contribution to the Modern Language Association symposium, saying that of course all scholarship is personal, yet worrying that there is such a thing as being "excessively personal." "My personal name for this excess," she says (thus personalizing the very tendency she is ostensibly deploring), "is narcissism." Balancing the dangers of "too much" and "too little" personalism, she concludes that she herself is "headed for a writing where it would be literally impossible to separate gossip from scholarship."

The academy has, in fact, been heading in that direction for some time. Stanley Fish, the not-so-grey eminence of Duke University (professor of English and law, executive director of the university's press, associate vice provost), has been described, in press releases by his publisher (the venerable Oxford University Press), as "the Roseanne Barr of the professoriate." Jane Gallop, competing for that distinction, bills herself as the "bad girl" of feminist theory. If few professors are as sensationalist, exhibitionist, and publicity-seeking as these, a good many share the assumptions and ideas that legitimize such antics.

"Everything is personal" is a logical deduction from the postmodernist dictum, "Nothing is true." For it is only if there is no truth, therefore no objectivity, that everything can be deemed to be personal. And the denial of truth—not absolute, fixed, total truth (no scholar has ever laid claim to that), but partial, contingent, incremental truths—is not confined to feminists or literary critics; it has become the prevalent academic mode. (The word "truth" almost invariably appears in quotation marks in the learned journals.) In the

new credo, truth is replaced by power—"everything is political"; and objectivity by will—"everything is personal."

The irony is that the personal itself, according to this credo, is specious, for postmodernism deconstructs the "self" together with truth. If there is no fixed truth, neither is there any fixed identity. All there is is a "protean self" (as Robert Lifton named it many years ago)—an ever-changing, "transgressive" self that expresses itself only by constantly reinventing itself, assuming new roles and postures, shocking others and making a spectacle of oneself. This is the meaning, as Gallop herself makes clear, of the dance that initiated her into the liberated world of feminism, where the conventional categories—masculine and feminine, professor and student, public and private—were so sensationally defied.

But if personal identity is so ephemeral, personal scholarship is all the more so. There is no "there" there—no person of any substance, and no scholarship of any enduring value; the one is as evanescent as the other. The impersonality of traditional scholarship was, in fact, a triumph of character over personality, the character of those who had the self-discipline and strength of mind to submerge their own persons in what they knew to be the far more important and interesting subjects of their work. These scholars were elevated by their scholarship, by their denial of self, rather than demeaned by an exhibitionism that degrades both themselves and their profession. ♦

STROLLERGATE

Something Is Rotten in Denmark, Not in New York

By Tucker Carlson

One Saturday night in early May, Annette Sorensen, a 30-year-old Danish tourist, went to the Dallas BBQ restaurant on the Lower East Side of Manhattan with her boyfriend. As the couple drank margaritas inside, their 14-month-old daughter Liv sat outside—unattended in a stroller on the sidewalk. It was a chilly night in New York, and before long the child began to cry. Concerned waiters and patrons approached Sorensen and her boyfriend, a 49-year-old American named Exavier Wardlaw, and offered to bring the child inside. Sorensen declined. Her daughter, she said, was "fine." The child continued to cry. After about an hour, somebody called 911. The police arrived, arrested both Sorensen and Wardlaw—her for child endangerment, him for disorderly conduct—and carted them off to jail for two nights. The child was placed in foster care.

From the beginning, Sorensen claimed the whole thing was a gigantic mistake. "I didn't think twice about it," she said at her arraignment. "We do this in Denmark all the time." Within days, a number of newspapers confirmed her story, running photographs of baby carriages lined up outside of stores (though not outside of bars) in Copenhagen. The point was clear: Unaware of local customs, Sorensen had committed a foolish but understandable faux pas, like German tourists wearing black socks to the beach, and bumbling New York authorities had overreacted. In the words of a *New York Times* op-ed, it was "a gross cultural misunderstanding."

Based on the information provided in most news accounts, this was not an irrational interpretation. Taking a child away from his mother is, after all, a dramatic step, and it's hard to see how the child was helped by four days in New York City foster care. On the other hand, most news accounts didn't tell the whole story.

Consider the descriptions of the child's father, Exavier Wardlaw. In an interview with the New York *Daily News*, David Kirsch, Wardlaw's attorney, described his client as a "production assistant for Walt Disney Productions" who lived in Brooklyn and was married to Annette Sorensen. Kirsch, it turns out, was never sure that all these facts were exactly true. "It's not like he's full-time or whatever," the lawyer says now, "but when Disney does movies here, supposedly, according to him, he works on them." Kirsch of course is a lawyer, not a biographer, but his rendering

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of his client's vital statistics was repeated in virtually all news stories. And Wardlaw's resumé grew more impressive in the telling. By the time the *New York Times* summarized the case a week later, Wardlaw had become "a movie producer from Brooklyn."

Details like these help shape public perceptions, and in this case they were instrumental in portraying Sorensen and Wardlaw as responsible middle-class parents caught up in a cross-cultural nightmare. Unfortunately, none of them was true. According to his new lawyer, Ron Kuby, Wardlaw is not a movie producer from Brooklyn, but instead an "unemployed homeless activist playwright on the Lower East Side," author of such works as "The Lust of Justice" and "Disco Frankenstein." In other plays, Wardlaw has celebrated the life and work of cop-killers Mumia Abu-Jamal and Larry Davis. And his name may not even be Exavier Wardlaw. Until he was arrested last month, Wardlaw seems to have been called Exavier Muhammad.

"OH," MRS. CLINTON ENTHUSED, "IF WE COULD ALL LIVE IN CITIES WHERE WE COULD LEAVE OUR BABIES IN BABY CARRIAGES OUTDOORS . . . WITHOUT ANY FEAR."

Minor details? Maybe. But they might have given readers a better idea of why Wardlaw was arrested outside of Dallas BBQ. In an interview with CNN, Kuby explained what happened at the restaurant: "Exavier came out as soon as the police arrived and said, 'Look, this is a normal custom in Denmark. If there's a problem with this, we'll be happy to take the baby inside.'" Reasonable enough. Except, this, too, is a false account. According to bystanders, Wardlaw and Sorensen (who met while both were living in an abandoned building in lower Manhattan's Alphabet City) called the police "pigs" the moment they showed up. The scene, Kuby now admits, got worse from there: Wardlaw "said to the officer, 'You cops don't know what the f— you're doing.'" Kuby calls this "a statement so redolent of truth as to be absolutely awe-inspiring," and it may be. But it is not the statement of a man calmly trying to explain Danish customs.

Kuby seems to recognize his own limitations as a storyteller, and he doesn't spend a lot of time promoting Sorensen and Wardlaw as parents. "Exavier obviously is never going to be named by *Good Housekeeping* magazine as Father of the Year," he concedes. Indeed, Kuby, who as a protégé of William Kunstler has made a career of defending some of society's creepiest members (Long Island Railroad mass murderer Colin Ferguson among them), sounds ambivalent about what his client in this case has done. "I fight with my wife about it," he says. "She thinks it's outrageous that the child was left outside in the stroller. She's got a point. I mean, we never did that with our kid."

And for good reason: Sorensen and Wardlaw left their daughter unattended in a pretty sketchy neighborhood—a neighborhood, moreover, that they both had lived in long enough to know was marginal. The East Village, as Kuby himself describes it, is a place where "you can wear your hair in big purple spikes and walk down the street with your breasts hanging out in nipple rings and nobody gets too exercised about it. A lot of odd behavior is expected and tolerated here." In other words, it's not easy to shock an East Village waiter. Leaving your baby on the sidewalk is one way to do it.

It's also one way to earn the praise of a certain kind of intellectual. Peggy Barlett, identified by the *Atlanta Constitution* as an anthropologist at Emory University, no doubt spoke for Denmark-loving liberals everywhere when she used the event to contrast the enlightened child-raising attitudes of Scandinavia with the cruel deficiencies of the United States. "In other places, there is more of a sense of community responsibility for children," she moaned. This is hardly an original idea on the left. Hillary Clinton, for one, noticed the very same thing on a trip to Denmark several years ago. "Oh," she enthused at the time, "if we could all live in cities where we could leave our babies in baby carriages outdoors while we went in to shop without any fear."

Mrs. Clinton was merely confirming what has been received wisdom among her friends for years. "Everywhere you go, there's a place for children," recounted Marian Wright Edelman, head of the Children's Defense Fund, upon returning from Denmark last year. The Danes, Edelman told the *Denver Post*, "find it unthinkable that in this country children are killed by guns, that people don't have child care or health care." If Annette Sorensen had come from Peru or China or Tanzania, it's unlikely her arrest would have made the paper, much less drawn attention from Emory University anthropologists. But as a resident of Denmark—a heaven on Earth for kids, the home of Lego—she obviously could not be using faulty parenting techniques.

Every day is a slow news day in Denmark, and the papers there kept Sorensen in their pages for days, invariably in the role of victim. "Dane in Grotesque

Nightmare in New York: Police Stole My Baby," screamed a headline in one Danish paper. Others called New York a "banana republic" and demanded payment for the "psychological rape" and "huge mental scars" Americans had inflicted upon Sorensen and her daughter. The Danish response was ferocious, but *Newsweek*, among others, seemed to understand. No wonder the Danes were so mad, since what is a crime in America, as they put it, is "a common practice in Denmark."

And vice versa. Denmark, it is worth pointing out, is not necessarily a paradise for children. It is, for example, one of the few countries in the world in which it is legal to possess child pornography. In 1994, TV2, Denmark's largest television station, aired footage from locally produced child pornography showing an 8-year-old girl having sexual intercourse with an adult man. The film's 50-year-old producer provided the narration: "The children seem happy and satisfied," he said. "The parents are present during the shootings. . . . I know that children are not harmed by it."

Outside of Denmark, others weren't so sure, and the European Parliament has put pressure on the Danes to tighten their kiddie-porn laws. But the sexual exploitation of children has been profitable for Denmark—by last year, pornography was the country's third largest industry—and so far nothing has changed. Plus, there are ideological questions at stake. Outlawing child pornography, the country's justice minister told TV2, "would be like searching in people's pockets."

If Denmark sounds like a depressing place, apparently a lot of the children who live there think so, too. The country records more teen suicides per capita than just about any other place in the world—5 percent of the population under 20 years old has tried to commit suicide at least once. More than twice as many Danes now kill themselves as die in car accidents. Denmark also boasts astronomical rates of divorce and illegitimacy (as well as the highest tax rates in the world, and no private hospitals). Several years ago, it was estimated, not surprisingly, that one out of every six adults in Denmark was taking tranquilizers.

Shortly after the Danish stroller-baby story broke, the *Detroit News* dutifully sent a reporter out to gather reactions from Ordinary People. Opinion about Annette Sorensen was split fairly evenly, and most of it wasn't very interesting. One woman, however, did have a thought that turned out to be illuminating, probably unintentionally. "I don't believe that they should be punished for living out their culture," she said, and somehow it was hard not to see what she meant. ♦

The Use and Abuse of Stress

By Christopher Caldwell

Springfield, Massachusetts, home of the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, has long been proud of its annual spelling bee. But in the first week of May, Springfield superintendent of schools Peter Negroni canceled the event forever, on the grounds that "the bee provided too much stress and too few rewards." He announced that henceforth the school system would replace it with Scrabble.

The local newspaper applauded, as well it might. For the problem Negroni cited—stress—is now viewed as a society-wide scourge, and efforts to battle it are expensive and intense. According to the journal of the Society for the Advancement of Management, stress is the cause of as many as 90 percent of all job-related doctors' visits, is responsible for over half the sick days American workers take, and is the culprit in up to 80 percent of on-the-job accidents. The total cost to American companies: up to $300 billion a year.

Companies now call for outside "stress audits," courts throughout the world are increasingly indulgent of stress-based awards, and "stress management" has become a multi-billion-dollar industry. A survey by stress expert Kenneth R. Pelletier found that stress-

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management plans are by far the leading priority for corporate health programs, cited four times as often as the next closest concern (cardiac care). What should alarm us, and lead us to distrust all of the statistics cited above, is that no one—not the doctors who study it, not the plaintiffs who claim it, not even the "stress-management consultants" who have become the ethicists of the stress trade—can come to any agreement on what stress *is*.

It's not that the medical study of stress is bogus and newfangled; quite the contrary. Hippocrates spoke of something like stress (*pónos*). Our current understanding of the problem has its beginnings with doctors Walter Bradford Cannon and Hans Selye, who, working separately between the wars, uncovered the syndrome Selye would name "stress." Cannon investigated the "fight-or-flight" response—the way in which the human body produces adrenaline and other hormones in response to outside stimuli. When activated, these hormones sharpen the attention, speed up the heart, and prepare the body for action. But the response also depletes the immune system and temporarily halts the normal function of certain of the body's regulatory networks. Cannon and Selye speculated that, in the 20th century, the fight-or-flight response was not being evoked at rare moments of extreme need, as it presumably was when prehistoric man had to outrun a lion, but that it had become a chronic condition. The irony was that 20th-century man, awash in conveniences and more divorced from nature than ever before, lived in a state of constant, or at least over-frequent, bodily vigilance that was causing his body to squander its whole bank account of self-protective resources.

Cannon and Selye were medical researchers, but their followers turned their research into an amalgam of social theory and psychiatric dogma. Now, it seems, practically *everything* causes stress. According to the Society for the Advancement of Management,

> causes of workplace stress include: schedules and deadlines, fear of failure, inadequate support, problems with the boss, job ambiguity, role conflict, change, new technology, work overload or underload, repetitive work, excess rules and regulations, lack of participation in decisions, poor interpersonal relationships, career development factors (obsolescence, under/over promotion, organizational structure, organizational leadership, culture), and poor working conditions that include the climate, overcrowding, politics, and communication problems.

(Sorry—did someone say "the climate"?) As if that weren't enough to worry about, *success* on the job—or the "success syndrome," as stress-management consultants put it—affects one in five managers, and can cause "apathy, irritability, uninvolvement in projects, decline in productivity, marital problems, and excessive drinking or smoking." Stress-management candidates include people dying of AIDS, hot-tempered adolescents, people scared of surgery, binge drinkers, undergraduates with exam anxiety, athletes who choke, vaguely defined "Type A personalities," and on and on.

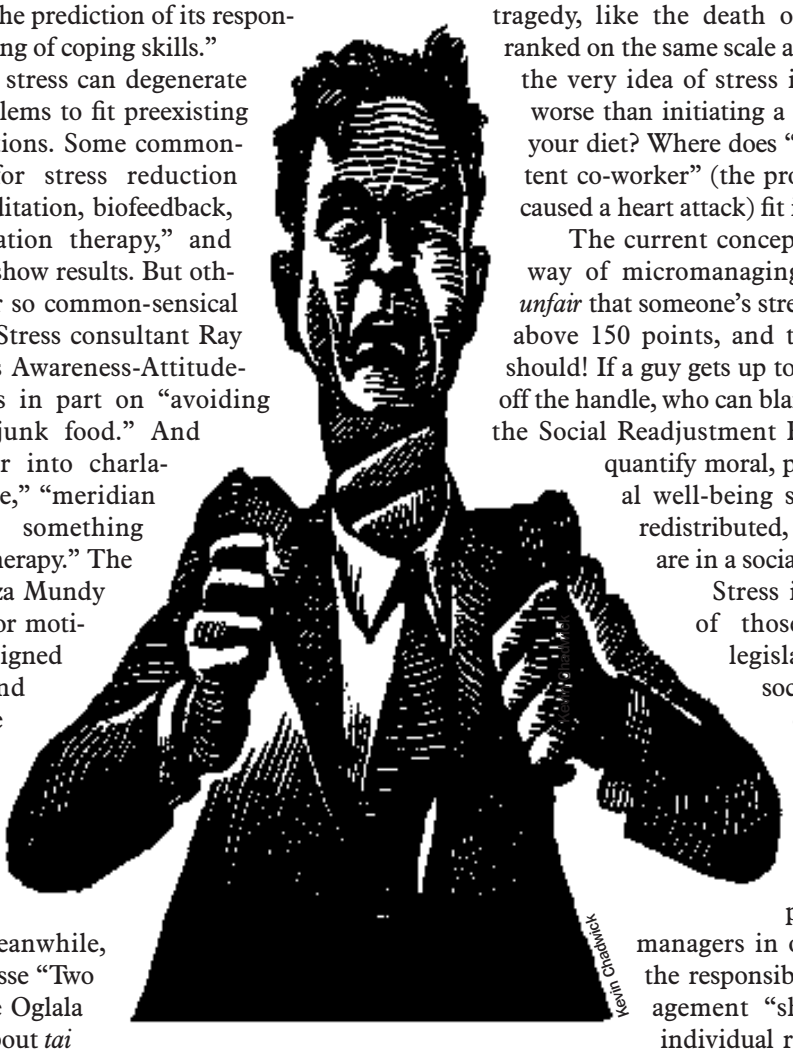
The comprehensive nature of the stress theory is the first indication that we're in the presence of a racket. Stress-related lawsuits and claims are booming in courts across the country. Under the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act, companies are responsible for "all diseases arising out of and in the course of employment," and that is now taken to include stress. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health considers stress one of the 10 leading occupational diseases. Recent rulings on the Americans with Disabilities Act make it likely that that act, too, will be used to buttress stress-related claims. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit recently ruled that a factory employee in Michigan could collect for a heart attack suffered on the factory floor and caused, he said, by the stress-inducing incompetence of one of his fellow workers and the unpleasant noise at work.

For all its American roots, stress is a global issue, at least in any country where people have grown impatient with modern life. Sweden's incredibly generous 1991 Work Environment Act makes it the responsibility of employers to make sure "that the employee is not exposed to physical *or mental* loads which may lead to ill health or accidents." One British citizen got a settlement for the stress of being stuck in an elevator. British papers have been in a panic about stress since 1994, when the social worker John Walker received £175,000 for being "severely mentally wounded" by the stress at work. More recently, the Scottish social worker Janet Ballantyne received a settlement of £66,000 for the stress caused by her "outspoken and abrasive" boss. (It's interesting that both these British stress collectors hail from UNISON, the same left-wing union of underpaid social workers. As one London businessman told the London *Times*, "I've yet to see a damages claim brought by a City stockbroker.")

Clearly, if we're looking for a synonym for stress it would be something like "modern life," and the current anti-stress activism is an ethical and political critique of it. University of Chicago anthropologist Richard Shweder thinks that stress is merely a synonym for unhappiness, much as people a century ago talked of angst and ennui. Others see it as similar to the 19th-century fad ailment of hysteria. But it is more than that, for unlike its forebears, stress is linked to

treatments and to states and corporations that mandate them. As University of Montreal psychologist Ethel Roskies puts it, "The most distinctive characteristic of stress management as a treatment is its universality; there is no one for whom treatment is apparently unneeded or inappropriate." According to Roskies, "Essentially, the diagnosis of a clinical stress problem has less to do with the etiology or severity of the problem itself than with the prediction of its responsiveness to the teaching of coping skills."

That means that stress can degenerate into a hunt for problems to fit preexisting (and lucrative) solutions. Some common-sense techniques for stress reduction appear to work. Meditation, biofeedback, hypnosis, "visualization therapy," and relaxation coaching show results. But other techniques appear so common-sensical as to be laughable: Stress consultant Ray Shelton has said his Awareness-Attitude-Action model relies in part on "avoiding excess coffee and junk food." And treatments can veer into charlatanism: "acupressure," "meridian energy flow," and something called "trampoline therapy." The *Washington Post*'s Liza Mundy attended a Fred Pryor motivational seminar designed to fight stress and learned little more than that she ought to keep a "smile file" of happy thoughts and "take time out to just be." European American Bank, meanwhile, reportedly invited Jesse "Two Owls" Teasley of the Oglala Sioux tribe to talk about *tai chi*—not, to the best of anyone's knowledge, an American Indian cultural product.



The very idea of stress management, its opponents suggest, instills "learned helplessness"—the assumption that people don't have enough internal resources to quiet the storm within their own minds. Stress thus becomes the close relative of the "Twinkie Defense." If self-help methods don't work, then obviously society has the obligation to protect us from our own adrenaline.

The great pop-psych expression of this attitude is the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, devised by two psychologists in 1967. It ranks stressful events using a point system. Death of a spouse is 100, pregnancy is 40, problems with the law is 29, etc. If your tally rises above 150 points, you have a 50 percent possibility of suffering stress.

The effect of such a scale is to muddy all *moral* claims—the notion that maybe you ought to feel bad if you do something wrong. By assuming that a tragedy, like the death of a spouse, can be ranked on the same scale as a pregnancy makes the very idea of stress itself arbitrary. Is it worse than initiating a divorce or changing your diet? Where does "having an incompetent co-worker" (the problem that allegedly caused a heart attack) fit in?

The current conception of "stress" is a way of micromanaging fairness. It's just *unfair* that someone's stress rating should rise above 150 points, and there's no reason it should! If a guy gets up to 300 points and flies off the handle, who can blame him? The goal of the Social Readjustment Rating System is to quantify moral, physical, and spiritual well-being so that they can be redistributed, as money and goods are in a socialist society.

Stress is now the preserve of those unacknowledged legislators of the world: social workers and other members of the caring professions. It is they, not the wider public, who decide the stress agenda. While 74 percent of corporate managers in one survey felt that the responsibility for stress management "should lie with the individual rather than the organization," institutional stress professionals continue to extend their reach and their agenda. That agenda is, not to put too fine a point on it, pro-feminist, anti-competitive, and inclined to see a racist under every bed.

The classic idea of stress has been easily adapted to a feminized America. Much of the initial research on stress had to do with men; the fact that they were undeniably more susceptible to stress-related heart attacks made it likely they suffered more stress. But recent research, all of it sociological and psychological rather than medical, has sought to put women at cen-

ter-stage. The prevailing theory is that "juggling work and home" *must* make women's lives more stressful than men's, whether or not there's any evidence to back it up. Too little attention has been paid, say the stress enthusiasts, to women's stress, brought about by the fact that women have been "socialized to care for others."

From heart attacks to the woes of caring for others—yet again we see, even inside the world of stress management, a great leveling taking place. These days, women are increasingly considered the true victims of stress. Take NBC's "Stressed Out in America," a series of spots that ran on the network's weekend *Today* show throughout the month of April. "It's estimated that—get this—75 percent of all doctor visits are due to stress-related disorders," said host Jodi Applegate. "Now there's evidence to suggest that women may be more prone to stress than men." Participants consistently favored stereotypical female coping mechanisms to stereotypical male ones. Take Xavier Amador of Columbia University: "Really what we mean is it's important to talk about how you feel, and—and the worst thing you can do if you're stressed out is to keep it inside and carry it with you." Then Amador talked about the importance of using "I" statements: "It's very important that you talk about how you feel, not what the other person is doing. So, if you're stressed out, you come home, the dishes aren't done, don't say, 'You don't do the dishes, why didn't you do the dishes?' Say, '*I* would really appreciate it.'"

The who-does-the-dishes example hardly came out of thin air. Indeed, one commonplace assertion in the world of stress management is that stress in men is caused by their being too aggressive, while stress in women is caused by women's being too passive. Says Dr. Redford Williams, director of the Behavioral Medicine Research Center at Duke, "You should just cool out. Let it go." But what if the situation is amenable to change? "That means you should really swing into action . . . and for women that often means being assertive."

The agenda of the stress industry also includes race. The most notorious recent example was a study by Harvard epidemiologists Nancy Krieger and Stephen Sidney on "Racial Discrimination and Blood Pressure," which appeared in last October's *American Journal of Public Health*. Blacks die on average seven years earlier than whites, from cancer, heart attacks, and a variety of diseases to which they have a higher propensity. The two researchers asked for responses about exposure to racial discrimination and plotted the results against high-blood-pressure statistics. There was no statistically significant relationship; in fact, those blacks who had faced zero episodes of discrimination had higher blood pressure than those who had faced one or more. But Krieger and Sidney assumed a relationship anyway, on the grounds that those with the highest blood pressure were probably *underreporting* the number of racist incidents they'd been exposed to, and that they were thus merely victims of "internalized oppression."

High stress, in the categories of race and gender, is seen as merely a stand-in for virtue. That's not the case with stress in the category of achievement—and the contrast is instructive. We all know about how dangerous it is to be a "Type A," shorthand for "Type A behavior syndrome," which researchers define as "characterized by competitive drive, impatience, hostility, and rapid speech and motor movements." For years, doctors and stress researchers have found a correlation between those behavioral qualities and a high incidence of coronary heart disease.

If, for physicians, the Type A is merely a cardiac-ward candidate who deserves attention, for stress professionals he's the vice president in the penthouse with the five secretaries and the attitude. An unmistakable note of righteous discipline, even divine wrath, can be heard in their discussions of Type A personalities. In their view, for Type As, excessive work is an "obsessive-compulsive disorder." NBC's "Stressed Out in America" suggested that Type As who are always nervously looking for the shortest line in a supermarket should instead seek out the *longest* one.

Here as elsewhere, "stress" is frequently an explicit indictment of competitiveness, and this means an implicit indictment of the economic status quo. Karen Nussbaum, the director of the working women's department at the AFL-CIO, told a *Newsday* reporter that "companies that really want to relieve stress should be more concerned with redistributing work, paying a decent wage, and creating a family-friendly environment." Stress thus serves as the ultimate pretext for gripes about the need for economic reorganization.

As a medical matter, the study of stress is an effort to examine the problem that the human animal lives under conditions of modernity to which his system has not adapted. It is a serious issue that deserves serious study. But that is not why America has become so addicted to talk about stress. "Stress" is a smoke screen—a cover for what is, at root, a political and moral movement aimed at fixing "inappropriate" ways of responding to modernity. Its agenda is large enough and its rationale vague enough that it ought to be drawing more skeptical interest, and meeting more resistance. ♦

Education: The Era of Big Government Is Still Here

By Chester E. Finn, Jr.

The post-big-government era never actually arrived in the field of education. Its chances at best were about as real as the prospect of finding true love with someone your parents told you to look up. Neither Congress nor the White House was ever seriously interested.

As President Clinton noted in his May 17 radio address, the new budget deal contains the biggest expansion in federal education spending since Lyndon Johnson occupied the Oval Office. When all the new college tax credits and deductions are added up, it will indeed be "the largest single increase in higher education since the G.I. bill in 1945." The budget agreement also provides for at least one other sizable item on the White House education shopping list: the new "America Reads" program, meant to place a million "volunteers" (many of them paid) in the nation's classrooms at a cost of several hundred million dollars annually.

But the generous picnic served up by the budget pact is just part of the federal feast being cooked for the U.S. education establishment and the interest groups that regularly dine with it. A special-education bill that sailed through Congress the other week, far from shrinking or restructuring this heavy-handed program, expands and further complicates it. Looming next on the horizon is reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which is all but certain to turn into another contest between Republicans and Democrats to see which side can lavish more money on an enterprise that is already sadly over-built, over-priced, under-productive, and lacking in quality control.

In education, at least, big government, far from having outlived its time, seems to have been reborn. What's remarkable about its current growth is the gusto with which the Republican Congress is joining in. Today, it's hard even to recall that moment two years ago when GOP leaders spoke of getting Washington off the backs of schools and communities, of empowering parents rather than bureaucrats and interest groups, of repealing harmful programs and block-granting others, even of putting the Department of Education out of the misery it causes.

Such words drifted away on the same breezes that carried off Clinton's widely noted claims about big government's demise. In education, I judge, he never meant them. Congressional leaders may once have been serious about the task, but they were outfoxed by the administration, which ran a deft election campaign on the premise that the way to gauge a politician's commitment to education is by how much he is willing to spend and how many programs he supports. Well before Election Day 1996, the GOP majority was vying with the White House over who could write the fatter budget for federal education programs, good, bad, and indifferent. Since few in that majority could explain why a top-to-bottom overhaul would solve the country's education problems better than another injection of federal cash and regulation, the Republicans simply abandoned the fight. They were Kasparov to the president's Big Blue.

Like IBM's supercomputer playing at chess, American education today is, in William James's vivid phrase, a "tyrannical machine." It is its own boss, answering to no one but its innumerable organizational "stakeholders." It scorns its own customers while tirelessly pursuing its own interests: expansion of its revenues and defense of its monopoly. Serious challenges to this machine are now being made in some states and communities. The spread of charter schools, contract management of public schools, privately funded voucher programs, even a few examples of the publicly supported sort, attest to the widening revolt in the countryside. Some people actually seem to be waking up to the fact that the system squanders both their money and their children.

But the rebels are a long way from the capital city. There we witness the opposite: deepening tyranny, more money, bigger government, and worse policy. Now, though, it's bipartisan bad policy.

Look again at that budget agreement. Its juiciest education windfall is a set of tuition tax breaks intended to make the "13th and 14th grades" universal. Virtually every analyst who has looked at this idea finds it misbegotten. The problem with higher education isn't

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too few people starting the process. We already have more college than high-school students and the world's loftiest matriculation rates: two-thirds of all high-school graduates go straight to college and more follow later. The great problem is that so many of those who enter aren't prepared for college-level work because they learned so little beforehand.

Almost a third of today's freshmen require remediation—and more would if academic standards hadn't also slipped. That leads to costly compensatory classes and a soaring college dropout rate. Assuring everyone a free ride through grades 13 and 14 is like paying for high school twice. It signals the futility of reforming grades 1 through 12. And it will tempt every college in the land—already costly and sluggish—to hike its prices to harvest the new federal windfall.

As for "America Reads," the more one knows about reading, the less sense the program makes. The reason a great many schoolkids never learn to read well is not that their classrooms lack adults; it's that those adults don't know how to teach reading. Says Dr. Reid Lyon, the National Institutes of Health's chief authority on reading: "Teachers want to do the best they can. It's just that they don't have the conceptual tools. They weren't trained in those. So a lot of this stuff tutors are supposed to do, unless they're provided with that information, I don't see how you would expect that to improve anything."

If you believe that a million fresh-faced amateurs, overseen by 11,000 AmeriCorps volunteers, after brief training by the nation's colleges of education, are going to bring proper phonemic methods of reading instruction into classrooms where the full-time teachers don't do that well, you're more of an optimist about these things than I am.

Now look again at the new special-education law. Actually, you will have to look for the first time, since it sped through the House and Senate so fast, nobody had time to examine it prior to enactment. It was written behind closed doors by a handful of congressional aides, administration activists, and special-interest lobbyists. Their sole objective was to reach consensus among those in the room. Anything they could agree on was deemed enactable, hence wise public policy.

The fruit of this secretive process—a vast, tangled piece of legislation whose real workings are barely understood by anyone—was whisked through both chambers. Trent Lott's chief of staff choreographed the production—without amendments, lest House and Senate versions differ at all. (So long as identical versions are passed, there's no need for a conference committee, hence no opportunity for delays that might give people a chance to scrutinize the measure.)

Naturally, this well-greased legislation passed by huge margins. Though hailed as an example of bipartisanship, its enactment was more like a case study in special-interest politics. The bill makes a few small improvements in a sorely troubled program. But each of its "reforms" invites new problems—and more government. Consider these three:

¶ The current program gives a state additional mon-

ey if it "classifies" more children as disabled—a genuinely perverse incentive. The new bill shifts to a formula based on population and poverty—but that new formula doesn't kick in until Congress appropriates almost 2 billion additional dollars. Let's not be surprised if that day dawns soon.

¶ Supporters claim the bill shrinks the portion of federal special-ed dollars going to overhead and boosts the part going to classrooms. But that isn't quite true. The increase actually goes for "capacity building," which means teacher training, which means another plump subsidy for the nation's colleges of education.

¶ The bill's most controversial provision—the issue that bogged it down during the last Congress—deals with disabled kids who bring weapons to school. Can they be expelled like other students? (Indeed, another federal law requires schools to suspend or expel weapons-bearing students.) The short answer is no. Under the new plan, the school system can never slough off responsibility for educating a disabled youngster, no matter what he does or to whom. It may move him to another program, but only temporarily and only after jumping through dozens of procedural hoops. Nor does the measure acknowledge that, in the words of a Georgia educator, "teeth and feet and hands can be weapons just as much as knives can."

For principals and school boards faced with disruptive disabled pupils, the new law actually provides less leeway than the old one, which allows for 10-day suspensions. Now, according to a Knoxville school attorney who tracks these issues, "you won't be able to do anything but move the child to another school." (To such concerns, the Education Department's chief enforcer tartly replied that educators should quit complaining and should instead learn new methods of behavior modification to prevent classroom disruptions. Perhaps she hasn't done much teaching lately.)

More revealing than any changes made by the measure, however, are its silences—the big-government assumptions it leaves untouched.

Washington's involvement with special education began as a well-intended effort to aid the many disabled youngsters ill served—even turned away—by school systems that couldn't be bothered to deal with the challenges they posed. Congress decreed in 1975 that they would henceforth have the right to a free, appropriate education at public expense and offered a trickle of federal dollars to wash down the costly medicine that communities were thus forced to swallow.

Questions instantly arose. How do you define "appropriate"? Who does the defining? Who exactly is disabled? What happens when educating some children according to federal mandates undermines the community's ability to pay for the education of its other children?

In reply to every such query came another pile of regulations—that's how government grows bigger, after all—and soon the nation's schools were choking. Youngsters deemed to be disabled—there were powerful incentives so to deem ever more of them—enjoyed first claim on district budgets, never mind the havoc wrought in other areas. The handicaps that Congress had in mind—blindness, cerebral palsy, retardation, spina bifida, etc.—were overwhelmed by millions of youngsters in a hazy new category called "learning disabled." A different standard came to be applied to their behavior. Classroom conduct once judged naughty and punishable was now excused as beyond the perpetrator's control. Bureaucracy and litigation overtook the enforcement of "appropriate" education. Parents got their lawyers' bills paid by the school system—and law firms specializing in these cases grew wealthy at taxpayer expense. In the name of "inclusion," teachers were sent children they couldn't handle and who disrupted the education of others.

The federal subsidy grew—to $3.1 billion in the present fiscal year—but not nearly so fast as the program's costs. Uncle Sam now pays about 8 percent of the bill. The other 92 percent is by far the largest unfunded federal mandate in the education field.

All that and much more remains intact under the new law, which nearly everyone in Congress voted for and which education secretary Richard Riley hailed as a triumph for education. No matter that two years ago, GOP leaders were pledging to curb such mandates. Never mind that those same leaders once voiced doubts about special privileges for victim groups. Forget that they once promised to lighten the burden of federal regulation. Pretend you never heard that we're supposed to be restoring individual responsibility and civil society; Congress has just signaled again that you can get away with mayhem so long as you can claim that it wasn't really your fault.

This was once known as the "Gee, Officer Krupke" defense. Today, we're more apt to associate it with O.J. and the Menendez brothers and others who blame their homicidal actions on racism, poverty, global warming, budget cuts, unloving parents, or lack of self-esteem.

No, it's not a good lesson to teach schoolchildren. But why should school be different from real life? In real life, we can watch the nation's leaders doing harm while claiming to do good, expanding government while claiming to shrink it. It's Washington's version of the Menendez defense: I am innocent of any misdeeds, because politics made me commit them. ♦

Lest Ye Be Judged

Is the Creator of 'Beavis and Butt-head' and the New Hit 'King of the Hill' a Social Conservative?

By Daniel Wattenberg

We all know what Clintonism is: the unacknowledged appropriation and successful electoral exploitation of *our* ideas. Well, now it's spreading. Into the culture at large. The days of conservative exclusion from the culture are over. These days, the conservative sensibility is more likely to be raided, or sampled, by ideologically coy or closeted crypto-cons—by cultural Clintonists. It's getting so you can't even turn on the television anymore without being exposed to ideological larceny.

Take Mike Judge. The creator of MTV's *Beavis and Butt-head* is no conservative. But you would never know it from *King of the Hill*, Judge's second animated sitcom. *King of the Hill*, which airs on Fox following *The Simpsons* Sunday night, is pixel-perfect conservative satire. Really. The series could be summarized as *an affectionate look at the daily ups and downs of Phil Gramm voters*. On second thought, the series is more *entertaining* than that, but the point is, how on earth did something this right-wing ever get on prime time, episodic, network television?

Mike Judge is not looking to join the club; in fact, fearing initiation, he declined to be interviewed for this article. But if he's going to steal our ideology, then he's asking for it—a *conservative reappraisal*. And, yes, that includes Beavis and Butt-head, the two midget imbeciles who set off a conservative pop-culture scare three or four years back. But first, the Hills.

The Hill family—dad Hank, mom Peg, and son Bobby—live in fictional Arlen, Texas, a plain-vanilla, middle-class suburb. The aerial pan of the opening credits swoops over platform pools on postage-stamp lots. Folks relax out back on concrete slab patios, not decks. Boys play baseball, not soccer. Men who work hard and play by the rules swill cold ones, pat their spare tires, and tinker under the hoods of their pickups. Everyone anglicizes Spanish words. Characters like Hank's marble-mouthed buddy Boomhauer say things like, "I tell you what, man," before they tell you what.

I tell you what, man—the Hill family is traditional. Father Hank is the primary breadwinner, selling "propane and propane accessories." Wife Peg helps out, in a traditionally feminine occupation, as a substitute teacher (her specialty is Spanish, which she too manglicizes, in a running joke). And tubby pre-teen Bobby is an achingly childlike child. Unlike the precociously worldly-wise sitcom wisenheimers of *Roseanne* or *Married with Children*, he is an innocent, a dependent who remains *emotionally* dependent.

Bobby loves his father and craves his approval. He is even a little *scared* of his dad, a grouch like his working-class precursors Ralph Kramden and Fred Flintstone. Anger is the one feeling Hank Hill believes in sharing: "Instead of letting it out, try holding it in," he advises his crying, broken-hearted niece in one episode. "Every time you have a feeling, just stick it into a little pit inside your stomach and never let it out."

But for once, a little fear of an authoritarian father is not equated with dysfunction. Bobby exhibits the filial reverence that disappeared from sitcom families in that September long ago when Mike Brady showed up at his drafting table with a divine new perm.

Hank and Peg have sex-specific hair *and* sex-specific roles in the family. Hank disciplines. Peg comforts. Hank stokes his son's aggressive and competitive fires. Peg emphasizes participation. When Peg tells Bobby on the way to a Little League game, "Don't you worry, son, you just do your best," Hank demands "better than your best . . . 110 percent for that winning edge."

The Hills are the kind of middle-American family that Hollywood has made sport of for a generation—from the Bunkers in the '70s through the Bundys in the '90s—for their reactionary politics and lowbrow tastes. It's not that Hollywood hates Middle America. It's more like Hollywood patronizes Middle America. Even when it's rooting for working-class families like the Simpsons or the Conners, it can't help pitying them. Homer Simpson is ultimately a loser. And when Roseanne wasn't combating the outmoded prejudices of her own class, she and Dan were stoically coping with wage stagnation, downsizing, and the export of skilled jobs to low-wage states—helpless victims of off-screen corporate elites, a shad-

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Daniel Wattenberg last wrote for The Weekly Standard *about John Berendt's* Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil.

owy overclass straight out of Dick Gephardt's imagination.

The Hills wage their own battles with antagonistic elites. But Judge pays them the respect of allowing them to fight the very elites that opinion polls and election results show people from this class and region consider antagonistic: pointy-headed bureaucrats and family-intervention do-gooders who defend children from parents. Together with the realism of the show's politics, the detailed realism of the drawing and coloring of characters and settings provides the viewer the recognition in the midst of exaggeration indispensable to good satire.

When Bobby gets a black eye in his Little League game and Hank is spied blowing his stack at a clueless clerk at the Mega Lo Mart, small-town gossips jump to conclusions. Before long, Hank has been reported to Child Protective Services for child abuse. "I wish I could, ma'am, but I can't take custody without an interview," answers the case worker, an alternately sniveling and bullying jargon-spouter from nudnik hell. "Don't you worry, he's in the system now," he assures the caller just before peeling off the support sleeves he wears on his repetitive-stress-injured wrists, with a crackle of Velcro and a feeble yelp.

As the "twig boy bureaucrat" (Hank's term) snoops for evidence that will confirm his preconceptions and justify moving Bobby from his home in "redneck city" to a foster family in North Arlen where he can "develop healthy life adaptations," Judge and co-creator Greg Daniels maliciously parody his simpering developmental-psych *sprachen* ("You're coming from an anger mindset," "Loud is not allowed") and class prejudice. Bobby learns he can leverage the intervention threat into a license to make juvenile mischief without having to fear the wrath of his now-neutralized father. "Dad, that's not respectful adult-child growth dialogue," he tsks. "Your hostility invalidates our parent-child contract." The plot could almost be a "Focus on the Family" scare video on how the therapeutic culture undermines adult authority in the home and elevates children to the status of peers.

But Judge is a satirist, not a propagandist, and his beloved Bubbas absorb some playful arm punches at their own pretensions. In the same episode, Hank and his gear-head pals comically misdiagnose what's wrong with his pickup, until finally ditzy niece Luanne, a beauty-school student with a body that says Bam! breezes in to prick Hank's mechanical machismo: "You had a clogged fuel line, but I blew it clear."

He's even tougher on Hank's pal Dale, unerringly mocking his talk-radio-derived one-world delusions ("Open your eyes, man, they're trying to control global warming. Get it? Glo-BULL. . . . I say let the world warm up. See what Boutros Boutros Ghali Ghali thinks about that. We'll grow oranges in Alaska"). But is Judge tough enough?

At times, Judge comes close to romanticizing his favored characters. They pursue suspiciously wholesome, suspiciously *vernacular* pastimes. They line-dance and work on their cars. Hank plays south-of-the-border crying songs on his guitar, like his idol, Willie Nelson. Aren't there any couch potatoes in Arlen? The question was suggested by a couple of commercials during a recent episode promoting upcoming Fox reality-based shows. One was for *When Stunts Go Bad*. The other was *The World's Scariest Police Shootouts*. Who watches these things? Wouldn't Hank, Boomhauer, and Dale be exactly the beer-guts-'n'-vicarious-glory demographic that eats this schlock up?

Of course, tweaking the programming of one's host network and poking fun at the viewing habits of the audience that sustains one are not comic strategies for the faint of heart. But that's exactly what Mike Judge did on *Beavis and Butt-head*.

Judge's notorious satire mischievously subverted the signature music videos of MTV, the network social traditionalists love to hate, by having us view them through the eyes of Beavis and Butt-head. By design, about the only time these two *idiots* were *savants* was when they were laughing at these videos' icky pretensions to aesthetic or social merit.

"The people who make arty, high-concept videos think they are so heavy and smart, but Beavis and Butt-head watch them and say, 'This is dumb, it sucks,'" Judge once said. "Or they'll see an explosion in the background and say, 'Fire, cool,' which sort of shoots down the whole thing. That's what I like about them. They may be idiots, but sometimes they're right."

But Beavis and Butt-head were more than a medium through which to smirk at Peter Gabriel videos. They were a medium through which to smirk at American cultural meltdown—and in terms not so unlike those employed by the Wildmons and Rakoltas who anathematized the show as the midnight stroke on their cultural doomsday clock.

The social-traditionalist critique of today's popular culture goes something like this: With the rise in two-earner couples, parental supervision of the next generation is declining. The void in parental authority is being filled by peer pressure and junk culture—violent video games and trash television, misogynistic rap, crypto-satanic heavy metal, and morosely self-absorbed alternative music—and the symbolic confluence of these insalubrious tributaries, MTV. Underexposed to adult authority and overexposed to peers and junk culture, children—especially boys, especially teenage boys—are apt to become lazy, stupid, coarse, authority-averse, thrill-seeking nihilists.

And the premise of *Beavis and Butt-head*? Two teenage boys are devoid of parental supervision (Watching a family dinner scene on

TV, a perplexed Butt-head once asked, "Why's that guy eating dinner with those old people?") They spend all their time together, mostly watching television, especially MTV. As a result, they are lazy, stupid, coarse, authority-averse, thrill-seeking nihilists.

And the boys are not just *ultimately* coarsened by junk culture in a way that's hard to measure. One surprise of saturation viewing is that most of their stupid antics are *immediately inspired* by contact with junk culture. Their adolescent minds are as plastic and suggestible as the crudest, most mechanistic critics of pop culture claim real adolescent minds are.

In one episode, the boys are paging through skin mags at the convenience store, when they see an ad for for Sunny Grove Nudist Colony. After struggling with the ad copy ("Uh, *words*"), Butt-head concludes: "Naked people. We're there, dude." In another, they call a phone sex line (and get a slovenly sow in a dark and smoky trailer home) after watching a commercial in which a siren in a satin teddy invites them to call 1-900-LICK. In a third, the boys are watching a "reality-based" news show called *Hard Story*. A report on breast implants prompts the boys to seek surgical enlargements of their own (and they never figure out that all they got were nose jobs).

Another aspect of *Beavis and Butt-head* mirrors the social-conservative party line. Traditionalists complain that the adult world—whether profit-hungry executives at Time-Warner or education-establishment ideologues who assume that children are born, not made, moral—no longer treats kids like kids.

By design or not, the adults in *Beavis and Butt-head* insist for the most part on treating the two early adolescents like fellow adults. When the two venture into the commercial realm—to sign up with a dating service, set up their own phone sex line, join a nudist colony, or have their willies enlarged—the question of whether these activities are age-appropriate never seems to arise. If they have the money to pay (usually they don't), they qualify. And at Highland High, adult authority figures are outnumbered by easily gulled and ever-tolerant progressives like Mr. Van Driessen, their pandering PC pushover of a teacher.

Fox Broadcasting Company

The Hill family: Luanne, Peggy, Bobby, and Hank

My guess is that there is conscious design here, that Judge is laughing at the adult world's reluctance these days to do the dirty work of adulthood, the making and enforcing of rules for minors. After all, about the only adult in the series who ever succeeds in making Beavis and Butt-head behave is Highland High's Mr. Buzzcut, a traditional (albeit comically exaggerated) authoritarian apparently on loan to the school from the Marine Corps. After being thrown out of four different classes for inappropriately laughing (at the attendance roster's "Mr. Butkus" or the invocation of the "Gay Nineties" in history class), the two are finally sent to detention with Buzzcut, whose idea of respectful adult-child growth dialogue is to brandish a riot stick and scream, "There's nothing wrong with you little monsters that can't be cured by a quick return to the days of corporal punishment!" For once, the boys stop laughing at the hidden sexual and scatological double entendres audible only to themselves.

Now, it would be disingenuous to suggest that *Beavis and Butt-head*'s appeal lies solely in its shrewd adult satire of contemporary cultural meltdown. In the early years of the show, I watched for a time and laughed—not just at Judge's shrewd adult satire, but at the tasteless, juvenile clowning of the boys also. And, yes, that was juvenile of *me*. But those were the Mitchell-Gephardt years, the high-water mark of the PC era. Remember the public culture of that now-receding time? With its welter of newly minted taboos, its systemati-

cally euphemized language, its workplace surveillance and absurdly overprotective regulatory regime? That public culture didn't just treat juveniles like adults. It treated adults like juveniles. And an *official* culture that treats its grown-ups like children is asking for an *alternative* culture that snaps its bra straps and allows its infantilized adults the occasional juvenile catharsis. It's asking for *Beavis and Butt-head*.

But times *have* changed. By now, even the arrested adolescent in the White House has figured out that it can't hurt to dress school kids in uniforms. And Mike Judge has fashioned *King of the Hill*, the only new TV hit of 1997, into a show that can run without complaints from anybody at 8:30 p.m.—smack-dab in the middle of Family Hour. ♦

B&A

Isn't It Pathetic?

Wendy Wasserstein's Uncommon, Unsatisfied Women

By Lisa Schiffren

Despite negative reviews in all the New York papers, the night I saw *An American Daughter*, the latest Broadway offering by the Pulitzer-prize-winning playwright Wendy Wasserstein, the audience was packed with visibly high-powered, sophisticated Manhattanites. They bore little resemblance to the now-typical Broadway audience of tourists, suburbanites, aging Jews, and homosexuals.

That Wasserstein can bring such an audience into a Broadway theater indicates just what a cultural icon she has become. Her work is as pure a reflection of what the liberal establishment thinks of itself and the rest of us as, say, the punditry of her close friend Frank Rich, the *New York Times* columnist. In particular, she is understood to be the chronicler of America's women. Not all of them, to be sure; just the best and the brightest.

An American Daughter is the latest installation in the saga of the Mount Holyoke class of 1972—its friends, relatives, and significant others, their life choices, and the consequences that follow. Wasserstein began the series with *Uncommon Women and Others*, set at Mount Holyoke before graduation and over the next few years as a group of young women begin to construct their lives at a moment roiled by feminist promises. It was followed by *Isn't It Romantic*, featuring Janie, a funny, smart but somewhat unfocused, overweight but adorable Jewish woman, and her best friend, Harriet, a thin, driven WASP, dealing with men, marriage, and independence against a backdrop of feminist orthodoxy. Janie, the Wasserstein stand-in, decides that marriage is too much of a compromise of selfhood.

In the Pulitzer-prize-winning *Heidi Chronicles*, Heidi, an amalgam of Janie and Harriet, pursues a career as an art historian, conducts an affair with a man who becomes a philandering liberal politician, and ends up alone with an adopted baby, wondering whether she was the only one who took the dictates of feminism seriously.

The Sisters Rosensweig, her biggest hit, tells the story of three sisters at midlife, and their failed or deeply troubled relationships with inadequate men.

Now Wasserstein has moved on to politics. *An American Daughter*, set in Washington, has a plot loosely based on the Zoe Baird confirmation fiasco. As it opens, Lyssa Dent Hughes, a physician and advocate of medical care for the poor, has just been nominated to be surgeon general. A graduate of Miss Porter's and a college classmate of the president's wife, Lyssa is the daughter of a conservative senator from Indiana. As played by Kate Nelligan, she is cool and contained, organized and professional. She is married to a slightly schlumpy Jewish sociologist, Walter Abrahmson, who loves and is proud of her but is facing his own midlife crisis, exacerbated by his wife's sudden quantum leap up the success ladder. Some years earlier, Walter wrote a book called *Toward a Lesser Elite* that was the defining liberal text of its moment. He has done little of note since. The couple have two sons, whose voices are heard offstage, but who are never seen, which seems like an unintentionally accurate depiction of the role of children in the lives of Wasserstein-style superwomen.

Lyssa's best friend, Judith Kaufman, is a black Jewish oncologist profoundly miserable about her childlessness and nearing the end of unsuccessful in-vitro fertilization efforts. What the author intended by making Judith black is a puzzle—as written, the character is entirely Jewish, with no specific attributes to suggest black cultural identity—though perhaps she wants to suggest Judith is even more of an outsider than the usual Wasserstein stand-in.

Two former students of Walter's also figure prominently. First there is Morrow McCarthy (Bruce Norris), a close family friend who is, we are told, a gay conservative. The character, who is not notably conservative, turns out to be based on Andrew Sullivan, the not notably conservative former *New Republic* editor, which suggests just how insular Wasser-

Lisa Schiffren is a writer living in New York.

stein's universe of references is. The second student is a "neo-feminist" named Quincy Quince who has written a hot book on gender and who uses her almost parodically aggressive sexuality to pursue a media career.

Lyssa is eager to be the surgeon general, not for any self-serving reason but because there is just so much good she can do. This good amounts to protecting the "right to choose," which is threatened as usual, and providing health care for the poor.

But in the course of a profile-interview with a TV journalist, the gay conservative Morrow McCarthy lets slip that Lyssa once failed to answer a jury-duty summons, showing contempt for the obligations that less important Americans take seriously. If that weren't enough to sink a nomination, remarks she makes about her mother, a housewife who made ice-box cakes and cheese-pimento canapés, are misconstrued. They cause a furor among the Indiana housewives who are among her father's most loyal constituents, among others.

In the face of controversy, the president bails, just as the real one did with Lani Guinier, without so much as a phone call to Lyssa. The characters bemoan the media scrutiny that attends presidential appointments these days. They complain that they no longer know what it means to be "smart" and that America sets impossible standards for women who merely wish to serve. As the nomination sinks, Quincy Quince points out that Lyssa's generation—that is, Hillary's generation—is earnest and dowdy, bereft of sexuality, in contrast to her own peers, who really like sex a lot.

It seems all that superwoman effort has cost Lyssa her spark. So it is not much of a surprise when Walter chooses the very moment his beloved wife is under national scrutiny and sinking fast to cheat on her with Quincy Quince. Irony of ironies, the only male character who does *not* betray Lyssa is her father, the conservative senator.

As the critics said, *An American Daughter* is a failure. Wasserstein is out of her milieu writing about politics, and there are too many plot twists that go nowhere for the play to hang together. But if it is not very successful as entertainment, or as political satire, it is not without value. The play is, in its way, a weather report on the *Zeitgeist* among our nation's liberal elites. And the forecast in those regions gets colder and bleaker as the seasons progress.

Kent Lemon

For, intentionally or not, *An American Daughter* is a plausible depiction of what life has become for those scions of the liberal establishment who presumed that they would lead the nation in its political and cultural enterprises, but have awoken to a post-Reagan world in which "Indiana housewives" and their ilk can derail a cabinet nomination over cultural values. What really sinks Lyssa's exemplary nomination is not the putative arrogance of ignoring a jury-duty summons, but the "innocent" remarks she makes about her stay-at-home mother, who died when she was a teenager. She was, Lyssa says, an "ordinary housewife" who made "ice-box cake" and other postwar treats at which any sophisticate would laugh.

Lyssa cannot think of any interests or accomplishments to add to this description of her mother, and the "Indiana housewives" intuit the contempt lurking in this remark and take revenge on her. In later conversation, her father informs her that her mother was not the dolt she assumed. That the same might be true of "Indiana housewives" escapes the nominee. It seems odd that Wasserstein promotes the fast-fading career woman/weekend mom position so dogmatically. (A remarkable side note: In a recent interview in *Newsday*, Kate Nelligan, who plays Lyssa, points out that she had not been seen on Broadway for the past several years because, when her son was born, she found herself unable to abandon him to a nanny. She told the interviewer she believes it is a mother's duty to raise her children and thus has little sympathy for the character she plays.)

Wasserstein is credited with being the bard of her generation's women. One wonders whether she is conscious of the fact that, taken as a whole, her oeuvre can be read as a superb indictment of the feminist

way of life. In play after play, Wasserstein's characters end up alone; family and the happiness it generates are eroded; careerism does not provide meaning; men, ruined by the sexual revolution, are weak, philandering, and narcissistic; children are absent or neglected.

And now, the voters are rejecting all the good they want to do. Twenty years into what will undoubtedly be a chronicle of their lives from college to death, Wendy Wasserstein's uncommon women are uncommonly unhappy, their lives a mockery of all that early promise. ♦

B&A

O My Newark!

Philip Roth's Triumphant 'American Pastoral'

By David Grann

At 64, Philip Roth has decided there may be more to life than masturbation. Until now, he has spent most of his literary career reflecting on himself, dissecting himself, portraying himself, disguising himself, and, at times, artistically and otherwise playing with himself. In the process, he has pitted his id against nearly every imaginable Jewish, middle-class, American, and literary taboo. His characters have, in no particular order, found sexual release in a handful of liver; turned into a 155-pound, watermelon-shaped female breast; drowned a naked President Nixon in a bag full of water; and bedded the beatific Anne Frank. In *Sabbath's Theater*, the eponymous protagonist sums up the Rothian credo in four words: "F— the laudable ideologies."

This style of truth-telling has a vapid ideology all its own. Irving Howe ruefully observed that Roth's writings "betray a swelling nausea before the ordinariness of human existence." So what is extraordinary about Roth's latest novel, *American Pastoral*, is its ordinariness. It is not about Roth's usual compulsion, which is to say, sex. Nor is it about his usual obsession, which is to say, Philip Roth. In *American Pastoral*, he has produced his most radical work since he began his literary rebellion 40 years ago by producing a conventional book, a testimony and elegy to the bourgeoisie.

Philip Roth
American Pastoral
Houghton Mifflin Co., 423 pp., $26

Spanning from World War II to Watergate, *American Pastoral* sets out in familiar territory: the Jewish section of Newark, amid the hum of leather factories and smoke shops, the smell of Syd's hot-dogs and Tabachnik's pickle barrels. Only this time there is no Portnoy complaining about stifling Jewish mothers or millennial guilt. Instead, there is Seymour Levov, the hero of Weequahic High School.

Tall with striking blond hair and blue eyes, "Swede" Levov is the mythical Other: an Aryan Jew, a football star, a Marine. Where Roth's most notorious character, Portnoy, fantasized about and had tortuous relationships with goyim, the Swede settles down happily with one: Miss New Jersey of 1949. Together, the Levovs are Newark's Kennedys. He dutifully runs the family glove business, Newark Maid, while she breeds cattle at their farm. "The contradiction in Jews who want to fit in and want to stand out, who insist they are different and insist they are no different, resolved itself in the triumphant spectacle of this Swede. . . . Where was the Jew in him? You couldn't find it and yet you knew it was there. Where was the irrationality in him? Where was the crybaby in him? Where were the wayward temptations? No guile. No artifice. No mischief." No Roth.

Actually, Roth is present in *American Pastoral*, or rather his longtime alter-ego, Nathan Zuckerman, is. But Zuckerman is not the novel's protagonist; Roth is not interested in playing his usual cat-and-mouse game, making us guess what part of Zuckerman's life is simply borrowed from the author's and what part is invented. Zuckerman is here to observe.

At the book's start, the Swede is in his late 60s. He seeks out Zuckerman, the worshipful childhood friend of his brother Jerry, ostensibly because Levov wants the famous novelist to write a tribute to his recently deceased father. Zuckerman's encounter with the Swede over dinner at a New York restaurant confirms what he has always suspected: Levov is empty, a kind of Matroshka doll with nothing inside. "There's nothing here but what you're looking at," Zuckerman concludes at the end of their meal. "This guy is the embodiment of nothing."

Or so it seems. It is only soon after, at his 45th high-school reunion, that Zuckerman realizes he has committed the novelist's worst sin: He has misread a character. Zuckerman learns that the Swede, who has just died of cancer, had concealed more than his illness during their encounter. At the height of the Vietnam War, Levov's daughter blew up a local post office in protest and disappeared. "His life was blown up by that bomb," says Jerry, the Swede's brother. "The real victim of that bombing was him."

And so begins Zuckerman's effort to reconstruct the Swede's rise and

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fall, a rise and fall that self-consciously parallels the American century. In Merry, Levov's daughter, Roth finds the ultimate vessel for civilization and its discontents, the Oswald of ideologies, a woman who could bestill even Sabbath's heart. She has killed not just one person, but four. She is a Weatherman, a mad bomber, "chaos itself." But just as we seem to be heading back to the couch of Portnoy's shrink, Roth subverts his ordinary subversions. Rather than lampoon the Swede, Roth gives his life a lyrical quality and lacerates Merry for destroying Swede Levov's American pastoral. It is as if, after all these years, Roth himself has joined the ranks of the Patimkins, the middle-class Jews he satirized so ruthlessly in *Goodbye, Columbus*. Zuckerman confesses for Roth: "Writing turns you into somebody who's always wrong. The illusion that you may get it right someday is the perversity that draws you on."

It is a stunning confession; Roth has revolted against his own revolt, and has embraced the Swede's pastoral as the antidote to Sabbath's theater. The Swede signifies order, faith, law, reason. He is home; he is Newark; he is flesh and blood. And with one nonsensical act, Merry—the Communist idiot, the viper, the stuttering imp—destroys her father and all he embodies. Her vision has "nothing whatsoever to do with 'ideals' but with dishonesty, criminality, megalomania, and insanity," writes Zuckerman. "Blind antagonism and infantile desire to menace—those were her ideals."

But something is lost in Roth's conversion to middle-class ideals; his characterization of Merry, the one type he has always gotten right, is off. She is all catalyst and no character. While the mythical Swede contains an unmistakable inner life, Merry has only a stutter and a bomb. Even her name is pat: Merry is unmerry. When Lyndon Johnson appears on TV, she screams: "You heartless mi-mi-mi-miserable m-monster." Years later, when she has converted from communism to cultism, she screams: "I am bound to harm no living being, neither man, nor animal. . . . I destroy plant life. I am insufficiently compassionate as yet to refuse to do that." Indeed, by the end of the book, she has spouted so many ideologies, she has none. And that is perhaps the point, and why ultimately she doesn't destroy the novel along with her father. Unlike the Swede, who embodies America at her best, she truly is the embodiment of nothing.

Kent Lemon

And, oddly, her nothingness is what makes *American Pastoral* so powerful. Merry is the logical outgrowth of Roth's relentless revolt against convention. The literary uprising, which began with the sardonic Neil Klugman of *Goodbye, Columbus*, inevitably led to the petulant Portnoy, which inevitably led to the soulless Sabbath, which finally produced the murderous Merry. Once all ideologies are found wanting, there is only chaos itself. Thirty years ago, *Portnoy's Complaint* literally ended with a punchline; *American Pastoral* closes with despair. "The combatant had borne all the disappointment he could," Zuckerman writes of the Swede. "Nothing blunt remained within him for bludgeoning deviancy to death. What should be did not exist. Deviancy prevailed. . . . The old system that made order doesn't work anymore. All that was left was his fear and astonishment, but now concealed by nothing."

Roth, too, has left himself bare, especially to those who will charge he has renounced everything he himself has wrought. Unlike his other books, *American Pastoral* is very much a political book, and, stranger yet, a conservative one. It is a paean to old Newark, its family-run factories and crowded neighborhoods, to all the ordinary people whom Merry and her modern disciples have destroyed. It seems that somewhere along the way from Portnoy to the Swede, Philip Roth decided that even literary rebellions have consequences. ♦

B&A

Blame Israel First

Amos Elon Misperceives the World Around Him

By Martin Krossel

For roughly the first 30 years of Israel's existence, there was general agreement in the country about how to deal with hostile Arab neighbors. Virtually all Israelis believed that the wars they were fighting were forced on them by Arab aggressiveness. The Arab states launched these wars because they hated the Jews and wanted to destroy Israel—that was that.

Amos Elon
A Blood-Dimmed Tide:
Dispatches from the Middle East
Columbia, 264 pp., $24.95

Sometime in the late 1970s, this conventional view was challenged by a number of Israeli intellectuals. For them, the central issue was not the Arabs' refusal to live in peace, but Israel's reluctance to surrender territories occupied in 1967's Six-Day War. This "peace movement" included several prominent writers, among them Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, and Amos Elon.

Elon has just come out with a collection of essays on the Arab-Israeli conflict, 21 in all, written during the 28 years from the Six-Day War to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. The volume will probably score a hit in America, not because it contains anything insightful—it does not—but because Elon is the kind of Israeli favored by the American media, as well as by most American Jews.

If Israel is portrayed as the heavy, who better to fortify such an image than an articulate, urbane Israeli? Rabin's widow, Leah, enjoyed a successful book tour recently. If her experience is any indication, Elon will be on the talk shows and lecturing on campus. Most of the collected essays were published in American magazines to begin with, notably the *New Yorker* and the *New York Review of Books*.

Elon's book is significant because it shows that the Israeli Left has become radicalized and extreme. An epidemic of Stockholm Syndrome has broken out among these intellectuals, so completely do they identify with the Arab cause. Elon's arguments—like those of the movement for which he speaks—are fraught with deception and hypocrisy.

Take, as a starting point, the use and abuse of the Holocaust in Israeli polemics. Elon argues in "The Politics of Memory" that the Holocaust has been exploited by right-leaning politicians as a justification for their inability to make peace with the Palestinians (the Arabs are like the Nazis, Yasser Arafat is like Hitler). He extends this criticism even to Abba Eban—well loved in the West as a dove—for referring to the pre-1967 lines around Israel as "the Auschwitz borders."

Elon further objects to Israeli students' being sent on the "March of the Living," a study tour of former Nazi death camps. He writes, "Upon their return from Poland, some of the young participants in these tours told the press that . . . they had become 'better Zionists'; they had become convinced that Israel must become every square centimeter of Eretz Israel [Greater Israel]; territorial compromise was impossible." Elon backed the decision of Rabin's minister of education to cancel such trips.

The Left, however, is no more hesitant than the Right to invoke the Holocaust when it serves political purposes—as exemplified by Elon himself. There is this difference, though: In Elon's writings, it is the Israelis who are the Nazis. He quotes favorably an Israeli officer who told a newspaper in the late 1980s, "When I read about [Kurt] Waldheim in the papers, I worry about how the future will interpret what I am doing in the territories today." In a similar vein, he quotes his cohort Yehoshua about the failure of Israelis to rise in mass protest against their army's efforts to put down the Palestinian *intifada*: Yehoshua said that, at last, he could understand how Germans, following World War II, could claim not to have seen or heard of the death camps.

This is the sort of double standard that permeates all of Elon's analyses. In his essay on the murder of Rabin, he addresses the loaded question of who was responsible for the crime. He declares that the assassin, Yigal Amir, is not to be regarded as a Lee Harvey Oswald, acting on his own initiative; Elon instead casts a very wide net.

Amir, he notes, grew up in an ultra-Orthodox home, attended Orthodox schools, and so on. Elon has long been concerned about the danger that this segment of Israeli society poses to both the state's democracy and reconciliation with the Arabs, and some of this concern is justified. But Elon's suspicion that Amir received prior rabbinical sanction for Rabin's murder is without foundation.

Elon spreads the blame for the murder to nearly everyone who opposed the Oslo accords, especially those in the parliamentary opposition. He contends that "no Israeli government had ever been as deliberately and systematically delegitimized by its opposition as Rabin's."

While some of the anti-Rabin rhetoric was indeed excessive, and dangerously so, Elon conveniently

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overlooks the Left's history of equally inflammatory statements. After the assassination, Hillel Halkin, a well-known Israeli writer once active in the peace movement, wrote,

> [An] example of right-wing incitement, said to have provoked the assassination, were the placards and shouts of 'Rabin is a murderer' . . . These were reprehensible—but the copyright on them belonged to the Left. Such slogans first surfaced in Israel in 1982, in the huge Labor-party and Peace Now rally held in Tel Aviv's Kings of Israel Square [now Yitzhak Rabin Square] to protest the massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christians. There, signs proclaiming, 'Begin is a Murderer' and 'Sharon is a Murderer' were held high by many demonstrators. I can vouch that no one asked for their removal . . .

Elon is unable to make the case that politicians' words whipped up a murderous climate. The opposition's rhetoric was, in the main, well within the bounds of legitimate discourse. Moreover, much of this criticism was valid. When Benjamin Netanyahu charged in the Knesset that Oslo would establish "an army of Arab terrorists," he was referring to a Palestinian "police force" of 30,000 that, in any confrontation, would side with their own and turn their weapons on Israelis. During the riots that followed the opening of a Jerusalem tunnel last fall, this is exactly what happened.

Elon's writings on the *intifada* are excellent examples of the Israeli intellectual at work. Elon not only condones the violence: He outright embraces it.

Elon believed the West Bank Arabs who told him that they expected few political gains out of their uprising. But these Arabs knew that world opinion regarded them as victims and the Israelis as their oppressors. They figured that, in time, pressure on Israel would mount and cause the government to make risky concessions, as at Oslo.

It is doubtful that the *intifada* would have lasted so long had world opinion not fully aligned with the rioters. If the international community had resolutely signaled that political legitimacy could not be gained by hurling lethal objects at soldiers trying to maintain order, the violence might have died down within weeks. Many fewer lives, both Israeli and Arab, would have been lost or ruined.

In Elon's one-sided view, Israelis are responsible for violence committed by Israelis, and they are also responsible for violence committed by Arabs. These essays demonstrate, again and again, how reluctant Elon is to hold Arabs accountable for their own actions. While there are scattered mentions of Palestinians' missing opportunities for peace, Elon clearly believes that, since 1967, Israel has had it within its power to determine war or peace.

Ideally, according to Elon, the Israelis would have been "generous victors" and returned the territories soon after they captured them. Then, they could have had peace. But Elon produces no evidence that either the population in the territories or the neighboring Arab states would have accepted a "land-for-peace" deal in the '60s and '70s. Perhaps this is because there is no such evidence. An Israel reduced to its pre-1967 frontiers had proven an inviting target for Arab aggression. Israel captured the territories in defending itself against such aggression. It would have been foolish for any Israeli government to think that it could return those territories without inviting further unprovoked attacks.

As time went on, an exchange of land for peace became more difficult, Elon says, because Israel allowed the territories to be settled by Jews. In his view, the settlers are all fanatics and zealots with a racist view of the Arabs and no desire for peace. Right after the Six-Day War, the government made a half-hearted attempt to prevent the creation of new Jewish settlements. Elon argues that the government should have been more determined to prevent the establishment of these settlements. If there is ever to be peace, he says, Israel will not only have to surrender the territories, but abandon the settlements—which should be unthinkable for a Jewish government.

Elon assumes that the Israeli population is divided neatly into two groups: pragmatists, who are willing to trade land for peace, and fervent nationalists, who eschew peace in order to hold on to territories divinely set aside for Jewish habitation and control. But there is a third major group within Israeli society, probably the majority. These Israelis are skeptical about surrendering territory because they are not yet convinced that the Arab states have committed themselves to peace with their country. By pretending that this third group does not exist, the Left in Israel has tried to stigmatize and undermine everyone who has doubts about Oslo and the Arabs' willingness to make peace. As Elon and his fellows see it, since 1993 every Israeli has either supported the Oslo accords—every jot and tittle, every implementation and violation—or stood against peace.

In his last chapter, Elon writes, "In an essay on the rise of Meir Kahane, Leon Wieseltier wrote that the Jews must attend to their demons as well as they attend to their enemies. One by one the enemies have fallen away. Only the demons remain."

Certainly the Jews still have their demons, their religious fanatics on the right. Baruch Goldstein earned infamy in his massacre of almost 30 Arab civilians in a Hebron mosque three years ago. But they still have their enemies, too. Elon is willing to overlook the existence of these enemies, and is even ready to champion their cause. Which makes him about as dangerous to Israel as the gun-toting zealots. ♦

Police have been criticized for overreacting when a Danish mother left her baby in its stroller on the sidewalk outside the New York restaurant where she was eating. —*News item.*

POLICE BULLETIN

TO: ALL NEW YORK CITY POLICE OFFICERS
FROM: ONE POLICE PLAZA
SUBJECT: INFANTS OF FOREIGNERS

After meeting with several officers of the United States Department of State, the New York City Police Department is issuing this bulletin.

Swedish Babies: The State Department's Scandinavian desk has advised us that it is the cultural custom of average Swedish parents to leave their baby or babies naked out on the sidewalk in summer, particularly on hot, sunny days. Swedes will often lay their infants down on the hottest portions of the asphalt and then disappear to Greece or Spain for weeks at a time, hoping that, if and when they return, their children will be tanner, blonder, and more Swedish than when they left. If any peace officer stumbles upon a Swedish child tanning or roasting in such a manner, the officer is to leave the infant alone, unless an excessive amount of tar is building up around the baby.

French Babies: Several weeks ago, a squad car was dispatched from the 8th Precinct when a report was phoned in of an enfant wearing a small blue beret romping around in the window of Françoise's Bakery on Hudson Street. The arresting officers forcibly removed the perpetrator, now being referred to as Bébé Pierre. This was, we are now told by the State Department, a faux pas. Apparently it is normal in France to leave a child at a bakery or pâtisserie or horse butcher for hours at a time, while the attending parent either shops, naps on a park bench, or meets another adult at a pre-arranged site for what the French call a "*cinq à sept*." The French government is in an uproar and is threatening to withdraw the Statue of Liberty from New York Harbor. The arresting officers have been reassigned and are now on desk duty, their latte privileges removed until a task force can look into the matter. In addition, all officers should be advised that most French children start drinking wine in their mothers' wombs, so no baby holding French citizenship should be brought in for unlawful use of alcohol, and no French adult can ever be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor.
In addition, State has indicated that French parents tend to be haughty and superior when placed under arrest, and it is not unusual for them to write plays or novels while detained in their cells for two days.

Italian Babies: If any officer of the law stumbles upon an Italian infant napping, snoozing, or otherwise sleeping outside, he or she is to leave that child alone. Italians take the month of August off and it is customary for them to leave their children outside either a café or a restaurant while they have lunch. As the typical Italian lunch often lasts five hours or more, it is to be assumed that the baby in question has been fed by either a pedestrian or a local shopkeeper and is napping after having consumed pasta, bread, soup, a second dish of either fish, chicken, or meat, accompanied by a side dish or "contorni," as well as mineral water and dessert. Several weeks ago, a "Baby Maria" was removed from the shade of a fire hydrant outside a restaurant on the Upper West Side; there has been no outcry thus far from the Italian government, as it has changed hands three times since the above baby was taken into custody.