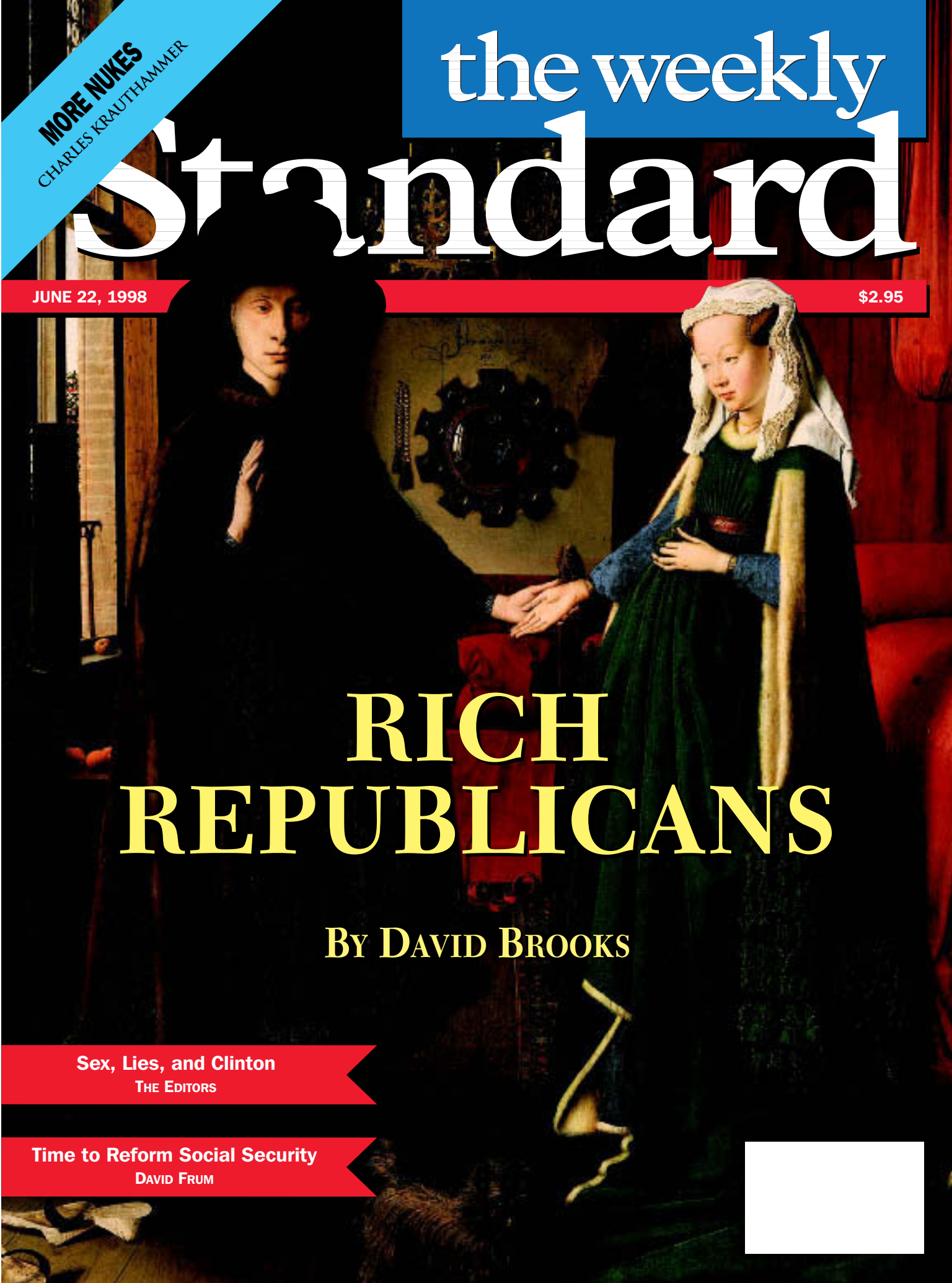
the weekly Standard

JUNE 22, 1998

$2.95

MORE NUKES
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER



RICH REPUBLICANS

By David Brooks

Sex, Lies, and Clinton
The Editors

Time to Reform Social Security
David Frum

the weekly
Standard

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 40 • JUNE 22, 1998

Cover painting by Jan Van Eyck
Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

Books & Arts

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Bill Clinton's Fellow China Apologists

As preparations for the Tiananmen Square Summit proceed apace, it's increasingly clear that no Chinese infamy—not blatant interference in American elections, not Beijing's aggressive military buildup, not the forced-abortion and organ-harvesting horrors perpetrated by the Chinese Communists—will halt the tank-like forward progress of the Clinton appeasement machine. It's also clear that, as long as Clinton embraces the butchers of Beijing, much of America's commerce-loving foreign-policy Establishment will embrace Clinton. Interestingly, the more craven and fawning Clinton has become towards Beijing, the more he has tended to point out that his policy is a direct descendant of George Bush's. And for the approval-craving Bush crowd, this praise from the man who booted them out of office seems to be most welcome.

Perhaps that's why Brent Scowcroft, Bush's national security adviser, swung into action last week in defense of Clinton and his summit. Scowcroft drafted a cliché-drenched "Open Letter to Congress" full of Council on Foreign Relations blah-blah ("China is destined to become a great economic and political power in the 21st century; the United States should neither fear nor oppose this development"). Then he circulated this letter with a comically full-of-itself cover memo on Scowcroft's letterhead—a copy of which The Scrapbook has obtained—in order to drum up VIP signatures for the letter.

"Dear Colleagues," Scowcroft wrote, "As you are aware, U.S.-China relations have come under significant criticism in recent weeks. Much of the criticism seems based on misinformation or a lack of credible facts. . . . In an effort to bring some balance to public debate, we are proposing an open letter to Congress, to be published in selected national newspapers a week before President Clinton leaves for China. We anticipate that funding for this effort will come through the U.S.-China Education Foundation. Presidents Bush, Carter and Ford, as well as Henry Kissinger and Larry Eagleburger, agree that such a letter could bring a much needed reminder of the critical importance of the strategic relationship between our two countries. All have agreed to sign the letter. We would be honored if you would join us."

"I am currently in China with President Bush, but my colleagues . . . can assist you with any questions you may have regarding this letter."

It's nice to know that if President Clinton needs any informal advance work for the Tiananmen Square Summit, he seems to have some very able helpmeets already on the ground. The Scrapbook is also pleased to learn, from the distribution list on the Scowcroft memo, who makes the Establishment A-list these days: James Baker, Lloyd Bensten [sic], Michael Blumenthal, Nicholas Brady, Harold Brown, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Frank Carlucci, Dick Cheney, Warren Christopher, Henry Fowler, Alexander Haig, Melvin Laird, Anthony Lake, Robert McFarlane, William Miller, Walter Mondale, William Perry, Colin Powell, Dan Quayle, Donald Regan, Elliot Richardson, William Rogers, Donald Rumsfeld, James Schlesinger, George Shultz, William Simon, Cyrus Vance, and Casper [sic] Weinberger. Next week, once the letter has been published, we'll provide an update on which of these men has the gumption—and principle—to spurn Scowcroft's entreaties.

Tiger, Tiger

Golfer Tiger Woods is proving himself one of the nation's leading purveyors of clear-headedness about race, not that this is winning him many friends. Woods's mother is Thai, and his father is black—but also part-Caucasian and part-American Indian, which leads Woods to describe himself as "Cablinasian," a rebuke of sorts to those who would assign him a part that he doesn't wish to play. Gen. Colin Powell, for one, ridiculed Woods and this "very strange word" last year on *Meet the Press*.

But Woods seems immune to criticism. Three years ago, when still in college, he was asked at the Masters whether he felt an "obligation" to serve as a role model to minority youths. And he answered, breathtakingly, "No. I feel I have an obligation to serve as a role model to everyone, regardless of color."

And he did it again, last week, on *Larry King Live*. King asked, "Do you feel that you're an influence on young blacks?" And Woods answered, calmly, firmly, "Young children." King, a little annoyed, shot back, "Just young *children*? Don't you think you've attracted a lot more blacks to the game?" And Woods replied, "Yeah, I think I've attracted minorities to the game, but you know what? Why limit it to just that? I think you should be able to influence people in general, not just one race or

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social-economic background. Everybody should be in the fold."

Few things these days are as shocking as a bracing dose of what used to be called liberalism.

A Choice, Not an Echo

School reformers just had a banner week. Last Wednesday, the Wisconsin Supreme Court approved a pioneering effort to expand educational choices for the children in Milwaukee's worst public schools. The court declared—over the protests of the ACLU, People for the American Way, the NAACP, and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State—that public funds, in the form of school vouchers, could be used by parents to send their kids to religious schools. Currently, 1,500 children in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program use vouchers to go to non-religious private schools. As a result of the decision, which will open up participation by numerous parochial schools, another 13,500 children will be able to escape dysfunctional public schools.

More good news came from the private sector, with the announcement by investment banker Ted J. Forstmann and Wal-Mart heir John T. Walton of a Children's Scholarship Fund that could send 50,000 needy children to private schools. Forstmann and Walton have pledged to raise $200 million for the national initiative and have already kicked in $50 million each. The announcement was followed by grousing from the American Federation of Teachers. Sandra Feldman, president of the AFT, said, "I would much prefer to have seen a contribution like that made to the public schools, the way Walter Annenberg did." No doubt. Trouble is, there is no evidence that Annenberg's gift has helped students. Maybe competition will.

Mayor Pressler?

Failed presidential candidates never die, they just run for mayor. Jerry Brown did it in Oakland earlier this month. Now, perhaps inspired by Brown's success, former senator Larry Pressler of South Dakota has announced that he may run for the Republican nomination for mayor of Washington, D.C., this fall.

Didn't know that there were Republicans on the ballot in Washington? Then you probably don't know that Larry Pressler once ran for president, either. (Admittedly, both are the kind of factoid usually relegated to Trivial Pursuit.) Pressler's presidential bid began in 1979 and lasted a total of 106 days. The issue he was hoping would sweep him into the White House? He summed it up at the time in a single word: "Gasahol."

Pressler is running on a somewhat broader platform this time, for tax cuts and school vouchers and against crime. Mock him if you like, but there's little doubt the former senator would do a better job running Washington than the gang of larcenous race-baiters who have spent the last 20 years turning the District government into an unamusing joke. And the former senator is already doing his best to woo the city's predominant ethnic group, pointing out in interviews that he has an honorary degree from Southeastern University, which has quite a few black students. Plus, says Pressler, "I have a lot of African-American friends." Yes, he really said it. We smell a successful campaign slogan, if not campaign: "Larry Pressler for Mayor. Some Of His Best Friends Are Black."

Casual

Dream Beat

No one likes a braggart, but here's a fact: A golf tournament is a much nicer experience with a press pass. And you feel the difference immediately.

You arrive at the Kemper Open, outside Washington, D.C., with thousands of other fans. You get to the public parking lot, where you've always left your car before, but you don't stop. You keep going . . . and going. At checkpoint after checkpoint, you're waved through by smiling young people, all because of the magical pass that dangles from your rearview mirror. When you finally reach your designated lot, you're practically in the clubhouse. No wonder people resent the press.

Then you check in at the media center, where you're greeted by a platoon of eager-beaver volunteers who will ensure that you have everything you need. So what do you need? Everything: programs (expensive to the average Joe), newspapers, PGA Tour paraphernalia, phones, fax machines . . . and the food tent. Ah, the food tent, where you feast all day on sandwiches and pie, exchanging Tour gossip with the grizzled press, some of whom are famous.

When the spirit moves you, you wander over to the practice range, to see who's warming up. Fans have lined the rope two and three deep, but you don't have to stand with them: You head straight for the entrance, where a couple of semi-huffy guards try to stop you. But they can't, because you have that thing hanging from your neck, and, in a second, you're mingling with the titans of golf—questioning them, joking with them, spying (or, if you like, reporting) on them.

Much of the talk—no surprise here—is about women: "I think that deal might have been firmed up last night," says one of the players. "Oh?" says another. "Horizontal?" Another pro, who styles himself "Big Daddy from Cincinnati," is a well-known connoisseur of the nation's strip bars, and, sure enough, he has a blonde with him right there on the range—and she doesn't look like his wife, or anyone else's.

But there are other scenes, too, best appreciated from a reporter's privileged vantage: swing gurus trying to straighten out their anxious clients; players yakking on their cell phones, inquiring about endorsement contracts; Jesper Parnevik (son of "The Johnny Carson of Sweden") cracking up his friends; Dicky Pride (now there's a name) instructing a portly volunteer who has asked for swing advice; and Justin Leonard—one of *Cosmopolitan* magazine's "25 Most Eligible Bachelors"—being teased about the gaggle of giggling girls waiting for his autograph.

Then, it's on to the first tee, scene last year of a notorious episode. Greg Norman, the president's jerk pal, threw a screaming fit at the announcer, simply because the man had made a gentle reference to Clinton's injury at Norman's Florida estate. The man has since died, and the Kemper people have installed a plaque in his honor. Norman also flipped the bird to one of his fans in the gallery last year. Swell guy, and totally deserving of Clinton.

Out on the course, you hunt down some of the more interesting players, looking for stories. Sandy Lyle is there, a hulking Scotsman who was once the world's top golfer but has been languishing for a decade. His demeanor is admirably stoic, as he struggles to recoup his game. You notice, though, that he says, "Sh—," after poor shots: just as he did on television one year at the Masters (whereupon Ken Venturi, in the booth, said, "That describes it").

You also spot Esteban Toledo, a former lightweight boxing champion from Mexico who has cast his fate with golf. He still looks like he could go 12 rounds with anyone, and his headcovers are—what else?—boxing gloves. Just as Lyle is followed by British-accented fans, Toledo is surrounded by Spanish-speaking ones, who shout *Viva!* after even mediocre tee shots. Toledo may be an average Tour player, but he's a remarkable athlete, adored by his public.

As the parade passes by, you realize that you know these guys embarrassingly well—from golf magazines and books and interview shows. This one is recovering from a divorce; that one has been to a hypnotist. This one is a fervent Bible student; that one is losing his putting stroke to drink. The caddies, too, are part of the pageant, some of them as familiar as their bosses. They are perhaps the motliest crew on earth—the carnies of the fairways—and they don't shy away from your notepad, especially if you have cigarettes to give.

Back in the media center, your glorious Walter Mitty/Ferris Bueller day is coming to a close. The print men tap at their laptops; the TV men fool with their hair; the radio men tape their spots. You wonder whether you are spoiled for life—whether you will ever again be able to attend a tournament in the ordinary way. But you don't wonder for long. You are jubilantly, almost impossibly happy. And you have a story to file.

Jay Nordlinger

Correspondence

Bibi's Endgame

Charles Krauthammer's "Bibi's Endgame" (June 8) credits Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with injecting a degree of "realism" into the Oslo negotiations. However, I believe Krauthammer's scenarios for Palestinian statehood are only slightly more realistic than those of the left-wing utopians he rightly criticizes.

Netanyahu is undoubtedly justified in believing that an 11 percent withdrawal is preferable to a 15 percent pullout, but ultimately his squirming will prove futile. Unable to cut the Gordian knot that is the Oslo "peace process," he will lurch reluctantly but inexorably toward the true endgame: war.

All the chatter about American guarantees, negotiated statehood, or unilateral statehood will not change the governing dynamic set in motion by the handshake on the White House lawn that legitimated Arafat and his cause. It eviscerated the Zionist ideology that has sustained Israel and its pioneers since the 19th century.

Let us hope that whatever shape the Israeli withdrawals take, there will be enough land remaining to defend—and, more important, a unified people prepared to defend it.

Gary M. Osen
Oradell, NJ

Charles Krauthammer's piece was penetrating. The detail and logic of his work make one wonder how the vast majority of the Jewish community in the United States can be so liberal and so antagonistic toward the religious Right. If the preservation of Israel and Judaism are their prime objectives, our Jewish leaders should be in league with the Christian Coalition.

N. F. Stein
Lower Burrell, PA

Crocodile Smiles

David Frum's "Smile When You Say That" (May 25) is right on the mark. The people who make the most noise about incivility are those who should be most closely watched.

I differ with Frum, however, when he says that "greater deference" should be paid to executive-branch officials. There's too much bowing and scraping going on now, which doesn't mean that manners and civility are in evidence.

Jacqueline Edwards
New York, NY

Weird Science

Granted, it was only a hook for a gag about the Clinton White House, but the opening sentence of David Frum's "Worse than Iran-contra" (June 8) was so arresting as to demand comment. According to Frum, "Scientists tell us that a human embryo recapitulates in only nine months the entire evolution of life, from single-celled molecule to Homo sapiens."

I don't know what kind of scientists Frum hangs out with, but I can only suppose they wear tall, pointed hats and keep vials of bat wings and dragon scales in their labs. Recapitulation is a bizarre antique notion that is given no credence by modern science. A "single-celled molecule" is a logically absurd concept, like a single-orchestra violin. However much some of the proponents of abortion might wish it were otherwise, a human embryo is of the species Homo sapiens from the get-go.

It must have been difficult to cram that much misinformation into a single sentence. Maybe Frum's own views on abortion will become clearer and more sound once he discards the strange "scientific" misconceptions under which he has evidently been laboring.

William C. Porth
Charleston, WV

Hurtful, Insensitive Drivers

I am disappointed that The Weekly Standard has joined the liberal media in cop-bashing and cop-mocking (Tucker Carlson, "Postmod Squad," April 28). I won't defend rude or improper behavior by police, but perhaps some perspective is needed.

The "social worker" cop Carlson writes about has arisen because of society, and is not necessarily that bad. It hardly seems like a cause for complaint or mockery if some cops are taking the extra time to explain why a violation is dangerous.

But consider the trooper working the New Jersey Turnpike or the Beltway. The trooper has stopped a stranger, who could be a wanted felon, a drug trafficker, an abusive motorist, or perhaps just someone not paying attention to his driving. The possibility that the trooper will be struck and killed by traffic while dealing with the stranger is very real. The traffic is horrendous, with tractor trailers and inattentive drivers speeding by at 70 mph. These are not conditions that conduce to a pleasant interaction with motorists.

No one likes getting a ticket, and no one likes being warned, lectured, or barked at. But it's a larger issue than hurt pride and a hurt wallet.

Police officers are killed and injured in traffic accidents and in encounters with criminals. Physical danger, constant negative publicity from the media, lawsuits, and anti-police court rulings are all working to reduce the effectiveness of the police. Meanwhile, the rights of defendants and convicted criminals expand.

John T. Bandler
Middletown, NY

the weekly Standard

Bill Clinton: This Precedent's for You

What if, just for the sake of argument, nothing more can ever be established from the Monica Lewinsky investigation than that she and the president engaged in, say, a sex act—and that both of them later, under oath in a civil proceeding, denied having had a sexual relationship? The answer to this question, we have been told over and over and over again since the beginning, is simple: If that's all Ken Starr's got, then Bill Clinton is and should be off the hook. "You can't get a perjury conviction" on the basis of vague responses to vague queries, Harvard's Alan Dershowitz informed the nation, early on in the controversy. "If he says, 'I didn't have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky,' and it turns out, hypothetically—I don't believe this—but if it turns out he had oral sex on one occasion with her, you cannot get a perjury [prosecution]."

Other titans of legal scholarship are even more emphatic about the president's invulnerability on this score. Geraldo Rivera, for instance, tells his CNBC audience that "in our research—and it's been furious and in-depth—we've found scarce precedent for a federal prosecution of a sex lie in a civil case." CNN's Bill Press reports on *Crossfire* that "there's never been another case in the history of this nation where someone has been indicted for lying about sex in a civil case." Press's guest, defense attorney Stan Brand, offers anyone who can produce a single example of such a prosecution "dinner for two at The Palm."

We'll have the porterhouse steak.

Edward I. Arthur is a decorated Army veteran of the Vietnam War. In 1990 and 1991, he received treatment for various combat-related disorders at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Boise, Idaho. In May 1991, responsibility for Arthur's medication was assigned to a VA staff psychiatrist, Dr. Barbara Battalino. In October 1991, according to a recent story in *Boise Weekly*, Battalino resigned her post at the hospital after her superiors became aware that she had maintained an "intimate relationship" with Ed Arthur. That same month, in U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho, Arthur filed a civil tort claim against Battalino and the VA, alleging that he had been the victim, during this affair, of medical malpractice.

Battalino, in response, insisted that her sexual contact with Arthur had not begun until July 1991, when he was no longer in her care. In particular, Battalino denied Arthur's charge that during an office visit on June 27, 1991, she had suddenly acknowledged having "feelings" for him—and had proceeded to perform an act of oral sex. At a hearing in this case on July 14, 1995, for example, Battalino was asked: "Did anything of a sexual nature take place in your office on June 27, 1991?" And she testified as follows: "No, sir."

Now, Alan Dershowitz may believe that it is legally impossible to make a crime out of such a sworn statement, and the rest of America's punditocracy may believe that no prosecutor has ever so much as tried. But Bill Clinton's Justice Department appears to have a different view.

Toward the end of their romance, it would subsequently turn out, Ed Arthur had—shades of Linda Tripp—recorded more than 25 hours of telephone conversations with Barbara Battalino. In one of those conversations, she rebuked him for telling someone about the office-visit encounter: "No, the thing was that we were supposed to not have had sex until after. . . . I can't believe you would divulge that." And armed in part with this taped evidence, the U.S. Department of Justice last year conducted a grand-jury and FBI investigation of Battalino's truthfulness.

Two months ago, on April 10, 1998, the Department of Justice filed an official "information" in federal district court by which attorney general Janet Reno alleged that Barbara Battalino "did corruptly endeavor to influence, obstruct and impede the due administration of justice in connection with a pending proceeding before a court of the United States." The charge rested entirely on Battalino's two-word courtroom denial of July 14, 1995, which Reno concluded "was false and misleading in that the defendant in fact had performed oral sex on Arthur in her Boise VA office on June 27, 1991."

Four days after this document was signed and delivered, on April 14, 1998, the Justice Department issued a press release to announce that Battalino had pleaded guilty to one count of obstruction of justice and would be sentenced on July 20, 1998, at 9:30 A.M. The violation, a felony under Title 18, Section 1503, of the United States Code, carries a basic penalty of 10 to 16 months of incarceration.

A few weeks from now, in other words, at the behest of the Clinton administration, a former VA hospital physician will submit to a possible federal prison term. "Simply" for deception about oral sex in a civil case.

Why should exactly the same standard of justice, for exactly the same offense, not clearly apply to Bill Clinton himself? Why, for that matter, should congressional Republicans now be desperately beseeching Kenneth Starr not to send them a report on Clinton's potentially impeachable offenses until after the independent counsel has chased down every last lead—and thus proved something, well, more "serious" than just a sexual episode with Monica Lewinsky?

As *United States* v. *Battalino* reminds us, falsely denying such behavior under oath is a serious crime, all by itself. You'd think Congress would feel an urgent responsibility to resolve the question whether the president of the United States is a serious criminal.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Ashes to Ashcroft

by Fred Barnes

THIS IS THE BEST REPUBLICANS could muster: not a principled assault on the tobacco bill, but a clever scheme to destroy the bill by ostensibly improving it. The backhanded effort, pursued by a half-dozen conservative Republican senators, worked brilliantly—up to a point. They managed to modify the legislation in two significant ways: by funding anti-drug programs, and by earmarking dollars to eliminate the marriage penalty in federal taxation (both measures passed the Senate by narrow majorities). These were supposed to be killer amendments, ones the White House, anti-tobacco zealots, and Senate backers of the tobacco bill would find so unpalatable the bill would have to be jettisoned. But in the end, the killer amendments didn't kill. Clinton and the bill's supporters gulped, then decided to go ahead with the measure in spite of the conservative modifications.

Kevin Chadwick

John Ashcroft

There are more killer amendments on the way. But even if they succeed and the bill dies, Republicans won't be seen as profiles in courage in the tobacco debate. Start with this: The tobacco bill, sponsored by GOP senator John McCain of Arizona and crafted in consultation with the White House, is the worst major policy proposal since Clinton's health-care initiative in 1993. In fact, it's similar. It's social engineering by Washington with higher taxes, more bureaucracy, and less personal responsibility. It would provide billions to trial lawyers, sworn enemies of the GOP, to use against Republican candidates and to finance more lawsuits. Yet majority leader Trent Lott, like his predecessor Bob Dole on health care, favors compromise over opposition. And most Republicans—with the notable exception of John Ashcroft of Missouri—are afraid to take on the bill frontally, if at all. They accept the notion that the public is clamoring for tobacco legislation and will punish politicians who get in the way.

Thus GOP foes of the bill chose subterfuge. After Ashcroft's lone "no" vote failed to prevent the bill from clearing the Commerce Committee 19-1, six anti-tobacco-bill Republicans—Phil Gramm of Texas, Pete Domenici of New Mexico, Larry Craig of Idaho, Paul Coverdell of Georgia, Don Nickles of Oklahoma, and Ashcroft—conferred. They concluded the Ashcroft approach—full-throated, open opposition—wouldn't work on the Senate floor. Rather, they'd need to pretend to be interested in improving the bill, while actually aiming to drive several stakes through its heart. Their weapons would be amendments designed to be as objectionable as possible to the bill's enthusiasts.

Coverdell's amendment was the most obnoxious of all. It would beef up the anti-drug programs of the federal government, absorbing roughly one-third of the money otherwise allocated to anti-tobacco programs. There was worse from the standpoint of the bill's supporters. The Customs Service would be allowed to ignore a collective-bargaining agreement with a government employees' union and deploy its agents wherever it wanted. Worse still, Coverdell threw in school vouchers for kids in drug-infested and high-crime areas—money to go to private or religious schools. McCain pleaded with Coverdell to drop the Customs and voucher provisions. Coverdell wouldn't budge, and his killer amendment passed. Then, to his surprise, the bill's backers said they still wanted to pass it, figuring they'd have a chance to straighten it out in a Senate-House conference later this year.

The foes had another tactic: delay. Sen. Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina joked that swallowing a June bug that flies into your mouth as you're riding a motorcycle at 60 miles per hour is better than swallowing one after examining it in a glass jar for two weeks. Lott initially wanted to finish work on the bill in April, then before the Memorial Day recess. But the opponents dragged out the debate, spotlighting issues like the cost of the bill, the regressive taxes, the lavish fees for trial lawyers, the limits on liability for the tobacco companies but not for companies that manufacture, say, medical devices. The Senate Republican Policy Committee provided a fresh (and credible) estimate of how much revenue the bill would draw from the private sector: closer to $800 billion than the $500 billion projected by McCain. Delay worked, and when Democrats tried to shut off debate, they not only failed but irritated Lott.

Given all the unattractive features of the bill, might a principled attack have been more effective? Ashcroft thinks so. Among potential Republican presidential candidates, he alone uses stump speeches to trash the bill. "They may call it a tobacco bill, but only in Washington do bad choices by free people become an excuse for a massive tax hike," he declared at the South Carolina Republican convention in May. On the Senate floor, Ashcroft has challenged the assumptions of the bill. He pointed, for example, to study after study finding that smokers are not price sensitive. McCain's lame response was to cite tobacco-company documents in which officials expressed fears that higher prices would curb smoking.

Ashcroft believes the analogy with Clinton's health-care bill is still apt. In 1994, Washington was the last to learn that ClintonCare had lost favor around the country. Now, as James Bowman notes in the *New Criterion*, "the anti-tobacco frenzy seems largely confined to politics and the media, where it has taken on a life of its own." In early June, a *Washington Post* reporter questioned people in St. Louis about tobacco legislation and found mostly indifference. And voters, in a survey by Kellyanne Fitzpatrick, said drugs (39 percent), gangs (16 percent), alcohol (9 percent), reckless driving (9 percent), and sex (7 percent) are bigger sources of worry about teenagers than smoking (2 percent). Four years ago, when Republicans, plus some Democrats, discovered that the Clinton health plan had lost favor with the public, they turned on it brutally, and it died. Now it's time to do the same with the tobacco bill.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

WANG DAN'S WITNESS

by David Aikman

HE COULD EASILY PASS for one of the tens of thousands of young Chinese studying at American universities. His smooth skin, boyish looks, and modest demeanor might be those, say, of an astrophysics researcher at MIT. But though Wang Dan, 29, earnestly stresses his desire to study in the United States (modern Chinese history, no less), his future won't be that of the typical graduate student. As Bill Clinton prepares to fly to Beijing on June 25 for another symbolic embrace of China's Communist leadership, Wang Dan could teach the president much about China's democracy movement and why it is central to U.S. national interests.

Less well known in the global arena than the famous dissident Wei Jingsheng, 47, who was suddenly exiled to America in November 1997, Wang Dan is far more familiar inside China. He was catapulted to prominence in May 1989 as a student leader during the tense stand-off between the Beijing authorities and pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square. In the brief halcyon weeks before the June 4 crackdown that year, the Chinese press was nearly free, and Wang's face was seen on television and in the newspapers. His arrest weeks after the massacre was hailed by the regime as a triumph over the "hooliganism" of the student movement.

Wang's relatively mild sentence—just four years—may have reflected the regime's uncertainty about how to deal with him. Unlike other famous student leaders, such as Chai Ling and Wu'er Kai Xi, Wang had consistently sought to head off confrontation in the square. In late May, he had tried to persuade the students simply to declare victory and leave. Also, Wang was very much part of the Beijing establishment. He had been a bona fide student of history at Beijing University, where both his parents were teachers. He had not pilloried China's Communist leadership in public wallposters, as had Wei Jingsheng, a Beijing zoo electrician, during the Democracy Wall movement of 1978-79.

But if they thought they could co-opt Wang through relatively mild treatment, China's leaders miscalculated. Within weeks of being freed in 1993, Wang was writing articles on the need for democracy in China and communicating with democratic activists who had escaped to the United States. He even gave an interview to *Beijing Spring*, an anti-Communist periodical based in New York, which was published in March 1995. That was probably the last straw for the Chinese authorities. They arrested Wang two months later, held him incommunicado for 17 months, then summarily sentenced him to 11 years for "plotting to overthrow the government."

But Wang did not serve out his term. Instead, last April, he was bundled without warning onto a Detroit-bound Northwest Airlines jet—just as Wei Jingsheng had been—and sent to America "on medical parole." His release was China's way of rewarding Washington for dropping its annual resolution criticizing China at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Beijing may have gambled that, as with Wei Jingsheng, once the publicity surrounding the release died down, Wang Dan would cease to matter in China's internal political equation.

That could prove to be another miscalculation. Though he lacks Wei Jingsheng's intense bitterness towards China's Communists, Wang represents a strand of opposition to the regime with deeper roots in Chinese political thought, harking back to the liberal activists whose slogan "Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy" was popular at Beijing University in the 1920s. Wang began his high-school years as an ardent Communist, getting up at 4.30 A.M. to study Mao and receiving accolades, he says with a smile, "as a model cadre of the Communist Youth League." It was reading restricted-issue Chinese translations of essays by Soviet dissidents, notably Andrei Sakharov, Wang says, that opened his eyes: "Once I had access to a different system of thought, the contrast made me realize what a mistake I had made before." At Beijing University, he learned Lincoln's Gettysburg Address by heart for the power of its statement of democratic ideals.

Even before his second arrest, Wang was no advocate of sudden political change. "We should clear a new path and devote ourselves to building a civil society by focusing our efforts on social movements, not political movements, self-consciously maintaining a distance from political power and political organs," he told *Beijing Spring* in the 1995 interview. He went on: "I feel that society still needs idealists, people who are working to sacrifice themselves to uphold the basic ideals of freedom and democracy." Intellectuals, in particular, have a duty to speak out against abuses of power, he feels; but today, "they have given up their moral responsibility" and been co-opted by the regime for economic advantage. And maybe not just inside China: Fellow Tiananmen Square leader Chai Ling, who does not share Wang's continuing anguish over the Tiananmen deaths, is currently completing her MBA at Harvard.

In accordance with his emphasis on gradually readying society for democracy, Wang welcomes U.S. trade with China and a certain crass consumerism by ordinary Chinese. "In a consumer society, people at least care about *something*," he points out, contrasting this with the hyper-politicized China of the 1950s and '60s, when children denounced their parents for deviating from the party line. What matters to Wang is that China's intelligentsia recover the democratic idealism that inspired it early in the century—and without which, he believes, China could develop into a dangerous rogue state.

Much as he regrets the hundreds of deaths at Tiananmen Square nine years ago, Wang believes that the crackdown changed China forever. "Before Tiananmen, most Chinese had a very vague idea about democracy," he says. "But after 1989, most of the people had a good idea what it was. The fact that the government used military violence to crush the democrats led to the complete abandonment of any illusions about the government."

Like almost all Chinese intellectuals and democratic activists in the past 100 years, Wang is fascinated by America's democratic tradition. He mentions the Mayflower Compact of 1620 and the role of religious freedom in fostering this country's democratic culture. Now enjoying the liberty to read and converse as widely as he wishes, he is immersed in the practice as well as the philosophy of freedom. His ambition, he says, is to be president of Beijing University. But first he is investing his energies in the work of making China free.

***David Aikman, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, covered the Tiananmen Square massacre for* Time.**

A Fish Called Darwin

by Christopher Caldwell

THE FISH IS, along with the superimposed *chi* and *rho*, one of the very oldest symbols of Christianity. As handed down in Christian iconography, it looks like a football drawn with two arcs—but sloppily, so that the two lines meet at one end and cross at the other. Most early Christians having been Greek-speakers, between the two arcs is written ΙΧΘΥΣ—Greek for "fish," and an acronym for "Jesus Christ the Son of God [Is] Savior." It invokes the miracle of loaves and fishes and Jesus' exhortation to his disciples to become "fishers of men." It was scratched in the Roman catacombs and daubed on walls in Pompeii and Herculaneum, and it is mentioned in the writings of the Carthaginian church father Tertullian. It still appears on gonfalons and stoups and salvers and various other accouterments of Christian worship.

And—fatefully—on the backs of cars. For the past decade, five-inch-long chrome trunk plaques of the fish symbol have sold like hotcakes, at four bucks apiece. Harbor House Gifts of Fullerton, Calif., the maker of the fish, has made hundreds of thousands of them. Such success has led, predictably, to a backlash. In 1990, a Hollywood special-effects designer named Chris Gilman began producing a bumper plaque of his own design that replaces ΙΧΘΥΣ with "Darwin" and gives the fish legs, as if to show it walking out of the shallows of amphibiana onto the solid ground of the mammal kingdom. Gilman sold his gag to Evolution Design of Karnes City, Texas, which is making a fortune off them. The company has sold tens of thousands of the Darwin gadgets, primarily in the South and West.

The bumper plaques have occasioned a battle over religious tolerance, free speech, and political correctness that has been playing out for years now—through pulpits, talk shows, op-ed columns, and especially letters to the editor. A writer in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* worries that the Christian fish is seen as "rubbing noses in the fact that 'I'm this and you're not.'" A *Dallas Morning News* writer says people sport the Darwin fish "just to infuriate Christians."

Both have a point. Displaying the ΙΧΘΥΣ fish *is* a gesture that many conservative Christians would recognize as "identity politics" if someone else were doing it—at worst a kind of puffed-up pride, and at best a lighthearted bit of crowing, along the lines of "Thank God I'm Irish" or "You Bet Your Dupa I'm Polish." But the Darwin fish is something altogether nastier. It's a statement that, were it directed towards anyone besides Christians, would be condemned as bigotry by most of those who display it.

Because once it is acknowledged that we are talking about identity politics, we are talking about something on which—in this country at least—a clear-cut decorum has developed. Namely: It's acceptable to

assert identity and abhorrent to attack it. A plaque with "Shalom" written inside a Star of David would hardly attract notice; a plaque with "Usury" written inside the same symbol would be an outrage. A bumper sticker with "Pride" written in the gay-rights rainbow colors would be anodyne; a bumper sticker with "AIDS" written in the same color scheme would be a hate crime. Where "Black Is Beautiful" might start a conversation, "Black Is Horrible" could lose you some teeth. This isn't a baffling custom, and the Darwin-fish people ought to understand it—safe to say they've had more to do with promulgating it over the years than their ΙΧΘΥΣ-proclaiming brethren.

Discontent with the Darwin plaque is not just humorless bluenosery—though presumably the Darwin people would say they're purveying a species of humor, not hatred. In ethnic humor, it's hard to tell pomposity-deflating kidding from boiling malice—which is why, in the last decade, this once-thriving vein of wit has been all but banished from the public square. Except as regards Christians.

The Darwin people and their sympathizers would insist that they're lampooning not a holy symbol but a piece of propaganda. "The Darwin fish folk are rebutting creationist teachings," writes the AP's Gary D. Robertson. Robertson takes aim at those who believe in the literal meaning of the Bible—that God created the universe in seven days, and that Darwin's theory of evolution is therefore impossible—and who want to revamp school systems across the country to reflect their teachings. Shantana Croom of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* also bills the bumper-sticker wars as a controversy between rationalists and Bible-thumpers. The *Economist*, writing on the issue in 1996, got Robert Simonds of the National Association of Christian Educators and Citizens for Excellence in Education—a creationist group—to defend the fish, as if Christians and creationists and deniers of evolution were all synonymous.

There are two ways to look at this conflation of Christianity and creationism. First, assume it's inaccurate—which it is. The creationist Simonds, who can be expected to make a generous estimate, claims to represent only 350,000 parents. That's 0.1 percent of the country—a group that's barely enough to account for all the fish plaques in circulation and that looks more like a minority in need of protection than a threat to pluralism. North Carolina State rhetorician Paul Celmer is right to note, "Darwinists are mocking what they think is the 'Christian' view of the origin of man and the Universe (even though there are probably as many Christian interpretations of Genesis as there are denominations of Christianity)."

But even if the one-to-one identification of Christians and creationists were accurate—and the Darwin fish were a sincere attack on those who reject Darwin and all his works—it is hard to think of another religious belief that could be held up to the same scorn in today's cultural climate. Don't hold your breath waiting for a bumper sticker saying "Eat a Cow" in Hindi.

You'll never see one. And the reason is that, for all our complaints about its death, civility is something we have a lot more of than we think, particularly on matters of ethnic and religious identity. Whether one praises it as courtesy or derides it as political correctness, there can be no doubt that it has been elevated to the status of a social compact, one that is observed punctiliously and enforced ruthlessly—with one exception. The source of Christians' rising frustration is not hard to see. They are bound by a regnant civility that has no hold on those who wish them ill.

Christopher Caldwell is senior writer at **THE WEEKLY STANDARD.**

I.F. STONE: RED AND DEAD

by Robert D. Novak

THIS IS THE NINTH ANNIVERSARY of I.F. Stone's death. When he died of a heart attack in a Boston hospital on June 18, 1989, he rated a top-of-the-page *New York Times* obituary that called him "a pugnacious advocate of civil liberties, peace and truth" and asserted that his "integrity" was acknowledged even by "detractors." On ABC television, Peter Jennings praised Stone's credo: "To write the truth, to defend the weak against the strong, to fight for justice." A eulogy by the civil libertarian Nat Hentoff described him as a "lonely pamphleteer" prying loose the truth in *I.F. Stone's Weekly* (1953-68) and *I.F. Stone's Bi-weekly* (1969-71).

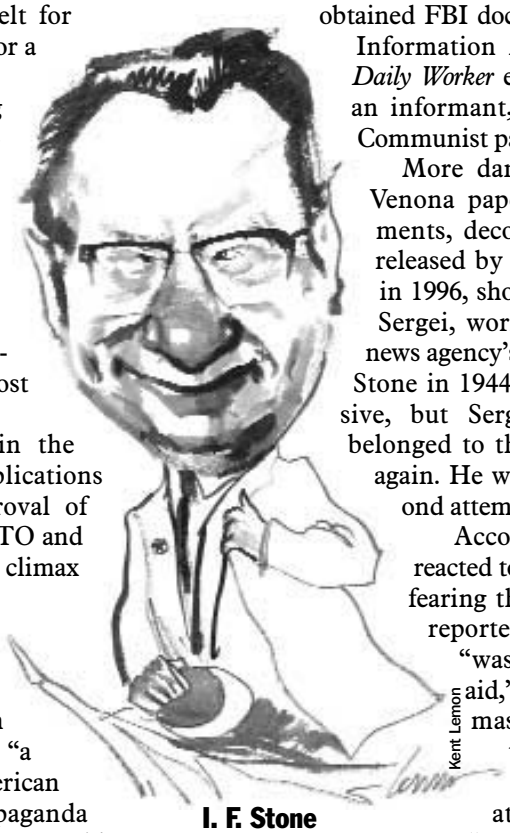
From the days when I covered Congress in the late '50s and early '60s, I remember Izzy as a solitary figure prowling Capitol Hill, rumpled, loaded down with documents, and flashing a bemused smile. He was

much admired as a symbol of incorruptibility. In fact, looking back at Stone's lifetime work, one sees a pattern emerge.

He was born Isidor Feinstein, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, in Philadelphia in 1907. He dropped out of the University of Pennsylvania his junior year to devote full time to duties as a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. While working for the *Philadelphia Record* in 1933, he wrote articles for *Modern Monthly* under the pseudonym "Abelard Stone" that assailed Franklin D. Roosevelt for moving toward fascism and called for a "Soviet America."

In the 1930s, Stone—writing editorials for the *New York Post*—applauded Stalin's infamous show-trials. "Stone was lyrical in his praise of the Soviet government," writes Dr. Kenneth J. Campbell in *Moscow's Words, Western Voices*, "claiming that Communism was transforming Europe's most backward nation 'into the most advanced.'"

Stone's subsequent writings in the *Nation* and other left-wing publications expressed nearly unrelieved approval of Soviet policy and opposition to NATO and other anti-Kremlin initiatives. The climax came with the publication in 1952 of Stone's book *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, which claims that the United States and South Korea provoked the North Korean invasion in 1950. Campbell calls it "a masterpiece of innuendo, anti-American rhetoric, repetition of Soviet propaganda themes and a dearth of evidence to support his theses."


Kent Lemon

I. F. Stone

From its beginning in 1953, *I.F. Stone's Weekly* was the launching pad for missiles aimed at U.S. foreign policy—especially when it collided with Moscow's. So, to Stone, Nikita Khrushchev, not John F. Kennedy, was the hero of the 1962 missile crisis. Needless to say, Stone attacked the U.S. intervention in Vietnam early and often.

That Izzy Stone was far out on the left (a fact largely omitted from the fawning obituaries) began to take on a sinister cast four years after his death.

Oleg Kalugin, a former KGB major general stationed in Washington, in a 1992 interview with the *London Independent,* said: "We had an agent—a well-known American journalist—with a good reputation who severed his ties with us after 1956 [Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin]. I myself convinced him to resume them. But in 1968, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia . . . he said he would never again take any money from us." Gen. Kalugin later told Soviet intelligence expert Herbert Romerstein and Reed Irvine of Accuracy in Media that the agent was I.F. Stone.

Under intense fire from the mainstream media, Kalugin backed away from this identification—saying Stone was only "a fellow traveler." But other information started to come out. In 1993, Accuracy in Media obtained FBI documents under the Freedom of Information Act that showed that former *Daily Worker* editor John Gates, operating as an informant, identified Stone as a covert Communist party member in the 1930s.

More damaging is evidence from the Venona papers. These intercepted documents, decoded by U.S. intelligence and released by the National Security Agency in 1996, show that NKVD agent Vladimir Sergei, working under cover of the Tass news agency's Washington bureau, recruited Stone in 1944. Stone was at first unresponsive, but Sergei learned that Stone had belonged to the party in the '30s and tried again. He was more successful on the second attempt.

According to Sergei, Stone had reacted to the first approach "negatively, fearing the consequences." Now, it was reported back to Moscow that Stone "was not refusing his [Sergei's] aid," while urging the Russian spymaster to "consider that he had three small children and did not want to attract [the FBI's] attention." Stone expressed his "unwillingness to spoil his career," Sergei reported.

Stone also asserted to Sergei that he earned as much as $1,500 a month through his newsletter (about $150,000 a year in 1998 money), but that "he would not be averse to having a supplementary income." Sergei's cable dealt with "establishment of a business contact" with Stone, who was given the code name BLIN ("pancake" in Russian).

No wonder the obituary writers appeared to know nothing of this: Hardly a word has appeared in the mainstream press about Stone's Communist connections. And the *Nation* names its annual prize for "excellence in student journalism" the I.F. Stone Award. Ignoring the past, however, does not expunge it.

Robert D. Novak is a syndicated columnist.

Rich Republicans

Living the Conservative Dream?

By David Brooks

Shallow people are greedy for money, but profound people are greedy for real estate. The shallow person wants fast cars and glitz, but anyone with a broader worldview longs for the kind of home they have in Winnetka, Ill. The million-dollar houses stretch for mile upon mile through the North Shore suburbs of Chicago. Some are Tudor Revival, others are Prairie School or Queen Anne, but they are all massive and immaculate. There are no weeds in Winnetka. Each house is surrounded by a huge spread of flawless lawn and masterfully landscaped grounds, with hedges so neatly sculpted they look like they're made of green marble. Even the garages are spotless inside, with baby joggers hanging neatly from pegs, the Little Tykes kiddie cars arrayed in perfect rows, and the floors swept and mopped. The renovators appear inside the house every seven years or so like cicadas and install a new refrigerator with even deeper sub-zero capability, a new master-bedroom suite bigger than some zip codes, and maybe new cherry paneling in the rotunda. From the time the Winnetkans wake up in the morning and first set foot on their preheated bathroom floor, to the waning moments of the evening, when they hit the remote to turn off the gas fireplace, they are reminded that life is good, America is just, and nothing should ever change. They claim that fantastic real estate does not guarantee them family happiness, ward off evil, or prevent death, but on the face of the evidence, I'm afraid I find that impossible to believe. Real estate matters; ye shall judge them by their deeds.

I've come to Winnetka to investigate the mystery of the Rich Republicans. The mystery is that, at least on national and ideological issues, they are becoming less and less Republican. The *National Journal* recently reported that the Democratic vote in America's richest 261 towns has risen in every presidential contest over the past two decades. The Democrats won 25 percent of the rich vote in 1980 and 41 percent in 1996. In this last election, Bill Clinton carried 13 of the 17 richest congressional districts in the country. And Winnetka embodies the trend. In 1960, Richard Nixon beat John F. Kennedy in New Trier Township—which encompasses Winnetka and several similar North Shore suburbs—by 71 percent to 29 percent. In 1996, on the other hand, Bill Clinton edged out Robert Dole in New Trier; and in the Senate race, New Trier voters decisively preferred the Democratic candidate, Dick Durbin, to the conservative Republican, Al Salvi.

Winnetka still has a Republican congressman, John Porter, but you wouldn't exactly call him a Gingrich or a Lott or even a Dole Republican. His voting record makes him an extremist in the pursuit of moderation: He scores about a 50 percent in the liberal/conservative vote ratings year after year. He opposed more of the items in the Contract With America than any other Republican but one. He tends to support spending cuts but oppose Republican tax cuts. He enthusiastically backs federal funding for the arts, gun control, and environmental initiatives (he's been endorsed by the Sierra Club). He's also pro-choice, rejecting the gag rule that would have banned abortion counseling at federally funded clinics.

When you ask Winnetkans why they are disenchanted with the Republican party, they sometimes go an entire six or seven seconds before they mention the religious Right. To be elected in Winnetka you have to demonstrate you are on the correct side of the cultural divide that splits the GOP between the sane moderates and the Bible-thumping crazies. The most important symbolic issues in this regard are abortion and gun control. In 1996, Democrat Jeff Schoenberg and Republican Tina Escamilla were running neck and neck in a race for state representative. But just before Election Day, Schoenberg sent out a mailing accusing Escamilla of accepting money from the conservative United Republican Fund and therefore not being as fervently pro-choice and pro-gun control as she claimed she was. Escamilla responded by calling Schoenberg's charges "McCarthyite," but the letter may have had an effect. Escamilla lost.

Basically, Rich Republicans feel that the problem with their party is that it doesn't have a sufficiently tough membership committee. The GOP was

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trundling along pretty well when suddenly all these people with Democratic parents started pouring out of their oversized churches and think tanks, calling themselves Republicans and screaming for revolution. (Since when does Gary Bauer count as a Republican anyway?) Moderate Republicans may not be as loud as these conservatives—there are no moderate Republican magazines or moderate Republican pundits (at least since Robert Novak and George Gilder went right). But at least they are normal human beings. The country is at peace, the economy is booming, crime rates are dropping, and there is an ever-growing number of excellent family-vacation destinations. But instead of going out and enjoying life, the rabid conservatives treat happiness like it's some sort of calamity. They storm around the country warning about the decline of civilization, gnashing their teeth because Bill Clinton hasn't yet been flayed and quartered, and going into ballistic rages because some polluter somewhere might be over-regulated.

From the perspective of the Rich Republicans, the conservatives are addicted to strife. Right-wingers screech out an endless stream of radical and loopy ideas—destroy the IRS, scrap the tax code, voucherize the schools—though in reality they have no practical knowledge of anything. They rant and rave on *Crossfire*. They go hunting through the backwoods of academia looking for seminars to be outraged by. They seem to feel best about themselves when they are antagonizing others, challenging whatever is said, being negative about everything, hating every movie, feeling superior to every trend. They're so caught up in their sense of themselves as countercultural they even wind up in the lap of the tobacco companies. No wonder they drive away voters.

From the perspective of the conservatives, on the other hand, Rich Republicans get their opinions the way they get their dress shoes: They just go to Saks Fifth Avenue and pick up whatever is fashionable this season. If the *New York Times* tells them that soft money is hurting democracy, they're for whatever might go by the name of campaign-finance reform. If their trophy wives tell them that being pro-choice carries more prestige with the ladies on the exercycles, then they write a check to Planned Parenthood. This hunger for political status, conservatives believe, turns the Rich Republicans into perpetual dupes. If a fashionable play attacks rich suburbanites, they flock to it. If a politician comes up with a noble-sounding scheme to redistribute their wealth, they support it. If a university wants to hire another Queer Theorist, they endow a chair. They couldn't see a hidden agenda if it hit them in the nose. And they've never met a foe they didn't want to appease. Whether it's Communists in Russia and China or extortion-practicing activists here at home, moderates think the solution to every dispute is to give money and make nice. Rich Republicans are, in the view of right-wingers, narrow, gutless, unimaginative, materialistic, selfish, and bland. Conservatives say they admire the stolid bourgeois values, but when they actually see them embodied by Rich Republicans, conservatives find them appalling.

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This cultural divide within the GOP is probably unbridgeable, but it is deeply revealing about the mindset of today's rich, and about the character of today's conservatism. For example, when you look at the way the two sides in this dispute actually live, you find that the "moderates" often have more conservative lifestyles than the so-called conservatives. Winnetka is an extraordinarily traditional town. The men go off to Chicago every morning in their white shirts and gray suits on the 7:14 commuter train. The women, by and large, stay home.

In 1960, the local Republican party ran an ad just before Election Day that included the instruction, "Ladies, please reserve voting time from 6-9 A.M. for the wage earner." You couldn't get away with an ad like that today; the consciousness of Republican

women has been transformed. But when it comes to the way people actually live, little has changed. On weekdays, Winnetka is a female-dominated place. The stores, cafés, and restaurants are filled with women and their kids, with a sprinkling of male retirees. There are more realtors than people on the North Shore, but every storefront that isn't a real-estate agency seems to be a children's clothing store; there's even a store that sells hiking gear for toddlers. And if

Winnetka Historical Museum

This is where they live: Winnetka, Ill., 1990.

you walk through the residential neighborhoods, every block or so you come across a young mother looking a little bored as her toddler crouches to inspect a pebble. We were always taught that it was this sort of solitude and ennui that leads to feminism. But I saw few nannies here. It seems that in Winnetka, where these mostly college-educated women can afford to—the majority opt to stay home.

The elementary schools in Winnetka send most of their kids home for lunch. There was a move recently on the part of the working parents to have lunch facilities put into the schools. But it went nowhere, so some kids brown-bag it, while the others head for Mom's kitchen. One afternoon, I was walking south from Winnetka into the neighboring town of Kenilworth when I came across a street that had 40 or 50 Range Rover-type vehicles idling along both curbs. I wondered what a bunch of vehicles designed for places that don't have roads were doing in a place that doesn't even have weeds. But then kids started pouring out of the Joseph Sears Elementary School, and mothers popped out of the SUVs in great clusters (you can fit six kibbitzing mothers in one Chevy Suburban). For a few minutes it was all happy pandemonium as the kids, carrying their musical instruments, baseball gloves, and collages, found their moms, bounding about with their extraordinarily high cheekbones, thin hips, and running shoes—and after a little dance of greetings and "See what I made?," they all tumbled back into their Range Rovers to go home and snack in their Corian-countered kitchens and frolic on their backyard playsets. If this isn't the sort of scene Phyllis Schlafly dreams about when she sleeps at night, I don't know what is.

Winnetkans spend an extraordinary amount of time thinking and talking about their schools. The homeowners have paid a $100,000 to $150,000 premium to get into this school district, and they are getting their money's worth. The median Winnetka 7th grader scores near the 90th percentile on state and national tests. This year, New Trier High School is sending 8 kids to Stanford, 7 to Johns Hopkins, 10 to Northwestern, 24 to Michigan, and 20 to the Ivy League, out of a graduating class of 765. The high school is growing out of its facilities, and there is a local debate about whether to replace it with one large campus or two. The letters-to-the-editor columns are stuffed with proposals, and the packed town meetings are evidence of the townsfolk's passionate attachment to their public-education system. Some of the parents have heard, however, that there are some barbaric Republican radicals in Washington who are talking about school choice and vouchers that would endanger the institution that serves them so well.

Every year an organization called the Winnetka Caucus sends out questionnaires to poll the residents on local issues. Reading through the responses for the past few decades, you are struck by how hawklike Winnetkans are when it comes to preserving local order. They are not big spenders: In 1994, 71 percent of the respondents said they were against tax increases, and 64 percent said they'd rather see the library close one day a week than raise property taxes. But they are tough proponents of zoning. Year after year, the residents call for tighter zoning regulations and stricter enforcement of the current ones. They want to regulate noise, fast food, bars, tree-cutting, multi-family dwellings, store sizes, house additions, and "teardowns" (someone buys a small house and then tears it down to put up a massive home that takes up the entire lot). We're often told that, since the 1960s, individual choice has emerged as the dominant value in American society, but in Winnetka the desire for order often takes precedence, along with that most conservative of values, the urge to make the future more like the past.

"The watchword in Winnetka, like that of the

whole North Shore, might be 'preservation,'" reads the first sentence of the 1921 report of the Winnetka Planning Commission. That's at least as true today as it was then, and one might even say that preservation has by now developed into an entire political philosophy. There is a tremendous attachment to the past here. You can buy Winnetka coloring books that introduce children to local history and architectural styles. There is an active historical society, which publishes guides to local homes and their histories. There are strict regulations to ensure that new construction hews to the patterns of the past. And, one suspects, there is even stricter social pressure to make sure that Winnetka traditions are maintained.

All of this means that Winnetka has retained its archaic formality. Most of the homes were built during the first quarter of the century, when a dignified reticence was prized by the upper class, and the houses have kept that spirit even in our more casual age. There are almost none of those cutesy suburban flags that hang above the doorways in many suburbs. There are almost no bumper stickers on the cars, or loose toys or decorations scattered about the lawns. For anybody used to the hodgepodge variety of city life, the atmosphere can be a little intimidating. A few years ago the writer Joseph Epstein took his friend Edward Shils up from Chicago for dinner at the WASPy Winnetka Grill. Shils looked around and said, "I have felt more at home in Africa and India than I do in this restaurant." At the end of their meal, Shils commented, "Thank you for this lovely dinner. And thank you for the intellectual profit of it. Until this evening, Christendom was merely a concept for me."

We talk about property rights a lot these days, but we don't often dwell on how possessing property—great gobs of it—influences a person's worldview. In the 18th and 19th centuries, when the franchise was being extended beyond the propertied classes, the subject was more on people's minds. Edmund Burke called the owners of great property the "ballast in the vessel of the commonwealth." The owners of large properties, the theory went, have a stake in the long-term health of the country, since they hope to pass their lands down through the generations. They are more interested in preserving the wonderfulness of the present than in taking a flier on the future. Therefore, they are moved not so much by abstract notions or social theories as by the need to preserve tangible objects and institutions. (George Bush captured a remnant of this ethos when he expressed his discomfort with the "vision thing.") In short, the large property owners are conservative in the old-fashioned sense of the word, treasuring stability more than change, concrete possessions more than abstract notions.

The American conservative movement has moved a long way from this original conservatism. We now have a weird situation in which it's the Republican moderates who want to preserve the status quo and the people we call conservative who are hungry for

change. These days, movement conservatives rail against elites; they don't work up justifications for them. They come to politics with ambitious agendas, not strategies for preserving the status quo. They tend to value creative destruction and entrepreneurial dynamism more than social stability. They go in for intellectual combat and confrontation, not compromise and Bismarckian tactical retreat. It used to be, if you hated rich people, you became a liberal, but now you can find resentment of the sluggish rich on the right at least as much as on the left. That leaves the Winnetkans in the position of affluent orphans: Newt Gingrich doesn't speak for them, and neither does Dick Armey or Trent Lott. Not that anybody's feeling too sorry for them or anything, but where do they go for leadership?

The clearest difference between the preservationism of the Rich Republicans and the activist conservatism of the modern American Right is illuminated in the two sides' approach to the culture war. The Right wants to fight. It wants to confront radical feminism, multiculturalism, identity politics, "Piss Christ," and all the rest. The Rich Republicans, on the other hand don't fight, they co-opt.

Once, 70 or 100 years ago when the homes in Winnetka were built, the American upper classes did have a fighting faith. They saw themselves as the American elite, obligated to serve as the guardians of America's ideology, the instructors to the masses in matters of etiquette and behavior, the leaders and standard-setters in cultural, economic, and political affairs. In those days the upper classes had an ideology inherited from the European elites. They were conscious of their distinct social role (Michael Knox Beran calls that period the "risorgimento of the well-to-do"). But over the past many decades, that aristocratic ethos, that sense of noblesse oblige, has been pounded into dust. Thorstein Veblen ridiculed the rich. A hundred novelists attacked them. A thousand movies made them villains. Just consider the recent films set on Chicago's North Shore—*Risky Business*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Home Alone*, *Ordinary People*, *The Breakfast Club*. If there is one constant in all those movies, it is that the adults in affluent suburbs are smug, stupid, cold, and selfish. There is no ideal personality type that rich people are supposed to aspire to these days, except to pretend that they're not rich or at least don't care about money.

Where that is the prevailing cultural climate, of course, people don't go around launching cultural counteroffensives. Compared with the right-wingers, who are always quick to detect an assault on their values, the Rich Republicans seem to have developed a bland obliviousness to cultural attack. They lack ideological antennae. At the World Financial Center in New York, for example, there is a sculpture that shows greedy capitalists in top hats worshiping money, spanking one another, and trampling people into the dirt. And this work is paid for by the rent collected from Merrill Lynch, American Express, Dow Jones, and Oppenheimer Securities. Don't the corporate bigwigs notice that they are paying for art that depicts them as devils?

Similarly, in Winnetka one is constantly confronted by odd juxtapositions, mingling bourgeois traditionalism with anti-bourgeois radicalism. The newsletter of the Women's Exchange features pictures of handsome suburban matrons and the organization's prim slogan, "Self, Skills, Service." But then if you look at the topics for the discussion groups, you come across "The Creation of a Feminist Consciousness" and "The Creation of the Patriarchy." And to start things off, the officers have included an introductory quotation from a Women's Studies professor at Duke: "We stand at the beginning of a new epoch in the history of humankind's thought, as we recognize that sex is irrelevant to thought, that gender is a social construct . . ." Can it really be possible that those women idling outside the Joseph Sears Elementary School in their Chevy Suburbans are chatting about gender as a social construct? It's as if their lifestyles were fashioned by *Architectural Digest* but their cultural attitudes were crafted by the *Nation*.

The Winnetkans seem to sense that the way to preserve their beloved community is not to fight hostile ideas, but simply to absorb them and render them anodyne. Many of the accouterments of the 1960s, which were invented as an alternative to suburban life, have now been assimilated by the suburbanites and sit cheek by jowl with the traditional *objets* they were meant to repudiate. If you're looking to fill your ample living room in Winnetka, for example, you can go to the old-fashioned stores with names like Knightsbridge to get traditional English-style furniture, paintings of fox hunts, and clunky silver tea services. Or you can rebel against the furniture of the colonialists and ally yourself with the colonial victims. You can go to stores like Cassella Interiors that sell African living-room chairs, masks, and wall totems—Frantz Fanon decor for the haute bourgeoisie. Up the road, a store called Material Possessions sells a Moroccan birdhouse for $295 for your multicultural mantelpiece, and Zig and Tig sells oversized Indian furniture for those who favor the funky château look. The avant-

garde used to produce terrorists to blow up the capitalist overlords. Now on the North Shore, the corporate masters can get their makeover at the Avant Garde Hair Salon. All that is hostile can be reconciled by the balm of consumerism.

Conservatives would say that you can't go on absorbing radical feminism or multiculturalism or New Left egalitarianism for too long without pretty soon seeing your own values co-opted out of existence. You become so diverse, non-judgmental, and relativistic that you lose your moral bearings. Conservatives argue that the community institutions that Winnetkans enjoy are actually based on certain principles about the different roles of men and women, about the structure of families, and about the application of religious notions to daily life. If you don't defend those principles, but instead blithely dabble in the fashionable ideas of tenured radicals, then your suburban stability will eventually topple. Your kids will grow up without moral instruction and will flounder. Your family and community life will decay.

It's not really possible to say who wins the argument between the conservatives and the moderates, because the debate is rather one-sided. The conservatives make their case, they write their devastating essays, but the Rich Republicans never respond. They just go on living their lives. And truth be told, if you had to bet on which branch of the GOP will have more influence on the nation in the coming few years, you would not put your money on the articulate right-wingers. Because as the country gets richer, more people start thinking and behaving like the Rich Republicans in Winnetka. Affluence produces preservationists. Affluence produces environmentalists. Affluence produces moderates who detest the heat and strife of a culture war and like instead the diverse pleasures of multicultural commercialism. There are now 8.3 million American households with incomes over $100,000. From 1992 to 1997, federal tax revenues rose at an annual rate of 7.6 percent. Consumer confidence is at a record high. This spreading affluence is a recipe for a nation of Winnetkas, or at least the temporary triumph of Winnetkan cultural hegemony. The North Shore suburbs represent only the uppermost strata of the American income distribution, but if the current political mood signifies anything, it is that the large mass of suburban middle-class Americans for the time being share the propertied and satisfied outlook of the burghers of Winnetka, Wilmette, and Lake Forest.

It used to be liberals who railed against the complacency of the American electorate, but now it's conservatives who long to see a little more mass outrage.

It used to be liberals who based their politics on abstract notions more than concrete realities, but now it's conservatives who like to emphasize that ideas have consequences. It used to be liberal intellectuals who longed for the drama and turmoil that put them center stage, but now the habits of the New Class, both good and bad, have migrated rightward. And when movement conservatives rail against the Republican middle, they are actually condemning people who lead conservative lives and embody the conservative temperament. The Rich Republicans may not always sparkle with idealism or intellectual rigor, but at least they have their feet planted on the ground—as you would too if your particular ground had been so meticulously aerated, weeded, de-thatched, fertilized, and mown. ♦

Thinking the Unthinkable . . . Again

By Charles Krauthammer

One of the least lamented casualties of the Soviet Union's demise was the arcane specialty of nuclear doctrine. Those who had wasted their youth studying the ins and outs of nuclear deterrence—the peculiar logic of nuclear war and the kinds of policies and weapons that might make it more or less likely—went the way of the blacksmith in the age of Henry Ford. Their skill was like conversational Latin: Its time had come and gone.

Or so it seemed. Now, thanks to India and Pakistan, deterrence theory is back. And it is needed. Every newspaper and commentator in the country is saying gravely that now that India and Pakistan have acquired nuclear weapons, the subcontinent is an area of great instability. What exactly does that mean?

After all, India and Pakistan have been at each other's throats for 50 years. They fought three wars. They routinely exchange rifle and artillery fire in Kashmir. Yes, the situation is more dangerous today. The stakes are obviously higher. Any war could be fought not just with conventional weapons but nuclear ones. But that does not necessarily mean that the subcontinent is more unstable.

Indeed, nuclear weapons can actually be stabilizing. The United States and the Soviet Union might well have gone to war at some point in the last 50 years had the specter of nuclear annihilation not hung over both countries. In the same way, India and Pakistan might be *less* likely to go to war if that means not just the loss of a few soldiers on the frontier, but the possible annihilation of one's major cities. This is true, however, only over the long run. In the short run, the nukes *are* destabilizing—but not for the reasons being advanced in the papers.

The subcontinent in the near term will be an area of great instability not just because, obviously, Pakistan and India are new at the nuclear game and thus will be prone to miscalculation, but because *each side has so few nuclear weapons*. This sounds odd. It is odd. But it reflects the central paradox of deterrence theory: Generally speaking, the more nukes the better. There is safety in numbers.

Now, conventional wisdom holds that the way to nuclear safety is to reduce numbers. That was the fuel for the frenzied nuclear disarmament movements of the early '80s and for the American obsession with arms control today. But conventional wisdom is wrong. When the numbers get very low, the nuclear balance becomes unstable.

Consider India and Pakistan. At the moment, each has a very small number of nuclear weapons and an equally small number of missiles on which those weapons might be delivered. In a time of crisis—say, fighting breaks out over Kashmir—this presents each side with the opportunity to destroy the other's entire nuclear arsenal in one fell swoop at the beginning of the conflict. Small numbers make for a small target. And a small target is a tempting target. It places a premium on preemption. It rewards striking first.

Conversely, each side fears that if it does *not* strike first, its nuclear arsenal could be wiped out in a first

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strike, leaving it naked to nuclear blackmail or to further nuclear attack. Because the side that destroys the other side's arsenal will have some of its nukes left over to intimidate the other's population. That intimidation could be enough to tip the scales of any war or even to induce the aggressed-against to a quick surrender. Very low numbers thus encourage a "use it or lose it" mentality. They promote the single most important contributor to nuclear instability: the temptation to preemption.

Consider the U.S.-Soviet example. Apart from the few days of the Cuban missile crisis, the most unstable period was the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the United States and the Soviet Union were just developing their nuclear arsenals. There was even talk in Washington in the early '50s of destroying the Soviet arsenal before it could be developed. That kind of talk disappeared when the Soviets had built enough rockets, airplanes, and subs—enough redundancy—to make a first strike futile.

The essence of nuclear stability is the existence on both sides of a retaliatory or "second strike" capacity. If the other guy has such a capacity, it is crazy to launch a preemptive nuclear attack. No matter how massive or how accurate it is, it cannot succeed in wiping out all of his weapons. There would be enough left over for him to retaliate massively. A first strike would thus bring on the incineration of your own homeland. Result? You don't attack first. Nobody attacks first. And if nobody attacks first, there can be no nuclear war. QED.

INCONVENIENTLY FOR THE DOE-EYED ARMS CONTROLLERS, NUCLEAR STABILITY TENDS TO BE ESTABLISHED AT HIGH LEVELS OF WEAPONRY.

That is how nuclear stability is established. Inconveniently for the doe-eyed arms controllers, this tends to happen at high levels of weaponry. More precisely, it is not the numbers that are decisive, but how they are distributed and how invulnerable they are to preemption. Thus the most stabilizing factor in the nuclear equation between the United States and the Soviet Union was the submarine forces. Their nuclear weapons could never be found with any accuracy by the enemy. They could thus never be preemptively destroyed. If either side were foolish enough to attack the other, there would always be the submarines to bring Armageddon on the aggressor. Huge, dispersed, mobile, and hardened arsenals of land-based and airborne nukes had the same stabilizing effect.

This explains why the nuclear-freeze hysteria of the early '80s was so pointless. It promoted not a panacea, not even a palliative, but a nullity. It also explains why the nuclear arms reduction agreements that so mesmerize the Clinton administration today are largely irrelevant. Yes, they are worth pursuing for their marginal economic savings and for reducing the stock of stuff that, if poorly tended, might be prone to accident or theft. These treaties do practically nothing, however, to enhance strategic stability.

Even worse is the movement today, led by such luminaries as Gen. Lee Butler, former head of the U.S. Strategic Air Command, to bring about (through gradual arms reduction) the total denuclearization of the United States. This idea, trumpeted for its boldness, is simply crazy.

Why? Because the nuclear genie is out of the bottle. There is no way to undo the *knowledge* of how to make the weapons. Many regimes can potentially make them. The only problem is acquiring the materials and the brains to assemble the devices. As Saddam has shown, a determined tyrant can do this under even the most stringent inspection regime. Remember: *Before* the Gulf War, Saddam was a card-carrying, paid-up, cooperating member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. He was regularly inspected by the International Atomic Energy Agency. And under the nose of that agency, he built not one but two clandestine nuclear programs. Were the United States to engage in the folly of total denuclearization, it would surely wake up one day looking down the barrel of some nuclear-armed bad actor—Iraq or North Korea or Iran or who knows what other rogue state of the future. Never in history would a Great Power have voluntarily put itself at such pointless risk.

After all, the ultimate instability—and vulnerability—occurs when one side has nukes and the other doesn't. Imagine what the world would have been like in the late 1940s if Stalin had acquired the bomb before we did. (Even worse, imagine if Hitler had.) Stalin might not have used the bomb. But the very fact that he *could* might have intimidated us into surrendering large parts of Europe, or even more.

The world was lucky that the first nuclear power was as benign a nation as the United States. It allowed us to go through the birth of the nuclear era in the most stable way: unilateral possession by a nonaggressive power. We used the bomb to end a war, not to start—or win by threat—new ones. Once the Soviets acquired theirs, however, a period of severe nuclear instability began.

That is where the India-Pakistan balance is now—about where we were in 1950. And it is U.S. policy today to try to rush in and get both sides to forswear the nukes: no further testing, no weaponization. This would be very nice. It is also very unlikely.

Indeed, it is likely that even if both sides agree, one side or the other will cheat. And it is certain that even if neither side does in fact cheat, both sides will surely suspect each other of doing just that. And when you suspect the other side of cheating, you suspect that it may have a first-strike capacity—which would spur you to cheat as well and develop a clandestine countervailing arsenal. Indeed, that is precisely what has happened between India and Pakistan—competing clandestine nuclear programs—to bring us to the current crisis.

The period of nuclear instability on the subcontinent is beginning. And paradoxically, the situation will only begin to stabilize when both countries have deployed enough nukes—spread out in enough areas—that neither side can be sure of a successful first strike. It sounds perverse to say it, but the fact is, now that the race is on, nuclear stability will only come to the Indian subcontinent when the respective nuclear arsenals have grown larger and more mature.

It is not a happy prospect. But it is reality. Welcome once again—just when you thought it was over—to the unthinkable world of nuclear deterrence. ♦

Time to Grab the Third Rail

The Political Case for Privatizing Social Security Now

By David Frum

These days, a Washington journalist who evinces an interest in Social Security is likely to find himself in the same predicament as someone who buys from a mail-order catalogue: 72 hours later, the Post Office will need a forklift to deliver all the bales of printed matter to his doorstep. Proposal after proposal! Plan after plan! And appended to each, a phone book's worth of numbers! It's dazing, it's daunting. Who can possibly hope to understand all these alternatives? Much less, choose one?

Everyone knows that the condition of Social Security is desperate. A system created for an America in which most people died soon after reaching 65 is breaking down in an America in which life expectancies approach 80 and the average woman gives birth to only two children. When the system was established in 1937, there were 42 workers for every beneficiary. Now there are three. Soon there will be only two. Sometime after 2010, the money raised by the Social Security payroll tax will no longer suffice to pay the benefits the federal government has promised. The gap between what the tax will bring in and what the system requires is enormous: Nobody can say for sure how enormous, but even the most optimistic projections reckon that the shortfall will be in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Without Social Security reform, we are 12 years away from a financial emergency more expensive than World War II.

Again, that much everybody knows. But they also know the immense political risk of attempting to solve the problem. The American public hungers for Social Security reform about as much as one of Trollope's gouty squires hungered for reform of the House of Lords. There is no appetite for change, and no trust in the politicians who will have to effect that change. The voters brutalized the Republicans in 1982, when the GOP considered stiffening the rules governing early retirement, and they punished the Democrats even more harshly in 1994, after Bill Clinton's budget deal taxed a big chunk of the Social Security income of the better-off elderly.

Under the circumstances, then, it might seem recklessly bold for anyone to propose a radical, free-

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market transformation of Social Security. In 1995, the Republicans got walloped by President Clinton for proposing a few-bucks-a-month increase in the Medicare premium. If *that* was too much for the American public, how can Republicans be expected to stake themselves to the cause of Social Security privatization? Wouldn't that be the same as putting the bullets into the gun, putting the gun into the Democrats' hand, and saying, "Shoot us"? Why on earth even tinker with the single most popular program in the vast federal repertoire, the famously dangerous third rail of American politics?

And the answer is, because there is no better choice. For all the seeming abundance of plans to reform Social Security, there are really only four possible types of solution. And as scary as privatization is for Republicans, the other three solutions are even worse.

Solution one is to do nothing, wait, and hope that something will turn up. The energy crisis went away on its own, so did the acid-rain problem, and so probably will global warming. Who knows? Maybe something similar could happen with Social Security. Those who advocate standing pat point out that while revenues from the payroll tax will begin to fail to keep pace with Social Security spending a dozen years from now, that doesn't mean immediate bankruptcy: The system has plenty of money in the bank. In fact, by the time the baby boomers begin retiring, it will have almost $3 trillion, all of it in U.S. Treasury bills. That's the fabled Social Security "trust funds," and the crisis can be avoided for 20 years simply by spending it.

THERE ARE REALLY ONLY FOUR POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. AND AS SCARY AS PRIVATIZATION IS FOR REPUBLICANS, THE OTHER THREE ARE WORSE.

Whether you accept this argument depends on whether you believe that the Social Security trust funds actually exist. Sure, most of us would feel pretty flush if we had $3 trillion of Treasury notes in our bank accounts. If you are generally a reliable person, and you write me a check for $100, then I'm entitled to think myself $100 richer. But no matter how reliable you are, you cannot make *yourself* richer by writing yourself checks. The $3 trillion that one branch of the U.S. government owes another branch is nothing but a bookkeeping notation. All it means is that over a long period of years the payroll tax raised more than the Social Security Administration spent, and that the surplus was placed in the Treasury. The Treasury in turn spent that surplus on other things—aircraft carriers, national parks, Bill Clinton's legal team—while solemnly promising to find the revenue for Social Security when it was needed. That $3 trillion in the trust funds could be $30 trillion or $300 trillion or some other equally incalculable number. It does not alter the harsh arithmetic fact that on that day 12 years from now in 2010 when the payroll tax falls short, the U.S. government will have to go find some new money if it is to honor its promises. In other words, doing nothing is an invitation to catastrophe.

That brings us to solution two, the favorite of liberal Democrats: Why not rejigger the benefit formulas, they ask—raise taxes a bit, cut benefits a little—so as to stave off the crisis of 2010? This is, as it happens, the course the federal government has been pursuing since Social Security was unveiled. At the beginning, the payroll tax rate was 2 percent on the first $3,000 of wages. Today it is 12.4 percent on the first $68,400 of wages. Even adjusting for inflation, that's close to a 1,500 percent tax increase over 60 years. In 1984 and again in 1993, the government began taking back through the tax code up to one-third of the Social Security benefits of the most affluent seniors. That's the sort of spending cut Republicans can only fantasize about imposing on, say, the Department of Energy.

Now, in principle, one could go farther still. One could raise the payroll tax even more, either by hiking the rates or by broadening the tax base. Right now, every dollar of income above $68,400 is free of payroll tax. Sen. Edward Kennedy has proposed extending the payroll tax to all income. Very gratifying to the liberal mind. And at the same time, we could go on slashing benefits, particularly for the more affluent elderly, directing Social Security funds to those elderly who need them most. This reduction of the Social Security benefits of upper-income seniors also has a political constituency: It has long been seen as a badge of political courage by neo-liberals at places like the Progressive Policy Institute and the *New Republic*.

And indeed, the Kennedy solution would require a great deal of courage. Republicans who worry about the political risks of privatization can cheer themselves by contemplating the truly colossal political risks of saving Social Security by raising taxes and slashing benefits. Because the system's deficit will be huge, the tax increases and benefit cuts will have to be equally huge—a payroll tax that will ultimately reach 18 percent, a tax that when combined with President Clinton's 39.6 percent top income-tax rate would bring

back the 50 percent tax rates of the 1970s for higher-earners, and finally spending cuts that will end by virtually eliminating Social Security benefits to senior citizens who saved for their own retirement.

That's not all. The tax-and-slash approach to Social Security will split the Democratic party. While it's arithmetically possible to save Social Security for the least-well-off by cutting the benefits for everyone else, it's also true that it is the universality of Social Security that has endowed it with such fantastic political strength. Franklin Roosevelt knew what he was doing back in 1937. He wanted to cleanse his program of any taint of mendicancy, to convince the American people that their payroll taxes were a form of contribution to a universal annuity. Your Social Security check was not charity: You had paid for it, and you were therefore entitled to it.

But if more and more of Social Security's costs are paid by higher-income people and its benefits are more and more tightly concentrated on lower-income people, its constituency will inevitably shrink. Even recipients will lose their enthusiasm for it as it comes to look more and more like welfare. Moderate Democrats like Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan understand that a more brazenly redistributive Social Security program is, sooner or later, a crippled Social Security program, and they will fight—as they have consistently fought—to save the program's popularity by maintaining its universality.

Which is why mainstream Democrats are becoming interested in a third solution: a plan devised by former Social Security commissioner Robert Ball that keeps the contribution and benefit scheme more or less as it is now, and tries to save Social Security by investing its funds in the stock market in the hope of earning extra cash. Professors Jerry Mashaw and Theodore Marmor of Yale argue that the Ball plan would "allow pensioners to capture the higher returns of financial markets, while keeping the risk collectively shared rather than individually borne."

Sounds good. But a couple of skeptical observations are in order. The payroll tax in 1997 raised some $44 billion beyond the amount needed to pay for current benefits. If that money had flowed into the stock market instead of the fisc, last year's tiny federal deficit would have grown by $44 billion. And if Social Security intends to invest any considerable amount of money now, it will need to sell off a huge batch of the Treasury bonds in the trust funds—possibly triggering a rise in interest rates, a recession, and a collapse in the very stock market in which it plans to invest.

One more thing. While the Ball plan seeks to capture higher returns for the Social Security system, it will incidentally capture something else too: control of the American economy. Put into practice, the Ball plan would have the government buy up to 20 percent of all the shares listed on the New York Stock Exchange, making it the largest single stockholder in the country. State ownership of the means of production is likely to seem to many Americans a rather high price to pay to save Social Security as we know it.

What remains, then, is privatization: The government requires everyone to save a minimum amount in tax-sheltered accounts, regulates those accounts to protect unsophisticated investors, and guarantees everyone a certain minimum pension regardless of how his investments turn out. There are dozens of versions of privatized plans. What they all have in common is that pensions are based on real assets, not a promise by government to tax future taxpayers, they deliver better returns than Social Security, and they are owned by the citizen rather than being controlled by the government. Where they differ is in how rapidly they make the transition from the present system, and in how firm a floor they put under people whose private pension investments turn sour.

Sen. Phil Gramm has introduced a plan that makes the transition with remarkable care, giving every retiree the choice of the pension promised by Social Security or an independent retirement account, requiring no new taxes or new borrowing, and making the transition from the old system to the new over the next 50 years. In 1996, Steve Forbes offered a much more radical plan that would complete the transition faster, offer retirees more benefits, but also require the federal government to borrow more in order to finance it. Democratic stalwarts Moynihan and Bob Kerrey have written a potential compromise plan that would put a modest 2 percent of payrolls into individual accounts.

Different politicians will make different choices. But the Republican party needs to steel itself now to the truth: The only alternatives to privatization—doing nothing, hiking taxes and slashing benefits, nationalizing American industry—are far riskier in both economic and political terms.

Mark Twain once quipped that a cat that sits on a hot stove will never again sit on any stove, hot or cold. Today's Republican Congress resembles that cat—so scalded by entitlement reform in the past that it is terrified of any bold measure. But politics is like the bumper-cars at amusement parks: It's a delusion to think that, by refusing to move, you can protect yourself from being hit. ♦

Sick Transit

The Bioethics of Big Brother

By Wesley J. Smith

People who are elderly, disabled, prematurely born, or seriously ill have much to fear from the medical intelligentsia—those bioethicists and moral philosophers who have in recent years transformed medical ethics.

It was bioethicists and moral philosophers, after all, who made it acceptable to dehydrate to death people diagnosed as permanently unconscious—a practice that has already spread to brain-damaged people who are unquestionably conscious.

It was bioethicists and moral philosophers who made a distinction between "human beings" and "persons," with only persons enjoying the right to life—a theory intended to pave the way for the legal killing of babies born with birth defects and involuntary euthanasia of legally incompetent patients. (Both forms of medicalized killing already occur in the Netherlands, a country some look to as a model for the United States.)

It was bioethicists and moral philosophers as well who promulgated "Futile Care Theory," which allows doctors and health-insurance executives to deny not merely high-tech interventions but also such treatments as CPR and antibiotics to the profoundly disabled and people at the end of life. Even if the patient or the patient's family wants the care, what matters is the medical professional's assessment of the quality and worth of the patient's life. Little noticed by the mainstream media, Futile Care Theory is already being implemented in hospitals and nursing homes, both informally in clinical settings and formally through hospital protocols.

In short, with the exception of helping to create laws that permit people to refuse unwanted medical treatment, the attitudes and policies of most mainstream bioethicists and moral philosophers are very bad news for the medically defenseless and vulnerable among us.

Daniel Callahan
False Hopes
Why America's Quest for Perfect Health is a Recipe for Failure
Simon & Schuster, 336 pp., $24

William B. Schwartz
Life Without Disease
The Pursuit of Medical Utopia
University of California Press, 204 pp., $22

It is in this context that two new books, *False Hopes* by the noted bioethicist Daniel Callahan and *Life Without Disease* by physician William B. Schwartz, cause so much concern. Both authors urge the laudable reform of our currently dysfunctional health-care system in order to make it more widely accessible and cost efficient. Unfortunately, both authors choose methods that are unethical and immoral.

At first blush, Callahan and Schwartz seem mirror opposites: Callahan is nihilistic; Schwartz is utopian. Callahan is convinced that medical progress has advanced just about as far as it reasonably can. Schwartz sees a medically miraculous future where life expectancy will reach 130 years. Callahan would put more money into public-health education, while Schwartz would increase investment in medical research. Callahan writes too long. Schwartz writes too short.

Despite these differences, however, the authors have much in common. Both write in the passive prose so favored by the medical intelligentsia. Both attempt to appear rational and balanced as they grapple with health-care policy. And both surrender abjectly to medical utilitarianism.

Each enthusiastically espouses a rigid system of health-care rationing that would sacrifice the life and health of some people for the sake of health-care "equity"—which for both the authors represents a higher good than the fate of individual patients. And therein lies an acute and fast-approaching danger to the future of America as a moral nation.

Callahan disbelieves in medical utopia, and everywhere he looks, he sees only limits. People expect too much from their doctors. Medicine is too expensive and getting more so. Health care consumes 14 percent of the gross domestic product and takes resources away from other important community interests.

And what have we gotten for our huge investment in medicine? Not as much, according to Callahan, as might be supposed. It's true that life expectancy has increased by approximately thirty years during the twentieth century, but that has mostly to do with improved infant-mortality rates. And our increased lifespan is actually a bit of a curse. We used to die quickly from infectious disease. Now we die slowly from such chronic and debilitating conditions as Alz-

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heimer's disease and cancer.

To our false hopes of a health utopia, Callahan's alternative is an intentional turning away from medical progress and a radical reshaping of America's health-care system. In a parallel to the environmentalist movement, the key word in *False Hopes* is "sustainability." A sustainable health-care system, Callahan asserts, is both affordable and equitable. It is a system that intentionally turns away from medical progress and accepts as it already is the current level of medical science—a "steady state," as Callahan labels it.

Callahan's prescription for maintaining this steady state is worse than the disease he seeks to cure. The traditional ethics that has served medicine so well in the past must mutate into collectivism rather than individualism. Private medical decisions between patient and doctor will be severely curtailed. The "community" (which turns out to mean the professional bioethicists and moral philosophers) will decide what can and can't be prescribed in specific circumstances. Nothing will be done to increase average life expectancy or find new ways to help premature babies survive. Research into the causes and cures of cancer, AIDS, heart disease, and other afflictions will be reduced by negative financial incentives that will dissuade private businesses from investing in medical research. Funding to pay for acute medical care will be drastically cut in order to restrict the options for sick people. And if, despite the heavy hand of government, new technologies are discovered, only those demonstrating in advance that they will benefit 50 percent of patients will be allowed to be put into clinical use.

The resources that once went into research and treatment will be diverted to fund a massive bureaucracy charged with public-health education, which may include coercive measures to force people to live healthier lives. Rationing will be strictly enforced, with doctors required to deny individual patients beneficial treatment in order to serve a higher obligation to the "community." Treatment will be based on such characteristics as the patient's age, disability, and even lifestyle choices.

Not a pretty picture, Callahan admits. Indeed, he acknowledges that these policies will "lead to harm or death to some portion of the population at risk." But what does that matter, when the misery inflicted on individuals is in pursuit of collectivist notions of equity and affordability? According to the bioethicist, "a sustainable medicine can do no other than accept this unpleasant reality."

Kevin Chadwick

The most frightening thing about all this is the stature of the author. Daniel Callahan is not a wild-eyed character on the futuristic fringe. He is a pillar of the bioethics establishment, a co-founder of The Hastings Center, one of the world's most famous bioethics think tanks. When Callahan speaks and writes, policymakers listen; when he espouses something, his lesser known colleagues in universities, medical associations, and hospital committees are thinking it and sometimes acting upon it.

Callahan's antipathy toward medical progress—and his firm belief that some of us must be pushed out of the lifeboat to benefit others—can be said to reflect fairly the predominant view in the bioethical community. We ignore the threat of *False Hopes* at our peril.

It is an interesting experience to read William B. Schwartz's *Life Without Disease* along with *False Hopes*. Where Callahan sees medical progress as coming to a standstill, Schwartz believes that we can and probably will reach near-perfection through genetic research and molecular medicine. The result for those lucky enough to be alive in the middle of the twenty-first century will be long lives generally free from the chronic afflictions of old age that so depress Callahan.

Schwartz had an intriguing notion for his book—though with only 204 pages of text, the core of it concerned with health-care rationing, he doesn't develop it well. *Life Without Disease* takes the reader on a hundred-year journey through medical history—a real history from 1950 to the present and an imagined history from the present to 2050.

Great strides are being made in cancer research, medical science can already stimulate the body to regenerate bone tissue, and there is hope that damaged nerves can be regenerated. The future holds even greater

promise, according to Schwartz. We can expect accelerated progress against heart disease, auto-immune disease, and other afflictions. Even old age, Schwartz predicts, will become a treatable condition. Indeed, he writes, "the medical successes of recent decades provide ample reason for us to plan for the possibility of a world in which disease and death are pushed ever farther into the second century of life."

Unfortunately, in the course of this trot through fifty real and fifty imagined years of medical history, Schwartz falls into the same unethical pit as Callahan does, promoting health-care rationing as a way to finance the great medical strides he sees coming in the future. Rationing as described by Schwartz requires a massive bureaucracy in order to undertake the project of ranking medical outcomes—with those of the highest value financed and those of the lowest value cut off.

The construction of such a ranking, as Schwartz sees it, is a community responsibility. In other words, medical care would devolve further into politics than it already has. The obvious result would be a gigantic struggle over rationing: AIDS activists fighting breast-cancer activists, fighting prostate-cancer activists, fighting multiple-sclerosis activists, each seeking to ensure that one particular disease has adequate funding. The redefinition of medicine as the politics of interest groups is no way to run an ethical and compassionate health-care system.

The authors of both *False Hopes* and *Life Without Disease* have little or no regard for the equality of human life. This is their most fundamental error, for if we are to resolve our problems in health care, we must hold tightly to Jefferson's self-evident truth that all of us are created equal, with an inalienable right to life.

America is not a nation that should accept—in the name of the greater good of the "community"—a health-care system that is the moral equivalent of exposing disabled infants on hills or leaving our elderly and wounded to die by the side of the trail. All of us, the healthy and the unhealthy, the able bodied and the disabled, the young and the elderly, those just born and those on their death beds, have equal moral worth. None of us is expendable. No one can be discarded. ♦

Best of Her Breed

The Unlikely Author of 'The 101 Dalmatians'

By J. Bottum

You've known girls just like her: tiny, pretty, flirty young women—energetic, talented, bright, and brittle. The kind who always wants to be an actress. The kind who makes old men long to pat her hand and middle-aged men buy sports cars. The kind who inevitably compels clichés—smart as a whip, cute as a button, snug as a bug—and so filled with razor ambition it makes your teeth ache.

Dodie Smith
I Capture the Castle
St. Martin's, 352 pp., $23.95

Valerie Grove
Dear Dodie
The Life of Dodie Smith
Chatto & Windus, 339 pp., $40

But on the other hand, no one's ever known anyone exactly like Dodie Smith—the petite and plucky failed actress turned playwright, who seduced her way up the London fashion and West End theater worlds until she had a string of six now utterly ignored stage successes, from *Autumn Crocus* in 1931 to *Dear Octopus* in 1939.

When she died in 1990 at the age of ninety-four (leaving $3,000 to her dog), she was mostly forgotten, and even the fascinating new biography *Dear Dodie* by Valerie Grove is unlikely to resurrect her. But Dodie Smith was the best of her ambitious, miniature breed, and when her playwriting career abruptly crashed after World War II, she sat down and proved that she had something more than just a talented little woman's drive for fame. However much the author herself has faded, she left behind two books that still live: *I Capture the Castle*, a 1948 novel of young love, and the 1956 children's classic, *The Hundred and One Dalmatians*.

Disney has filmed *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* in 1961 as a cartoon feature and again in 1996 as a live-action film starring Glenn Close as the wicked Cruella de Vil who wants to slaughter ninety-seven Dalmatian puppies to make a fur coat. But *I Capture the Castle*—a perennial reader's favorite and one of the best small romantic novels ever written—has been unavailable for years, and its reprinting by St. Martin's Press offers a wonderful opportunity for new readers to discover the book.

There are books that transcend their genre not because they go outside them, but because they fulfill them so perfectly, and *I Capture the Castle* is such a book: The classic elements of eccentric English family life, a comically ruined castle, and a girl coming to adult awareness mesh the way romantic novels always promise they will and rarely do.

The story is narrated by entries in the diary of the seventeen-year-old

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Cassandra Mortmain: "I write this sitting in the kitchen sink," she begins. Her twenty-one-year-old sister Rose longs to escape the family's poverty by capturing a husband, her fifteen-year-old brother Thomas longs for enough money to go to school, and the family's eighteen-year-old unpaid handyman Stephen longs for the budding Cassandra to notice him.

Presiding over the household is the father, James, once upon a time a famous novelist who wrote a modernist classic that American graduate students still bombard him with notes about. But he has shrunk from his former wild, vivacious self, ever since he was briefly sent to prison for threatening his first wife with a cake knife, and he has impoverished the family by spending years doing nothing but reading detective novels and bemoaning his writer's block.

After prison, James had rented an estate from an admirer. "Godsend"—pronounced either God's-end or God-send, depending on the speaker—contains a Norman battlement, an unheated Stuart house raised above the ruins of a Tudor castle, and a surrounding moat. Living on what they can raise in their garden and what little money they manage to bring in from odd jobs, the family is desperately concerned when their admiring landlord—who never bothered to collect the rent—dies and leaves his property to his American nephews, the wisecracking Neil Cotton and his serious older brother Simon.

The family's initial encounter with the Americans proves endlessly embarrassing. Neil and Simon first meet a green-toned Cassandra bathing in the kitchen vat used to dye clothes. And Rose, wrapped in an inherited fur coat, is mistaken by the brothers for an escaped bear and narrowly avoids being shot.

Over the next six months, Cassandra relates in her diary the complications that ensue. Her father James is either going mad or beginning to write again. The handsome, tongue-tied Stephen finds work as an artist's model and a potential Hollywood star. And Rose—seeing at last a way out of poverty—succeeds in trapping Simon into an engagement.

In many ways, the story in *I Capture the Castle* is entirely predictable—proceeding with inevitable logic through the necessary heartbreak to Cassandra's dawning knowledge of herself as a writer and a woman. But the book is so much better than it needs to be. Cassandra is wiser, sharper, and more observant than strictly necessary; her eccentric family is more finely drawn than it had to be; and the novel proves much more fun than the reader has any right to expect.

Something of the same thing is true of *The Hundred and One Dalmatians*. The genre of children's stories about talking animals is just as stern as the genre of romance novels. But those who only know the movie versions of *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* have missed the surprise of the sharply written book: It has its perfect animal plot and its necessary children's-novel ending, but along the way, it has as well a sparkle that no one could have predicted.

The same is true of Dodie Smith herself. She belonged to a well-marked type—smart as a whip, cute as a button, and riven with ambition—and she fulfilled her type well. But she had as well a glint of humor, an unearned sparkle of wisdom, and a real prose talent. Together, they made her so much better than she had to be. ♦

BCA

Little Latin & Less Greek

The Decline and Fall of Classics

By David Kovacs

Do the ancient Greeks still matter? Does it make a difference that they are no longer taught to high-school and college students? And who's to blame for the fact that they are not?

It is to answer such questions that the classicists Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath have produced *Who Killed Homer?*—a book that indicts classics professors for the death of the subject they are paid to teach. Arguing that this death has important consequences for those outside the university, *Who Killed Homer?* should be read and pondered by everyone who cares about the health of our educational system.

Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath
Who Killed Homer?
Free Press, 288 pp., $25

In an early nineteenth-century sermon at Oxford, Thomas Gaisford recommended Greek on the grounds that "not only does it elevate one above the common herd, but it also leads not infrequently to positions of considerable emolument." No one today would recommend studying classics for the money. But until recently many students took up the subject both because of the light it throws on civilization and for certain habits of mind that it seemed especially able to confer. The study of Greek and Latin was regarded as the

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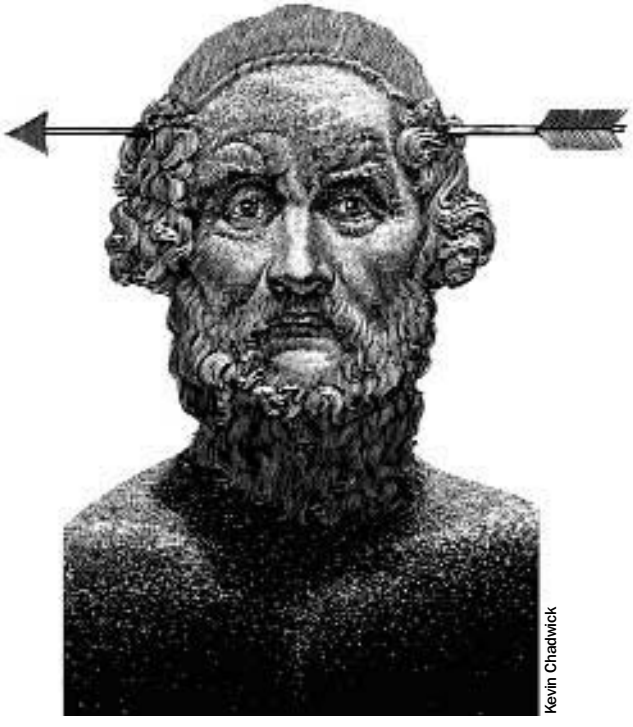
best training for a leading position in politics, finance, the military, or polite letters.

The preeminent position of the classics—so obvious to Gaisford—was not always secure. At the end of antiquity, many early Christians felt that Greek and Roman literature, bound up with pagan gods and moral values, should not be the basis for education in a Christian society. In the end, however, pagan literature was absorbed rather than rejected: Just as the children of Israel had "despoiled the Egyptians," taking what was valuable from their enemies, so Christians raided pagan culture.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the Battle of the Books pitted "the moderns" against "the ancients," the claim was made that the preeminence of the Greeks and Romans rested on mere social prejudice and that the vernacular literature of Europe provided a more modern basis for education. In the end, that claim too was accepted only in part: The newer studies were recognized, but the value of the old was affirmed.

When the rise of science challenged the place of humanistic studies in the later nineteenth century, educators felt compelled to admit that Greek and Latin did not deserve to be the whole of education. They still, however, maintained pride of place within the humanities: Entrance and graduation requirements in Latin continued to be enforced. When these were removed in the twentieth century, classics nonetheless enjoyed a high prestige, the inherent interest of its subject matter being reinforced by the fact that Latin and Greek seem to improve performance on standardized tests (classics majors in the 1970s had the highest GRE scores in the humanities, scoring on average fifty points higher than English majors). Through the 1980s, classics departments were also a haven for students who loved literature but disliked the "hermeneutic of suspicion" and other deconstructionist lunacies perpetrated over the last twenty years in English and modern-language departments.

Until recently, a classics major was still regarded as an excellent preparation for a wide variety of careers. It provides, for example, linguistic training. Learning to translate languages quite different from our own brings a rapid gain in sophistication about language. Greek and Latin are concrete languages and thus teach the "cash value" of an English sentence: "His failure produced in him a feeling of depression" would be expressed in Latin or Greek as: "Not having gained what he wanted, he was dispirited"—a way of speaking in which human agents, not abstract nouns, are the subjects of sentences. So too, studying the classics provides a unique intellectual content. Most of the West's great ideas occurred first and most forcibly to the Greeks—in politics, philosophy, historiography, rhetoric, imaginative literature, and science.


Kevin Chadwick

But in recent years the number of undergraduates majoring in classics has radically declined: Of the over one million bachelor-of-arts degrees awarded by American universities in 1994, only six hundred were in classics. Hanson and Heath argue that this is so because the classics professors who ought to be defending and promoting their discipline have failed to do so. The vast increase in classical scholarship (over sixteen thousand books and articles a year, according to the most recent bibliographical survey) masks an ailing profession.

The causes for this malady, Hanson and Heath believe, are many. There is the fact that the modern research university doesn't value teaching. Though there are classicists who devote substantial energy to their students, the American university system rewards publication rather than teaching—and part of the reward is a reduction in teaching. Teachers feel they must publish, and those who can't say much that is both new and true are tempted to make their mark with faddish topics and silly trendiness—writing endless articles with titles like "Gendering the Body in Sappho and Theognis" or "Homoerotic Rhetoric in Aristophanes."

Some scholars, like avant-garde artists out to shock, attack their own subject—declaring the Greeks the fountainhead of racism and sexism

and damning the whole classical inheritance. It is a sort of vandalism, like burning a Stradivarius violin to make a momentary blaze.

And yet, even more traditional philologists and historians are not to be excused for the death of classics. They are guilty of over-specialization, an unwillingness to address large questions, the habit of writing exclusively for specialists, and the reluctance to explain why their subject matters.

"Why," as Hanson and Heath ask, "do so few professors of Greek and Latin teach us that our present Western notions of constitutional government, free speech, individual rights, civilian control over the military, separation between religious and political authority, middle-class egalitarianism, private property, and free scientific inquiry both are vital to our present existence and derive from the ancient Greeks?"

Who Killed Homer? is a call to recover the sense of what is valuable. It is full of moral indignation, occasionally naming names. It rips at the mad follies of academia in general, but saves its harshest words for classicists themselves.

The authors, however, are not mere scolds. The chapter "Thinking Like a Greek" demands that professors teach the concrete realities of Greek and Roman history and society that are frequently ignored by literary classicists. Greco-Roman antiquity was not multicultural, but it was multiracial, and we owe to the Greeks the idea that it is the adoption of Greek culture, not the possession of Greek genes, that makes the Greek.

The authors of *Who Killed Homer?* tend to denigrate specialized scholarship and regard as obscurantist any work not addressed to the general reader. This is too bad, because one of the strengths of classics is traditional philology—scientific, based upon empirical fact and rigorous argument, and the opposite of deconstructionist relativism. Hanson and Heath also launch a tirade against foreign (especially British) scholars who take positions in America, and such xenophobia, besides being ugly, is unrelated to the principal points they make.

The specific proposals in *Who Killed Homer?* are intended to redress the balance between scholarship and teaching. Many of these are utopian—requiring an impossible degree of unanimity over the whole academy—or possibly harmful. The book, for example, recommends abolishing the doctoral dissertation in favor of five or six small papers that would remain unpublished, giving young scholars a wider breadth of focus. It also urges getting rid of tenure in favor of five-year contracts, despite the likelihood that administrative bean-counters will use enrollment figures, which for Greek and Latin are never very high, to abolish whole programs.

But some of the proposals from Hanson and Heath make good sense, if the world could be made to see it. They recommend ending the exploitation of graduate teaching assistants and of part-time adjuncts (teachers with no permanent position, paid a much lower salary). And they urge a limit on the number of publications that can be submitted for review at promotion time, which emphasizes quality rather than quantity.

Hanson and Heath are in the end pessimistic about the possibility of saving their discipline; they think it likely that classics in the academy will die and that "the recovery of Greek wisdom" will take place elsewhere. But if the classics survive, it will be in part thanks to such books as *Who Killed Homer?*—which describes so plainly and clearly what has gone wrong. ♦

B&A

Dooling's Storm

A New Novel Satirizes Hate Speech and Science

By John Wilson

First-rate satiric novelists are rare, in part because their art is harrowing even to themselves. True satirists grow so used to seeing through pretense that after a while they begin to wonder whether anything besides pretense exists at all: Reveal the sham too many times, and pretty soon even reality looks like it's shamming. No wonder so many of them—from Jonathan Swift to Evelyn Waugh—suffer bouts of madness.

But even if the price is madness, we need our satirists: not the comedians for whom satire is just funny, not the writers for whom satire at the pretenses of others is a way to sell their own pretense, but our real satirists—the ones for whom humor is a moral sledgehammer with which to smash euphemism and evasion on every side. And with his mad new novel, *Brain Storm*, Richard Dooling has joined the ranks of the real satirists.

Richard Dooling
Brain Storm
Random House, 401 pp., $25

Brain Storm is in part a defense of free speech against the advocates of "hate-speech" codes. But the novel is also, and more ambitiously, a defense of everyday humanity against the imperial claims of science. And it is a ferociously funny book.

John Wilson is editor of Books & Culture.

The clear and present danger that provoked *Brain Storm* is found in the writings of such people as Mari J. Matsuda, a law professor at Georgetown University and co-author of the 1993 *Words That Wound*, who sees nothing in free speech except hatred:

> At every single university at which I spoke—north, south, east, and west—I learned of serious incidents of racist, homophobic, or anti-Semitic hate. . . . The universities, long the home of institutional and euphemistic racism, were now seeing something different: the worst forms of gutter racism. Asian-American students spat on; Nazi literature appearing on Jewish holy days; and cross burnings, racist slurs, and homophobic insults so degrading and assaultive that I found I could not in good conscience reprint them, even for educational purposes, in the book I wrote on the topic.

While Matsuda was gathering information—north, south, east, and west—for her anti-free-speech manifesto, Dooling was earning his law degree. He began his career as a writer in 1992 with the novel *Critical Care* (made into a movie in 1997 by Sidney Lumet), and his second novel, the 1994 *White Man's Grave*, earned a National Book Award nomination. In 1996, he published his own manifesto on free speech. Entitled *Blue Streak: Swearing, Free Speech, and Sexual Harassment*, it is a book brimming with words to wound, offend, and outrage—and it turns out to have been a nonfiction test-run for *Brain Storm*.

Set in the near future, after the expansion of laws against "hate crimes," *Brain Storm* has as its hero Joe Watson, a young lawyer at the best firm in St. Louis. Happily married and the father of two children, Watson worries chiefly about the mortgage payment and how he is going to make what his father-in-law refers to as "Real Money." In short, he is ready for a fall.

That fall comes when he is assigned a pro bono murder case—to his secret delight, in part because he actually believes that even loathsome offenders deserve competent representation, and in part because he has always longed for a classic, Perry Mason sort of courtroom showdown.

The client, a lowlife racist named James Whitlow, is accused of murdering a deaf African-American sign-language teacher he caught in bed with his wife. The young lawyer's own wife wants him to refuse the hate-crime case, and his boss wants a quick guilty plea.

Before long, Watson has lost both wife and job. And meanwhile, a pair of thugs are asking menacing questions about a mysterious "delivery" involving Whitlow.

Keeping this plot merrily boiling, Dooling dissects the Matsuda-style doublespeak that justifies hate-crime legislation and campus speech codes while simultaneously preaching the dogma of civil liberties. (Matsuda herself is a member of the ACLU.) The novelist's principal mouthpiece is Judge Whittaker J. Stang, in whose tyrannical presence attorneys turn to mush. "You want to make hatred illegal?" he demands in one of his many rhetorical arias. "I've sat up here for fifty years and seen nothing but hatred."

HE TURNED HIS HEAD, PANTED, AND MOANED. "NEUROSCIENCE," SHE SAID. AND KISSED HIM.

As Watson prepares a defense for Whitlow, he is aided by a beautiful neuroscientist, Rachel Palmquist, a diabolical seductress with the brain of Marvin Minsky and the body of Christy Turlington. Convinced that humans are merely machines made of meat, Palmquist has the pictures to prove it—scans of the brain while the brain's owner is engaged in various activities:

> "Generalized muscular tension, perineal contractions, involuntary pelvic thrusting with a periodicity of zero-point-eight seconds, white-hot medial preoptic." She giggled. "The lateral hypothalamus brings accessory networks into play," she whispered. "Houston, we have bursts of impulses in the hypothalamic supraoptic and paraventricular nuclei down the axon terminals. Heart rate climbing. Skin flushed. Vasodilation. Muscle spasms. Involuntary vocalizations . . . *Aaaand* . . . Boom! Massive discharge of oxytocin from the posterior pituitary gland."
>
> He turned his head, panted, and moaned.
>
> "Neuroscience," she said. And kissed him.

Watson's desire for Palmquist contends against his marital vows, his love for his wife and children, and his neglected but not abandoned Catholic faith. It also plunges him into a thicket of speculation about free will, responsibility, and what it means to be human.

The connection in *Brain Storm* between Dooling's caricature of rogue neuroscience and his rage against the nanny state lies in the hubris of Palmquist and her real-life counterparts. Like those who long to make hatred illegal, Palmquist sets herself above the common run of humanity. The hopes and fears and dreams of men and women, their loves and lusts: all this she observes from an ironic distance, with an inhuman detachment and a smug sense of superiority.

Dooling possesses an insatiable appetite for news and gossip, and in the care with which he evokes Watson's world, he reveals that he has what all first-rate satirists require: an inebriated delight in language and a perfect ear for the self-indicting turn of phrase, the bureaucratic tic, the trademark pomposity. Dooling has mastered the vocabularies of law, computers, and neuroscience, and his performance reaches beyond parody into the realm of art.

Like Swift and Waugh, like Flann O'Brien and Wyndham Lewis, Dooling is a divided soul. Most satirists

have deeply conservative instincts—many of them, as it happens, are Catholics—but they inevitably end up flirting with nihilism. In the nonfiction *Blue Streak*, Dooling refers with apparent approval to the theory that "consciousness consists of a small swamp of neurons firing in specialized networks." A page later, he quotes Minsky on the brain as merely "hundreds of different machines." This sounds exactly like Rachel Palmquist in *Brain Storm*. Dooling can make her so persuasive because he is half-convinced that she is right.

But Dooling also knows the danger she represents. If the twentieth century was the age of political totalitarianism, the twenty-first may be the age of biological totalitarianism. And Rachel Palmquist is its prophet. *Brain Storm* ends happily with Joe Watson finding a way through his trials. But what remains in the reader's mind is the image of those—like Mari Matsuda and the haters of hate-speech, like Marvin Minsky and the determiners of biological determinism—who suppose they have risen above the low estate of being merely human. ♦

TRUMAN'S PROGRESS

Hollywood Delivers an Allegory

By John Podhoretz

You have to excuse America's movie critics for going a little overboard when a movie like *The Truman Show* opens. After all, they see many more films than anyone else, and when you spend your life foraging in a garbage dump, a cubic zirconium can look a lot like a diamond.

To understand why *The Truman Show*—which is essentially an episode of *The Twilight Zone* made in color at a cost of $60 million—has provoked such enthusiasm, you have to take into account the changed nature of the movie business. Thanks to VCRs and the explosion of dollars invested in entertainment, there are now twice as many theatrical releases as there were in the 1980s and nearly four times as many as there were in the 1970s.

And yet unlike television, which has undergone a similar growth and vastly improved as a result, movies are getting worse and worse. This seems to be a violation of the principle of abundance: With all the chances they have to master their trades, writers and directors should be coming up with plenty of interesting new material. But except for James Cameron, the writer-director of *Titanic*, it's hard to point to a single mainstream moviemaker who came of age during the VCR era and matured into a genuine pop-culture artist. What we get instead are careers like Michael Bay's.

Bay started out with a forgettable buddy/action movie called *Bad Boys*, which made a zillion dollars. He went on to make the Sean Connery-Nicolas Cage buddy/action movie, *The Rock*, which made two zillion dollars. In the next few weeks, his newest buddy/action movie, *Armageddon*, opens. Bay's growth is measured solely by the fact that he produced this one as well as directing it. These movies all have the same visual signature: They're very dark, and when two people have a fistfight (which happens every ten minutes), there's so much rapid-fire editing that you can't tell who's hitting whom. You just hear the punches and the groans, and when Nicolas Cage gets up off the floor, you know he's won the fight.

Of course, Hollywood has always produced bad big-budget movies. There are just more of them these days, and there is a stultifying sameness to them: the shattering glass, the explosions, the tough-guy girlfriend who knows how to throw a punch, the killer who rises from the dead so we can witness another climactic battle on top of the one we just watched, the ticking clock that reminds us the hero has only twelve hours (or eighteen hours, or twenty-four) to save San Francisco from germ-warfare attack, the duet between a scratchy tenor and a trilly soprano that plays over the closing credits.

Michael Bay and his ilk account for half the moviegoing life of a movie critic. The rest of the time, the critic goes to "independent films." The term was invented to describe small American movies made without benefit of a studio, but since most "independents" are now distributed by studios—and many of them are financed by studios—the term now refers solely to a style of moviemaking in which a young director offers an autobiographical account of the ennui and depression of his childhood and college years.

The movies are almost all false, of course. Whatever horrors they may accuse their families of, there's hardly an independent filmmaker whose suburban parents didn't raise $100,000 or more to help their child produce a script that does nothing but complain about the injuries done by mom and dad. Nobody who makes a movie in his twenties actually suffers from ennui and depression, because making a movie that young requires too much drive and energy.

The only good films of this kind are *Swingers* and the wonderful new *The Last Days of Disco*, both of which

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offer a satiric take on the subject. In *The Last Days of Disco*, the epigrammatic writer-director Whit Stillman hilariously captures the pseudo-intellectual justifications that America's affluent and educated youth have always at the ready to explain away their many self-indulgences.

In an effort to comfort a young woman who contracts both gonorrhea and herpes the first time she has sex, her friend points out that "VD is really a good way to get back in touch with previous partners." Another explains the benefits of herpes: Either you end up with another sufferer who's bound to be very experienced sexually, or you'll be with a man who loves you so much that he's willing to risk contracting the disease for you.

Another character gets out of difficulties with women by telling them he is a homosexual (the movie is set in the early 1980s, before knowledge of AIDS was widespread). He seems to believe it, but when asked whether he has actually had homosexual congress, he is offended: "That's defining it rather narrowly, don't you think?" He is also offended when a girl tells him he has a "gay mouth," and she is offended in turn by the way he takes offense: "You're not fit to lick the boots of my *real* gay friends," she says dismissively. Later, the same nasty girl insults her roommate but can't figure out exactly why: "Anything I did that was wrong I apologize for," she says, but then stiffens her back and adds, "Anything I did that was *not* wrong I do *not* apologize for."

The Last Days of Disco is a miniature, a portrait of a moment in time spent in a tiny but glamorous New York setting. I fear overpraising it, because then people who go to see it will come away disappointed. The same is true on a wider scale with *The Truman Show*. What's most interesting about the movie is not its plot about a thirty-year-old man, played by Jim Carrey, who discovers that his life is a twenty-four-hour-a-day TV show. The world of Truman Burbank is too unreal—too bright, too white-bread, and so phony that the audience loses respect for Truman because he can't see through it. "We accept the reality with which we're presented," the TV show's creator, Christof, says to explain the fact that Truman has never questioned his existence. That sounds good, but never was a less true word spoken. What child hasn't entertained the fantasy that he might have been stolen away


Melinda Sue Gordon

from his *real* parents—the ones who would let him eat all the ice cream he wants?

No, what makes *The Truman Show* fascinating in ways that nag at you for days is that it is the first full-blown allegory in a long, long time. But as you might expect from Hollywood, it's a perverse allegory. Truman is not Christian, the tortured soul seeking the Celestial City and experiencing all manner of terrors and joys along the way in that greatest of allegories, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

If *The Pilgrim's Progress* is about finding God, *The Truman Show* is about rejecting God. The world constructed for Truman is self-consciously Edenic: "*Your* world is the sick place," Christof tells someone who is trying to rescue Truman. In the TV world, there's no crime, no war, no ugliness of any kind—at least not until Truman attempts to escape and incurs the wrath of his angry creator. Truman is not cast out of the Garden of Eden. He flees, invoking and exercising the free will he never knew he had.

The director of *The Truman Show*, Peter Weir, has been making movies for two decades now—*Gallipoli, The Year of Living Dangerously, Witness, Fearless, Dead Poets Society*, and *Green Card* among them. There isn't a more provocative filmmaker alive, in part because his movies are all alive. Weir has the mystical ability to infuse a script with an emotional power that other directors seem incapable of creating. Screenwriter Andrew Niccol brings everything except real feeling to *The Truman Show*, but Weir is able to find it. He finds it not in Truman, though Carrey's performance is all anyone could have wished for. The real journey is taken by the show's creator, Christof (in a beautiful performance by Ed Harris), who loves the passive Truman with omniscient calm but loses himself in rage when his creation begins to realize the truth.

The Truman Show might well win Weir an Oscar, and it wouldn't be the first time someone has won for the wrong movie. (Weir should have won for *The Year of Living Dangerously* or *Witness*, and, if they gave out prizes for the last fifteen minutes of a movie, for *Fearless*.) Critics don't vote on Oscars; people who work in the movie business do. Those people are as sick of the stuff Hollywood makes as the critics are, and they love to anoint movies like *The Truman Show* to make them feel better about the business they work in.

But then they go right on making the junk. And it's the critics who have to continue to sift through it. ♦

A Tale of Two Cultures

How Two Newspapers Cover the World Cup

Le Monde

Allemagne v. Etats-Unis

The green field at Parc des Princes shimmered like the lips of the virgin spring, unmistakably French, innocent yet knowing, a totality bursting upon a completion. Across its surface, 22 men—non-French, non-significant—scampered after a black and white ball, their existence overshadowed by the deep wisdom of the French soil, the chic of the grass. This reporter sat in the press box munching a biscuit, remembering the soft smells of his nursemaid so many years ago in Deauville.

As the game commenced, the score was nothingness to nothingness. The ball was round with that marvelous roundness that round things have when they are in France. The Germans, paradoxes of angst and *Anschluss*, pushed from East to West (ironic echo of their Austrian cousins at Austerlitz!). Meanwhile, the Americans, vulgar, commercial, yet vital in their childish way, stood hapless before the Hessian onslaught. The score may have changed as the match progressed, but is a goal an addition or a subtraction? Is it not a slavish concession to the bourgeois production ethic? Does it not mar the Hellenic perfection of the spheric zero? Is a ball in the back of the net a mere construct played upon by the ever-shifting fancy of our perceptions? Up in the press box, I sneezed, and the entire Yale English faculty got a cold. . . .

Pierre Henri-Lévy Derrida
(Mercredi 27 mai.)

The Washington Times

BY PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

United States v. Germany

American soldiers with names like O'Brien and O'Malley didn't die at Verdun and Bastogne so a bunch of Huns with names like Klinsmann and Mattheus could shoot soccer balls past American goalies. But, my friends, that's where America's elites have led us—into the clutches of a bunch of thick-thighed Hessians with devious elbows.

It may not occur to the pansy mandarins of the corporate class, but American greatness was built on the premise that God gave us arms, and we should use them. The rest of the world is filled with dim-witted dribblers—half of whom don't even have last names—who no sooner see a ball flying through the air than they want to stick their foreheads in its way. Meanwhile, their hordes of fans—whose lives consist of riots interrupted by welfare checks—jump up and down screeching their idiotic anthems. The full lyrics of one of their soccer songs is this: "Oh-lay, oh-lay, oh-lay, oh-lay." They sound like a bunch of banshees worshiping a potato chip.

So the nation of Mark McGwire and Michael Jordan finds itself sucking up to Yugoslavia and the Netherlands in this quadrennial soccerfest. How did we get into this position? The answer is that the World Cup is the sports equivalent of the GATT: big, multicultural, run by hairless global bureaucrats, and organized to create the greatest possible humiliation for the American working man. And the global elites, who check their loyalties at the airport Gold Club lounges, want to merge our identity into some cosmopolitan cocktail reception. Whenever I see an American calling this game "football," I want to puke.