the weekly
Standard
DECEMBER 27, 1999 • $3.95

GOOD GRIEF, NO MORE PEANUTS
JOHN PODHORETZ

Portrait of the Artist

David Gelernter on Rembrandt

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THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the second week in April, the second week in July, the last week in August, and the first week in January) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-303-776-3605 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. THE WEEKLY STANDARD Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Ian Slatter 1-202-496-3354.

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The Gore-Broaddrick Transcript

The most devastatingly probing question of the presidential campaign thus far was asked not by a reporter but by New Hampshire voter Katherine Prudhomme (formerly a Democrat, now a McCain supporter), at Al Gore's Dec. 14 town meeting in Derry, N.H.

Here's the transcript (minus Gore's plentiful ums and ahs, for readability):

Q: When Juanita Broaddrick made the claim, which I found to be quite credible, that she was raped by Bill Clinton, did that change your opinion about him being one of the best presidents in history? And do you believe Juanita Broaddrick's claim? And what did you tell your son about this?

GORE: (nervous chuckle) Well, I don't know what to make of her claim, because I don't know how to evaluate that story, I really don't.

Q: Did you see the interview?

GORE: No, I didn't see the interview. No. Uh-Uh.

Q: I'm very surprised that you didn't watch the interview.

GORE: Well, which show was it on?

Q: ABC, I believe [actually NBC].

GORE: I didn't see it. There have been so many personal allegations and such a non-stop series of attacks, I guess I'm like a lot of people in that I think that enough is enough. I do not know how to evaluate each one of these individual stories. I just don't know. I would never violate the privacy of my communication with one of my children, a member of my family, as for that part of your question. But,

Q: So you didn't believe Juanita Broaddrick's claim?

GORE: No, I didn't say that. I said I don't know how to evaluate that, and I didn't see the interview. But I must say something else to you about this. Why don't you just stand back up; I'd like to look you in the eye. I think that whatever mistakes [Bill Clinton] made in his personal life are in the minds of most Americans balanced against what he has done in his public life as president. My philosophy, since you asked about my religious faith, I'm taught in my religious tradition to hate the sin and love the sinner. I'm taught that all of us are heir to the mistakes that—are prone to the mistakes that flesh is heir to. And I think that, in judging his performance as a president, I think that most people are anxious to stop talking about all the personal attacks against him. And trying to sort out all of the allegations, and want to, instead, move on and focus on the future. Now, I'll say this to you, he is my friend, and that friendship is important, and if you've ever had a friend who made a serious mistake and then you repaired the friendship and moved on, then you know what that relationship has been like for me.

Secondly, I felt the same disappointment and anger at him during the period when all this was going on that most people did. You may have felt a different kind of emotion, I don't know. I sense that maybe you did. I certainly felt what most Americans did.

Third, I have been involved in a lot of battles where he and I have fought together on behalf of the American people, and I think we've made a good, positive difference for this country.

Number four, I'm running for president on my own. I want to take my own values of faith and family to the presidency, and I want you to evaluate me on the basis of who I am and what you believe I can do for this country as president. Thank you.

Three observations: 1) Despite this exchange's being televised locally, with lots of national reporters present; and despite the mesmerizing watchability of the video, the network news shows have never mentioned this exchange. (The Media Research Center has made the clip available on its website, *mediaresearch.org*) 2) Gore has now very usefully pledged not to violate his family's privacy: Does this mean no more lachrymose tales about his dying relatives? 3) What's Katherine Prudhomme doing enjoying life in Derry? Quick: Someone give this woman a microphone and a job in the White House press corps. ♦

George W. Bush on Campaign Finance

Why do so many conservatives have so little use for John McCain? They find his unceasing agitation for more restrictions on campaign finance grating. For partisan Republicans, it's enough that Democrats agree with McCain. For small-government conservatives, the anti-money bias that McCain shares with every newspaper editorialist in the country betrays both a willingness to increase the power of the liberal media (since conservative advocacy groups would be muffled by campaign finance restrictions), and a woeful misunderstanding of Washington (it's only because government is so big and bloated that people must spend so much money, soft and hard, on politics). For constitutionalists, McCain's sin is even worse: Like all those who would restrict political donations, he fails to understand that money is hard to disentangle from speech, and that his pet reform amounts to an assault on the First Amendment.

So George W. Bush is the answer, right? Wrong. To listen to some GOP loyalists, you might think Bush really zinged McCain on campaign finance at the Iowa debate last week. But consider what Bush said: "Here's my worry with [McCain's] plan: It's going to hurt the Republican party, John, and I'm worried for this reason. . . . The Democrat party is really the Democrat party and

the labor unions in America. And my worry is that you do nothing about what's called paycheck protection. We do nothing about saying to the labor, you can't take a laboring man's money and spend it the way you see fit.

"There's a lot of laboring people who are Republicans and conservatives. And yet under the vision you've got or—I guess you've got—or people in Washington have, it's okay that they just take their money and spend it the way they want to spend it. I don't think it's fair. And I think that's unilateral disarmament.

"I agree with you, we ought not to have corporate soft money and labor soft money. But there better be paycheck protection. Otherwise our Republican Party and our conservative values don't have a shot."

Here's what's striking about Bush's answer: It's pure partisanship (by gum, we gotta stop that "Democrat party"). On every substantive point—the disagreeability of money in politics, the willingness to throw the First Amendment overboard—Bush turns out to be a McCain clone. He just seems to think McCain was inept in drafting campaign-finance legislation. No wonder Bush got good press for this exchange: He was the perfect caricature of a money-hungry Republican. ♦

Flatter-the-Tyrant

A few weeks ago THE SCRAPBOOK reported how, during the Nov. 10 edition of his Christian Broadcasting Network show the *700 Club*, Pat Robertson played a particularly craven game of flatter-the-tyrant with his guest Li Zhaoxing, China's ambassador to the United States. Pretending to "question" Li about religious freedom, Robertson volunteered that Li Hongzhi, founder of the outlawed Falun Gong meditation sect, "was lying to the people." Then he asked whether Beijing's ban on Falun Gong might "ever be applied to Christianity or Buddhism or some other religion?" Oh, no, replied Li, "not at all. . . . This has got nothing to do with any religion because the Falun Gong is not a religion. It is nothing but a cult."

"All right," said Robertson, his face a wreath of satisfaction.

Yeah, well. Now comes word, from the respected Hong Kong-based Information Center of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China, that —shortly before Robertson's witless broadcast—Beijing's ban on Falun Gong had *already* been applied to Chinese Christians. With a vengeance. On Oct. 30, China's Communist "legislature" tightened its prohibition against "cults" and "evil religions" and officially attached those designations to 10 so-called "home churches": independent rural Christian congregations, some loosely affiliated with evangelical Protestant movements overseas.

Barely a week after Li Zhaoxing's appearance on the *700 Club*, China began vigorously enforcing this anti-Christian edict. At least 103 members of the newly-proscribed home churches were arrested in the crackdown's first four days. And lots more will surely follow. The total membership of all ten sects now on Beijing's list of "evil" Christian "cults" is three million.

You might call Pat Robertson and ask him to pray for these people. It's the least he can do. ♦

Casual

Shrink This!

My grandfather, who never had a son, made himself responsible for my education. He did it by following his enthusiasms. He taught me the alphabet with Red Sox box scores, told terrifying bedtime stories about explorers in the Dark Continent (as Africa was once invariably called), and set math problems—including long division, which was necessary, after all, for computing batting averages.

Papa loved cards, and had the idea that teaching me cribbage, casino, and poker would sharpen my wits. But any pedagogical intent soon lost out to his desire to shower me with money, which my grandfather, even when I was a toddler, called my "carfare." Somewhere, Papa had become a formidable card-cheat, no mean achievement in his case. For in the last weeks of World War I, when he was 11, he and some friends had decided to play catch with a blasting cap they'd found on a mined beach. My grandfather spent his last 71 years with three fingers on one hand, two on the other, and one eye. But he was a maestro with cards, and it was rare he'd deal me less than a full house.

When I was 6, we'd stay up till ten in his smoke-filled, applianceless kitchen in Lynn, Massachusetts, a bottle of Schaefer on his side of the cardboard card table and a mounting pile of nickels on mine. My grandmother thought it was "cunning" (Bostonese for *cute*) the way I glowed as my winnings swelled. One night, after I'd been playing whiffleball with a bunch of older neighborhood kids, I sat down with Papa's deck in hopes of generating some carfare. But when the first hand failed to produce my wonted royal flush, I replied to my grandmother's cooing "Whatcha got, Chris?" by deploying, in my 6-year-old's falsetto, all the new vocabulary I'd learned that afternoon. "F—in' s—!" I chirped.

After dinner, Papa would suggest we go "look at the smash-ups." He'd drive us to a scrapyard. We'd wander around the chain-link perimeter, looking at cars with bashed-out windows, or—on lucky nights—with the roof peeled off like an opened bean can or the grille stoved clean into the passenger area. And Papa would mutter a few imprecations, increasingly sanitized against my alarming mimetic precocity. "Jeepers crow," he'd say. "For cripe's sakes."


Darren Gygi

A similar spirit brought us to the Peabody Museum in Salem. In Hawthorne's time, Salem was a big port, and the Peabody housed the booty from the whaling ships: noserings, leis, funny codpieces and headdresses, the bludgeons Polynesians used to keep their wives in line, samurai swords, and various other exotica pillaged at gunpoint from the Heathen Chinee or looted from the savages of the Dark Continent. But the *pièces de résistance* were the shrunken heads collected from the Cannibal Islands—wizened, striated, the size of oranges.

Last week I got an e-mail from my old friend Ethan—whose older brother David had, in 1969, taught me that double-barreled obscenity with which I regaled my grandmother. Ethan had taken David's 5-year-old to the Peabody to show him the shrunken heads. But they weren't where he'd remembered them, so he approached a docent to ask where they'd been moved. He was told: "We took them off display because we could think of no way to describe them without casting their creators in a negative light."

For cripe's sakes. I always thought political correctness a bureaucratic thing. Surely, where I grew up, plain talk goes on undiminished. But no: My home town is drenched in PC. A few years ago, signs were posted on every road into town that showed a white Matisse cutout and a black Matisse cutout. They read, "Marblehead celebrates diversity."

Yeah, right. If the people I grew up with "celebrate diversity," it's much as people from Iceland do—from afar. A kid I knew from Salem used the occasion of Harvard's first Gay-Lesbian Awareness Day to get drunk and pummel a couple of necking revelers. He was slated for expulsion, but the GLAD organizers petitioned that he be allowed to stay if he apologized at a public meeting. "I will regret what I did for the rest of my life," he said from the dais. I'll bet he meant it—he had gay friends and was a gentle fellow day-to-day. But then he added something that angered the assembled gays even more than his assault. "In my defense," he continued, "we don't *have* people like you where I come from." Whatever attitude this reflects towards diversity, "celebration" doesn't quite capture it.

So: A true thing—the headhunters of the South Seas *did* shrink heads—has been buried in a basement. A lie—that Boston's North Shore is some kind of cosmopolitan crossroads—has been posted on the highways in big letters, the better to stroke the sanctimony of the town elders. If education means learning to judge between true and false, I can only assume today's equivalent of the 6-year-old I was is getting a lousier education than I did.

Besides, I could probably kick his ass at poker.

Christopher Caldwell

Correspondence

King of the Diamond

The sub-headline of David Brooks's article asks, "Did running a baseball team help prepare George W. Bush to run America?" ("Texas Ranger," Dec. 13). It is a common expression that the president "runs the country." In fact, the president does not "run" the country, or even the federal government; he directs the executive branch of the federal government. Louis XIV ran France, insofar as the technology of that era allowed. More modern technology allowed Hitler to run the Third Reich, Stalin to run the USSR, Mao to run China, and Pol Pot to run Kampuchea, with poor efficiency and tragic results. "Running the country" may be useful shorthand, but it leads to a dangerous mindset. If we wish to remain citizens, not subjects, we should avoid creating the impression that it is desirable, or even feasible, for one person to "run" a vast and complex nation of more than a quarter-billion human beings. They run the country, at least for the present.

David C. Stolinsky
Los Angeles, CA

America's Drug Lunacy

Do the facts matter when it comes to developing a drug policy that works? Don Feder's article about drug policy in the Netherlands generally avoids facts and misrepresents the real story when discussing Dutch drug policy ("A City Goes to Pot," Dec. 13).

The article claims: "Crime is rampant." In fact, according to official statistics from both countries, the murder rate in Holland is 1.8 murders per 100,000, while the U.S. rate is 8.22 per 100,000. Where is crime really rampant? The article applauds the declining violent crime rate in the United States since 1988. Of course, the U.S. violent crime rate was at very high levels in the mid-1980s when crack came on the scene. Now that the crack market has matured and stabilized, crime rates are declining, even though U.S. government surveys show use of crack has not diminished.

When it comes to drug use, the article relies on reports of drug use in 1992—almost a decade ago. Since 1992 the U.S. adolescent drug use rate has increased by 50 percent—finally showing signs of stabilizing last year after consistent increases. The most recent (1997) comparable official government figures show that 32.9 percent of people in the United States have used marijuana, while only 15.6 percent in Holland have—even though we fight an expensive war on marijuana and the Dutch allow its retail sale. When it comes to heroin, 0.9 percent of the U.S. population has tried heroin, while 0.3 percent of the population in Holland has. For cocaine the figures favor Holland even more—10.5 percent of the U.S. population has tried cocaine, while only 2.1 percent of the population in Holland has.

No doubt someone favoring the drug war will go to Holland and see marijuana shops, easy methadone availability, and public health approaches to hard drugs. That makes drugs more visible—but that does not mean they are more prevalent. Here, our drug use is hidden in shooting galleries and crack houses. While we don't see it, the facts are that drug use is more prevalent, AIDS is more prevalent, and drug-related crime is more prevalent in the United States.

One more fact to consider: Our federal drug budget has increased from $1 billion two decades ago to $18.1 billion today. It seems the more our drug policy fails, the more tax dollars we are willing to throw at it. We spend $81 per capita on drug law enforcement, while the Dutch spend $27. Perhaps if we learned from the successful approaches of other countries, we would see a drug war tax dividend rather than a drug war budget rupturing out of control.

Kevin B. Zeese
President
Common Sense for Drug Policy
Falls Church, VA

Juggernaut George

Fred Barnes's article appears to be more a continuation of The Weekly Standard's love affair with John McCain than a realistic assessment of either the New Hampshire debate or the GOP nomination contest ("The Less-Than-Inevitable Bush," Dec. 13).

First, few regarded George W. Bush's debate encounter with Ann Richards as "a snap" going in. But as the now-unemployed Richards later noted, Bush just keeps hammering away on message until he beats you down.

Few others found any problem with Bush's defense in the New Hampshire debate of his tax package; in fact, most singled it out as one of his strongest moments. Sure, he didn't use up all his allotted time. Why should he? Having delivered the message he wanted to send, why digress and dilute it, or offer something extra to be picked apart and attacked?

As for Barnes's assertion that Bush suffers from not having played the national political game to the same extent as John McCain, Steve Forbes, Alan Keyes, Gary Bauer, and Orrin Hatch—please! In a more sensible time, when an appearance on television didn't elevate one to presidential status, three of those gentlemen would never be on the stage. In Bush we are talking about a highly successful governor of the nation's second most populous state, a man who has virtually eliminated the once-majority party from existence. Anyone who underestimates his acumen does so at their peril.

As for Bush's inevitability, I suppose he could be run over by a truck (it did nearly happen once). Otherwise, once past the idiosyncrasies of New Hampshire, John McCain or anyone else will have a difficult time overcoming a

national organization powered by the political machinery of nearly every Republican governor. Any McCain "momentum" generated in New Hampshire looks to last no longer than South Carolina, where, despite the senator's huge effort, he trails by 40 points, and lags behind even among veterans.

Bush is in better shape than Reagan in 1980, and Reagan was about as inevitable as they come. If you truly expect him to stumble, prepare for a long wait. Democrats in Texas are still waiting—that is, the few of them that are still left.

M.A. Reeder
Laguna Park, TX

Cybermonk Sympathy

It's difficult for me to see what Stephen Schwartz's point is about the "trendy monk" he derides as being out of touch with reality in Kosovo and an alleged soulmate of President Clinton ("The Cybermonk of Kosovo," Dec. 13). Father Sava, by Schwartz's admission, speaks the truth when he blames Serbs for eradicating Albanian culture and when he identifies Milosevic as the main problem. Father Sava supports interfaith dialogue in Kosovo. Father Sava harbors the hope that Serbs and Albanians one day can live together in peace. Father Sava, in other words, is doing exactly what he should do as a Christian and as an Orthodox monk. As a human being, Father Sava is not allowed to be hyperbolic when describing "Crucified Kosovo," but maybe that's because Schwartz has not himself endured the destruction—systematic or not—of sites sacred to his faith.

The cheapest shot, of all the cheap shots Schwartz fires at the "cybermonk," is that Father Sava wasn't a devout Orthodox Christian his entire life, and that somehow this makes him and his message suspect. Schwartz finds Father Sava a "man of the past," a New Ager of the '70s and '80s, a proponent of the "vague idealism of international pop religiosity." Schwartz does not support his charges with anything concrete other than Father Sava's "multiculturalism" and use of the "narcissistic" Internet.

I never thought I would read such ad hominem criticism, such a thinly veiled screed against an Orthodox Christian figure, in The Weekly Standard. It does not reflect well on your magazine that your editors gave Schwartz a venue for his attack on a cleric that he, for whatever reason, simply does not like. Please re-read the piece and let me know what it is I'm missing.

Nicholas Dujmovic
Parish Council President
Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
Reston, VA

Spineless in Seattle?

Matt Rosenberg's article on the relation of Seattle's political culture to the WTO protests is just one man's opinion ("Seattle Politics, Always a Riot," Dec. 13). Although many of us here in Seattle decry what happened in our streets, on the other hand, no one was killed, not one bullet fired, and no one severely injured. For the most part, our small, undermanned, and overworked police responded professionally and with restraint. It's too bad that people fail to find the positives within that. I seriously doubt that, had a protest of this magnitude occurred in Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York, the same claim could be made.

Honoring the rights of dissenters is crucial to our democracy. And if Seattle is accused of being too liberal and caring too much about all the people, regardless of their social status, I guess a lot of us here can live with that. If our city is the last enclave in America that still considers the constitutional rights of others fundamental, then we'll just have to live with the consequences. If Rosenberg doesn't like it here, he can always move to a more repressive city—another privilege that comes with being an American.

Mardig Sheridan
Seattle, WA

Strange Bedfellows

I was pleasantly surprised by The Weekly Standard's editorial on China's accession to the WTO ("Trading Places," Dec. 6). David Tell, on behalf of the editors, raises what I believe are solid criticisms about the recently forged accession deal between President Clinton and the Communist Chinese. In almost Buchananesque tones, Tell condemns the "semi-conscious slide to appeasement" of Beijing's dictators and human rights abusers.

But wait a minute—isn't The Weekly Standard usually the mouthpiece for the free-trade, pro-NAFTA, pro-fast track, internationalist wing of the Republican party? And haven't its editors and writers repeatedly and painstakingly detailed their aversion to Pat Buchanan, who called China's WTO accession "a cave-in, pure and simple, to a regime that even today persecutes religious minorities and aims nuclear rockets at the United States of America"?

Here's what editor and publisher William Kristol recently said about Buchanan on *Hardball with Chris Matthews*: "Well, he's an intelligent man and he makes his false arguments with a certain convincing ability that sophists always have."

Here's the mystery: If, on one hand, Kristol and The Weekly Standard say that Buchanan is a sophist and that his statements are "false," and, on the other hand, they both say essentially the same things about China's WTO accession, is The Weekly Standard also guilty of making "false" statements? What exactly is it that makes Buchanan's rejection of China's WTO accession "sophistry" and The Weekly Standard's rejection of China's WTO accession not sophistry?

I'm confused.

Bill Greene
Arlington, VA

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Columbine, Again

The Columbine killers are back. Back in grainy pictures from the surveillance camera in the cafeteria that caught a portion of their rampage through their high school in Littleton, Colorado, last April 20. Back in quotations taken from the five videotapes they made to explain and publicize themselves. Back in a cover story in last week's *Time*, whose reporter was granted an exclusive viewing of the tapes by the Denver sheriff's department and the FBI. Back in the news. Back in our heads.

There has been some controversy about the publication of the boys' words. Public opinion in Colorado seems to hold that the families of the victims ought to have been shown the tapes first. Questions have been raised about why one reporter in particular was allowed access by the authorities, who have come in for considerable and well-deserved criticism for their ultra-cautious performance on the day of the shootings.

But hardly anyone has asked why the tapes were revealed at all. If their usefulness as evidence is at an end, why weren't they destroyed? If they remain important to the investigation, why were they shown to a reporter? In an introductory column explaining the publication of "The Columbine Tapes," the leader of *Time*'s reporting team in Colorado says, "Family after family told us what they wanted most was to know everything about what happened and why." "I work for the victims," declares the head of the FBI's Columbine unit. "When they don't have any more questions, then I feel I've done my job."

But *Time* and the Denver authorities didn't give the answers, such as they are, to the victims' families. They gave them to the rest of us. As a result, the Columbine killers are winning. They wanted to be famous, and they are. They wanted to echo in our minds, and they do. They demanded on the tapes that they receive attention for slaughtering their classmates, and they have. Every new revelation and account moves toward making the killers more vivid than the victims, more iconic, more memorable, more real.

The Columbine killers are winning. They wanted to be famous, and they are. They wanted to echo in our minds, and they do.

The heroism of the teacher Dave Sanders in guiding trapped students from the school seems to be fading from public recollection. Though none of the sources for the original story has recanted, reports apparently based on other witnesses and cryptic half-comments from the sheriff's office have suggested that it was Valeen Schnurr instead of Cassie Bernall who said yes, she believed in God, and was shot for her answer. Or Valeen Schnurr *and* Cassie Bernall. Or perhaps it was Rachel Scott. And the effect on the media of this natural confusion—in the midst of the smoke and the gunfire and the screams and the sprinkler system drenching everything—seems to be the disappearance of the fact that *someone* said it, that at least one Colorado high-school girl affirmed her faith, and was killed.

Which leaves us with only the murderers. Our national discussion of the Columbine tapes has disseminated the words they wanted spread across the nation. The words for the sake of which they killed, for whose publication 12 students and a teacher lie dead, with 23 more badly injured.

Those words themselves are shocking, disturbing, and infantile. They waver uncertainly back and forth, like an adolescent boy's half-broken voice, from *Heart of Darkness* to *I'm OK–You're OK*. Feeble efforts to pose as the stalest of existentialist heroes are interspersed among low-grade attempts at pop sociology, all to justify the hatred of the popular and the successful precisely for being popular and successful. A carefully hoarded scrap of Shakespeare—deployed, with painful unselfawareness, for its tones of profundity—is followed by references to video games and discussions of which directors will make the best movie versions of their killings.

Even the boys' constant stream of profanity has something servile and ridiculous about it, the falsity of the weak-willed pretending to be strong-willed. And what shows through in every line is not the titanic anger they absurdly imagined they were revealing, the godlike rage they proclaimed, but a whine and a whimper, the cringing snarl of a resentment they cosseted and fed within themselves. They are like suburban high-school Raskolnikovs

or imitation Underground Men—characters wrenched from a Dostoyevsky novel and dulled down into something unspeakably murderous, vulgar, and boring.

But nonetheless, we read them, and quote them, and editorialize about them in newspapers and magazines, on radio and television, as though we were fulfilling the terms of some satanic covenant, some contract signed in blood to make the killers famous. The blood is Cassie Bernall's and Steve Curnow's. Corey DePooter's and Kelly Fleming's. It drained from Matthew Kechter and Daniel Mauser. Daniel Rohrbough and Dave Sanders. Rachel Scott. Isaiah Shoels. John Tomlin. Lauren Townsend. Kyle Velasquez. Apparently, these children and their teacher died to ensure that we forget their names and remember their murderers'.

The killers are oddly concerned on the videotapes to let us know that their plan is original, that they weren't copying the school shooter in Oregon, the school assassins in Kentucky. But, of course, they weren't original. Not at all. In 356 B.C., the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, was burned to the ground by a man who did it, as Plutarch tells the story, so that his name would be immortal.

In response, the Ephesians passed a law banning any mention of the arsonist, in the hope that he'd be forgotten and not spawn any imitators. They didn't succeed; you can find his name if you look in any standard ancient history. Friedrich Nietzsche uses him as an iconic figure in *Human, All Too Human*. Jean-Paul Sartre modernizes him in a short story about a weak and resentful man who imagines becoming important by *descendre dans la rue et tirer au hasard dans la foule*—by going down into the street and shooting randomly into the crowd—and is arrested before he can fire a shot. The Ephesians didn't succeed at denying him the fame for which he'd embraced evil. But at least, unlike us, they tried.

—J. Bottum, for the Editors

John McCain's Southern Strategy

He's still a longshot in the crucial South Carolina primary, but he's making headway. BY FRED BARNES

Spartanburg, S.C.

JOHN MCCAIN'S THEORY of the Republican presidential campaign is elegantly simple. "It's on one page—win New Hampshire, win South Carolina," he says. After that, the McCain juggernaut prevails. The idea is that national polls showing George W. Bush with an enormous lead over McCain mean zilch now. A first-place finish in the New Hampshire primary on February 1 would change everything, giving McCain a 15 or 20 percentage point surge in support, a jolt of political momentum, and a chance to win the South Carolina primary on February 19. A victory in South Carolina would further transform the national polls in McCain's favor and make him viable in Michigan, Virginia, Washington, and everywhere else. As for Bush, whose nomination was supposedly inevitable, a series of losses would force him to drop out. Result: McCain is the GOP nominee.

That's the momentum theory, anyway. There are two big problems with it. The first is history, which hasn't treated the theory kindly in South Carolina. In 1996, Patrick Buchanan won in New Hampshire only to be clobbered by Bob Dole here. Ronald Reagan in 1980 and George Bush (the father) in 1988 got small boosts from winning the New Hampshire primary. But they were already far ahead in South Carolina and won easily. Second, there's the nature of the state's Republicans. They tend to be institutional voters, going along with the party's top leaders, who are mostly for George W. And nearly half of the GOP electorate consists of evangelical Christians. The pastors at least, if not the members, of many large Baptist and charismatic churches are pro-Bush, having been recruited by Ralph Reed, the ex-Christian Coalition official. No "significant evangelical leader" is supporting McCain, Reed says. Result: McCain will be hard pressed to pull off an upset in South Carolina.

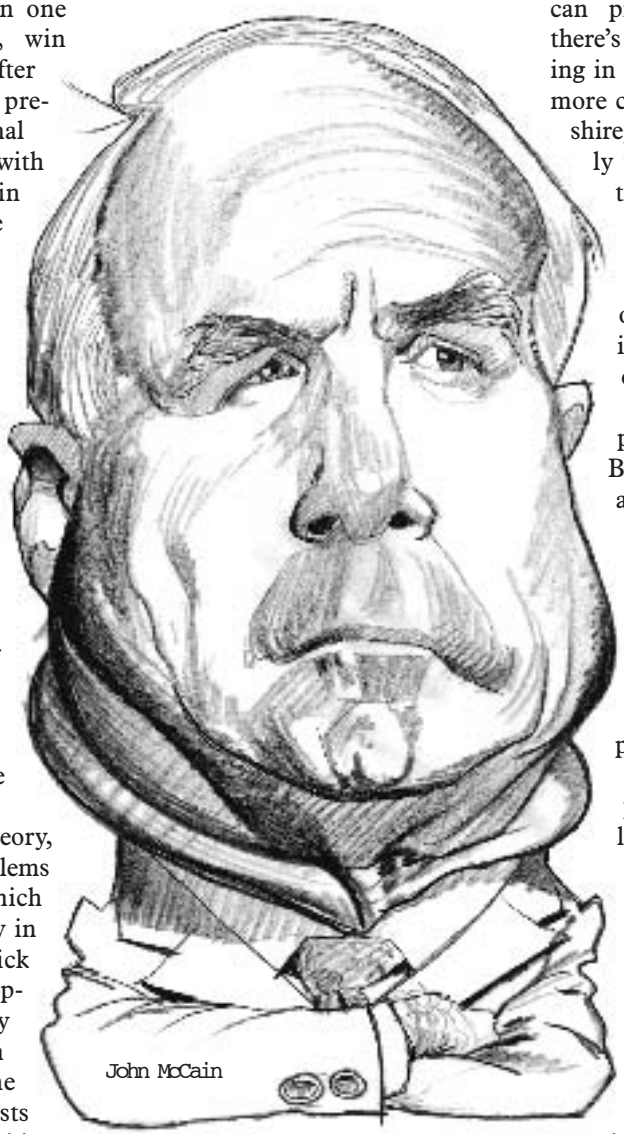

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

Yet McCain does have a shot here, and that's amazing in itself. South Carolina is not New Hampshire, where McCain expects to attract a slew of independents to the Republican primary. In South Carolina, there's no tradition of cross-party voting in primaries. The state is also far more conservative than New Hampshire, and McCain appeals especially to moderate Republicans and those whose identification with the party is soft. South Carolina is not moderate country. Moreover, McCain's strategy of organizing military veterans into a force at the polls is dubious. South Carolina has more households with veterans—38 percent—than any other state. But veterans have never voted as a bloc. Bob Dole, a war hero like McCain, tried to appeal to them in 1996 on veterans' issues and got nowhere.

So what gives McCain a chance in South Carolina at all? "The fundamental underpinning of the campaign is he's the anti-Clinton," says John Weaver, McCain's political director. That goes a long ways in South Carolina. If there's a more anti-Clinton state, "I don't want to go there," says Rep. Lindsey Graham, a House impeachment manager and probably the state's most popular politician. "I've got more Clinton fatigue than the average person," he adds. Graham's presence as an ardent McCain backer underscores the contrast with Clinton. So does McCain's emphasis on his Vietnam war record and his integrity. "They've had a pres-

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

ident for eight years they could never believe," says McCain consultant Richard Quinn, "and now there's a guy they can always believe." Quinn, by the way, puts out a fiercely conservative magazine called the *Southern Partisan*. It recently featured an article with the headline: "10 Reasons Why George W. Bush Won't Do."

While McCain hasn't changed any positions, he does play up his conservative side in South Carolina. At Converse College in Spartanburg, he gave a speech on the "conservative case for campaign finance reform." (En route to the school, he jokingly told reporters, "It's the place they make sneakers.") In answering questions from voters, he endorsed Reagan's view that the Panama Canal should never have been given up, strongly opposed gays in the military, called for tax reform and deep spending cuts, said Social Security should be partially privatized, and said Elian Gonzalez shouldn't be sent back to Cuba. "I can assure you if I'm president, this young man would not have to go back to a life of slavery," he told the Charleston Rotary Club.

All this has improved McCain's standing in South Carolina. "Clearly it's going to get closer," says Heath Thompson, Bush's campaign director for the state. McCain claims it already has. A *Time*/CNN poll last month found Bush ahead by 62-15 percent. A McCain poll, conducted in early December, pared Bush's lead to roughly 52-26 percent, campaign aides said. And McCain says he'll devote virtually his entire campaign schedule to South Carolina for the 18 days after the New Hampshire primary. He's proven to be a formidable campaigner here. At Converse, his appearance was preceded by a powerful 9-minute video about his experience as a POW in North Vietnam. His speech was bland, but when McCain followed by taking questions from the audience, he was dazzling.

Bush strategists are hardly panicking. For one thing, Bush's appearances in South Carolina have drawn huge and enthusiastic audiences. He's lined up the support of the lieutenant governor, attorney general, state house speaker, adjutant general, three former governors, and two congressmen. And Sen. Strom Thurmond is on board. The McCain forces suggest the Bush team represents a fading GOP establishment soon to be replaced by Young Turks like Graham and Mark Sanford, the Charleston congressman who's keeping his promise to retire in 2000 after three terms. Maybe, but many of the Bush backers are in their 40s and 50s and not about to retire. Former Gov. Carroll Campbell, for one, is making plans to run for governor again in 2002.

The momentum theory draws scorn from the Bush camp. "Big mo, no go," says Karl Rove, Bush's chief strategist.

But it's the momentum theory that draws the most scorn from the Bush camp. "Big mo, no go," says Karl Rove, Bush's chief strategist. He points out that the theory has worked only for political unknowns such as Jimmy Carter and Gary Hart who burst on to the national political scene with a New Hampshire breakthrough. McCain, in contrast, is already a national figure. Also, there are two other early events that aren't likely to aid McCain. Bush is heavily favored to win the Iowa caucuses on January 24 and the Delaware primary on February 8. As pro-McCain as the national media are, they can't ignore these contests.

McCain doesn't minimize the role of South Carolina. "It's of transcendent importance," he told the Charleston Rotarians. He would have "an extremely difficult time winning the nomination without South Carolina," he conceded. And he would have a hard time winning South Carolina without an unprecedented bounce from a win in New Hampshire. Forget history, says Trey Walker, McCain's national field director. "I don't think history repeats itself," he says. "We'll make our own history." Stranger things have happened. ♦

Palm Pilot Nation

I wanna hold your handheld device.

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS

Darren Gygi

SUDDENLY I AM SURROUNDED by a sea of Palm Pilots, Handspring Visors, Psions, Palmtops, and Microsoft Windows CE Personal Data Assistants. At every meeting these handheld computers lie on the table alongside people's pens and eyeglasses. Run into someone on the street, and he whips one out to check his calendar. On airplanes they are more common than coffee cups.

What is going on here? The handheld is no symbol of wealth, because prices have fallen too far too fast. Can it be that we are all suddenly busier now that the Cold War is over? Has globalization expanded our Rolodexes so fast that electronic versions are now needed? Seems unlikely. In fact, the ubiquity of the handheld reflects two other key trends among the Baby Boomers: No one has a secretary, and no one can remember anything.

The secretary problem is a matter of the age. The sharp young girl of yesteryear is gone; in this generation, she is a heart surgeon or an astronaut. The dedicated spinster lady, with you for decades and all-knowing, has taken early retirement and is living on her 401(k) in North Carolina. There is no one left to take dictation, so we all turn to computers. We type our own e-mail or (this will be more and more common) dictate right into the computer. This is dangerous, for the computer isn't sure if you meant to include "Now I have to answer another letter from this moron" before you got to "Dear Senator." Miss Blue would have figured that out. She would also have made your travel arrangements, so you wouldn't have to spend three hours trying to figure out why Microsoft Expedia won't accept your credit card. She also would never have forwarded that salacious e-mail to the list that included your mother.

But the truth behind the triumph of the handheld is not *the* age, it's *our* age. I don't see kids with Palm Pilots. They are not common on college campuses, except among professors. Gen Xers don't need them. They are a phenomenon of the 50-something who can't remember if his broker's number ends in 1137 or 3317. They are a product of the inability to recall if lunch with the guy from Seattle is Wednesday or Thursday. They represent the failure to remember if Gracie Hall is your son's dormitory or his girlfriend's name.

Clearly the old laptop is useless in this regard. You can't lug one of those around all the time, and anyway they take seven minutes to warm up before you can read the screen. And that assumes that until you get a new prescription for those reading glasses you *can* read anything on the damn screen. Nor is a pencil useful. It is, on the eve of the millennium, simply too humiliating to pull an Eberhard Faber No. 2 out of your pocket and start erasing a smudged, barely legible note you seem to have made yesterday. Everyone will see you, and they will know that you are too dumb to work a handheld device. It's okay that, in the privacy of your own home, you tried to record *ER* on the VCR but recorded high school football on channel 53 instead. In public, an admission of technological inadequacy would be too embarrassing.

So: the personal digital assistant. It tells you what all those phone numbers and addresses are when you can't recall that last digit; it remembers if you are going down to Austin next Thursday or the one after; it knows when your sister's anniversary is and can even beep you to remind you. But that is not really the point. Above all, the handheld makes you seem modern, proficient, and well-equipped when what you really are is pre-senescent. Instead of sitting there desperately trying to recall who the guy is you're meeting next because you are already 15 minutes late, you deftly pull out the handheld and in no time are chatting with his secretary Gloria, who is flattered that you remember her name (because you were smart enough to write it into your handheld, but she doesn't know that) and promises to smooth any ruffled feathers.

Elliott Abrams is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

I know, I know: How come *you* don't have a secretary but he still has Gloria? The answer is, he's doing better than you are. Today's status symbol is the Palm Pilot; tomorrow's is *not* having one, because you have a whole staff keeping track of you. It's like a winter coat in Washington: The ultimate status symbol isn't cashmere, it's *no* coat at all on the snowiest day of the year—because that means you have a car and driver waiting for you, so why do you need a coat?

The handheld has arrived just in time for the Baby Boomers. It is the perfect Christmas gift for fading Clintonians, hopeful Bushies, harassed congressmen, and sleek lobbyists who are united only by their increasing inability to remember key dates, numbers, and names. In the next Republican presidential debate, spare us the "who's prime minister of Turkmenistan" question and ask them each, "Quick! What's today's date?" If you get it right, you get the nomination. If you get it wrong, a Palm Pilot will be in your stocking this year. ♦

Who Really Won the Gulf War?

With the collapse of our Iraq policy, Saddam Hussein is up to his old tricks. BY JOHN R. BOLTON

IRAQ IS BACK IN THE NEWS—in a context that should pointedly remind us how completely American policy toward Saddam Hussein has collapsed. The immediate issue is U.N. Security Council debate over a resolution that would recreate some semblance of the old UNSCOM weapons inspection program in Iraq. The proposal's practical effectiveness is dubious at best, but it has been repeatedly held up, for eight long months, by explicit Russian (and tacit Chinese and French) veto threats. Meanwhile, not a single international weapons monitor has set foot in Iraq since last fall. By now all traces of UNSCOM's earlier work have been erased, and Saddam has doubtless been hard at work rebuilding his capabilities in weapons of mass destruction.

Following the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War, Saddam had two principal policy objectives: first, to break free of the U.N. weapons inspection regime created to discover and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile delivery systems; and, second, to escape the international economic sanctions that prevented him from funding a rearmament campaign. Before Saddam could achieve either of these objectives, of course, the U.S.-led Persian Gulf coalition would have to fragment politically. Which, unfortunately, is exactly what's happened. The Clinton administration has been inattentive to, and feckless about, foreign policy in general. As a particular consequence, no meaningful U.S.-led Persian Gulf coalition any longer exists.

The Security Council's failure to reinstitute weapons inspections in Iraq is one piece of painful evidence. The neutering of international economic sanctions is another. Saddam has cynically exploited the U.N.'s oil-for-food program with the help of sympathetic U.N. administrators on the ground in Iraq. At U.N. headquarters in New York, Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently underscored his continuing solicitude for Saddam by reappointing Hans von Sponeck as the chief U.N. official in Baghdad. He did so over unusually vehement American and British objections; State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin had publicly announced that "we do not have confidence in [von Sponeck's] leadership of this effort. [He] has undermined the role of the humanitarian coordinator in Iraq." Nonetheless, Annan, who owes his election as secretary-general to Madeleine Albright more than anyone else, felt free to ignore her wishes. More recently, he has implicitly criticized the United States, complaining about the Security Council's alleged tardiness in approving contracts under the oil-for-food program.

In short, Saddam Hussein has very nearly realized his postwar goals. Yes, Iraq is still subject to a desultory American air campaign (we now drop bombs filled with cement in order to minimize Iraqi casualties). Yes, Baghdad remains isolated in polite diplomatic circles. Still, Saddam is now poised to do what he loves to do most: threaten both his regional neighbors and the West. In late November, Iraq prompted a dollar-per-barrel spike in

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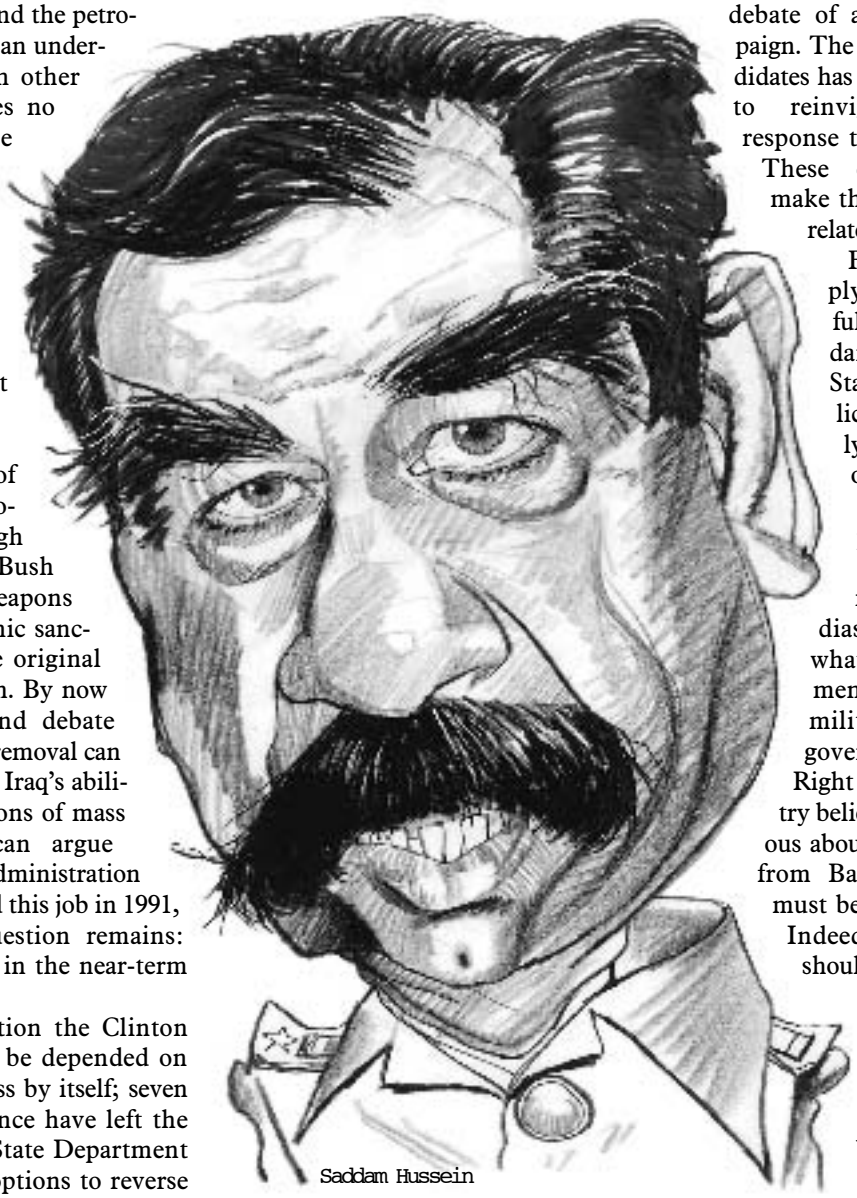
the global price of crude oil simply by cutting off its pipeline flows (to protest what it called an inadequate extension of the oil-for-food program). Oil prices haven't been so high since nine years ago, when coalition forces were making final preparations to liberate Kuwait and the petroleum market was in an understandable frenzy. In other words, Saddam sees no reason why he shouldn't now exercise the same international clout he had before he lost the war.

The Clinton administration won't admit it, but the downfall of Saddam's regime was an unspoken aim of every postwar program pushed through the U.N. by the Bush administration: weapons inspections, economic sanctions, and even the original oil-for-food program. By now it should be beyond debate that only Saddam's removal can realistically forestall Iraq's ability to produce weapons of mass destruction. We can argue whether the Bush administration should have finished this job in 1991, but the urgent question remains: How to get it done in the near-term future?

It is not a question the Clinton administration can be depended on adequately to address by itself; seven years of incompetence have left the White House and State Department with precious few options to reverse the downward drift of our Iraq policy. As already noted, any forthcoming Security Council weapons inspection regime will almost certainly be toothless. Secretary Albright appears to have lost significant influence over Secretary-General Annan on Iraq matters, leaving Saddam basically free to deploy his oil revenues as he sees fit.

The embarrassments and setbacks continue unabated. Last month the Iraqi resistance met in New York to coordinate its efforts; President Clinton had to be dragged into the effort, kicking and screaming, by Congress—which appropriated funds for the resistance over administration objections. This month, the American U.N. delegation just barely eked out a Security Council extension of the oil-for-food program: France simply refused to vote, and Russia, China, and Malaysia abstained.



Saddam Hussein

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

Who, then, if not our incumbent president and his aides, can finally refocus national attention on this crucial and dangerous corner of the world—and thus help force new energy into a faltering and flaccid policy? The men who want to be our *next* president might do so if they choose. Few things reorder American political priorities like the high-profile debate of a presidential campaign. The current crop of candidates has a major opportunity to reinvigorate the U.S. response to Saddam Hussein. These candidates should make three clear and interrelated points.

First, instead of simply whispering hopefully about a post-Saddam Iraq, the United States must state publicly and unequivocally that his removal is our paramount objective. In the process, we must encourage resistance not only by the Iraqi diaspora, but also by whatever dissident elements exist within the military and Saddam's governing structures. Right now, no other country believes that we are serious about removing Saddam from Baghdad. The world must be made to believe it. Indeed, Saddam's fate should be the catalyst for a larger debate about the legitimate uses of American military force: Should force be employed not only to solve an immediate strategic problem, but also to eliminate the regime which has precipitated it?

Second, Saddam's elimination must become an international priority, not just an American one. Secretary Albright has now achieved passage of the Helms-Albright legislation on U.N. arrearages, one result of which, the bill's proponents suppose, will be revived American influence in

U.N. circles. We should make Iraq the first test of their theory and insist that the oil-for-food program be run principally by U.N. Secretariat officials in New York, under the close supervision of the Security Council. Moreover, we should insist that economic sanctions against Iraq be restored to full effectiveness—including armed enforcement by the members of a recreated Persian Gulf coalition. If we cannot have weapons inspectors operating effectively inside Iraq, we must do a far better job of ensuring that critical materials do not enter the country.

Third, we need a coherent policy on the use of force against Iraq, one that also has domestic American and international support. Estimates differ widely over the effect of the quiet bombing campaign we have been conducting for the past year, but few believe it really threatens Saddam. One thing is certain: The administration's failure to make a strong public case for the bombing leaves us diplomatically vulnerable should there be a mishap.

If, in fact, the air campaign is achieving important objectives, we should say so, and step it up. More boldly, we should say that, along with his immediate coterie of advisers, Saddam himself, as commander in chief of the Iraqi military, remains a legitimate target. And we should deal with him accordingly.

Iraq is an unhappy subject for the United States, which is one reason it has lately faded from both media and executive branch attention. Still, we cannot afford to continue on our current path, all but ignoring Saddam Hussein. He represents a serious and growing security threat which, left unchecked by American resolve, may soon make even the worst of our past frustrations and failures in Iraq seem very small indeed. Time is not our friend. The United States has an excellent chance, during the next year's presidential campaign, to actively reconsider its policy toward Iraq. If we miss the opportunity, there is little hope that we will ever get another. ♦

Sales Tax: The Next Generation

What, you mean you've never paid taxes on goods you've bought online? **By Edmund Walsh**

IF YOU BOUGHT ANYTHING over the Internet this holiday season, chances are you're a tax cheat. That's because online retailers from Amazon.com to Yahoo! rarely include sales taxes in the prices their customers pay. As a result, most buyers don't realize they're supposed to remit the tax themselves to the state in which they live.

States, of course, tend not to enforce this part of their tax codes, a fact mail-order retailers and their customers have taken advantage of for decades. The Supreme Court ruled in 1992 that while states can certainly levy taxes on their residents' purchases, they have no authority to force companies outside their borders to collect them.

This sleepy corner of the law is becoming contentious again, thanks to the rise of online shopping. Though less than one percent of retail sales now takes place on the Internet, everyone expects the amount to explode. Revenue-hungry states, nat-

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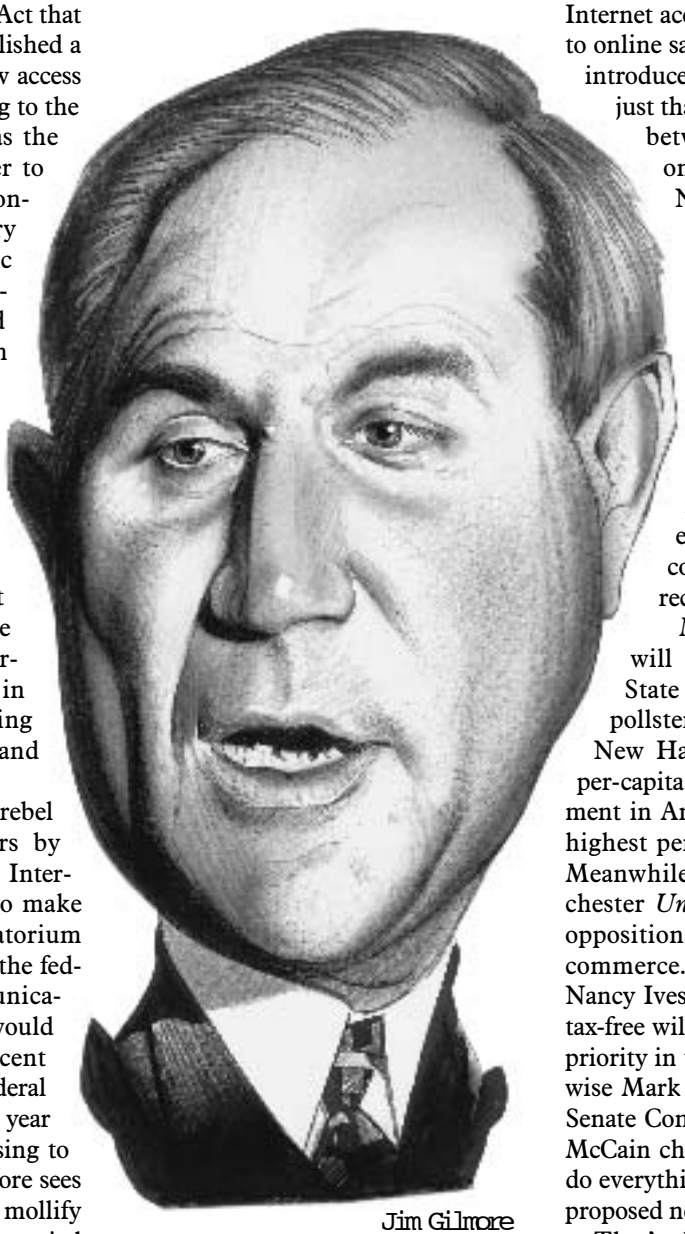
urally, are as eager as anyone to participate in the growth of e-commerce. And sales taxes are only one of the many potential sources of revenue now lumped under the umbrella of Internet taxation—a suddenly hot topic in the New Hampshire presidential primary and sure to figure high on Congress's agenda next year.

The Internet Tax Freedom Act that Congress passed in 1998 established a three-year moratorium on new access taxes—a fee just for connecting to the Internet. Left unresolved was the question of how and whether to tax online sales. Instead, Congress created the Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce to study the complexities of current tax law and formulate a recommendation to Congress. That report is expected in April.

Last week in San Francisco, the 19-member commission, chaired by Virginia governor Jim Gilmore, held the third of four meetings. State and local government officials, led by governor Mike Leavitt of Utah, stressed fairness to traditional retailers in making the case for applying sales taxes equally to online and "real world" merchants.

Gilmore has emerged as a rebel among Republican governors by pushing a ban on all taxes on Internet commerce. He would also make permanent the current moratorium on access taxes and eliminate the federal excise tax on telecommunications. At the same time, he would allow states to levy a 1 percent telecom tax—a third of the federal tax but still some $1.7 billion a year for state governments, increasing to $3.4 billion in ten years. Gilmore sees that final proposal as a way to mollify his fellow governors, who are worried that tax-free Internet shopping will eat into their sales tax revenue flows.

Commission members are split on Gilmore's proposal. And with politicians aligned against one another, the business community's representatives on the panel have become increasingly influential. David Pottruck, president of Charles Schwab, acknowledged a consensus on the issue of banning Internet access taxes and told the other commissioners he personally favored eliminating the telecom tax. The sales tax issue, he said, "is not a problem today," with e-commerce sales still relatively small and state treasuries flush with revenue from a booming economy. He noted widespread agreement that the existing system of sales-tax collection and administration is too complicated and burdensome to business. Ted Waitt, CEO of the computer maker Gateway, similarly urged the commission to address the question of "our total strategy for taxation in the 21st century."



Jim Gilmore

The issue of Internet taxation has cropped up in the last presidential campaign of the 20th century for a couple of reasons. John McCain favors a permanent moratorium on Internet access taxes as well as an end to online sales taxes. In September he introduced a bill in the Senate to do just that. George W. Bush, caught between Texas's dependence on sales taxes (Texas, like New Hampshire, has no income tax) and the demands of anti-tax conservatives, has hedged his bets by proposing a three- to five-year extension of the current moratorium on access taxes but has so far refused to voice an opinion about online sales taxes before the e-commerce commission makes its final recommendation.

McCain's eagerness to act will surely appeal to Granite State voters. A recent study by pollster Frank Luntz found that New Hampshire has the highest per-capita level of high-tech employment in America and boasts the fifth highest percentage of adults online. Meanwhile, the conservative Manchester *Union Leader* has voiced its opposition to any taxes on Internet commerce. McCain spokeswoman Nancy Ives says keeping the Internet tax-free will be McCain's number one priority in the Senate next year. Likewise Mark Buse, staff director of the Senate Commerce Committee, which McCain chairs, said the senator "will do everything in his power to kill any proposed new taxes."

That's the hurdle self-styled fairness advocates must overcome. With McCain leading the charge against any plan for tax-equalization, local officials and bricks-and-mortar retailers must generate a groundswell of support for taxing transactions that currently escape scrutiny. National

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

Governors Association executive director Ray Sheppach, who thinks McCain and Gilmore are "making a decision to give a clear advantage" to online businesses, believes the tide in Congress can be turned only by a concerted effort led by traditional retailers. They must convince members of Congress that exempting online purchases from taxation will "devastate small-town America." James Goldberg of the North American Retail Dealers Association says retailers and their allies must "keep hammering home the point . . . that we are not talking about new taxes." Rather, the question is "all about fairness and equity."

Gilmore, on the other hand, will continue to lead his commission secure in the knowledge that a friendly Congress will ultimately decide the fate of Internet taxes. A philosophically aggressive opponent of taxation, Gilmore told the commission, "I don't start from the assumption that everything in America ought to be taxed." The governor fends off suggestions that exempting online purchases from taxation is a significant advantage for Internet merchants. "It is an advantage," Gilmore told the commission, but "there are other advantages all throughout commerce," including new roads that favor large retail outlets and public money spent on sports complexes. Furthermore, Gilmore insists states won't be losing that much money anyway. He points to an Ernst & Young study indicating that states lost less than $170 million in 1998—or one-tenth of one percent of total sales tax revenues for the year—due to consumers avoiding taxes on their online purchases.

Gilmore's numbers are significantly lower than the National Governors' Association estimate of $10 billion a year in lost revenue by 2003. But his argument will certainly appeal to online shoppers looking to maintain a clear conscience on tax day. The effect of his proposal, Gilmore insists, would be "to decriminalize all those illegal people out there." An effect voters are sure to appreciate. ♦

The Lessons of 1952

Will the GOP presidential nominee shape his party's foreign policy?

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

CONSERVATIVES are quarreling again about American foreign policy—about how forceful it should be and to what extent it should reflect the nation's values and ideals. But this time, far from remaining the exclusive property of pundits and intellectuals, the debate is also being waged in the political arena. Among Republican presidential aspirants, to be sure, the disagreements have been fairly nuanced. George W. Bush's advisers are all committed internationalists—as for that matter are candidates Forbes and McCain. The same, however, cannot be said of the GOP's congressional wing, which, especially in the House, has been grappling over questions presumed to have been settled half a century ago.

According to our most respected editorial pages and numerous other opinion-makers, this distance between the GOP's executive and legislative factions raises the question: How will the Republican nominee devise a coherent foreign policy stance? The divide between the two wings, after all, has already yielded a schizophrenic critique of the Clinton record, with candidates for the GOP presidential nomination chiding the administration for not employing

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American power forcefully enough, while a chorus of legislators condemns it on exactly the opposite count.

Senator McCain, for example, has gone so far as to espouse a policy of "rogue state rollback." Similarly, Gov. Bush's bid to craft a "distinctly American internationalism" condemns those in his party who would have America retreat into isolation and thereby "abandon our allies and our ideals" and "invite challenges to our power." As to the congressional Republicans who are the objects of Bush's rebuke, they have resurrected caustic phrases like "gunpoint democracy," "imperial bullying," and "elite interventionism" that were thought to have been banished forever from the GOP's lexicon. And while such invective is the exception rather than the norm, a consensus appears to have emerged in their ranks: Not only is the United States wielding power promiscuously, but it is doing so at the expense of our vital interests, which it neglects in the name of a "democratic crusade."

Yet this is hardly the first time Republicans have been split down the middle with respect to the aims of American foreign policy. Indeed, the current debate revives an argument that came close to splintering the Republican party in 1952, when the presidential wing of the party assailed President Truman for being insufficiently bellicose, and the congressional wing criticized him for being excessively so.

As to the first of these, the presidential wing embraced John Foster Dulles's "policy of boldness," which denounced as weak and static Truman's "mere" containment of tyranny, and pledged a "positive" program of rollback and liberation. But Dulles, whom Eisenhower would appoint secretary of state over the protestations of many congressional Republicans, equally disowned those within his own party who he claimed "would turn their backs on all the world's problems and wrap the United States in some magically impregnable isolation."

This view was exemplified by Senate majority leader Robert Taft—Mr. Republican, as he was known to the public—and like-minded colleagues who had pilloried the Marshall Plan, ridiculed the establishment of NATO as a needless provocation, and demanded that the United States "withdraw without condition from Korea." Averring that "we should not commit troops to continental soil," Taft promoted instead the "development of an all powerful air force" behind which America could rest secure.

Yet far from relishing a confrontation with the Taft wing, Dulles implored Ike to craft the "foreign plank in the Republican platform" so as to "avoid an open battle between the isolationist wing and internationalist wing" of the party. That caution yielded a muddled blueprint that both censured Truman for abandoning "countless human beings to despotism" and touted Taft's elixir of deterrence through airpower and nuclear weapons. "It looks," Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson later observed, "as if Taft lost the nomination but won the nominee."

It was Eisenhower, however, who won the election. With that in mind, Philip Zelikow, who served in the National Security Council under President Bush, advises candidate Bush to follow "the same path in winning the battle of ideas that President Dwight Eisenhower used successfully in the campaign of 1952"—that is, to stress party unity on matters of foreign policy. And Zelikow is not the only one advising Bush to make room for the new minimalists in the name of party unity. In fact, a few months before he enunciated the tenets of his "distinctly American internationalism," which repudiated the congressional posture, Bush espoused a policy that was largely congruent with it. In a September speech on national defense, he took care to highlight aims he shared with congressional Republicans, among them "an immediate review of our overseas deployments" and "withdrawal from places like Kosovo and Bosnia."

On matters of foreign policy, however, such nods to party unity have been known to exact a high price: Contradictory pledges made during campaigns all too often become enshrined in contradictory policies. And here, too, the Eisenhower example is instructive.

As policy, for instance, the split-the-difference mantra of deterrence through airpower and nuclear weapons proved ill-suited to many of the challenges America actually confronted—non-deterrable threats such as war in Indochina and revolution in the Third World. (A lesson, perhaps, for those congressmen who tout SDI not merely as a vital addition to our arsenal—which it surely is—but as a means of extricating ourselves from global entanglements.)

Second, and perhaps more important, the gap between the Eisenhower administration's aggressive hyperbole and the reality of its tentative foreign policy led to the justifiable impression of American hypocrisy—most notably, in the case of the Hungarian uprising.

As shortly became apparent, compromise makes for strategic incoherence when the objects of compromise are irreconcilable creeds like isolationism and internationalism. Rather than look to the Eisenhower era for his model, then, the Republican front-runner might look to the resolution of a still earlier dispute between the GOP's presidential and congressional wings.

Theodore Roosevelt, too, found his vision of America's global role hamstrung by Republican obstructionists on Capitol Hill. And so he wielded executive power to send the U.S. fleet around the world, dispatch forces to South America, engineer our acquisition of the Panama Canal Zone, and win a Nobel Prize for brokering peace between Japan and Russia. Rather than allow himself to be constrained by congressional Republicans, TR led them. If there is again to be a coherent Republican foreign policy, our next president would do well to follow his example. ♦

The Drug Court Revolution

Do we really want therapy rather than justice to become the basis of our legal system?

By Eric Cohen

At the most recent Washington, D.C., Drug Court "graduation"—a monthly event for drug defendants who have successfully stayed in treatment—Mark Williams stole the show. Williams, a transvestite dressed in checkered hot pants with matching pocketbook, gave spirited testimony. "I want to thank God. And all my lawyers. And I want to say that you've got to want to stop smoking. You've got to put your mind to it."

The rest of the graduating class—about 20 in all—whooped and hollered from the jury box. Judge Russell Canan, who was presiding over the ceremony, couldn't help but chuckle. "This is one of the happier days we have in Drug Court," said Canan. "The people we are honoring here today have gained some respect for the law and for themselves." Williams, by the way, is still awaiting trial on prostitution charges. "He's very creative," his lawyer told me. "Very smart."

After the speech and the applause, the clerk read Williams's case, a misdemeanor drug charge. Then the case was dropped—the reward for the "client" (as all defendants are called) having completed the drug court program, a year-long regimen of therapy and frequent court visits.

In addition to getting his drug charge dropped or reduced, each of the graduates receives a certificate of achievement and a copy of Iyanla Vanzant's 1993 book *Acts of Faith: Daily Meditations for People of Color*. Most of the graduates make speeches—very heartfelt, gracious testimonials. They thank the judge, their treatment counselor, and (some of them, anyway) God. This is, they say, a new beginning.

The event is moving, and perfectly attuned to our therapeutic age. Which is exactly the way the drug court "professionals" (as the lawyers, judges, and counselors who run the nation's drug courts call themselves) have designed it to be. Graduations should be "used to capture the public's interest and garner favorable media publicity," writes Judge Stephen Marcus, one of the gurus of the drug court movement. "The Drug Court graduation is the Super Bowl, NBA Finals, and World Series all rolled into one." The "emotional appeal" and "tears of joy" make journalists, politicians, and lawyers into "immediate converts."

Drug courts are the cutting edge of therapeutic jurisprudence, the latest panacea in the ongoing war against drugs. They are the brainchild of Attorney General Janet Reno, who organized the first drug court in 1989 when she was state's attorney for Dade County, Florida.

Reno's vision—a courtroom unencumbered by traditional rules, a criminal justice system that focuses on the "individual needs of the client" rather than equal justice for all, cooperative therapy rather than adversarial trials—has taken the nation by storm. Five years ago there were only 12 drug courts nationwide. Now there are almost 400, with hundreds more in the planning stages, backed by over $100 million in federal seed money. Some 140,000 defendants who would otherwise have been prosecuted for non-violent drug offenses have enrolled in drug courts since 1989.

Perhaps as significant, the drug court advocacy machine is firmly in place—and growing. There is a National Drug Court Institute; a drug court office in the Department of Justice; a drug court journal; hundreds of national, state, and local associations for drug court professionals; and an endless stream of resource guides and pamphlets selling the concept with all the public relations savvy of Madison Avenue—think *Chicken Soup for the Addict*. This elaborate promotional apparatus, it turns

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out, is all the more necessary, because the drug courts' results, as yet, don't speak for themselves.

Drug court is, as its advocates triumphally declare, "a revolution in justice." It did not come out of nowhere, though, but is the culmination of three decades of agitation to supplant traditional criminal justice with therapeutic rehabilitation.

In 1970, Congress passed the Treatment and Rehabilitation Act, which gave courts the authority to commit drug offenders to treatment. In response, "Treatment Diversion" programs sprang up across the country, bolstered by social science claims that the root cause of drug use is economic deprivation and medical science claims that drug addiction is a physiological problem largely beyond individual control. Junkies were redefined as victims of both an undeserved social pathology and a sickness.

The largest and most important treatment organization was TASC—Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime—formed in 1972 with the explicit purpose of "linking treatment and the judicial process." But treatment and justice remained distinct. Where appropriate, the courts diverted offenders into treatment programs, but the purpose of the criminal justice system—namely, to mete out impartial justice under the law and punish the guilty—was maintained. Judges were judges, prosecutors were prosecutors, and therapists were therapists.

In drug court, however, the mission of the court is transmuted. Offenders are now patients; prosecutors, defense attorneys, therapists, and judges are all part of the "treatment team." Indeed, drug court judges talk directly to "clients," who are encouraged to "share their feelings" in the courtroom. Treatment counselors make detailed presentations of the "client's" progress—*Mr. Young has suffered a setback this month*; *Mr. Smith has maintained a firm pattern of sobriety*; *Ms. Jones has made significant contributions to group process and is ready to update her treatment plan*—while prosecutors remain silent. After the monthly progress report, the treatment counselor makes a recommendation about the client's status in the drug court program, which the judge, after a few words of encouragement or fatherly scolding, almost always accepts.

"It's really open-court therapy," Judge Canan told me. The judge plays the "role of confessor, taskmaster, cheerleader, and mentor," says Jeffrey Tauber, a former judge from Oakland, Calif., now president of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. "We try to build self-

esteem. I'm talking in terms of treatment, love, and care," says Judge Robert Fogan.

In most jurisdictions, participation in drug court is voluntary. Those who are eligible—and this varies somewhat from court to court, though it generally includes any defendant indicted for a nonviolent drug offense—are given the choice of standing trial or entering mandatory, court-regulated treatment. If the defendant elects drug court, he is assigned to a case manager—a "licensed addiction treatment professional"—who explains the program in a lengthy pretrial orientation. Then the offender comes before the judge, who asks him if he is willing to waive his right to a speedy trial to opt instead for, as Canan puts it, "an opportunity to change your life and clear your record." Once the client agrees, his treatment begins immediately.

The Washington, D.C., treatment facility is state of the art and looks like a mix of pediatrician's office and elementary school. There are pamphlets everywhere—on every drug imaginable, on sexually transmitted diseases, on various government programs. In the lobby, drugs-ruined-my-life videos run nonstop while clients wait for their next counseling session or drug test. The plastic chairs in the therapy rooms are in a perfect circle. There are pictures on the wall from the most recent drug court picnic. There is a hand-painted sign that reads: "We will involve you in a process of self-evaluation and positive productive change, while also responding to your individual needs and concerns. . . . We believe you can fly. Don't you?"

Upon arrival, the client undergoes a lengthy psychological evaluation: He signs pages and pages of release forms. He takes an AIDS test. He answers hundreds of multiple-choice questions about his childhood problems, family problems, drug use, and sexual behavior. He writes an autobiography ("for the purpose of allowing us to know the inner you"). Many clients are then referred to other psychiatrists and psychologists for further evaluation. Some end up in in-patient treatment centers. The rest begin treatment with the drug court staff.

The Washington Drug Court has four phases of treatment: "Orientation and Assessment," "Stabilization and Cognitive Restructuring," "Transition," and "Maintenance." Each week, the client attends two group therapy sessions ("feelings processing groups"), receives individual counseling, and takes substance abuse education classes. He completes a series of assignments and worksheets—first to "explore his addiction," then to develop a "recovery and warning sign management plan." He learns to identify "intervention points," "triggers," "action urges," and "internal dysfunctions." He builds a "personal recovery schedule" and learns "effective feelings management."

Strikingly, in all the hundreds of pages of workbooks, self-assessment guides, and personality tests, there is never a mention of morality, character, virtue, or right and wrong. One personality test asks the clients if they "turn to God" for answers. A yes response means—categorically—that "you are in the late stage of addiction."

When I ask a number of the therapists and the judge whether they try to teach any moral lessons to their "clients," they all look stunned, then offended. "We don't frame it as a moral lesson. Your morality isn't necessarily my morality," says Suzzette Brann, the drug court program director. "We don't try to dictate judgments," says Rashida Mims, assistant treatment coordinator. "We don't do that. We can't do that. If I were to attempt to dictate my values on someone I'd be doing them a disservice." Says Judge Canan: "My personal morals may or may not be meaningful to someone else."

Nevertheless, the drug court program does, at its best, teach some moral lessons—if for no other reason than that clients are required to show up on time, hand in assignments, and examine their lives. More important, offenders must remain drug-free to "graduate." Everyone in the program takes two drug tests a week—one on Monday, one on Thursday. A positive test results in "sanctions"—typically three days of "motivational jail." Many participants are sanctioned a number of times before finally staying clean long enough (three months) to graduate. Such relapses are, according to the therapists, part of the recovery.

Advocates claim that drug courts are a "miracle," a "new reality," "our last, best hope." The statistics they cite seem impressive: According to the Department of Justice's drug court program office and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 70 percent of all drug court participants have either finished the program or stayed in treatment; 90 percent of drug tests have been clean; and the recidivism rate for drug court graduates is only 4 percent, compared to "well over 50 percent" of defendants who go through the "traditional adjudication process."

Likewise, the drug court story is heroic, inspirational, a grand social drama with progressive judges and therapists as the protagonists. "A revolution has been going on in the criminal justice system over the past ten years," writes Judge Tauber. "We understood it would take a new kind of community . . . a circle of interveners . . . to restore our cities and our people to health."

A closer look at the statistics, however, tells a far less heroic tale. The most extensive independent evaluation of the nation's drug courts—conducted by the General Accounting Office in 1997—concluded that current evidence "did not firmly establish whether drug court programs were successful in reducing drug relapse and offender recidivism." The GAO report cited three major problems with the available studies: Most drug court programs were still in their first or second year of operation; most courts did not keep follow-up data on the rate at which "clients" relapsed or were rearrested; and most studies made no comparison between drug court participants and nonparticipants.

Other studies by outside agencies—including the Rand Corporation and the American Bar Association—have found that drug courts have had no discernible effect on crime rates. James Nolan, a sociologist whose recent book *The Therapeutic State* devotes a chapter to drug courts, found that despite the claims of drug court advocates, the most important factor in the apparent success of drug courts is the criminal history of the defendants, not the treatment program. In addition, Nolan found that many of the leading studies are based on questionable, often misleading assumptions—such as excluding early dropouts from the calculation of success rates or counting as success stories individuals who have stayed in the program for more than a year (despite the fact that such career participants have not graduated because they routinely fail their drug tests).

In fact, many drug court professionals reject on principle evaluations of their program according to such empirical, hardheaded criteria as recidivism, relapse rates, and urinalysis testing. They believe, as one put it, that an emphasis on statistics undermines "the real human realities, the changed lives." As Judge Lawrence Terry puts it, we need to "reeducate judges about what success is." A professor of criminal justice at Florida International University conducted a study that found "little difference between persons remaining in the [drug court] program and those who have not." Still, he concluded that "there is absolutely no question that the drug court is having a very positive effect upon the lives of many people."

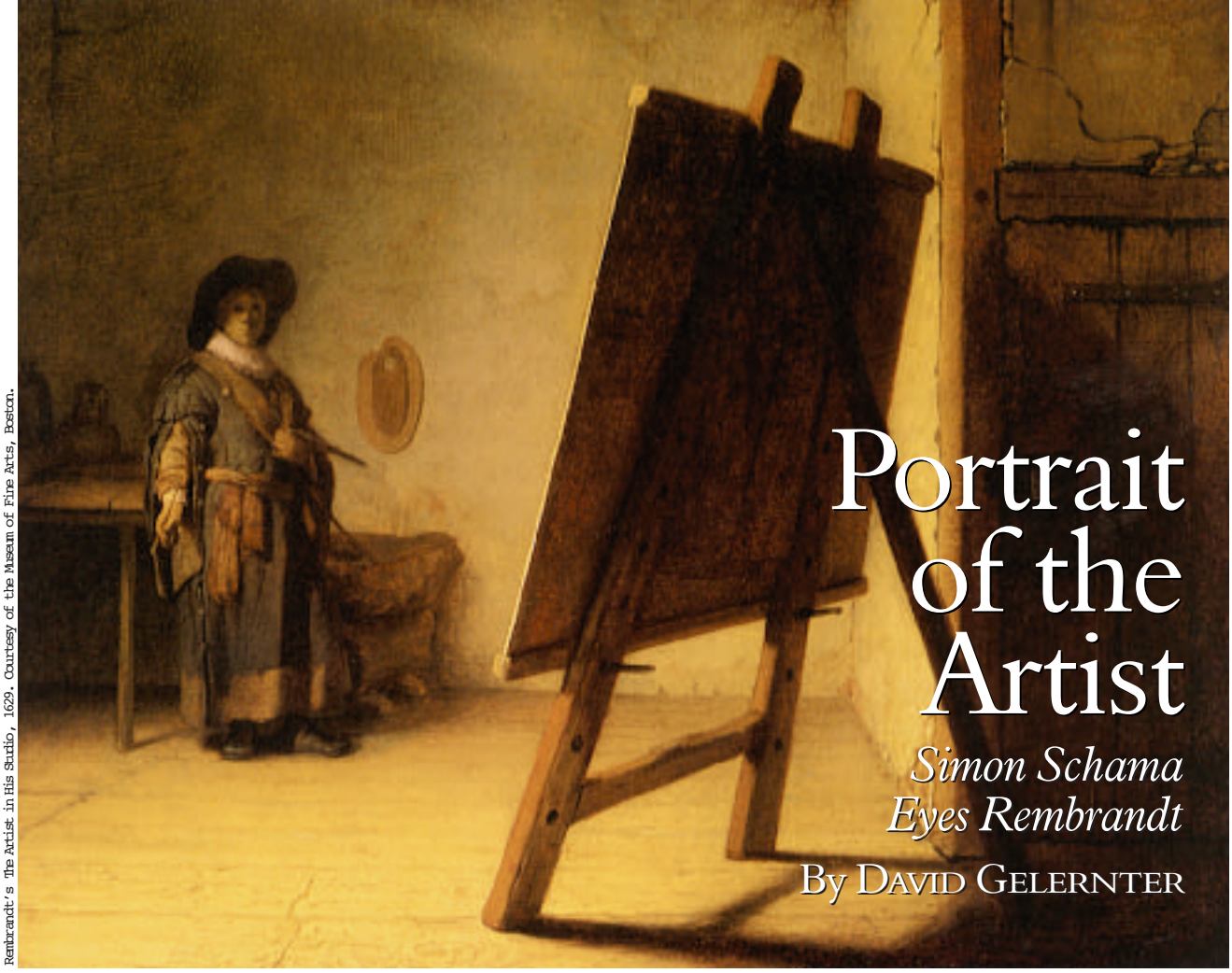
No one doubts that the drug court movement will expand, even though its effectiveness remains in serious question. But the rise of therapeutic jurisprudence raises sobering questions about the future of American criminal justice: Is the purpose of courts to "meet the individual needs" of defendants, as the drug court literature routinely assumes? Are justice and therapy one and the same thing? Should judges really play the role of "confessor, cheerleader, and mentor" to the accused who come before them? In the present euphoria over the "drug court revolution," these questions are almost never pondered.

For the fact is that the most passionate advocates for drug courts have a thoroughgoing contempt for "traditional justice." When they call the present system "adversarial" they mean to disparage it, and they mock as antiquated the idea that a judge should be a "dispassionate, disinterested magistrate." They see drug courts as the first step in the transformation of the courts into a wholly therapeutic enterprise. They want to expand the therapeutic model to cases of domestic violence, larceny, prostitution, and even rape. The individuals who commit these crimes are sick, they insist, and should be treated by therapists rather than punished and exiled.

There is no doubt something very pragmatic and sensible about trying to get addicts off drugs, which explains why many prominent conservatives—James Q. Wilson, John J. DiIulio Jr., Jeb Bush, Rudolph Giuliani—have had nice things to say about drug courts. Indeed, when it comes to dealing with most drug-related misdemeanors, drug courts are actually more demanding and coercive than the usual suspended sentence and probation. Offenders who would otherwise be unwatched or at best loosely monitored are instead kept to a rigorous schedule and drug-tested twice a week. Moreover, the best drug courts process cases quickly, which, as Wilson argues, links crime and punishment in the defendant's mind.

What's more, there is no question that the present system—the revolving door of drugs and crime—is in need of reform. As DiIulio recently wrote, two million prisoners, roughly a quarter of them drug-only offenders, are enough. A self-governing people should not abandon the effort to help drug offenders become decent citizens again. The principles that underlie this effort, however, are important. And it is here that the drug court revolution is most worrisome.

The Washington, D.C., Drug Court tells its clients that lifelong therapy is a "part of healthy living." The evidence so far—from the entrenched moral relativism of the therapists to the transformation of lawyers and judges into "helping professionals"—suggests that therapeutic justice will lead not to the remoralization of society but to the rise of a therapeutic state. Instead of an explosion in the prison population, then, we would have an explosion in the patient population. This is not an outcome that a free society should welcome. ♦



Rembrandt's The Artist in His Studio, 1629. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Portrait of the Artist

Simon Schama Eyes Rembrandt

By David Gelernter

Rembrandt's face is the best-known, best-loved face in art history, and it is the ghost in art's mirror—humbling in its humility, reproaching with its gently raised eyebrows every artist who plays the fool for fame or fortune, haunting with its intimate faraway eyes every other artist's attempt at art's fundamental rite of self-portraiture. It is the nearest art has to a conscience.

Rembrandt's paintings have the beckoning aura of warm tents on cold nights. Once you are inside, they envelop you. Writers routinely use the language of light to describe intangible, invisible states of mind: "illumination," "clarity," "spark." For painters, such metaphors are harder to wield; no artist ever surpassed Rembrandt in wielding them. The golden light that fills his paintings seems like the actual stuff of spirit, the light of thought.

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Rembrandt's colors are relentlessly warm; he used the warmest palette of any great painter. The metal surfaces he depicts are apt to be gold, not silver. His reds are orangey, his yellows golden, his greens earthy brown. A Rembrandt pearl has golden warmth, not pearly coolness. His hatred of blue verges on the pathological. Modern scholars point out that the famous painting that has been called *The Night Watch* since the late eighteenth century is actually a daylight scene; it is said to have picked up its name because of surface grime. But today it stands degrimed—and it could still be mistaken for a night scene. Rembrandt hates blue so much (and ambiguity so little) that he omits the blue sky even when a painting seems to call for it.

Rembrandt's Eyes
by Simon Schama
Knopf, 728 pp., $50

Rembrandt's figures seem detached, in a remarkable way—while looking you straight in the eye. They offer you the intimacy of a friend who knows you so well, he can acknowledge your presence without interrupting his train of thought. In a whole series of later masterpieces (for example the *Portrait of Jan Six*, or *Saint Bartholomew*, or the Frick *Self-Portrait*), the subject looks right at you but thinks about something else.

Rembrandt's paintings nearly always have an immediacy that reflects an unusual cognitive personality: Every artist thinks in images, but some don't merely think in pictures, they think *by making* pictures. Instead of pondering, they draw or they paint. Another artist might have thought obscene thoughts about his critics; Rembrandt made obscene pictures of them. He left a trail of vulgar, rude, and scatological images that has upset critics and admirers for centuries. But his unusual style of thought accounts also for his greatest achievement: the invention of a type of light that seems like a direct emanation of mind, that makes spirit visible almost in the sense that night-goggles make infrared

Scala/Art Resource

Raphael's The School of Athens*, 1510, in the Vatican.*

visible. His art extends the eye's capacity to see.

Rembrandt's range was never broad, and grew narrower as he matured. Critics sometimes praise his range (of colors, moods, media, brushstrokes)—which is like praising the range of cut diamonds. Diamonds do come in several colors; they don't all look alike. But their similarities overwhelm their differences. The celebrated "Rembrandt Look" appears on the faces of men and women, old and young, Jews and gentiles, whites and blacks, Biblical heroes, ancient Greek philosophers and modern merchants.

Rembrandt recreated one image again and again (or reinstalled one spirit in a long line of bodies) with a fanatic stubbornness unequaled until Alberto Giacometti's work in the twentieth century. Giacometti kept remaking the same image because he saw each fresh attempt as a fresh failure, another failed effort to translate into paint, clay, or plaster the idea that obsessed him. We have no reason to think that Rembrandt saw himself as a failure—but every reason to understand his work in terms of an all-consuming compulsion.

The historian Simon Schama is an admirable man. He is a formidable and respected authority on the seventeenth century, and, more important, he is serious about scholarship and art. Today's hot topics in academic art history—gender, race, class, Eurocentrism, multiculturalism, the oppressive tyranny of white males—he doesn't believe are even worth dismissing. In *Rembrandt's Eyes*, Schama has taken the radical tack of writing about Rembrandt. It is a rare achievement, and he deserves all the honor and glory he can get.

But his book should be evaluated on its own terms. Take, for example, the characteristic Schama discussion of an important early Rembrandt called *The Artist in His Studio* (1629). It is a small, striking painting in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston that shows the artist with a large panel on an easel. We see the panel from behind. The artist turns his head aside from the panel, toward the viewer. The artist seems so tiny compared with the panel that some scholars have guessed it is the fourteen-year-old Gerrit Dou, Rembrandt's student. But art historians who have reconstructed the room conclude that the figure's size is a trick of perspective, the consequence of a viewpoint that is surprisingly close to the easel: The artist is a normal-sized adult, and the consensus agrees with Schama that it is Rembrandt himself.

The dispute about *The Artist in His Studio* tells us something interesting nonetheless about the picture: The reality it depicts is not quite right, not quite real; the image has the disturbing, vaguely unreal quality of a dream.

And what kind of dream? The panel is much bigger than the painter; we conclude that to be a painter is a big, daunting job. Yet this panel that dominates the painter (who looks at us with a vague, cool, questioning look) is also (paradoxically) the best way to convey that the painter dominates his art. Picture a small fisherman next to a big fish. He is a more formidable character by far than a big fisherman next to a small fish. This painting tells us plain-

Knopf

Rembrandt's The Night Watch*, 1642, in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum.*

ly that Rembrandt is a powerful painter, a powerful man, a force to be reckoned with.

Schama's discussion, which covers twenty-five paragraphs, starts with the cracks in the studio wall and explains why plaster tended to crack in Amsterdam and what you could have done about it. Several paragraphs later, he works around to an important question: How would the artist's contemporaries have understood this painting? It was no history painting, no conventional self-portrait. So what was it? Schama's answer: "It was a quiddity." It was "the essence of the matter; the something that made things (in this case *schilderkunst*, the art of painting) just exactly what they were." And furthermore it was "a subtle provocation; a riddling road to illumination."

Now that we've got *that* straightened out, we are ready for a series of themes. Rembrandt could not have transcribed this scene directly from a mirror; he must therefore have imagined it, at least in part; it is therefore "a picture of in-sight [sic]"—a picture of what the artist thinks, not what he sees. Fair enough. Next: The picture is well done, and therefore proves that Rembrandt is skillful, and therefore that Rembrandt "is presenting himself" in this picture "as the personification of painting." (I don't follow the final "therefore," and Schama's big assertion seems extravagant and unnecessary.)

Next, a long excursus about the eye in seventeenth-century painting, leading to a major conclusion: "When Rembrandt made eyes, then, he did so purposefully." Which is surely true, but was obvious before we started. Then an interesting observation: The tiny figure conveys "a sense of creative reverie, the waking sleep which writers on art since Plato have characterized as a kind of trance." A few more paragraphs, a recapitulation of the "personification" theme, and we are done.

The passage is typical Schama. Wherever you go in this book, you are guaranteed to meet sharp observations along the way. You might also conclude that this author takes an awfully long time getting to the point and sometimes never gets there at all. Certainly Schama is an author who feels no need to rein himself in. *Rembrandt's Eyes* is a biography whose subject isn't even *born* until page 201. The young artist's first masterpiece (*The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* of 1632) waltzes into the story on page 342. The book could profit from "You are Here" locator maps every few pages. We find ourselves at one point in the middle of Prince William of Orange-Nassau's wedding festivities—in 1561, nearly half a century before Rembrandt's birth. Evidently the bride's uncle fell off a horse and broke his arm. So what? Well, ten years after the wedding, the Princess of Orange-Nassau had an affair with Jan Rubens, whose son was Peter Paul Rubens, who was greatly admired by Rembrandt. In fact *Rembrandt's Eyes* contains within it (like a nesting Russian doll) a complete biography of Rubens, free of charge—Schama is fascinated with the topic, but Rubens is box office poison and obviously had to be kept out of the title.

The sharp insights keep coming, sometimes with the force of revelation.

Knopf

Rembrandt's Hendrickje Bathing*, 1655, in London's National Gallery. Rubens's* Het Pelsken*, 1638, in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum.*

Schama's comparison of Rubens's *Het Pelsken* (1638), a painting of his wife in her fur coat, only, and Rembrandt's spectacular *Hendrickje Bathing* (1655)—to choose one example out of many—is superb from start to finish. But the process of retrieving the brilliant bits feels less like reading than like panning for gold, and calls for patience and fortitude: Schama has delivered not so much a finished product as a rumbling dump truck full of ore.

Great art can be appreciated against an empty background, but can't be understood unless the background is filled in. The "context of Rembrandt's art" means, to Schama, the culture, politics, and texture of daily life in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. No author has written more comprehensively and convincingly on this theme. But the "context of Rembrandt's art" might also mean Rembrandt's place in art history, his artistic relationships to the great men (largely of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries) who created our modern pictorial sense. But for Schama, the "artistic context" largely means Rubens, with an occasional glance at Titian.

Fair enough; Schama is a historian first, an art critic second. But his method sometimes leaves gaps and potholes in the discussion—which are the last things you would expect in a seven-hundred-page book that does not suffer from terseness.

His analysis of *The Night Watch*, for example, is the usual long ramble, with sharp observations embedded along the way like needles in haystacks. His big claim is that Rembrandt has used this painting to "repudiate" flatness more emphatically than any artist had ever done; Rembrandt's plan called for him to "beat not just Rubens and Titian at their own game but Michelangelo, Caravaggio and Bernini as well."

An intriguing claim—which demands some consideration of the art-historical context. Schama certainly knows the relevant points of comparison, but he doesn't choose to discuss them. *The Night Watch* centers on two striding-forward figures who seem to emerge from the painted surface. Raphael's *School of Athens* (1510) also centers on two striding-forward figures, and Rembrandt's figures are, in a sense, the inverted mirror-images of Raphael's. Raphael's left-side figure extends his left arm upward; Rembrandt's right-side figure extends his right arm downward. The companion figure in *The School of Athens* extends his left hand outward, palm down. In *The Night Watch*, the corresponding figure extends his right hand outward, palm up. Both paintings have arches in the background.

Schama might have used the comparison to strengthen his point: Rembrandt's action tumbles forward out of the plane. Raphael's takes place behind the plane. In fact when you compare the two, Rembrandt's painting seems less a repudiation of flatness than a repudiation of Raphael and the whole poised, balanced, crystalline, classical world of the high Renaissance—in favor of thrusting baroque virility.

But does Schama really mean that Rembrandt has beat *Michelangelo* at the game of "repudiating flatness"? Do the figures in *The Night Watch* explode out of the plane more dramatically than, say, the crucified Haman on the Sistine Ceiling? Why does he think so?

The effort of extracting wisdom from the copious ore of *Rembrandt's Eyes* is complicated by Schama's prose. Rembrandt's paint seems, at one point, "to have been inseminated with vitality." (That must have been a messy procedure.) At another point, Rembrandt's colors "are all stuck on the canvas as if the savages themselves [who are gathered round a table] were clutching it in their fists." "Fists" is a big word for Schama; the artist's early efforts "are what they are: a fistful of bare-knuckled energy." But Rembrandt had no desire to be a "pseudo-Rubensian maker of angel-choked altarpieces."

Any bold, venturesome writer hits sometimes and misses sometimes. If the hits are good, you forgive the misses. But Schama's wild pitches tend to be not merely strange but illogical—as though they had been translated from some Oriental language, badly. "In the seventeenth century, grief had perforce to be economically measured out, for there was a lot to go around." (If there was a lot to go around, why not measure it out generously?) The bells in an Amsterdam tower can be seen "hanging like magpies on a fence." (Do the bells hang upward or do magpies perch downward?) Plain awkwardness lurks in the shadows: "To tell the truth, the three synagogues, one of them Neve Shalom, the Dwelling Place of Peace, housed in the old warehouse called 'Antwerpen,' were the result of another flourishing feature of Jewish culture. . . ." Certain aspects of *The Night Watch* are "breathtakingly scary." The effect is like an elegant white-tutu'd corps de ballet performing in wooden shoes.

Why does Schama write this way? Probably to make sure that no one mistakes his work for academic prose. *Rembrandt's Eyes* reads like an inspired first draft. It could have been more; Schama could have drained the swamps of unnecessary verbiage (or at least built dikes), added art-historical background, cut out the strange images, calmed down the jittery prose. It is a tragedy of today's intellectual marketplace that he didn't feel he had to. Schama easily distinguishes himself from most of his academic colleagues merely by taking art and scholarship seriously.

The end of the twentieth century is a good time for a brilliant book about Rembrandt. You can see a great deal from the vantage point of twentieth-century art. Rembrandt has the moral stature of Giacometti, built on uncompromising artistic seriousness and integrity. But the artist he most resembles is Picasso—another man who thought not in pictures but by making pictures, another master of pictorial rudeness. Picasso too had an overwhelming technique, a strange sense of color, and a proclivity for print-making. Picasso too was aggressively original. Most of Picasso's best pictures are portraits, and many are self-portraits. They were two powerful, physically small, spiritually gigantic men whose lives were dominated by art and women. Rembrandt was the greater artist and the greater man: He worked with unstinting, fanatic stubbornness at the same image again and again until his work was perfect and he died. He paid the price; he was unwilling (unlike Picasso) to satisfy the public's need for novelty, to twist and turn with the times. He died poor. Public taste had long since passed him by. *Time* magazine would not have written him up; CBS would not have covered the funeral.

Of the greatest Old Masters, Rembrandt is the only one who is decently represented in the United States. Growing up in and around New York, I spent some of my happiest hours in the Rembrandt rooms at the Met—and there were several other major masterpieces a mere ten blocks south at the Frick. Many others have had the same experience. Rembrandt is our man, and we are still awaiting a great book about him. Simon Schama would be just the author to write one. ♦

No More Secrets

The opening of a KGB archive.

BY CHRISTIAN LOWE

It was a postulate held by Cold War hawks that Soviet imperialism was the real cause of international tension after World War II. And thus doves' support for "peaceful coexistence" served, according to this hawkish theory, primarily to aid the Soviet Union.

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The doves, of course, labeled this kind of thinking "paranoid McCarthyism," and the hawks had little with which to answer the charge—until now. While the definitive history of the Cold War has yet to be compiled, several books have provided new insights. The release of the Venona intercepts, the publication of Stasi chief Marcus Wolf's memoirs, and now the recent issuing of *The Sword*

and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB have all shed light on Soviet conduct. And the combined effect of these records is the complete vindication of the old Cold Warriors.

For nearly twelve years, from 1972 to 1984, KGB officer Vasili Mitrokhin, while on assignment to transfer the official KGB archive to a new headquarters, painstakingly transcribed the material onto scraps of paper. Upset over the corruption and oppression his totalitarian homeland promoted around the world, Mitrokhin took excessive risks to conduct his espionage, sneaking the records out of his office in his clothing and burying them under the floorboards of his dacha. In 1992, Mitrokhin defected to England with all of his records, handing over to the British intelligence services the most comprehensive and detailed history of Soviet intelligence activities ever obtained by the West.

It had been Mitrokhin's intent to make the archive public. But British intelligence convinced him to delay the release of the material, offering in return the services of the historian Christopher Andrew to help Mitrokhin translate and publish the archive. After almost a decade of research and investigation, *The Sword and the Shield* has at last appeared, one of the most detailed and comprehensive histories of the Soviet KGB.

The first significant information in the Mitrokhin archive is the confirmation of historians' suspicion that the NKVD (the precursor to the KGB) had deeply penetrated the American government. The archive confirms that Franklin Roosevelt's close wartime adviser, Harry Hopkins, was tipping off the NKVD residence in Washington to FBI surveillance and counter-espionage activities. Not even the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor to the CIA, was unscathed. Duncan Chaplin Lee, the personal assistant to the OSS's chief "Wild Bill" Donovan, passed on secrets throughout the war.

The archive also provides insight into the Soviets' penetration of the Manhattan Project. Mitrokhin's notes reveal that most of the scientists recruited by the NKVD were "ideological agents": spies who believed that it was unjust for the United States to be the sole nuclear power. Harvard physicist Theodore Hall, for instance, became a Soviet spy because he felt his espionage would "help the world."

Vasili Mitrokhin

The Sword and the Shield
The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB
by Christopher M. Andrew with Vasili Mitrokhin
Basic, 720 pp., $32.50

But perhaps the most overwhelming effect of *The Sword and the Shield* is Mitrokhin's demonstration of just how single-mindedly the Soviet Union devoted its resources to destabilizing the West. The politicians, activists, and media figures who advocated appeasement and coexistence were being blackmailed, paid, or manipulated by the KGB astonishingly often. The influential French journal *Le Monde*, a frequent critic of conservative Cold War policies, proves to have been heavily subsidized and penetrated by Soviet agents.

The KGB found a vulnerability even in the CIA, when liberal politicians around the world seized on accusations of CIA misdeeds in Cuba and Vietnam as emblematic of America's misguided role in the Cold War. American lawmakers quickly joined the campaign, labeling the CIA a "rogue elephant" and demanded open investigations.

The poster child of this campaign was Philip Agee, a former CIA employee. Agee, who defected to Cuba in the 1970s, published a tell-all book called *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, which exposed hundreds of agents and operations around the world. The Western press showered praise on Agee's book, without ever realizing that throughout the period of Agee's celebrity, the KGB was feeding him detailed information that permanently damaged American intelligence work in the Cold War.

Certainly there was no more important target for the KGB during the Cold War than Ronald Reagan. As early as 1976, the KGB active-measures division was intensively searching for a way to discredit Reagan. Initially, the Soviets thought of trying to sow doubt about Reagan's mental stability by taking advantage of his being the son of an alcoholic. They chose instead to exaggerate his "weak intellectual abilities" by placing KGB-authored stories in newspapers in Denmark, France, and India. For Reagan's reelection bid in 1984, the KGB initiated its most aggressive media campaign, instructing its consulates around the world to promote the slogan "Reagan Means War."

Some of the most sensational revelations in *The Sword and the Shield* concern the KGB's plans to sabotage strategic targets in the event of war with the West. Mitrokhin notes that "By 1959, if not earlier, the most vulnerable points of power transmission lines, oil pipelines, communications

systems, and major industrial complexes in most NATO countries" were marked for sabotage. Intelligence operatives buried hundreds of caches of arms, communications equipment, and explosives throughout Europe. (Acting on a tip from the archive, Swiss authorities earlier this year uncovered one of the covert caches near the village of Berne, finding a container of radio equipment and explosives in the exact spot provided by Mitrokhin.) And, Mitrokhin adds, as early as 1966, Sandinista guerrillas were being dispatched to camps in the Soviet Union for training in sabotage and subversion against the United States—instructed by the KGB on how to infiltrate America by posing as immigrant workers, pick up explosives and weapons at caches throughout the country, and destroy key infrastructures.

While *The Sword and the Shield* will prove an enthralling read for any espionage enthusiast, it is primarily a historical treasure trove, proving beyond any possibility of doubt that the Soviet Union was in fact what the Cold War hawks always said it was: an aggressive and subversive antagonist to the Western democracies. *The Sword and the Shield* provides further vindication that the Cold Warriors were right. ♦

BCA

Good Grief!

Charles M. Schulz calls it quits after fifty years of Peanuts. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

"I wish I could be happy," the boy says. "I think I could be happy if my life had more purpose to it. I also think that if I were happy, I could help others to be happy. Does that make sense to you?"

The little girl with him, who had seemed intently interested in his words, responds: "We had spaghetti at our house three times this month!"

Once again finding himself entirely alone in a world that cannot possibly comprehend him, the little boy utters his mantra of despair: "Good grief!"

Peanuts, A Golden Celebration
The Art and the Story of the World's Best-Loved Comic Strip
by Charles M. Schulz
HarperCollins, 254 pp., $45

The boy is, of course, Charlie Brown, engaged as usual in his desperate struggle to make sense of a chaotic existence—and driven to distraction yet again by the fact that the existential questions which obsess him are of absolutely no interest to his ever-present interlocutor, Lucy Van Pelt, in Charles M. Schulz's comic strip, *Peanuts*.

Life is a simple proposition to Lucy: It's about getting what you want when you want it, and finding a convenient excuse when you botch things. When someone complains about her crabbiness, Lucy responds by saying, "Can I help it if I was born with crabby genes?" Decades before school districts began drumming self-esteem into American children, Lucy Van Pelt was the nation's prime example of the perils of too much self-esteem. "Does it bother you," Charlie Brown wants to know, "to think that there may be people around who dislike you?" "Dislike *me*?" Lucy replies. "How could anyone dislike *me*? There's nothing to dislike! Jealous maybe . . . yes, I could understand that . . . I could see how someone could be jealous of me . . . but dislike? No, that's just not possible . . . So, getting back to your original question . . ." Defeated by Lucy's implacable sense of self, Charlie Brown tells her to forget it.

The argument between Charlie Brown and Lucy has gone on for five decades without coming to a conclusion. He has a good heart; she has good sense. He is will to knowledge; she is will to power. He can't bring himself not to trust her when she offers to hold the football for him to kick; she can't bring herself not to pull the football away every time just for the pleasure of seeing him fall on his back.

It may seem silly to use the word "argument" when discussing the appeal of a comic strip, but it's the heart and soul of this extraordinary cultural phenomenon. *Peanuts* is the most successful and enduring newspaper feature ever created of any kind. It held the attention of readers on six continents because it managed to capture a central human conflict day after day in an endearing and amusing way: Should you struggle with the difficulties of being alive, or try to glide over them in order to achieve happiness?

Cartoonist Schulz, now seventy-seven and suffering from colon cancer, has decided to close up shop next month after fifty years and more than eighteen thousand daily comic strips. Commercially, *Peanuts* and its assorted merchandise have grossed more than $1 billion worldwide. Characters like Charlie Brown, Lucy, and Snoopy are the Casey Joneses and Paul Bunyans of the twentieth century: figures from home-grown folk tales who have become archetypes that may long survive their creator.

Schulz has always hated the name *Peanuts*, which was imposed on him by his syndicate in 1950 after it turned out that his original choice, "Li'l Folks," had been copyrighted by someone else.

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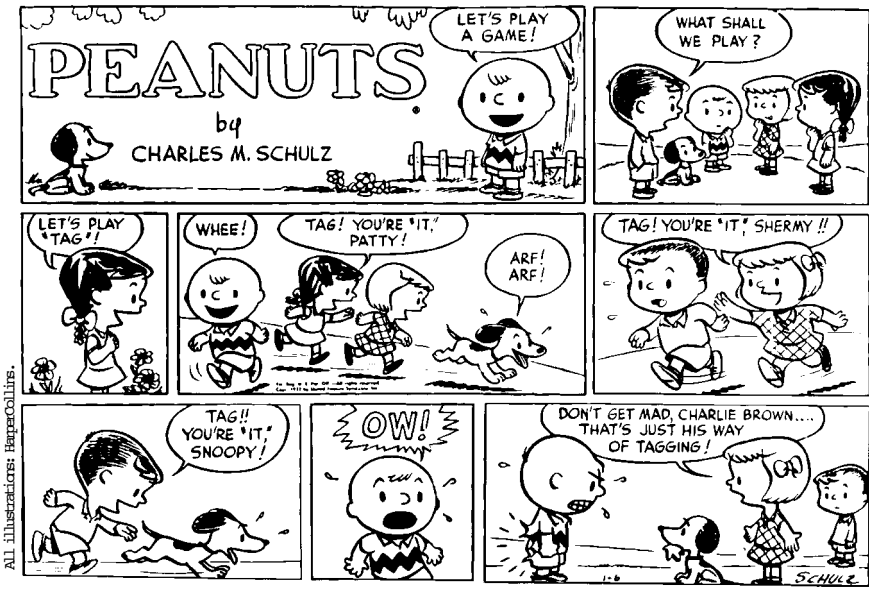


All illustrations: HarperCollins.

Above: A Peanuts *cartoon from 1952. Below: from 1991.*

"Li'l Folks" was a more appropriate name for Schulz's work, because though his characters certainly lead the lives of young children—going to school and summer camp, playing Little League and dress-up, suffering from first crushes and sibling rivalries and chronic dependencies on baby blankets—Schulz endowed them with adult sensibilities and neuroses so well-developed that they more than justified Lucy's decision to open a psychiatric practice instead of a lemonade stand.

No strict Freudian was Lucy; rather, she was an early proponent of cognitive therapy: "What do I do about this loneliness?" Charlie Brown asks. "Get more friends. Five cents, please."

They're obsessives, these kids. Schroeder sits in front of a toy piano playing nothing but Beethoven, always Beethoven, ignoring the vampish Lucy as she tries to catch his fancy. When he's not playing, he's carrying around placards announcing "There Are Only 16 Shopping Days Left Until Beethoven's Birthday."

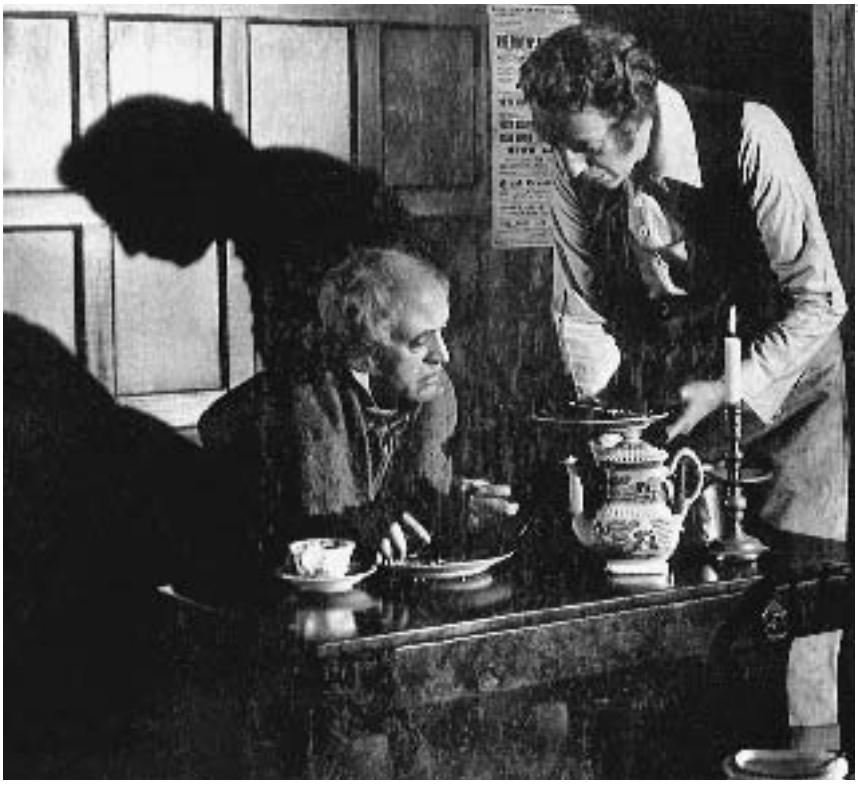
When Linus goes away to camp, he is sure his parents will move away and not leave a forwarding address—and that he will be eaten by a queen snake in the forest. Charlie Brown's younger sister Sally is madly in love with Linus, whom she persists in calling "my sweet babboo" even though every time she does it he hollers from out of frame, "I'M NOT YOUR SWEET BABBOO!"

Charlie Brown is not like the others. He's just trapped inside his own head, and he can't get out. "My anxieties have anxieties," he tells Linus, and he's left to watch in wonder and jealousy as his dog Snoopy—the only real kid in the bunch—gets to lose himself in an active and joyous fantasy life.

It's Snoopy who gets to play the great World War I flying ace; Snoopy who gets to go behind enemy lines during the war wearing a giant mustache and inquiring of the German lovelies, "Wo ist der Root Beer Hall?" And what writer could forget Snoopy's novel, which begins, "It was a dark and stormy night"? In Part One, a shot rings out, a maid screams, and a pirate ship appears on the horizon while in Kansas a young girl is growing up—but not to worry, because as Snoopy assures us, "In Part Two, I tie all of this together."

And it's Snoopy, said to be the most popular cartoon character in the world, who provides Charlie Brown his rare moments of transcendence. The little boy, who often spouts self-defeating philosophies like "I only dread one day at a time," knows certain truths denied to Lucy Van Pelt and all the other too-worldly folk, little or otherwise. Charlie Brown can find joy in catching a snowflake on his tongue, jumping in a big pile of autumn leaves—or just giving a happy Snoopy a hug.

"Happiness is a warm puppy," Charlie Brown says. For that thought alone, Charles M. Schulz deserves his little corner of pop immortality. ♦



Alastair Sim in A Christmas Carol. United Artists.

The Reel Christmas

No miracle on 34th Street.

BY GEORGE MCCARTNEY

In one of their earliest decrees upon reaching the New World, the Puritans outlawed Christmas. It was a heathenish holiday that had nothing to do with Christ's birth. Worse, its festivities were unseemly if not immoral. There was to be none of that in the New Jerusalem. Governor William Bradford made it a point to have people work their fields on December 25 to show their contempt for what he called, with a rare flash of Puritan wit, the Fool's Tide instead of the Yuletide.

Bradford and the Puritans proved uncharacteristically prescient. Over the succeeding centuries, the celebration of Christmas has become almost entirely divorced from its occasion in Bethlehem. What remains is a feverish ordeal of forced bonhomie and manufactured sentiment that is especially the legacy of the late nineteenth century. With the advent of large department stores after the Civil War, merchandisers were quick to recognize an unparalleled economic opportunity in the Christmas tradition and the various stories of St. Nicholas. Campaigns were drummed up to promote the necessity of gifts, toys, and cards for the season.

And then, in our own century, an even more potent force went to work: movies that glamorized the holiday as the ultimate locus of all our material desires. Christmas has never recovered.

It's not difficult to understand why Christ has faded into the background of our Christmas season. Honoring the mystery of the Incarnation in all its terror and promise doesn't promote sales, especially when the instrument of God's entry into human history was a seemingly ordinary girl giving birth in the lowliest of circumstances. This doesn't conjure visions of plenty and luxury.

So our commercial culture has encouraged us to honor instead a generic bonhomie: our softer selves, our better instincts, our fellow feeling—all to be made manifest in the gifts we bestow on one another, the more expensive the better. We've allowed, in other words, the holiday to be ruled by sentimentality, and the consequences can be read in all those harried, fatigued faces we meet during the season. It's exceedingly difficult to feel redeemed while in the grip of the spangled mania of commercial Christmas.

Popular culture confirms this nowhere more than in Christmas movies. Three years ago in the surprisingly cynical and predictably execrable Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle, *Jingle All the Way*, a father maniacally hunts for the season's ultimate toy, an unattainable action figure called Turbo Man. After a series of remarkably humorless misadventures, Schwarzenegger finds himself mistaken for the actor who is to play the toy character in a Christmas day parade. Before he knows what is happening, he's hustled into a superhero costume and put on a float. He has become the toy for which he was desperately searching. We're invited to laugh at this, but how can we? It is such a bitterly accurate rendering of the travesty we've allowed Christmas to become: an obsessive pursuit of commodities.

Even classic Christmas films carry this depressing message. George Seaton's *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947) provides an apt example. Seemingly a send-up of Christmas commercialization, it actually promotes a sappy ethos in which material gain is the final measure of moral success. When Edmund Gwenn, the man who maintains he's Kris Kringle, takes over as Macy's Santa, he puts niceness above business, going so far as to direct parents to other stores when his employer can't supply the toys for which their children yearn.

The anxiety this causes store executives is quickly allayed when astonished customers pledge their undying loyalty to such a thoughtful institution. R.H. Macy himself decrees Kringle's decency as store policy. "When we don't have exactly what our customers need, we'll send them to where they can get it," he chortles. It's good public relations and that means increased

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Republic Pictures

The closing scene of It's A Wonderful Life.

profits. Soon Gimble's is following suit, launching a veritable war of niceness on its primary competitor. This seems satiric, but it isn't really. *Miracle on 34th Street* doesn't recommend anything be changed. It merely pretends to respect its audience by giving us a knowing wink.

The film betrays its hollowness most in the conversion of nine-year-old Natalie Wood to Santa orthodoxy. She has been brought up by a thoroughly faithless modern woman, played by Maureen O'Hara, who believes only in being "realistic." Naturally the child has been taught that Santa was merely a silly legend. Under Gwenn's charming influence, however, she comes to believe fervently in him as the North Pole benefactor. Tellingly, Miss Wood's new-found faith is severely tested when at first she doesn't get the house she had requested from Gwenn—a nice suburban home for her mother and herself and possibly the nice young lawyer her mom has befriended. But when the house finally does turn up, her faith is instantly restored and everything is nice once again.

The question is, faith in what? Beyond sponsoring a mawkish belief in the spirit of niceness as embodied in Santa, the script keeps its counsel. Whether for commercial or ideological reasons, there's absolutely no mention of the Christ child. *Miracle on 34th Street* hews to a particularly American view of faith as the guarantor of material welfare. That sounds oddly Puritan—and indeed, our modern movies' sappy sentimentality does descend in a straight line from the Puritans, for it's what you get when you retain a Puritan view of faith and strip away its original object. We are to believe merely in belief.

The various film adaptations of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* are similarly afflicted with a well-meaning appeal to our instinct to believe in the right thing. Even in Dickens's text this is left suspiciously vague, but in the movie versions, what few hints Dickens gives are quickly stripped away. The twisted Scrooge and the hapless Cratchits present irresistible opportunities for over-acting, especially in that spectacularly poignant parallel between the spiritually crippled skinflint and the physically crippled innocent, Tiny Tim.

Admittedly, Dickens's stage-managed sentimentality is full of energy and wonderfully entertaining. But it is, to use Scrooge's favorite word, humbug. This is why—whether we think of Alastair Sim in 1951, Mr. Magoo in 1962, Albert Finney in 1970, George C. Scott in 1984, or Patrick Stewart in 1999 in the part—it's never the redeemed Scrooge we really picture. It's invariably the emotionally stunted curmudgeon. The truth is we don't really want a reformed Scrooge. The cold-bosomed bastard is the one who warms our hearts. In his presence, it's no effort at all to feel good about our noble, generous selves. This is the essence of sentimentality: a labor-saving shortcut to self-approval.

Frank Capra's favorite, *It's a Wonderful Life*, narrowly avoids sentimental bathos almost in spite of itself. The production is generally thought of as a Christmas film, though the holiday seems at first incidental to its story of a despairing man redeemed by angelic intervention. The film closes with all its characters gathered round a decorated fir tree, but it's more a prop than anything else. It's meant to signal a triumph of decency over evil, no more.

Nevertheless, when George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) battles the evil financier, Mr. Potter (Lionel Barrymore), for the soul of Bedford Falls, their conflict takes place within a demonstrably Christian ethos, however secularized. Capra's moral vision may have been singularly simple-minded, his theological understanding risible, and his egoism obnoxious, but he was nevertheless an artist in the grip of more than he seems to have understood.

This is most evident in the wounds he gives George Bailey, which mark him explicitly as a savior hero, one who undergoes an ordeal of suffering, death, and resurrection. Bailey has been rendered deaf in one ear as a boy by saving two people. Diving into the frigid waters of a frozen pond to save his younger brother, he contracts an ear infection. His ear is further damaged when Mr. Gower, the pharmacist he works for, slaps it. Gower assumes Bailey is being insubordinate when he refuses to deliver a mistakenly prepared prescription, only to discover afterward that the boy was not shirking but rather preventing a fatal mistake.

Bailey's irreversible affliction is of a piece with his less tangible wounds. However reluctantly, he is a man who suffers loss to help others. Although he has ambitions to travel and go to college, he dutifully stays home to keep the family's building-and-loan business going after his father dies. When he marries, he gives up his honeymoon to quell a financial panic that threatens his clients' welfare.

For all its fantasy, this film doesn't duck mortal issues. This is especially true in its fantasy sequence. Falling into despair at the imminent collapse of his family's business and the consequent triumph of Potter, Bailey, contemplating suicide, wishes he had never been born. When Clarence, a timely angel, grants his wish, Bailey discovers what Bedford Falls would be like without his generosity of spirit. It turns out to be a nightmare world firmly in the grip of selfishness and vice: In his absence, evil flourishes. His brother drowns, Gower becomes a ruined alcoholic, his father's business collapses, and Potter gains control of the town. Only by returning to life can Bailey dispel this curse.

Tellingly, blood is the sign of his rebirth. His lip had been cut in a drunken bar brawl just before Clarence relieved him of the burden of life. During his period of non-existence, this wound had vanished. Upon his return to the living, it begins to bleed once more. His wound is the baptismal guarantee of his identity. He is the man who despite his sorrows stands up to evil.

There is one other film in this genre worth attention, *A Christmas Story*, with its script by Jean Shepherd, who died this fall at age seventy-eight after a long career as a humorist in radio, television, and film. Shepherd had an engagingly sardonic vision that is fully apparent in this film, which he wanted to call *Satan's Revenge*. It is a uniquely unsparing exposure of the consequences of a Christless Christmas.

The story begins with Shepherd's boyhood alter ego, Ralphie Parker, possessed by the demon of Christmas commerce. We first see him pressing his face against a department store's plate glass window as he gazes rapturously on the Holy Grail of Christmas presents, "an official Red Ryder BB gun with a compass in the stock and a thing that tells time." He knows it's beyond his reach. Every time he brings it up, he runs into "the classic mother block" in the formula of a non-negotiable rejection: "You'll shoot your eye out."


20th Century Fox

Natalie Wood meets Kris Kringle in Miracle on 34th Street.

Having exhausted all other avenues, Ralphie decides to go over his parents' heads and appeal to the guy at the top, Santa Claus, not that he believes exactly. "Let's face it," Shepherd says in his perfectly pitched voice-over narration as the adult Ralphie, "most of us were scoffers but moments before zero hour it didn't pay to take chances." Entering Higbee's department store, he eagerly rushes to the Santa line. There he encounters Jean Shepherd himself playing a mildly exasperated father waiting with his own son. When Ralphie, mistaking the line's length, steps in front of them, Shepherd calls out, "Hey, kid, where do you think you're going?" He then points to the line's end some thirty or forty yards in the distance.

Shepherd plays his cameo wearing a black overcoat, black tie, pearl gray homburg, and a black beard. He is unmistakably the Anti-Claus. In this world, he reminds us, we're always being sent to the back of the line. Shepherd was determined to expose the clownish, shabby reality behind the gloriously advertised world, and for Ralphie this inevitable truth unfolds when he confronts Santa atop of a twelve-foot platform, supplied with a staircase on one side and a shiny metal slide on the other. Climbing the stairs with an awed look on his bespectacled face, he sits on Santa's lap too dazzled to speak his heart's desire. Hearing no request, Santa impatiently suggests a football might be nice and hustles him onto the departure slide. Realizing he's about to lose his last chance, Ralphie stops mid-course in his descent and scrambles back to the top to plead for his Red Ryder carbine. There's a long pause as Santa studies his plaintive smile before delivering the *coup de grâce*: "Kid, you'll shoot your eye out." Then, he gently places his booted toe on the tike's forehead and pushes the BB desperado down the slide.

For a mainstream film, the moment is daringly exquisite and deeply funny. I can't think of another scene that so thoroughly explodes the season's commercially created sentimentality. Ralphie's look of stunned disbelief at the bottom of Santa's slide is a tonic restorative capable of bringing us back to our senses. ♦

At a December 8 press conference, President Clinton said his choice for "person of the century" would be Franklin Roosevelt. *—News Item*

Parody

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 7, 1999

MEMO TO: The President

FROM: Sidney Blumenthal
Director, Office of Legacy Creation

RE: Press conference questions

We anticipate at least one question at tomorrow's press conference about *Time* magazine's "Person of the Century." The question could take several forms, i.e., a straightforward version ("Who do you think should be named person of the century?"), but be prepared for variations. Tom Brokaw will be there, so you might expect something along the lines of, "Don't you think I should be person of the century?" In our pre-brief, Jane Mayer told me she'll phrase the question as, "Sir, I think it will be a crime if they don't pick you, Mr. President, sir, don't you agree?" Clearly, this is a sensitive matter, with tremendous upside and downside potential. Following are some top-of-the-head thoughts on the candidates we've discussed.

FDR
Upside: Democrat. Strong leader, but the wheelchair thing shows he had a "sensitive side." Still big in New York (First Lady will be grateful).
Downside: Male. White. Serious substance abuse problem with tobacco--but you could follow up: "I forgive FDR this personal weakness, which is more to be pitied than condemned, etc., etc."--could be a good statesmanlike riff. Had a zipper problem (Lucy Mercer, etc.). But leadership has its price, as we know.

Gandhi
Upside: Anti-imperialist, really spiritual, no zipper problem (didn't even have a zipper).
Downside: Not American.Vegetarian (we're focus-grouping farm-state beef producers on possible neg. reaction). Skinny little guy, makes everyone else look like a charter member of the Chub Club by comparison (even you, Mr. President!).

Ray Kroc
Upside: None. I know he was your original choice, but I really do think you should reconsider. Per your request, research is trying to i.d. the inventor of Chili Cheese Fries with Extra Mayo for "runner-up person of the cent.," but again--not a good idea.

Eleanor Roosevelt
Upside: A woman, but not babelicious. At all.
Downside: Mrs. Clinton spoke with her last night. Mrs. R. declined the honor.

Recommendation The Office of Legacy Creation believes you should select FDR, for upside reasons stated above.

Please check one: Approve ____ Disapprove _____ Will waffle _____