



New York Times

Photo caption of the decade:

After almost 30 years of delays caused by planning and environmental challenges, the last stretch of Interstate 287, between Montville and Mahwah, N.J., is to be opened in the next month, six months ahead of schedule.

[October 16, 1993]

Larry King Weekend

Hillary recharged:

KING: Your first car—We were talking about first cars.

Ms. CLINTON: Yes.

KING: Mine was a '55—'53 Ford. And yours was a '63 Olds.

Ms. CLINTON: Right.

KING: Right? And you were telling me you had to take the battery out?

Ms. CLINTON: Well, anybody listening to this will probably write and say, you know, "This just shows you how crazy she is." My car had a personality—my first car. And I was in law school, and my car had a battery that did not like to be left in the car overnight. It would drain out if it were—especially in the New England cold.

KING: So, what did you have to do with it?

Ms. CLINTON: So, I unhooked it every night and took it to my dorm room and kept it warm, and then I put it back in the next morning.

KING: You—

Ms. CLINTON: And it made a very happy battery and a car that worked! [laughs]

KING: Did it have a name? I think we're losing it here.

Ms. CLINTON: It did. It did.

KING: You know, it's been a long week.

Ms. CLINTON: It did have a name, yes. I called my car "Julius."

KING: "Julius"?

Ms. CLINTON: "Julius," yes.

KING: Did the battery have a name?

Ms. CLINTON: No.

KING: No?

Ms. CLINTON: I did not name the battery. I think it was Eveready, or something like that.

[October 2, 1993]

Toledo Blade

In a column entitled "New Age," the Nutrition Nazis speak out:

It makes sense that smoking and drinking, both acknowledged causes of some of society's major diseases, ought to be somehow penalized—and sales taxes generally are difficult to deny. But the Clinton bean counters ought to uncover one more sacred cow as a source of sin tax revenue.

That would be the products of our giant, powerful meat and dairy industries. Hamburgers, ice cream, milk, eggs, cheese, lamb chops, hot dogs. . . .

So we offer a proposal of our own: To help finance the new national health care system, lay a modest surcharge on any food that derives more than 25 percent of its calories from fat.

That's right, a fat tax. Eating fat is no more sinful than smoking or drinking, but its overall impact on our nation's health is just as enormous. And since our talent for denial allows us to munch ourselves to disease as easily as we puff or sip, it may behoove government to help us face the facts in a way we seem able to recognize: by imposing a financial penalty.

[October 3, 1993]

Japan Times

Fidel meets the Rosa Luxemburg of Bolivia:

Cuban president Fidel Castro won a surprise endorsement in Bolivia over the weekend.

Maria Lucia Balcazar, niece of Bolivia's new president, said she would never wash her hand again after shaking hands with Castro on Saturday.

When President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada asked why, his niece said, "Fidel is more important than Walt Disney."

Castro, clearly delighted with the remark, bent down and kissed the 8-year-old on the cheek.

[August 10, 1993]

Duluth News-Tribune

Up in the Great North, original biblical research proving that, though the Nazarene was a gifted publicist, his gay rights position has been lost for 2000 years.

Both John 13:23 and 21:20 acknowledged Jesus' love of John, one of his three close associates. In John 21:21,22 Peter affirmed the relationship between Jesus and John was different.

Of course, if we note the non-canonical writings of Jesus' romance with Mary Magdalene, then perhaps Jesus was bisexual.

[August 5, 1993]

Stanford Magazine

Another inane passage in a full-blown interview with Dean Robert Gregg, Episcopalian chaplain of Stanford University who in a vapid remark after a vapid remark tastefully refrains from all mention of God or even God Is Dead—onward Christian Therapists!

SM: What is the job of the chaplaincy?

Gregg: There are three of us who work full-time on campus and another person who works in the biomedical ethics center at the Medical School and hospital. My job involves being a dean of Memorial Church and all the events that take place in there and teaching in the Classics Department and the Religious Studies Department. I oversee the various ministries of the different faiths that have representatives on campus and student constituencies, and am available to people who want to discuss the range of issues that people might bring to someone who they hope would have an impartiality in a complex system. When I arrived here, it dawned on me that given the wonderful diversity of Stanford's population—student, staff, and faculty—it was important to me to have a chaplaincy staff that was diverse in terms of gender and race, and that we have done.

[June 1993]

Minneapolis Star Tribune

On the pages of a great American daily, the Web Price reports on things Minnesotans need to know:

Gay men are passionate fans of strong women—tough cookies like Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Mae West, Marlene Dietrich. The list wouldn't be complete without the New York City gals who recently gave me a little something to remember them by. They're the Knights Wrestling Club for Women.

The club exists because two gay men, Bob Hofmann and Ed Unger, thought women should be encouraged to unleash their physical power. "Most women don't realize how much strength they have. And they are afraid to use it," says Hofmann, who jokes he's the only male president of a lesbian group.

The idea of starting a women's wrestling team originated at Gay Games III, an Olympic-style international competition that drew 7,300 athletes to Vancouver in 1990. Only wrestling was closed to women.

[September 22, 1993]

New York Times Magazine

The ebullient Lucinda Franks catalogues the many fine achievements of her prodigy son and all his peers, creating a list that quite properly does not include the ability to read, to write, to make simple mathematical calculations, to speak only when spoken to, and—apparently—to use bar soap:

In spite of the confusion these children experience, few would disagree that they are, in many ways, a splendid generation. My son, Joshua, 9, and his friends are amazing in their generosity, sensitivity, ability to stretch across an intellectual canyon and meet adults on their own terms. They have highly developed senses of justice and fairness, rejecting stereotypes and embracing oddities in their peers, whether a hair style or a disability. They are disdainful of smoking and drug use, can sniff out hypocrisy and have social consciences that are so poignant. They are so worried about the saw trees on their block that last year they formed an earth club to keep them free of litter. At times, the child in our children looks endearingly through the veneer of sophistication. "Mom, please don't buy Ivory soap anymore" was his most recent environmental request. "Why?" I asked. Because they shoot elephants to get the ivory, don't they?" he replied.

[October 10, 1993]

Washington Post

The prosecution of a 1960s radical for manslaughter and armed robbery occasions the 1963-64 president of the radical SDS, Mr. Todd Gitlin, to compose yet another authoritative opusculum:

Conservatives tend to crow or bemoan—we told you those kids would come to naught. Having presided over the gold-leafed decay of the 1980s, they cannot grant that the antiwar movement, for all its (relatively few) sins, its many failings and its occasional fugitive, saved the soul of America. As long as high-level war criminals are still lionized in Washington, and war veterans beg for work on the street corners, as long as Americans wrestle with questions about authority and materialism and violence and whether the world can be saved, the antiwar movement as a whole remains one of the most successful such democratic movements in history. It saved lives, limbs and minds. It was a lousy revolution, but it was, on the whole, a remarkable human triumph—and a hard act to follow.

[September 26, 1993]

Newsweek

Another unanticipated scientific breakthrough—The MacArthur Foundation gave a \$225,000 "genius" grant to this doltish charlatan:

Every month, women wonder why menstruation has to be such a mess. Margie Profet, 35, a self-described evolutionary biologist, wondered more than most. In 1988, she says, an early-morning dream gave her the answer: that menstrual bleeding was not merely the body's way of shedding the built-up uterine lining when no baby has been conceived. It was also, in the dream, a protective mechanism for cleansing the uterus of infectious organisms carried there by sperm. "Boys really do have cooties," says Profet. "What they told you in kindergarten was true." After reading copiously on this subject, Profet last week presented her 52-page scholarly article in the *Quarterly Review of Biology*—and so set off a squall about a process so ordinary that few researchers have even thought to question it.

[October 4, 1993]

New York Times

A missive from one of the millions of very nice people who make American Liberalism a veritable gold mine for psychiatry and for Valium-mongers:

Excuse me, but your color is showing. "Ribbon Control," that silly article by Jamie

Malanowski (Op-Ed, Sept. 4) about how every inane cause will soon sport its own colored ribbon, contains a racist blind spot you seem to have missed. A "flesh"-colored ribbon? And what color might that be exactly? Would that be a pallid pink and peach, an ebony black or perhaps a nutmeg reddish-brown? Whose "flesh" is this anyway?

When I was a child, my box of 64 Crayola crayons had a color called "flesh." But they long ago abandoned such obviously racist labeling. So should you.

—Michael S. Kimmel

New York

[September 20, 1993]

Associated Press

AP reporter Nita Lelyveld goes berserk at the word processor—or is it that Justice Ginsburg is a psychopath?

On her first day as a Supreme Court justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg would have surprised no one if she sat quietly, just taking in her new surroundings. Instead, America's second female Supreme Court justice asked question after question today—17 in all during her first hour on the bench.

The first came just nine minutes into arguments in the first case of the new term.

Seated at the far right end of the bench, six down from her only female colleague, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Ginsburg repeatedly asked for clarifications and went over fine points in the case, which examined whether federal agencies may be sued by people who claim their constitutional rights are violated.

While other justices like Clarence Thomas leaned way back in their tall black leather chairs, cupping their chins on their hands and gazing at the ornate chamber ceiling, Ginsburg sat absolutely still.

She kept a fixed gaze on each of the lawyers before her—blinking often but looking away only to take notes or glance down at her papers.

She smiled only a few times—once, softly, when she first took her seat and looked out at the rows of people before her. Then an aide pushed her chair way in and she got down to business.

By the end of the first hour, Ginsburg appeared well settled into her new role. She even rocked slightly in her chair. But the expression on her face was one of concentration.

Many justices take a while to find their voices on the court. Justice David Souter waited three weeks before speaking. Thomas stayed silent until his second day.

[October 4, 1993]



The President's Trollope

by Christopher Caldwell

It is one thing to read the literary classics as if they were timeless; quite another to hold that they were written specifically for today. The latter is most often a failing of the left, and comic examples abound—like the Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James's 1940s rereading of *Moby-Dick*, in which the *Pequod* is "industrial society," Ahab the Hitlerite "executive" class, Starbuck the bourgeois-morality-drugged proletariat, and Ishmael the Marxist intellectual vanguard.

I was immune to such post-facto allegorizing of the classics until I read *The Fixed Period*,¹ Anthony Trollope's futuristic novel of politically correct euthanasia, written in 1881 but set a hundred years later. I finished it on the day Hillary Clinton announced that she and the co-president were drawing up a "living will"—a written agreement that life-support systems be shut off in any illness where either of them loses his mental faculties. (What? No second term?)

The Fixed Period is narrated in first person by President Neverbend, a radical who has somehow become a mainstream politician in the former British colony of Britannula, whose young inhabitants, fleeing a deficit crisis in New Zealand, preoccupy themselves with building their country's infrastructure. To that end, Neverbend comes up with the "Fixed Period," a combination health plan/industrial policy, which will enrich the state by rationing health care to the old in the most efficient way possible—by killing them at the age of 68.

Neverbend wins over "the more quickly intelligent inhabitants of Britannula," and gains support from a Loser Bloc, who actually *want* to die, and petition for the age of dispatch to be lowered. Unfortunately, "the people for whose welfare I had done it all" do not see it the same way. Gabriel Crasweller, the popular farmer who is scheduled to be the first

killed, balks. "Religion is brought in," and extremists begin to call the practice murder—which word Neverbend bans as "revolting to the majesty of the people." (The aged are to be not executed, but "deposited.") Besides, it couldn't be murder, since "this thing was to be done by the law."

Crasweller and his allies ("a scum of the population . . . men who knew nothing of progress and civilisation") are motivated primarily by the desire to keep providing for their families, so Neverbend stipulates that old people spend their last year in a "college," where "the mind may be weaned from the ignoble art of moneymaking." Then, Neverbend attacks his opponents on conflict-of-interest grounds: they oppose the scheme because they're afraid to die. And they're afraid to die because "they have not been instructed in matters of good and evil." Which pretty much settles it: "Though to me the politico-economical view of the subject was always very strong, the relief to be brought to the aged was the one argument to which no reply could be given."

Neverbend is a one-man anthology of contemporary political prejudices: To the reader, he is Kirkpatrick Sale, bringing up "so-called civilisation" at least once a paragraph. To his anti-Fixed Period son he is a Kennedy ("Have you no love of country, no patriotism, no feeling at any rate of what has been done for the world's welfare by your own family?"). To his anti-Fixed Period wife, he is a tut-tutting Michael Kinsley ("And she does not, in truth, mean a tenth of what she says"). To the condemned he is like Marian Wright Edelman or any other poverty hustler, extolling the people in whose name he has aggrandized himself. ("I had loved [Crasweller] the better because I had endeavoured to commence my experiment on his body. I had felt a vicarious regard for the honour which would have been done him, almost regarding it as though I myself were to go in his place.")

Even after he has been removed by British fleet sent by the "Secretary of Benevolence," Neverbend sees the problem as "not that the doctrine of the Fixed Period was in itself wrong, but that it was impracticable because of the horror attending its last moments." That is, there are never any moral problems with the plan, only logistical ones: When Crasweller's daughter anticipates the horror of her father's execution, Neverbend treats it as a *practical* difficulty: "I had not in truth thought of it. But now, when the idea was represented to my mind's eye, I acknowledged to myself that it would be impossible that she should be left there for the occasion." He adds, as an afterthought, "And the cremating furnace must be removed."

It's ironic that, while Trollope generally appeals because of the timelessness of his obsession with love-in-society, this overtly ideological *jeu d'esprit* speaks to us through its very topicality. Not every age is one of blockheaded reform like our own, but the early 1880s were. That is while there is a universality to the reform impulse, not every generation will find *The Fixed Period* as terrifying as our own ought to. (And John Major did give Clinton a copy of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* last March.)

Still, I'm not sure I approve of extending this topicality-mongering exercise to Trollope's other books, or to literature in general. Once you start identifying novel characters with contemporary politician they infect everything—much as you can't help seeing the actor if you've seen the movie before reading the book. Villains are always better drawn than heroes, and when you run down the years from the *Celestina* to *Lady Macbeth* to *Madame Defarge*, you realize that reading the classics in light of contemporary politics is like going on a six-century-long date with Hillary Clinton—an argument for euthanasia if I've ever heard one. □

¹ Oxford, 186 pages, \$8.95 (paper).

Christopher Caldwell is assistant managing editor of *The American Spectator*.