ried men supposedly had done some running around. The apparent truth of the matter is far less lurid, contends Greeley, a University of Chicago sociologist, as well as a Catholic priest and best-selling novelist.

None of the statistics brandished by Kinsey and the pop authorities who followed him were based on a carefully designed, random survey of a cross section of Americans. These "experts" interviewed only selected—and in some cases, self-selected—groups of people willing to talk about their intimate lives. "These 'reports' are to responsible social science what alchemy is to chemistry . . . and magic to medicine," Greeley says.

The findings turned up in 1991 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), at the University of Chicago, are quite different. The 1,212 respondents gave their answers by "secret ballot," returned to the interviewer in a sealed envelope. The results: Only 11 percent of the women and 21 percent of the men said that while married, they had engaged in sex with someone other than their spouse. (The higher rate for men may simply reflect greater opportunity, Greeley notes. Among working women and men who have never paid for sex, the adultery rate was the same: 15 percent.) Overall, nearly six out of seven married Americans are faithful to their spouses.

Americans, it seems, may be more wedded to the Seventh Commandment than many think. Even among those in the NORC survey who maintained that adultery is not always wrong, 65 percent still said that they themselves had not engaged in it.

## *The New National Pastime*

Take me out to the ballgame? Forget it, writes Gerri Hirshey of the *New York Times Magazine* (July 17, 1994).

*Gambling is now bigger than baseball, more powerful than a platoon of Schwarzeneggers, Spielbergs, Madonnas, and Oprahs. More Americans went to casinos than to major league ballparks in 1993.* Ninety-two million visits! *Legal gambling revenues reached $30 billion, which is more than the combined take for movies, books, recorded music and park and arcade attractions. Thirty-seven states have lotteries; 23 have sanctioned casinos. More than 60 Indian tribes have gaming compacts with 19 states. As this century turns, it's expected that virtually all Americans will live within a four-hour drive of a casino. . . .*

*And so we stand in lottery lines and climb aboard buses on the strength of* possibilities. *They're limitless, but with absurdist odds. America has come to count heavily on our cheerful folly. Our modest stakes have become the last best hope for budget-strapped state legislatures, for long-impoverished Indian tribes now permitted to run gaming ventures, for stockbrokers and investment bankers looking to salve the wounds inflicted by '80s excesses. To these grateful constituencies, gambling is no longer a sin, but a saving grace. It can vanquish the ugly specter of raising taxes and shake cash into shambling infrastructures, Head Start programs, fire brigades, tribal medical clinics. It can fatten portfolios with new high-performance issues.*

*On the strength of such boons, Mammon's had a makeover. Much has been made of the new PG Las Vegas, of the theme park hotels, the troops of Dorothys and Totos, buccaneers, knights and hunks in mini-togas who now cavort where made guys and hookers once ruled. . . .*

It's O.K. now, *say the attitudinal seismologists. According to a national survey conducted by Harrah's, a top-tier casino company, 51 percent of American adults believe "casino entertainment" is "acceptable for anyone." Another 35 percent say it is "acceptable for others, but not for me." Even "gambling," the term that once conjured up green visors, cigar smoke and gumball-size pinky rings, has been buffed with warm fuzzies. We call it* gaming *these days. So Aspen. So Hyannisport. So very . . .* sportif.

## *Prudes and Puritans*

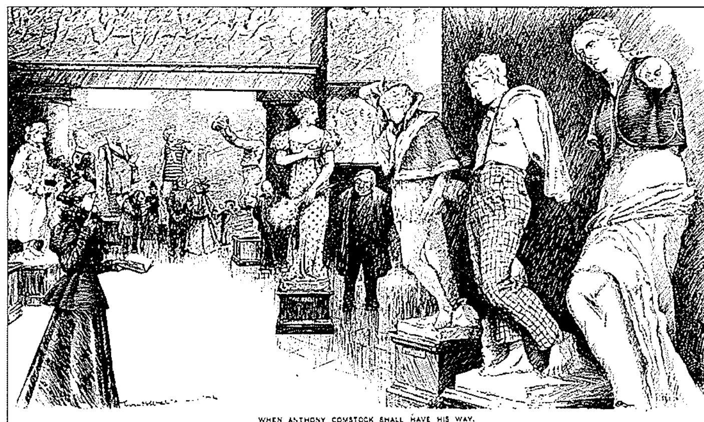
" 'Puritanism' as Epithet: Common Standards and the Fate of Reticence" by Rochelle Gurstein, in *Salmagundi* (Winter–Spring 1994), Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866.

*Puritan* is an epithet that sophisticates who regard a photograph of a crucifix submerged in

urine as art worthy of federal subsidy apply to those who disagree. In mundane fact, writes Gurstein, a historian at New York University, it is pretty hard to find an influential "Puritan" in late-20th-century America. Even Senator Jesse Helms (R.-N.C.) seeks only to ban government subsidies for works such as the infamous *Piss Christ*, not the works themselves. Nor is there any difficulty, in this land supposedly under the puritanical shadow, in finding Robert Mapplethorpe's shocking photographs of sexual violence at the local bookstore. The long-running struggle between the avant-garde and the so-called puritans has become a farce, Gurstein contends, and in some ways, it always was.

Puritanism as an epithet, Gurstein writes, first appeared in the early decades of the 20th century, "when an angry generation of feminists, birth-control champions, anarchists, free-speech lawyers, cultural critics, realist novelists, and Greenwich Village bohemians attacked their forebears for willfully evading what they considered to be the most pressing issue of life—sex." (They did not know or care that, as historian Perry Miller and others have since shown, the flesh-and-blood Puritans of colonial New England were not, in fact, dour people opposed to anything that smacked of pleasure.) Reformers such as birth-control advocate Margaret Sanger created a refrain that would be "repeated with tedious regularity by later advocates of exposure both in social reform and the arts," Gurstein says. "Its foundation was a belief in history as a long march of progress led by courageous individuals who were always before their time," the heroic avant-garde. Conveniently stepping into the role of chief villain was Anthony Comstock, the late-19th-century antivice zealot who came to symbolize "the Puritan as censor, prurient prude, neurotic, and fool." Literary critic H. L. Mencken joined the crusade against Comstockery, and by the time the dazzling verbalist was through, "the mere mention of Puritanism would be enough to instantly vanquish one's opponent."

Overlooked, or even conflated with "Puritan" Comstock's "impolite and evangelical form of moralism," was a competing and "more representative" late-19th-century sensibility, Gurstein says. This sensibility—as exemplified, for instance, by Charles Eliot Norton, a Harvard lecturer and man of letters—was not prudish or censorious but *reticent*, reflecting a keen sensitivity toward the feelings of others. "Courtesy, politeness, civility, decency, honor, refinement, cultivation, grace, and elegance were essential components of the reticent sensibility," Gurstein says—and the only thing it had in common with Comstockery was the view that private matters should be kept private. Some things, such as sexual intimacy, were considered "so personal, fragile, or vulnerable that they required the cover of privacy if they were to retain their significance and emotional vibrancy." Brought into the public sphere, such matters "were liable to become obscene" and to coarsen and degrade the common life.




*Advanced opinion, as expressed in this 1897 cartoon mocking Comstockery, keeps fighting the same battle today—despite the absence of Comstocks.*

The condition of American public life today seems to bear that out, Gurstein says. With the struggles for free expression and birth control long since won, it is high time, she believes, to call off the phony war on puritanism and to bring back something of the 19th century's "reticent sensibility."