

For some, perhaps many, in the conservative movement, this knowledge comes as a source of relief: their sacrifice will be small, their reward great. For others, it is a source of bitter disappointment. To this subset of activists and militants, the battle is all. To learn that it soon will be over and will not require so much from them is enough to prompt a complex of despair: disgust over the shabbiness of their effort, grief over the disappearance of their foe, anxiety over the early retirement into which they have been forced. As Irving Kristol complained after the end of the Cold War, the defeat of the Soviet Union and the left more generally “deprived” conservatives like himself “of an enemy,” and “in politics, being deprived of an enemy is a very serious matter. You tend to get relaxed and dispirited. Turn inward.”⁴⁶ Depression haunts conservatism as surely as does great wealth. But again, far from diminishing the appeal of conservatism, this darker dimension only enhances it. Onstage, the conservative waxes Byronic, moodily surveying the sum of his losses before an audience of the lovelorn and the starstruck. Offstage, and out of sight, his managers quietly compile the sum of their gains.