the weekly
Standard
FEBRUARY 23, 1998
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GOD AND THE GULAG
ALAN JACOBS

HILLARY'S BRAIN

Sidney Blumenthal, Chief White House Conspiracy Theorist

by Carl M. Cannon

Women Who Talk Dirty About Bill
DAVID BROOKS

Sex, Lies, and Public Virtue
DAVID FRUM

the weekly Standard

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Books & Arts

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A Scoop!

The Scrapbook has learned that the incredible efficiency with which Congress and the president cooperated to rename Washington National Airport the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport was the result of a crass political deal. The fix was in. Just three days after Clinton signed the airport name change, the Senate voted 63-35 to confirm his nomination of Dr. David Satcher as surgeon general. The nomination had been on hold because Satcher is a supporter of partial-birth abortion. But it was really important to the congressional Republicans to get that airport renamed. Quid, meet quo.

There really is nothing like old-fashioned horse trading. The Clinton administration has managed to fill a job left vacant three years ago by the untimely departure of Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders. She also was a controversial figure, who left under a cloud after promoting the solitary vice to schoolchildren. This turned out to be a misplaced enthusiasm in what we have since learned is a decidedly communitarian administration. Meantime, The Scrapbook is looking forward to its next trip to Orange County, Calif., which will carry the added pleasure of the dream right-wing itinerary: from Ronald Reagan airport to John Wayne International and back again. Who says the national greatness agenda isn't making progress?

With Friends Like These . . .

Who was that Democratic senator carrying water for President Clinton last week on *This Week with Sam and Cokie*, with his no-holds-barred condemnation of independent counsel Kenneth Starr? Why, it was none other than the moral colossus from Englewood, N.J.—Robert "I was deeply moved by the Kefauver hearings on a flickering TV when I was five days old" Torricelli.

Torricelli, you may recall, made a name for himself last year during the Thompson hearings by being the only senator sensitive enough to discern the potential for anti-Asian racial prejudice in the campaign-finance investigation. This was because, he said, he remembered how hurt Italian-Americans had been by the Kefauver organized-crime hearings—which turned out to have started before he was born. By the Torricelli standard, a Senate that uncovers illegal donations to the DNC from agents of the Chinese government had better pursue with equal fervor the mysterious Swedish Bikini Team-Haley Barbour connection, lest it give offense to Asian-Americans.

Here, in short, is a senator with just the right amount of moral gravity to defend the president in his hour of need. But the *Trentonian*'s chief political writer, Sherry Sylvester, pointed out, two days before Torricelli charged into battle on Clinton's behalf, he was shocking an audience of 1,200 at the annual New Jersey Chamber of Commerce dinner with off-color jokes about the commander in chief. Here's one of Torricelli's jokes, as Sylvester recounts it:

"It seems one of his colleagues in the Senate had been casually chatting with the president and said that before he and his wife had married they hadn't had sex. The senator then said to the president, 'How about you?' The president replied, 'I don't know. What was your wife's maiden name?'"

Ha ha. Sylvester reports that many of Torricelli's constituents were "confused about why the Democrat, who has been a staunch supporter of the president throughout the current investigation, would make fun of him so publicly."

Who Will Edit the Editor?

Tina Brown, the reputedly super-sophisticated editor-in-chief of the *New Yorker*, attended the state dinner at the White House for Tony Blair last week. But her "Fax from Washington" in last week's issue, which sounds more like a late-night love letter, raises the important question: Was it her first time?

We quote: "As the President of the United States walks with Hillary and the Blairs into the State Dining Room, his height, his sleekness, his newly cropped, iron-filing hair, and the intensity of his blue eyes project a kind of avid inclusiveness that encircles every jaded celebrity he passes. He is vividly in the present tense and dares you to join him there."

Well, maybe it *was* her first time. And apparently no one told Brown that friends don't quote friends, especially other media, making small talk at state dinners. ABC's Peter Jennings rushed out to take a call, and Brown rolled her tape recorder: "I had to be called out for another sleaze bulletin," Peter complained to Tina. "Apparently

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the [*New York*] *Times* is going with a story tomorrow that Betty Currie has turned." Someone asks Jennings if it's a Ken Starr leak. "'Maybe. But this is not Matt Drudge,' Jennings says gravely. 'This is the *Times*. And Joe Lelyveld'"—the newspaper of record's executive editor—"'is not an easy lay.'"

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

Remember the quaint phrase "appearance of impropriety"? Back in the scandal days of Ed Meese and John Tower and the Keating Five and Newt Gingrich, it was the media's favorite hanging offense. Whenever the editorial need arose to condemn officials whose wrongdoing hadn't been proved, "appearance of impropriety" was the charge. It is in fact a term of art from the code governing judicial ethics and thus represents the highest possible standard of public conduct—one we have been assured repeatedly that Americans have every right to expect from their elected officials.

And guess what? It is a phrase that has all but disappeared from use in the last month, for obvious reasons. Instead, the president's apologists import the language of the criminal law to defend him—"reasonable doubt," mere "allegations," "burden of proof," etc. But the phrase has not entirely disappeared. A Nexis search shows that Rep. John Conyers has invoked the appearance of impropriety. And CNN's Greta Van Susteren has referred to it twice. Not as pertains to the president, though. This is the high standard that they think Ken Starr fails to meet.

The wheels of justice grind slow. But five years into "the most ethical administration in the history of the republic," it is surely not premature to point out that the most boastful presidential candidate in the history of the republic no longer meets the exacting ethical standards of John Conyers and Greta Van Susteren.

Gates Redeemed

Henry Louis Gates Jr., Harvard professor, acclaimed author, and an occasional contributor of thoughtful articles to the *New Yorker*, made a very sensible observation on "The Two Nations of Black America," the recent PBS documentary he hosted on the economic successes, and failures, of black Americans. Speaking of the glamorization of the ghetto, Gates said, "I find it hard to concede that these young hoodlums are part of the same community I belong to." He added, "Since when does being black mean embracing the worst of what we can be?"

Hmm. Maybe since 1990. That's when Gates was defending the sexually vulgar lyrics of 2 Live Crew as nothing more than "heavy-handed parody." Indeed, in a 1990 op-ed for the *New York Times*, Gates argued that the rape- and misogyny-glorifying songs of 2 Live Crew could be read as "off-color nursery rhymes [that] are part of a venerable Western tradition." He counseled those who were critical of the group to become "literate in the vernacular traditions of African-Americans."

Paranoia Will Destroia

Under the heading "A Little Paranoia Isn't All That Crazy," a timely full-page advertisement in the February 12 *Wall Street Journal* for GBC Shredmaster paper shredders touts models that "will shred up to 19 pages at a time, at a blazing 45 feet per minute . . . even enough capacity for the White House."

Casual

Bio-Degradable

I recently picked up a collection of poems by a writer named Ann Carson and was happily struck by the simplicity of the biographical note—or bio, as it's called in the trade—written about the author. In its fine stark entirety, it reads: "Ann Carson lives in Canada." Not even the province in which she lives is given. Miss Carson, it turns out, has written other books, but these, too, get no mention. I am greatly impressed by Miss Carson's absence of vanity, her refusal to attach the prestige of institutions or previous achievements to herself in this splendidly economical bio. "Ann Carson lives in Canada"—a lean, clean writing machine, Miss Carson.

Styles in the writing of bios have changed over the years. When I first began noticing them, bios for male writers, especially novelists, on the dustjackets of their books tended to emphasize the sweaty, heavy-breathing masculine. "Jack Clark," such a bio might run, "has been a lumberjack, dishwasher, magician's assistant, short-order cook, and Marine officer in the Korean War. *The Onyx Urinal* is his fourth novel." Often there would be an accompanying photograph of the manly Mr. Clark in corduroy jacket, a pipe clenched in his square and rather pompous jaw.

Bios for female authors in those days tended to be homier. They might mention a woman writer's interest in gardening, or sailing in the summer, or having three daughters all of whose names begin with the letter Q. Today I am sure this treatment would be considered vicious sexism. But now an even cozier, more odious change is on the way. The change is to use first names in a writer's bio.

In the "NB" column in the January 2, 1998, *T.L.S.*, it is reported that Lucy Ellmann's new novel has a bio with sentences that begin, "Lucy was born in Illinois. . . . Lucy's first novel was published in 1988. . . . Lucy now lives in Hampshire." Nicknames or diminutive names, surely, will be next. "Chip's [or Muffin's] new novel is his [her] first since. . . ."

As every editor who has had to write them knows, sometimes there is a paucity of things to say about a writer in his bio, particularly a young writer, and so a bit of padding has to be done. The *New York Times Book Review* used to solve this problem by calling a reviewer about whom there must have been nothing else to say "an observer of the contemporary scene," which always seemed to me rather a pathetic thing to be. Any self-respecting writer, I used to think, wants a few italics in his bio, the titles of books he's written or the names of magazines to which he contributes.

When I was young, I remember, I used to feel what I can only call bio-envy at reading, in the *Commentary* of the late fifties, the heavily italic-laden bio of F.R. Leavis or Sidney Hook. Once an editor myself, I would occasionally describe a contributor in his bio as "distinguished," but I used this sparingly, saving it for writers of the stature of Jacques Barzun or Arnaldo Momigliano. For myself, I am thankful for never having been "an observer of the contemporary scene"; and I would like to go out without ever being described in a bio as a "national treasure." Don't ask me why, but you never want to be called a national treasure.

To fill in their bios, writers will occasionally promote things that they have in the works: "He is currently at work on a trilogy of novels about the founding of Levittown"; or, "His series of connected screenplays about the life of Buddha is nearing completion." This is all very well, except that these "works in the works" frequently never get done. A writer named Wallace Markfield used for years to have it noted in his bio that he was working on his first novel; and he did, after a decade or so, eventually complete it (the book turned out to be a comic gem called *To An Early Grave*). The critic James Wolcott, some while ago, began to advertise himself in his bios in *Vanity Fair* as working on a novel. So far the novel hasn't materialized. No hurry, kid, I have other things around the house to read in the meantime.

I once claimed, in a bit of bio padding, that I was working on a novel, which resulted in my getting letters from two publishers asking to look at it. Unfortunately, I hadn't written a page of it. (The only thing he disliked about the writing life, Peter De Vries used to say, was the paperwork.) If two publishers were interested in that vague entity, "a novel," what might have been the reaction had I baited my trap with something a great deal more enticing: "He is currently at work on a book on double-jointed courtesans of the *belle époque*"? When younger and not yet married, it occurs to me only now, I might have used my bios to promote dates: "Joseph Epstein, a smooth dancer and an easy conversationalist, is an observer of the contemporary scene, but not too close an observer." Damn. Another opportunity lost.

Joseph Epstein

Enlightenment from Miss America

After reviewing the open letter from Venus Ramey ("Dear Miss America," Dec. 29/Jan. 5), I wanted to clarify some important points and enlighten your readers about the Miss America Organization and my year of service.

Your editor's note and Ramey's letter indicate that my "special issue" is the distribution of condoms to high-school students. In fact, the personal platform I chose to advocate as Miss America is much broader, focusing on HIV education and prevention among all age groups, races, and genders. As Miss America, I don't throw condoms in parades. I don't distribute them at all, actually. But I do support organizations that provide them in the context of responsible, comprehensive health-education programs. Such programs have been proven to change behaviors and reduce the incidence of HIV and AIDS in our country.

I understand the concerns of Ramey and others who question the morality of making condoms available to students. I understand that it appears to be a tacit endorsement of sexual activity among young people. (In fact, I once shared those same concerns myself.) But study after study has proven conclusively that making condoms available in the context of a comprehensive health-education program does not encourage sexual activity. The need for these programs is obvious. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 77 percent of girls and 86 percent of boys have had sex by the age of 20.

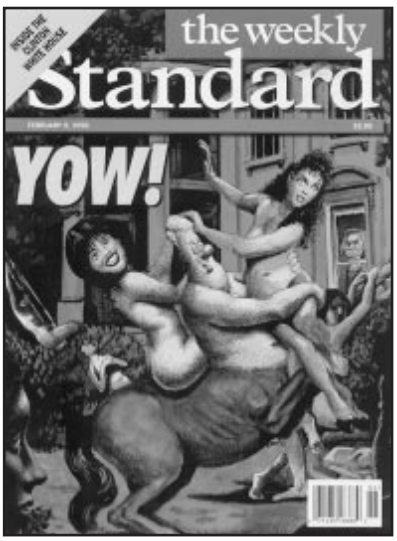
It must be scary to be a parent and acknowledge that such behavior exists, but it's even more terrifying to be a kid and not have a safety net. Even if we think young people are making a mistake by becoming sexually active, how can we allow them to pay with their lives—especially when we know how to save them?

As Miss America, I am honored to have inherited this job from women who have tackled tough issues. But I am even more honored to be associated with an organization that empowers young women to advocate issues of importance to our society. The Miss America Organization has changed considerably since Ramey wore the crown, and this aspect is just one of the many ways Miss America has become a relevant, credible role model who uses her year of service to give something back to our country and its many diverse citizens.

Kate Shindle
Miss America 1998
Atlantic City, NJ

Pink Down to His Boxers

Ironically, in reviewing my book, *Tricky Dick and the Pink Lady*, Christopher Matthews stoops to redbaiting—much as Richard Nixon did against Helen Douglas in 1950 ("Now



More Than Ever," Feb. 9). It was despicable for Nixon then and is despicable for Matthews now.

First, he states flatly that I was never "worried" about communism. This is reckless, absurd, and patently untrue.

Next, to prove this point, he misrepresents an important aspect of my book. He notes my reference to Alger Hiss "allegedly" passing documents to the Soviets, Nixon investigating "alleged" Communists, and the FBI nabbing some atomic spies under pressure to make arrests. But he fails to mention that the book is set squarely in 1950, in you-are-there fashion, and that few charges (at the time) were proven. I happen to believe Julius Rosenberg was guilty and Hiss was likely guilty, and *the book does not argue otherwise*; in fact, it doesn't argue at all. Yet, Matthews writes, "Does Mitchell find catching spies and traitors a seedy pursuit, a pastime beneath a gentleman of good manners? Was it bad form for the people protecting this country to find and apprehend the crowd who carried the A-bomb secret to Moscow?" The obvious answer is no, and there is nothing in my book to suggest otherwise. Hardly anyone then or now feels otherwise, and Matthews knows this.

Matthews engages in another rhetorical trick so common during the Red Scare when he states that *he* does not demand "latter-day confessions by those who were wrong about the danger of communism." Of course, in even mentioning this, he implies that my confession—what an evocative word!—is warranted. What does Matthews know about my beliefs, anyway?

Finally, my book does *not* suggest (contrary to Matthews's assertion) that the Soviet threat was not real or significant. What the book focuses on is the McCarthyite response to the Communist threat at home. Matthews complains that I treat redbaiting and blacklisting as though the "hysteria itself were a threat." Indeed, I do, and make no apologies for it. Oddly, Matthews admits that Nixon converted legitimate differences of opinion with Douglas into "grounds for treason"—and that Nixon based his 1950 campaign "on dirty tactics and outright lying." Very serious charges. Yet he still decries my "late hit" on Nixon.

Greg Mitchell
Nyack, NY

Strategic Shibboleths

Lawrence F. Kaplan's "Leftism on the Right" (Feb. 9) purports to analyze an ironic recent turn in the American foreign-policy debate.

But Kaplan's first mistake is to label me a conservative. Had he bothered to call and ask, I would have told him that even though I currently work at a right-of-center institute I have always placed myself to the left-of-center and continue to do so. My present affiliation simply reflects the considerable overlap on many trade and foreign-policy issues between many American liberals and conservatives today. I do differ from

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many on the left, however, in considering myself a strong nationalist.

Moreover, Kaplan quotes a passage from my 1993 *National Interest* article "Beyond Left and Right" that he claims bemoans America's global "arrogance" and "imperial designs." Yet the passage simply argues that, from the standpoint of a sensible definition of U.S. national interests, most of the current agenda of today's foreign-policy activists is an unconscionable waste of the country's time, energy, and resources. Worse, the passage argues, these policies could needlessly risk American lives. Whether the rest of the world regards such internationalism as arrogant or imperialistic is of little concern to me.

Finally, there is Kaplan's supposed *coup de grâce* against the substance of foreign-policy realism/minimalism, which he says "fails to credit the degree to which American interests and ideals overlap" and which forgets that "peace, prosperity, and political freedom are also self-interested aims." These platitudes define out of existence questions that any country with finite resources and political will must ask in order to carry out an effective foreign policy. These questions are: Are the costs prohibitive? Are the risks tolerable? What are our indispensable needs? What are simply desires? Sound foreign policy-making, in other words, involves more than drawing up a laundry list of intrinsically desirable goals.

Alan Tonelson
The United States Business and Industrial Council
Washington, DC

Lawrence F. Kaplan responds: ***Tonelson is correct that, in the strictest sense of the term, his views are not conservative. A prominent leftist critic of American foreign policy during the Cold War, Tonelson only recently migrated to the outer reaches of the realist camp, where his hostility to American power persists.***

This convergence of views was the point of my article. Tonelson's passage, in which he looks forward to marchers' once again "carrying signs and chanting, 'Hell no, we won't go,'" accurately captures the tone and substance of his* National Interest *piece. Which is probably why he chose to conclude it with those words.

A Satyr, not a Centaur

Your Feb. 9 cover was classic. However, I really believe you missed it by not portraying your centaur as half-jackass, as opposed to the nobler half-horse.

John M. Jenkins
Norman, OK

Stand By Your Cad

David Frum argues that liberal loyalty to Clinton has to do with vestigial allegiance to sexual libertinism ("A Generation on Trial," Feb. 16). This is original but wrong. I don't know if Frum talks to liberals, but if he does, he will discover that the more serious among us do not now, and have not ever, particularly liked Bill Clinton. We have always considered him unprincipled and slippery. But we have viewed the president as preferable to his adversaries on Frum's side of the fence.

The trouble is that liberals, like everyone else, don't want to see their enemies happy. The thought of the gloating self-satisfaction that would be evident among the Clinton haters if he resigned—combined with a real revulsion over the Kenneth Starr inquisition—is what has kept us sullen but not mutinous.

Dimming memories of the sensual joys of the '70s have, as far as I can tell, nothing to do with it.

Peter Connolly
Washington, DC

Milk & Honey in New York

William Tucker's "New York City, Economic Backwater" (Jan. 26) is riddled with inaccuracies and misperceptions. While the rest of the nation recognizes New York as a model for urban rejuvenation, Tucker fails to acknowledge the tremendous transformation that the city has undergone over the past four years—changes that have successfully positioned New York City for future growth.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's ability to reduce crime and taxes and create a business-friendly environment has dramatically bolstered New York City's economy. With a record $1.2 billion budget surplus and over 180,000 new private-sector jobs, New York City is primed for success in the Information Age. Contrary to Tucker's claims, Silicon Alley is not "sputtering"; it is growing fast. In fact, with a 105 percent increase in jobs over the past two years, the new-media industry added over 55,000 new positions. And the Giuliani administration is doing its part to foster this growth through a variety of programs that range from the city's Annual Venture Capital Conference to its Plug n' Go program for affordable space in Lower Manhattan.

New York City is riding a wave of success that Tucker fails to recognize. He ignores the fact that last November *Fortune* magazine selected New York City as the most improved city for business in North America. A 1997 Louis Harris poll also showed that New York City is the place where most Americans want to live. The arrival of the Information Age has in no way displaced New York City as the business capital of the world; it has, in fact, created another business opportunity for the companies and entrepreneurs who live and work here.

Every day, people come to New York City because they know they can succeed and prosper here. Our diverse range of talent and access to a variety of industries remains unmatched in this country. It is this talent and positive business climate that will secure New York City's position as a key player in our ever-changing high-tech economy.

Russell A. Harding
Executive Vice President
New York City Economic Development Corporation
New York, NY

The Weekly Standard

welcomes letters to the editor. Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number. All letters should be addressed:

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the weekly Standard

Just the Facts

There are many witnesses to the trail of Hurricane Monica. There are blameless ones like Bill Clinton's valets and stewards and Secret Service agents. There are not-so-blameless ones like his political handlers and sundry enablers. And all of them have lawyers. Most of the lawyers have been selected by recommendation of the White House counsel's office. And most of these lawyers are now unashamedly working to coordinate their clients' memories and testimonies—and to share the resulting "evidence" with the president's own legal and political defense team. Pretty soon, if whispered suggestions out of the White House are to be believed, the whole, thick stew of legal advice and PR spin will have been suitably assembled and massaged. And we will be offered a more or less coherent "explanation."

It will have to be a doozy. The scandal is a vast, still growing mountain of detail. The Clinton camp has denied only a very small number of the credibly reported facts in the Lewinsky matter. And they have expressed doubt about—or conveniently interpreted as innocent—only a very small number of others. Which unmistakably suggests that they cannot or will not dispute the rest. So the rest must be true.

As a service to our readers, we summarize all the facts below. Information that has been disclosed or firmly dated since we last outlined the Monica matter on these pages, two weeks ago, appears in italics.

November 29, 1993. Former White House aide Kathleen Willey meets with Clinton in the Oval Office to ask for a promotion. According to her subsequent sworn and videotaped deposition, Clinton molests her—kissing her, grabbing her breasts, and placing her hand on his crotch. Then-White House aide Linda Tripp meets the woman in the hallway immediately after.

June 1995. Monica Lewinsky begins an unpaid White House internship.

November 15, 1995. Clinton and Lewinsky begin a sexual relationship later described in extensive, tape-recorded conversations between Lewinsky and Tripp.

One Weekend in the Fall of 1995. *Former Secret Service agent Lewis Fox, he later tells a Pittsburgh television station and the* Washington Post, *escorts Lewinsky through the hallway door to the Oval Office for a meeting with Clinton. She does not emerge for the 40-minute remainder of his duty. Fox's lawyer now says Fox cannot be sure she did not leave through one of the Oval Office's other doors.*

December 1995. *Lewinsky gets a paying job in the White House Office of Legislative Affairs. There she becomes concerned about the suspicions of her coworkers. She tells a friend that Clinton is looking into having the display on her telephone console, which flashes his in-house acronym, "POTUS," whenever he calls her, turned off.*

April 17, 1996. Lewinsky is moved to the Defense Department. Clinton aides subsequently confirm that Evelyn Lieberman, former White House deputy chief of staff, was concerned that Lewinsky had been in too-close and too-frequent contact with the president. *Lewinsky returns to the White House for visits 37 times over the next 20 months, usually "cleared in" by Clinton's secretary, Betty Currie.*

Early July 1997. Linda Tripp, who is also working at the Pentagon by now, learns that *Newsweek* has caught wind of the Kathleen Willey incident and tries to phone Clinton crony Bruce Lindsey at the White House. Unsuccessful, she mentions the matter to Lewinsky, whom she has befriended. Lewinsky apparently reports the issue to Clinton. Lindsey then calls Tripp back.

July 12, 1997. *Clinton summons Lewinsky to the White House to discuss* Newsweek*'s Willey inquiry and, after consulting by phone with his lawyer Robert Bennett, reportedly tells her, "We're not going to be able to see each other for a while."*

August 11, 1997. *Newsweek* publishes its account of the Clinton-Willey encounter, sourced to Linda Tripp. Robert Bennett is quoted in the press calling Tripp a liar.

Early October 1997. Plaintiff's attorneys in the Paula Jones case hear rumors about Lewinsky and subpoena Linda Tripp. White House deputy chief of staff John Podesta then arranges an interview for Lewinsky with U.N. ambassador Bill Richardson. Richardson offers her a job in New York. She turns it down.

October 7, 1997. *Lewinsky sends the first in a three-month series of courier packages and letters to the White House, where Betty Currie signs for them, and to the offices of Clinton friend Vernon Jordan, who is intensively helping Lewinsky find a job in New York.*

December 5, 1997. Paula Jones's lawyers notify their Clinton counterparts that they intend to call Lewinsky as a witness.

December 10, 1997. Vernon Jordan calls senior officers at American Express on behalf of Lewinsky.

December 17, 1997. Lewinsky gets her Paula Jones subpoena—*and a job interview appointment from American Express*.

December 18, 1997. *Lewinsky has a Jordan-arranged job interview at Burson-Marsteller in New York.*

December 22, 1997. *Vernon Jordan arranges for Lewinsky initially to be represented by Washington lawyer Frank Carter and discusses her response to the Paula Jones subpoena while driving her to Carter's office. Clinton is in Bosnia. Lewinsky reportedly phones him there later in the day.*

December 23, 1997. Lewinsky has her interview with American Express.

Just Before Christmas 1997. *In a tape-recorded conversation with Linda Tripp, Lewinsky expresses anxiety about getting rid of incriminating gifts that Clinton has given her, including an inscribed photograph.* Lewinsky proposes that Tripp duck her own Paula Jones subpoena by claiming a "foot accident."

December 26, 1997. Lewinsky resigns her Pentagon post.

December 28, 1997. Lewinsky and Clinton meet in the White House, with Betty Currie present. They discuss how Lewinsky will describe her past visits; Clinton suggests that she say she had been meeting Currie. Clinton also urges her to move to New York. *Lewinsky attorney William Ginsburg says that Clinton told his client that she would not have to produce his gifts to her if she did not retain possession of them—and that Lewinsky then gave the gifts to Currie*.

December 30, 1997. Lewinsky has a Jordan-arranged job interview in New York at the Revlon corporation and a second interview with Burson-Marsteller. *She fails the Burson-Marsteller writing test and sends an ungrammatical thank-you note.*

January 7, 1998. Lewinsky signs a sworn affidavit declaring that she never had sexual contact with Clinton.

January 8, 1998. *Lewinsky, according to her later-taped conversations with Tripp, refuses to file the affidavit until Vernon Jordan gets her a job. Jordan personally calls Revlon's parent-company chairman, Ron Perelman, on Lewinsky's behalf.*

January 12, 1998. Linda Tripp takes her Lewinsky audiotapes to Starr's investigators.

January 13, 1998. Revlon offers Lewinsky a $40,000 job. Lewinsky meets with Tripp, who is wearing a Starr-provided wire, urges her to lie about her knowledge of the affair with Clinton, *and makes Tripp vague promises of "job security."*

January 14, 1998. Lewinsky gives Tripp a set of "talking points" covering Tripp's account of the Kathleen Willey incident—and suggesting that Tripp alter her recollections so as not to contradict the president.

January 15, 1998. Newsweek *reporter Michael Isikoff telephones Betty Currie to ask about Lewinsky's courier packages. Currie tells him she doesn't remember them. Within minutes, Lewinsky calls Tripp about the packages. Lewinsky visits the White House later that night.*

January 16, 1998. The Lewinsky "denial" affidavit is filed with the court. Agents of the independent counsel's office confront Lewinsky.

January 17, 1998. Clinton denies a sexual relationship with Lewinsky during a sworn deposition to attorneys for Paula Jones and states that he has never met alone with her in the White House. *That night, the president calls Betty Currie and asks her to meet him in the Oval Office the next morning, a Sunday.*

January 18, 1998. *Clinton reportedly tells Currie that he resisted sexual advances from Lewinsky—and, as his aides would later confirm, reviews his previous day's testimony. "We were never alone, right?" he asks Currie.*

January 21, 1998. The Lewinsky story breaks in public. Revlon revokes its job offer to her. Betty Currie begins talking to investigators *and turns over to them Clinton's gifts to Lewinsky: a dress, a hatpin, and a brooch among them. Linda Tripp signs a sworn statement recounting Lewinsky's conversations about sex with Clinton.*

January 27, 1998. *Betty Currie gives three hours of grand-jury testimony, during which she admits that Clinton and Lewinsky sometimes met alone and that Lewinsky's high-level job help was out of the ordinary.*

January 28, 1998. *A former lover of Lewinsky's, Andy Bleiler, says she told him she was having sex with a "high-ranking White House official" whom she called "the creep."*

Late January, 1998. *Ashley Raines, an employee of the White House Office of Administration, tells the grand jury that Lewinsky had confided in her about a sexual relationship with the president—and had played her Clinton's messages, left on Lewinsky's home answering machine.*

January 30, 1998. *Attorney William Ginsburg confirms that Clinton and Lewinsky spoke by telephone, in the evenings, while Lewinsky was home.*

February 1, 1998. *Ginsburg says it is "entirely possible" that Lewinsky offered Tripp a half-share in an Australian condominium while the two women were discussing Tripp's prospective Paula Jones testimony.*

February 2, 1998. *Pentagon officials announce that Lewinsky's 37 trips to the White House were unrelated to her official duties. Ginsburg gives Starr a written "proffer" of evidence in which Lewinsky confirms a sexual relationship with Clinton.*
February 3, 1998. *The* Los Angeles Times, *citing and confirming a story in the UCLA student newspaper the* Daily Bruin, *reports that in the summer of 1997 Lewinsky told then-Pentagon intern Dennis Lytton she was having sex with Clinton.*
February 4, 1998. *Former White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers says Lewinsky's visits to the White House were "extraordinary" and inexplicable. "I haven't visited the White House 37 times since I left."*
February 6, 1998. *President Clinton says, "I've told the American people what is essential for them to know about this."*

That last item is particularly delicious. The president's poll numbers may temporarily survive his amazing silence about so much devastating evidence that, yes, he did have sex with Monica Lewinsky and, yes, he and his friends did scurry around a lot in an effort to hush it up. But the survival of his legal position is another thing altogether. Before long, he will be subpoenaed by the independent counsel's office. And he will have to face a long set of impossible questions about two-and-a-half years of obviously unseemly activity. We look forward to reading the president's answers. And we hereby make public our request, in advance, that someone leak us a copy.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Clinton's True Believer

by Tucker Carlson

Paul Begala is not your ordinary PR sleaze—so why is he acting like one? In his private life, the presidential adviser is by all accounts a decent, upright person, an ardent Catholic with three children and a stable marriage. Off camera, he is friendly, intelligent, and witty. He is well liked by his peers at the White House. But put a microphone in his face, and Begala becomes something else entirely.

Four days after the Monica Lewinsky story broke, the White House sent Begala to the first of many network television appearances, on ABC's *This Week*. Begala arrived in the studio with almost nothing new to say about the scandal beyond what little President Clinton himself had already said. Unable to explain the president's ties to Lewinsky, Begala was reduced to dodging. In one particularly painful exchange, co-host Cokie Roberts asked Begala a simple question—Can a married man have a "proper" physical relationship with a woman who is not his wife?—more than half a dozen times without getting a direct answer. Begala finally retreated into non sequiturs. "I think that we have now descended into a point where we are going to shut down the recovery," he huffed. "We are going to shut down the government. We are going to shut down everything to start asking about whether somebody made a phone call to somebody."

Begala's interview with Tim Russert on *Meet the Press* two weeks later was even more excruciating. Russert went after Begala relentlessly, pressing him to answer "a very simple question: What was the relationship between President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky?" Begala didn't even bother to be subtly evasive. Instead, he launched directly into a rambling lecture on Ken Starr's moral failings. By the end of the segment, Begala had referred to the independent counsel's "false," "corrupt," "criminal" campaign of "illegal leaks" more than 15 times. "Well, Mr. Begala," said Russert at one point, clearly frustrated, "let's get beyond the leaks, let's get beyond Ken Starr." Begala made a sympathetic face. "I wish we could," he said.

Begala's performance on *Meet the Press* was remarkable even by the standards of political flackery, and in the most obvious ways it was dishonest and transparently diversionary. But it is also possible to feel sorry for Begala. Why is he doing it?

Habit, for one reason. Begala was an early practitioner of the Clinton administration's now-familiar strategy for containing scandal—deny, attack, change the subject. Begala (along with his partner, James Carville) was hired by the 1992 Clinton campaign largely on the strength of his reputation as crafty but brutal. "If he works for you, he'll go to war for you," said Georgia governor Zell Miller, who first recommended Begala, his former client, to the Clintons. Begala's partisan zeal soon became legendary. "I want to drive a stake through those Republican hearts," he told the *Washington Post* days before the election. "I really do." His temperament made him perfectly suited to manage the campaign's many unexpected public-relations explosions, and Begala spent much of his time trying to convince the press that Gennifer Flowers and Whitewater were not worthy topics for news stories. He was particularly visible during the furor

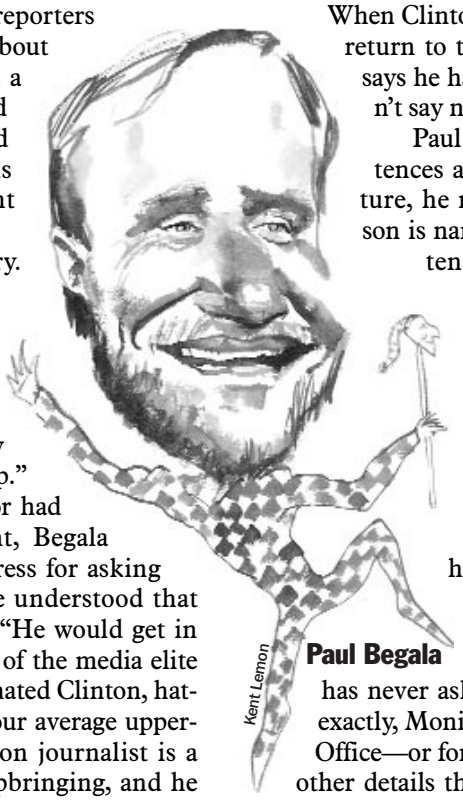
over Clinton's draft record.

In April 1992, the Associated Press reported that, while at Oxford in 1969, Clinton had received an induction notice from the U.S. military. It was a damaging revelation, particularly since the candidate had already implied, in an interview with the *Washington Post*, that he had never been drafted. "I wound up just going through the lottery," he told the *Post* in December 1991, "and it was just a pure fluke that I wasn't called." Begala was charged with explaining this apparent inconsistency to the media. At an informal press conference, Begala told reporters that Clinton had simply forgotten about getting his induction notice. It was a long time ago, Begala explained, and although his military record had been an issue in several previous campaigns, Clinton hadn't thought about it since the '60s.

Hardly anyone bought the story. "It was ridiculous," says one newspaper reporter who heard Begala's explanation. "Find a single person who doesn't remember being drafted. People remember what they had for breakfast when they were drafted because they threw it up." Pressed to explain how the governor had forgotten something so significant, Begala went on the attack, berating the press for asking such absurd, unfair questions. "He understood that bullying works," says the reporter. "He would get in your face and denounce you as part of the media elite and denounce you as someone who hated Clinton, hated progress. He understands that your average upper-middle-class white male Washington journalist is a product of a sheltered, suburban upbringing, and he would play on the guilt associated with that. It was never a pretty operation."

It didn't get any prettier. After the election, Begala continued to put out scandal fires for the Clintons, and to rail against the "Republican sleaze machine." When the *Washington Post* reported that Clinton had received a $200 haircut on the tarmac at the Los Angeles airport, Begala berated the newspaper for running the story. "That's pathetic," he said. "Get a life." When Newt Gingrich suggested that some White House staffers had been using drugs, Begala attacked the speaker as a pot-smoking "deadbeat dad," who had organized a "pro-obscenity campaign in college." The Clintons believed that Begala's outbursts were effective—they went over particularly well with Hillary—and Begala might have stayed attached to the White House indefinitely. In 1994, however, Bob Woodward published *The Agenda*, his book on the first year of the administration. It was obvious that Begala had been one of Woodward's more talkative sources. Begala was forced to apologize to the White House. Within a year, he had moved back to Austin.

"I fully intended to stay in Texas for the rest of my life," Begala says now, sounding slightly wistful. "I had the life I wanted. I had a great teaching job, I had a great PR job, I was with all my friends. I was never asked to do anything I was uncomfortable with." He was also making good money, representing corporate clients like Coca-Cola and Southwest Airlines. When Clinton called last year and asked him to return to the White House, however, Begala says he had little choice: "I realized I couldn't say no to this guy."



Paul Begala

Kent Lemon

Paul Begala is a religious man—his sentences are studded with lines from Scripture, he reads papal encyclicals, his oldest son is named after the pope—and if you listen to him long enough it becomes clear that Bill Clinton has a prominent place in his theology. Begala speaks like a person whose very life has been redeemed by the president. "I believe in this man. I really love this guy," Begala says with some emotion. "I owe him. He's certainly earned the faith that I have placed in him."

Faith is what Begala's defense of the president is all about. Begala happily admits that he has never asked the president to explain what, exactly, Monica Lewinsky was doing in the Oval Office—or for that matter asked about any of the other details that have convinced the rest of official Washington that Clinton is lying about the affair. "I don't have to ask," Begala explains. He *knows*. Such faith has turned out to be helpful in the PR arena, allowing Begala to dismiss without contrary evidence unflattering news stories about the president. Asked on television the other day to comment on a *New York Times* report that Monica Lewinsky had been waved into the Oval Office 37 times, Begala announced authoritatively that the story was "untrue." How does Begala know the story is inaccurate? "Most people don't know [Clinton] the way I've come to know him," he says.

Misplaced as it may be, Begala's belief in Clinton's goodness is not phony. "There's an enormous consistency between what he'll say on the air and what he says in meetings," says one of Begala's White House colleagues, "more so than other people here." Talking to him, one gets the sense that if it is ever proven that

Clinton lied about Lewinsky, Begala would be crushed, that his very understanding of the world would crumble.

On the other hand, he's not taking any chances. Not only did President Clinton not—never, not ever, under any circumstances—have a sexual affair with Monica Lewinsky, Begala says, but lots of Republicans do it, too. "From President Reagan to Sen. Dole to Speaker Gingrich, there have been leaders in the Republican party who have admitted to a lot of moral failings," he says. "I haven't seen Bill Bennett attacking them, passing moral judgment on them. I'm bothered by the hypocrisy." And, says Begala, he's not the only one who is bothered by it. So is Jesus. "In fact," he points out, "the only time Christ was moved to physical violence was in the face of hypocrisy, not in the face of adultery or immorality."

Paul Begala's loyalty to Bill Clinton is genuine, and apparently boundless. But how does Clinton regard Begala? It's hard to know for certain, but there are signs. During the 1992 race, Begala spent more time with Clinton than perhaps any other member of the campaign. Begala was frequently the first to see Clinton in the morning, sometimes handing the candidate his towel as he emerged from the shower. The two usually spent all day together.

How did Clinton repay him? According to *The Agenda*, "The morning of the inauguration, Begala received a phone call telling him he would not be sitting on the podium outside the U.S. Capitol where Clinton would be sworn in. Instead, he was assigned seats down front. He and his wife picked up their tickets that morning, only to find their seats were located in the last reserved section, down front, but way, way back. They went, and his wife wept."

As it turns out, Begala's partner, James Carville, also found himself relegated to third-class seating at the inauguration. Carville, however, is a somewhat less faithful man than Begala—"I'm a Mediterranean Catholic," he says—and so is less willing to endure such a humiliating snub. He stayed home and watched the event on television.

Not surprisingly, Carville also has a less theological understanding of political loyalty. Begala, he says, is a good political consultant, and, unlike "sunshine soldiers and summer patriots," a good consultant is apt "to be drawn by the sound of gunfire on the Potomac." That's simply the way good consultants are. To explain it, Carville invokes not metaphysics, but *The Godfather*: "In the words of Michael Corleone, 'This is what we chose to do with our lives.'"

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

THREE WHO WON'T FLACK

by Fred Barnes

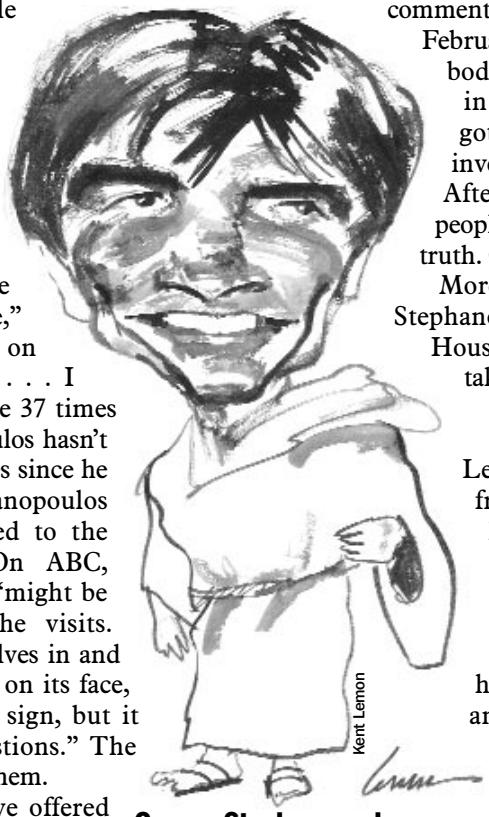
WITH FRIENDS LIKE George Stephanopoulos, Leon Panetta, and Dee Dee Myers, President Clinton scarcely needs enemies. During Clinton's first term, they were among his closest aides, always in daily contact with him. So their conspicuous absence now from the core group of strong Clinton supporters is striking. Rather than defend the president, they appear to feel betrayed by him. Indeed, both Stephanopoulos, who was a senior Clinton adviser, and Myers, the president's first press secretary, have used the word "betrayal" in commenting on the president's involvement with former intern Monica Lewinsky. Also, all three have balked at the Clinton strategy of pillorying independent counsel Kenneth Starr. Most telling of all, however, is their refusal to say they believe the president is telling the truth about his relationship with Lewinsky. And if these three, who know Clinton so well, aren't four-square behind him, who could be?

First reactions are revealing, all the more in the cases of Stephanopoulos, Myers, and Panetta. When the sex-scandal story broke on January 21, Stephanopoulos instantly declared it serious. He said he "hopes" the president is telling the truth, a line he's stuck with even after being pressured by Clinton advisers. And if the charges Clinton had sex with Lewinsky and then told her to lie under oath about it are true, "they're not only politically damaging, but it could lead to impeachment proceedings," Stephanopoulos said on ABC's *Good Morning America*.

On Day Two of the scandal, Myers appeared on an ABC special. Her initial reaction? It wasn't that Clinton had been hit with outrageously false accusations. "Your first instinct when you see something you weren't expecting . . . is to feel betrayed," she said. "And I think that's an understandable reaction." Panetta, Clinton's budget chief, then White House chief of staff, released a written statement on January 22. Sometimes interns worked in his office, he said. But "I am not aware of any improper relationship, sexual or otherwise, between the president and any of

these interns." Not exactly a ringing defense of the president. Nor were his comments to the *San Jose Mercury News*: "If there is something there and it leads to [Clinton's] having to step out of office, it may be time to do some repair work. . . ." It would be better, Panetta said, "if [Vice President Al] Gore became president, and you had a new message and a new individual up there. The worst scenario is if there's substance to it and it drags out." Later, the best excuse Panetta could offer to CNN's Larry King was that the president is usually too busy on official business to fool around ("there is very little time, you know").

What shocked Myers and Stephanopoulos was the disclosure that Lewinsky had visited the White House 37 times after leaving her job there in 1996. "There's no way to convince the American public that 37 visits to the White House by a former intern is routine," Myers told Geraldo Rivera on CNBC. "That's extraordinary. . . . I haven't visited the White House 37 times since I left. George Stephanopoulos hasn't visited the White House 37 times since he left a year ago." In fact, Stephanopoulos told an associate he'd returned to the White House only twice. On ABC, Stephanopoulos allowed there "might be innocent explanations" for the visits. "Sometimes people sign themselves in and don't actually go," he said. "So on its face, it's not necessarily a damning sign, but it does raise an awful lot of questions." The White House has yet to answer them.



George Stephanopoulos

The three former aides have offered plenty of public advice to Clinton on handling the scandal. But they have not urged him to step forward immediately and tell the unvarnished truth. My guess is they're leery of what the truth may be. Still, "at some point, he's got to present the American people the truth of that relationship [with Lewinsky]," Panetta said on CBS's *Face the Nation* on February 8. Stephanopoulos touched on the matter of truth a different way. "There's one question" basic to the scandal, he said on ABC's *This Week* on January 25. "Is he telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? If he is, he can survive. If he isn't, he can't." Sam Donaldson then asked, "What's your guess?" Stephanopoulos responded: "I don't know. I pray he's telling the truth. You know this is hard for me. I've got to tell you the truth. I'm heartbroken with all the evidence coming out." In the end, Stephanopoulos said on February 1, the president "is going to have to either apologize or concede mistakes."

As for demonizing Ken Starr, none of the three is on board. Myers called it "a step too far." (She also said Hillary Rodham Clinton shouldn't have used the word "conspiracy" in attacking her right-wing critics.) Stephanopoulos has been willing to call Starr "incompetent" and "unethical," but not corrupt, which is the White House's favorite term for the special prosecutor. Panetta has actually spoken kindly of Starr, so much so the Republican National Committee included his comments to Larry King in a press release on February 10. Starr, Panetta said, "is somebody that does have a good reputation in Washington, and I think that he's got to be given an opportunity to investigate the situation, find the facts. After all, he has said to the American people he's interested in the facts and the truth. Give him the room to do it."

More than Myers or Panetta, it's Stephanopoulos who has given the White House heartburn. Rush Limbaugh has taken to calling him "Brutus." Stephanopoulos has even defended the media frenzy surrounding the Lewinsky story. And he is aghast, friends say, the president would put himself in a situation where damaging accusations—even if untrue—could throw the administration and the Democratic party into chaos.

Press secretary Mike McCurry has expressed sympathy for Stephanopoulos, but others are furious. White House aide Rahm Emanuel and political adviser James Carville took Stephanopoulos to task at a lunch shortly after the scandal broke. "I heard they beat him up pretty well and then stuck him with the bill," says McCurry. Carville laughed when asked if he'd taken Stephanopoulos to the woodshed. "He's my brother," Carville said. "I love my brother. He's said some things I wouldn't have, and I've said some things he wouldn't have." A White House official said the conversation was "pretty candid," with Stephanopoulos being informed he was "certainly not making anyone inside [the White House] comfortable."

Stephanopoulos isn't talking about the lunch, or anything else. "I have to let my work on ABC speak for itself," he told me. It speaks loudly.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of **The Weekly Standard.**

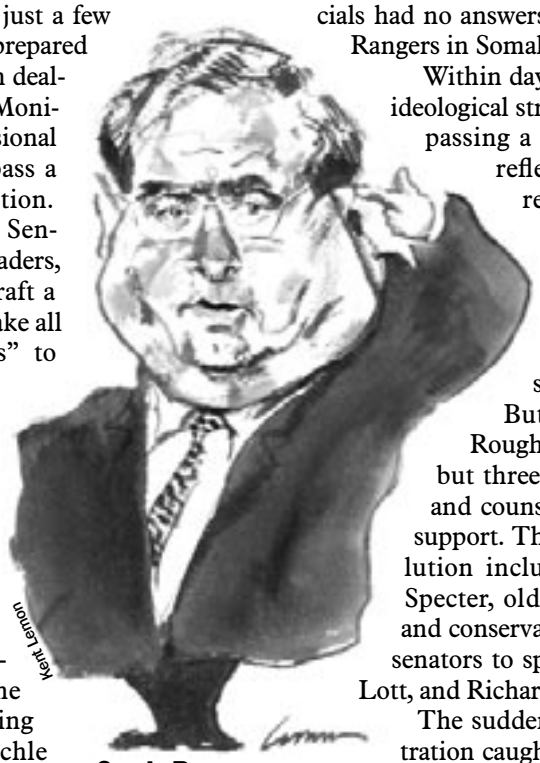
No Vote of Confidence

by Matthew Rees

"I DON'T HAVE TO STAY HERE and take this." That's what Sandy Berger, President Clinton's national-security adviser, said in exasperation during a February 11 meeting with Senate Republicans, who were berating him and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright for shortcomings in the administration's policy toward Iraq. Berger's outburst illustrates the gulf that has developed over the past few weeks between the GOP and the Clinton foreign-policy team. The vast majority of Republicans, and many Democrats, have concluded that the administration is sorely unprepared to wage a military campaign against Saddam Hussein. And last week, the Senate scrapped its plan to vote on a resolution supporting the use of force against Iraq.

This is a dramatic change from just a few weeks ago, when Republicans were prepared to give the president total freedom in dealing with Saddam. Shortly after the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke, congressional Republicans were determined to pass a resolution supporting military action. Democrats agreed, prompting the Senate's Republican and Democratic leaders, Trent Lott and Tom Daschle, to draft a statement urging the president "to take all necessary and appropriate actions" to frustrate Saddam's weapons-building program.

The draft resolution encountered no objections from Senate Republicans and was expected to pass easily. But then Democratic senators Max Cleland and Richard Durbin charged that it resembled the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution. Cleland's voice has particular resonance on these matters—he lost his legs and an arm while serving in Vietnam—and Lott and Daschle worked to craft a suitable compromise.



Keith Lennon

Sandy Berger

But soon after, support for the resolution began to evaporate. The turning point was a series of briefings the administration's top foreign-policy hands gave to senators. The administration's objective in these briefings was simple: to apprise senators of its strategy toward Iraq and to spell out the mechanics of a bombing campaign.

But the briefings didn't go as planned. Indeed, they convinced senators from both parties that the administration had no long-term strategy for dealing with Iraq. Airstrikes and more airstrikes, was the simple message delivered by Berger, Albright, and defense secretary William Cohen. There didn't seem to be much more to it than that.

Richard Shelby, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, came away from the briefings believing the administration "doesn't have a comprehensive plan to deal with Saddam Hussein." Chuck Hagel, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, complained that "there was no clear objective and there was a lot of unfocused commentary. Everybody sobered up on passing a resolution." Even John McCain, who furiously lobbied Senate Republicans to drop their objections to a resolution, conceded the briefings were "not very substantial." Another senator, who preferred anonymity, said the briefings were the worst he'd attended since 1993, when Clinton officials had no answers for the deaths of 18 Army Rangers in Somalia.

Within days, Senate Republicans of all ideological stripes united in opposition to passing a resolution. This unity was reflected at the Senate GOP's regularly scheduled weekly lunch, held on February 10. These lunches are usually casual affairs where not much business is accomplished and few senators bother to speechify. But this one was different. Roughly 20 senators spoke, and all but three blasted the administration and counseled against a resolution of support. Those speaking against a resolution included moderates like Arlen Specter, old bulls like Pete Domenici, and conservatives like Jon Kyl. The only senators to speak in favor were McCain, Lott, and Richard Lugar.

The sudden turn against the administration caught Lott off guard. Soon after the GOP lunch, he spoke to Albright, advising her that she should pay a visit to Capitol Hill as soon as possible.

Albright and Berger showed up the next morning, February 11, to meet with 10 Republican senators. In retrospect, the two might have been better off if they had stayed away. The 90-minute session, held in Lott's office, was even more hot-tempered than the previous week's briefings. One senator described it as "the frankest meeting I've attended since coming to Congress."

The senators, using what one participant called "unvarnished, brutal language," conveyed an array of grievances to Albright and Berger. Some charged that the president had failed since the State of the Union to build public support for a bombing campaign. Others complained the administration hadn't sought funding for the campaign. Still others thought too much faith was being placed in the power of airstrikes.

One of the senators remarked to Albright and Berger that there was a strong sense among Republicans "that you're the gang that can't shoot straight." Brash comments like this reflect longstanding GOP frustrations with the administration's conduct of foreign affairs, from the 1996 airstrikes against Iraq—which Clinton's CIA director later admitted had *strengthened* Saddam—to the president's repeated broken promises to bring home U.S. troops in Bosnia.

After the meeting, Lott realized that a resolution supporting the administration would be premature and would cause an uproar among Republicans. (He's still nursing wounds from his feverish work last year to pass the Clinton-supported chemical-weapons treaty.) McCain, however, was still lobbying for a resolution, and if Democrats had also been in enthusiastic support, Republicans would have been in a fix. But the dicey politics of the matter were mitigated by continued Democratic unease. Senate Democrats were far from united over how best to proceed. When Daschle spoke about Iraq from the Senate floor on February 12, he said he was in complete agreement with Lott's decision to delay the resolution.

With Congress in recess until February 23, Daschle, Lott, Newt Gingrich, and Richard Gephardt all tried to compensate for the absence of a resolution by making statements that condemned Saddam and supported the president. But these could not paper over the fact that large numbers of Republicans, and many Democrats, lack confidence in the Clinton foreign-policy team at a time when military action is imminent. It's a problem for the administration—and the country.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer for **THE WEEKLY STANDARD.**

CLINTON AND THE POLLS

by Everett Ladd and Karlyn Bowman

IN POLLS, IF YOU ASK A QUESTION, you almost always get an answer—though not necessarily to the question you wanted folks to answer. We see this illustrated once again in polls on Bill Clinton's standing as president in the wake of the allegations of an affair between him and White House intern Monica Lewinsky. All of the polls show higher proportions of people now saying they approve of "the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as president" than did before the scandal broke. In fact, of course, while observers differ on what the scandal's impact has been (and is likely to be), no one thinks it has strengthened Clinton's standing with the American people.

We can speculate about what a majority of poll respondents mean when they say they approve of Clinton's handling of his office. This question has always picked up assessments not just of the president but of the nation's condition—the domestic economy and our place in world affairs. It's also true that Americans have repeatedly expressed the view that the press is too intrusive, and people responding to recent polls may well have used the approval question not to endorse the president's conduct but to criticize the media's excesses.

Fortunately, on the larger issue of whether "character matters" to the contemporary public, we don't need to speculate. Americans have repeatedly said it does matter—and they have lessened their support for Clinton's presidency because of reservations about his character. A new poll from *U.S. News* found a 24-percentage-point gap between the president's job-approval rating and his personal-approval rating, 66 percent and 42 percent respectively. His mediocre personal standing is captured by many different kinds of survey questions.

In April 1997, Gallup asked whether Clinton's ethical standards are higher or lower than those of other recent presidents. Here's what respondents said:

	Compared with			
Clinton's standards	Bush's	Reagan's	Carter's	Nixon's
Higher	27%	29%	18%	47%
Lower	57%	54%	61%	30%
About the same	13%	14%	14%	15%

Thus, Clinton manages to beat a predecessor who was drummed out of office, but he loses to everyone else by this standard.

An early January question from Yankelovich Part-

ners asked whether Bill Clinton is one of our greatest presidents, a good but not great president, an average president, or a poor president. The pollsters also asked about Ronald Reagan. Far more (52 percent) said Reagan's presidency would be judged above average than said that of Clinton's (34 percent), even though the same poll recorded a whopping 59 percent approval rating for Clinton.

Gallup has asked a slightly different question about how presidents will go down in history. In September 1988, 52 percent said that Ronald Reagan would go down in history as an above-average or outstanding president. In January 1993, when the electorate had just voted George Bush out of office, 36 percent said the same about him. And, in January 1998, just 30 percent felt that way about Clinton.

In 1993, Gallup began asking whether a set of personal characteristics and qualities apply to President Clinton. Americans have been asked 20 times whether this president "shares your values." Only three times did respectable majorities say the phrase applied. Since January 1994—in 17 different surveys—pluralities or majorities have replied that the qualities "honest and trustworthy" don't apply to Bill Clinton. It's not surprising that substantial numbers of Americans think the president is lying about the Lewinsky affair.

Though he was not seen as a strong candidate in 1996, Bob Dole won the character contest over and over again. In a June 1996 poll by the bipartisan research team of Lake Research and the Tarrance Group, 70 percent described Dole as "moral"; only 41 percent felt the term applied to Clinton. In a lighter but revealing vein, the pollsters asked people to think about the prospects of going into business with Bob Dole or Bill Clinton. Fifty-five percent said they would trust Dole more to keep the books; only 24 percent said they would trust Clinton more. In July 1996, in response to an Opinion Dynamics/Fox News question, 43 percent said that Bill Clinton would be more likely than Bob Dole (12 percent) to lie under oath. An ABC poll during the campaign found that far more people would rather Bob Dole than Bill Clinton babysit for their children.

More recently, Opinion Dynamics/Fox News asked whether Bill Clinton or Al Gore would be more likely to cheat at cards. Forty-two percent in the September 1997 poll said Clinton would, 15 percent, the vice president. And last week, a Zogby poll asked whether respondents would like their children to look up to Clinton as a role model. Sixty-three percent said no.

Other evidence suggests that Bill Clinton will find it hard to secure a solid place in history. A January 1997 *Newsweek* poll found that a near majority, 49 percent, thought Clinton would be more likely to rank in the bottom 10 presidents 100 years from now; 37 percent said he would place in the top 10. Late last month, the *Washington Post* asked whether Clinton would be judged more for his accomplishments as president or for the controversies over his life and financial dealings. Sixty-one percent said that from what they had seen so far, he would be remembered more for the allegations about his personal life; only 33 percent said he would be remembered more for his presidential achievements. Democrats split evenly on the question.

The strong condition of the country notwithstanding, President Clinton's standing in the court of public opinion shows a fundamental weakness. Sky-high job-performance numbers of the kind we have seen in recent weeks will not erase the deep doubts the public has about his character. Mounting evidence from the same polls suggests that these reservations will weigh heavily in the public's judgment of Bill Clinton's tenure in Washington.

Everett Ladd is executive director of the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut. Karlyn Bowman is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Do It Virginia's Way

by Jan Witold Baran and Allison R. Hayward

Washington is obsessed with campaign fund-raising practices. In 1997, political elites spent considerable energy debating the legality of Al Gore's telephone fund-raising, while a Senate committee held televised hearings on White House coffee klatches.

Fueling the obsession is the fact that fund-raising is governed by literally thousands of pages of statutes, regulations, and rulings, which apply to every candidate for president and Congress. Three hundred officials at the Federal Election Commission supervise the process. And to most in Washington, "campaign-finance reform" means adding more of the same. Although Washington insiders depend on the freedom of speech for their livelihood, most object to unrestricted speech in the campaign context. The McCain-Feingold bill, notably,

calls for new bans and regulations, and for a bigger and more powerful FEC to enforce the growing mountain of laws.

But in all of the debates over campaign reform, no one in Washington seems to have glanced across the Potomac to the Commonwealth of Virginia, which has just inaugurated a governor elected under a remarkable campaign-finance system as different as possible from those the reformers love.

According to the conventional wisdom, Virginia should be mired in corruption. America's 12th-largest state, after all, limits neither the size of contributions to its political candidates nor the amount spent by campaigns. It has no public funding of campaigns and permits corporations and unions (barred from contributing in federal elections) to make donations. Commonwealth law merely requires public disclosure of the money politicians raise and spend. Yet Virginia is *not* mired in corruption. Asked to identify a local scandal involving campaign finance, University of Virginia political science professor Larry Sabato pauses, then replies, "I really cannot think of a major campaign-finance scandal."

So, how does a large, modern state escape endless pages of campaign-finance regulations—and avoid campaign-finance scandals as well? Virginia relies on just two measures: disclosure and term limits. Disclosure is the linchpin.

Virginia's approach is consistent with the political philosophy of native son James Madison. Madisonian democracy accepts the reality of factions and allows for factions to be heard. Indeed, it encourages broad participation in politics so that no single faction can dominate. Legal restrictions, such as those governing federal campaigns, distort this competition. Their Rube Goldberg requirements and prohibitions spawn such phenomena as "independent expenditures," "soft money," and "issue ads," all of which complicate the flow of political money to its designated ends and make political support more difficult to trace.

In Virginia, because there are no contribution and spending limits, no such contrivances arise. Instead, "special interests" openly support their chosen candidates. (The only groups not allowed to contribute are judges, pari-mutuel betting licensees, and racing-commission members.) Contributors of over $100 are named publicly, in alphabetical order, with their occupation and employer listed. And reporting must be timely: within 72 hours, for contributions of over $1,000 for a statewide office or $500 for any other office received in the last 13 days of the campaign. With this information in hand if they want it, the voters make their choice—and the winner takes office only if his contribution and expenditure reports are complete.

In Virginia, a candidate of modest personal wealth can raise the millions needed for a statewide campaign. The winner of the November '97 governor's race, Jim Gilmore, is the son of a butcher. He succeeded the son of a professional football coach (George Allen), who himself succeeded the grandson of slaves (Doug Wilder). Compare these governors with the incumbent U.S. senators, elected under the federal campaign laws. Chuck Robb and John Warner are men of means with glamorous personal backgrounds (Robb is married to President Johnson's daughter, and Warner was married to actress Elizabeth Taylor). Unlike the U.S. Senate, the Virginia State House is not increasingly populated by millionaires.

In an added irony, U.S. Senate races are so far the most expensive campaigns in the state, though the federal rules were intended to curb spending. The 1994 race between Robb, Oliver North (who raised $20 million), and an independent candidate cost $27 million and holds the state record. Warner's 1996 opponent, a cellular phone company investor, spent over $10 million of his personal fortune in a losing campaign; all together, that election cost the candidates and their parties $18 million. By comparison, the gubernatorial races in 1993 and 1997 cost $12 million and just under $18 million respectively.

Under the Virginia system, contributors are publicized—and sometimes become controversial. Thus, in the 1997 gubernatorial race, Republican Gilmore was attacked for accepting a contribution from conservative television preacher Pat Robertson (a Virginian). Gilmore's opponent, Don Beyer, produced a TV ad that warned voters, "By taking $50,000 from Pat Robertson, Gilmore is showing he would be the governor for the extreme right-wing agenda."

The largest contributors to Gilmore and Beyer, by far, were their respective political parties. The Republican party alone gave Gilmore over $2 million. But the next highest contributors clustered around $30,000. This figure is about where the federal contribution limit for PACs—set at $10,000 in 1974 and still unchanged—would be today if adjusted for inflation. Except for a few well-publicized heavy-hitters, then, Virginia donors give at a level deemed acceptable to federal lawmakers in 1974, and they do so without compulsory contribution limits.

The second important feature of Virginia's system is that governors may not serve consecutive terms. Accordingly, incumbent governors do not divert time and energy to their own political fund-raising unless they are seeking other political office, which is rare. (Only four Virginians in history have served as both governor and U.S. senator: Robb, Harry Byrd Sr., Claude Swanson, and James Monroe.) If President Clinton hadn't been eligible to run for reelection in

1996, would he have had all those coffees and overnights in the Lincoln Bedroom? Probably not, nor is there any history of contributor shakedowns in the Governor's Mansion or at Monticello.

Term limits may not come up in Congress this spring, but campaign-finance reform surely will. Lawmakers will have an opportunity to choose between the post-Watergate regulatory model, embodied in McCain-Feingold, and an alternative still on the drawing board that will emphasize disclosure. The bipartisan popularity of McCain-Feingold—endorsed by virtually every major newspaper editorial board—suggests that Washington remains intent on taking a cumbersome federal campaign-finance system and making it still more unworkable. McCain-Feingold would only drive political money further underground—and probably be held unconstitutional by the courts.

Before compounding the problem of campaign financing, members of Congress should compare the federal system with Virginia's and ask themselves which works better. If they do, perhaps a majority of members will admit that the 1970s experiment with campaign-finance reform has miserably failed. Then, those favoring a return to reason can perhaps work with the chairman of the Senate committee having jurisdiction over election laws, who has introduced a reform and disclosure bill—none other than John Warner of Virginia.

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Global Gun Grabbers

by Ronald Bailey

The United Nations wants to disarm Americans and other gun owners around the world. No, this is not some wild claim cooked up by the fevered imaginations of militia crazies. For the past couple of years, three different U.N. agencies—the U.N. Disarmament Commission, the U.N. Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, and the U.N. Economic and Social Council's Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice—have been holding meetings to devise policies to control "light weapons."

Ostensibly, these agencies are hoping to limit the "illicit" international trade in handguns, rifles, and other small arms. Perhaps not surprisingly, though, they have concluded that the way to crack down on the illicit trade is to keep law-abiding people from owning firearms. This, of course, mirrors the arguments of gun-control advocates in the United States, who it turns out are working hand-in-glove with the U.N. bureaucrats on these initiatives. "The constant rhetoric you hear in the U.N. is that the availability of firearms causes crime," says Tom Mason of the National Rifle Association. Yet U.S. studies clearly show that states with the highest per capita gun ownership—Vermont for one—generally have the lowest crime rates.

Now, it may be a good thing to prevent weapons from flowing into countries undergoing civil war—Rwanda, say, or Bosnia—but the U.N. and gun-control advocates have misidentified the problem. Take Afghanistan. That country is an armed camp not because some greedy gun-runners sold weapons to Afghan citizens; it's an armed camp because the *governments* of the Soviet Union and the United States supplied armaments to their respective allies in that country. Besides, guns didn't cause the Afghan civil war, the Soviet invasion did. And in most of the world's civil conflicts today, the vast majority of the weapons are supplied by *governments* pursuing what they believe to be their interests. Hunters and sport shooters are simply not part of the equation.

As creatures of government, U.N. functionaries do not accept or respect the principle that gun ownership might be a citizen's right. The Second Amendment guarantee of an American citizen's right to keep and bear arms is beyond fathoming by U.N. officials whose governments essentially want to figure out how best to control and disarm their citizens. "We consider personal defense to be a basic universal right," says Mason. "They do not." Instead, the U.N.'s gun-controllers argue that citizens should rely solely on their governments for personal protection and blandly advise that "all States should improve the safety and security of their societies, so their citizens would not see the necessity to arm themselves."

The most troubling of the three initiatives is the "U.N. Declaration of Principles for the Regulation of Firearms" being devised by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The working draft declares that "no State can be left immune from the effect of the lack or laxity of legislative and administrative control of firearms of other States." It goes on to say: "The absence of effective firearm regulation in one Member State can undermine not only the regula-

tory efforts but also the effective governance of other Member States."

Decoding the U.N.-speak, the declaration is claiming that countries which restrict the ownership of firearms are threatened by countries in which citizens have a right to own guns. The implied solution is global gun control—international standards for the regulation of firearms. Indeed, the draft declaration recommends: "The acquisition and possession of firearms and ammunition would always require a license granted by an authority." It further recommends that "a system for firearms registration to record information on serial number and other markings of the firearms legally imported and sold to citizens, or reported lost/stolen, should be domestically/internationally harmonized. That is, there is a need for centralizing and computerization of information in a standardized manner to facilitate further criminal investigations and to determine the responsibility of owners."

Simply put, the declaration is calling for global gun licensing and registration. But this would be only the first step. International gun-control advocacy groups that are advising the U.N. commission want much more.

According to the NRA's Mason, the main supporters of the declaration are Japan and Canada. "Japan is supplying the money and Canada is supplying the brains," he says. The leading non-governmental organization pushing the U.N. initiatives is a leftist arms-control group, the British American Security Information Council, based in Washington and London. With the help of a generous grant from the Ford Foundation, the council is expanding its old military arms-control agenda with a new Project on Light Weapons. They define "light weapons" as including "pistols, revolvers, rifles and machine guns."

In a report for the group, deputy director Natalie Goldring outlines its plans for domestic and international control of light weapons. First, Goldring derides the National Rifle Association and other U.S. gunowners groups for being paranoid about the global firearms initiatives: "Unlike the NRA, which apparently sees the U.N. efforts as an international conspiracy led by Japan and Canada, Gun Owners of America sees the United Nations as a front for domestic gun control in the United States." But only a few paragraphs later she blithely declares: "It will be difficult to control the international light weapons trade without monitoring and controlling domestic access to weapons."

Goldring goes on to suggest what measures would be needed to "make the connections between domestic gun control and international gun control." Among them are the creation of "subregional, regional, and global weapons registers" and "greater oversight of existing national control and enforcement mechanisms, harmonizing national measures in bilateral, regional, and global frameworks; and/or enhancing national policies." Can there be any doubt that "enhancing national policies" is to gun control what "revenue enhancing" is to tax increases?

Goldring singles out the United States for opprobrium, declaring that "the direct relationship between lax U.S. gun laws and illicit trafficking in U.S. weapons suggests that to control light weapons internationally, it will be necessary to control them nationally. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to control the illicit market in light weapons without monitoring and controlling domestic access to weapons." As the old saying goes, "Just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean they're not out to get you."

Does it really matter what the U.N. decides about regulating firearms? It may matter a great deal. Consider the recent U.N. treaty to ban landmines. The United States participated in all of the landmine negotiations, trying to make the point that while mines do cause considerable harm to civilians, they are essential to protecting American troops, especially along the DMZ in Korea. The United States asked for an exemption in that case but was simply ignored. In the end, President Clinton uncharacteristically resisted enormous political pressure from arms-control groups and refused to sign the landmine treaty.

The U.N. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice plans to submit its Declaration of Principles for the Regulation of Firearms to the U.N. General Assembly later this year, where it will almost certainly be hailed as an advance for civilization. It would then be a short and predictable step for gun-control activists to urge turning the declaration into a U.N. Convention on Firearms Regulations—with which U.S. politicians could be bludgeoned, as they have been on landmines. This is why the NRA's Tom Mason insists, "We have a damn good reason to make a big deal out of this U.N. gun-control effort."

Nonetheless, gunowners and sport shooters are playing catchup. Earlier this year, the NRA and more than 20 gunowner and sport shooter organizations from 12 countries formed the World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities to counterbalance the U.N. bureaucracies. Meantime, the United States has sent official representatives from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Treasury Department, and Customs to U.N. negotiating sessions on the Declaration of Principles. Their participation simply lends credibility to a process that threatens to erode the rights of American citizens. It should stop.

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Hillary's Brain

Sidney Blumenthal, Chief White House Conspiracy Theorist

By Carl M. Cannon

When Hillary Rodham Clinton went on the *Today* show last month to charge that a "vast, right-wing conspiracy" was behind the many allegations against her husband, it had to be a moment of triumph for Sidney Blumenthal. A longtime journalist turned senior White House staffer, Blumenthal has been pushing the conspiracy line for years. In December 1993, while a writer for the *New Yorker,* he appeared on *Nightline* to downplay the first great sex scandal of the Clinton presidency, the Troopergate stories published in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *American Spectator.* He denounced the reports as "a large, deliberate distraction" pushed by "a small, far-right-wing group of people" who "have been able to pull the strings of the mainstream media."

The first lady suspects she and the president have lots of enemies; Sidney Blumenthal whispers their names to her.

It was a curious posture for a journalist: leaping to defend the White House by taking pot shots at fellow reporters. But Blumenthal was no ordinary journalist. He had—then as now—the ear of the first lady, whom he has known since the late 1980s and who shares many of his views. She suspects large segments of the press are out to get her and the president; Blumenthal confirms her suspicions and fills in the names, faces, and personal agendas of supposed adversaries in the media. His connection to Mrs. Clinton gave Blumenthal influence inside the White House even before he went to work there in August 1997.

But it also earned him enmity from journalists. His colleagues' main complaint was that he was advising the White House—including on how to handle unflattering press. Two reports produced in the shop of then-White House special counsel Mark Fabiani were clearly Blumenthal-inspired. The first, later ridiculed by the press, was an overview of anti-Clinton press coverage that ran to hundreds of pages, with copies of articles attached. Entitled somewhat ludicrously "The Communications Stream of Conspiracy Commerce," this document, produced by Fabiani and his deputy, Chris Lehane, was superficial but not kooky. The aim was to steer mainstream reporters away from leads of the Vince Foster-is-alive-and-living-in-Argentina variety.

The second report was not so innocent. Dreamed up by Blumenthal, it was a detailed critique of reporter Susan Schmidt's aggressive Whitewater coverage in the *Washington Post.* Blumenthal floated the project with Mrs. Clinton, members of her staff, and the White House counsel's office. Howard Kurtz, media critic of the *Post*, recounts the episode in his soon-to-be published book on the Clinton White House and the press, *Spin Cycle: Inside the Clinton Propaganda Machine*.

Blumenthal was "still writing for the *New Yorker* but increasingly whispering political advice to Hillary," writes Kurtz. Blumenthal told Fabiani the White House should exploit a book on Whitewater by James Stewart that he, Blumenthal, expected to be favorable to the Clintons. Use it "to go after the *Post*," Blumenthal said, according to Kurtz. "You ought to prepare a document outlining the differences between the *Post* and other papers." Blumenthal wanted the White House to present the critique of Schmidt's reporting to her editor, Leonard Downie Jr., then release it "to show up the *Post* before the rest of the media."

Fabiani ignored Blumenthal's suggestion, "but he quickly learned that Blumenthal had Hillary's ear," Kurtz writes. "A week or so after he and Blumenthal had talked, she would reel off a list of ideas and, almost word for word, they would be Blumenthal's ideas." As it turned out, the report on Schmidt was never made public. White House press secretary Mike McCurry called it "the dumbest idea I've ever heard in my life"

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and ordered it killed. Kurtz adds, "All copies of the report were carefully collected."

So when Blumenthal joined the White House last summer, his reputation had preceded him. Top Clinton aide Rahm Emanuel was sufficiently skeptical of all the conspiracy talk that he nicknamed Blumenthal "G.K."—short for "grassy knoll." But Emanuel, like others in the White House, has become newly respectful in the weeks since Mrs. Clinton's *Today* performance. "I'm the first to roll my eyes at some of this, but Sid has been proven more right than wrong on the 'right-wing conspiracy,'" Emanuel told me. "There is a partisan effort against us—more than meets the eye." Paul Begala, the 1992 campaign mechanic who has returned to the Clintons' side after a brief exile in Texas, joined the White House staff the same day as Blumenthal. "Everybody predicted he wouldn't work out," says Begala. "Everybody was wrong."

Blumenthal has been opening doors for David Brock, about whom he once snipped: "I hesitate to call him a journalist."

Before the Monica Lewinsky story broke, it wasn't clear just how badly the White House would need Blumenthal's particular skills. A cerebral Brandeis graduate, now 49, he has written four well-received books, a play, and hundreds of high-toned political pieces for influential publications. But whatever his other talents, Sidney Blumenthal is a man who sees hidden agendas and sinister machinations behind nearly every Kenneth Starr subpoena and every *Washington Post* or *New York Times* scoop. And he is not shy about taking on reporters. With the White House now embattled, the Clintons—especially the first lady—have found in Blumenthal the ideal courtier.

After Blumenthal joined the White House, coverage of him was sparse, partly because he wouldn't speak on the record. He was brought in at a high level and given coveted "drop-in" privileges in the White House, meaning he doesn't always need to go through channels to talk to the president or first lady. This apparently aroused envy. Among his new colleagues, two reactions to Blumenthal kept cropping up: They weren't quite sure what actual work he was performing; and they circulated the subtle and always unattributed putdown that Sid was basically "harmless."

Neither characterization now seems apt. Blumenthal has a lot of substantive assignments. And his strategy for responding to the Monica Lewinsky scandal—unless the president is telling the whole truth—could turn out to be very damaging indeed.

In just eight months in the White House, Blumenthal has accomplished the following:

• Helped plan and manage the visit of British prime minister Tony Blair, from coaching the Labourites on how to deflect Monica questions to setting up a seminar on policy issues of interest to the Clinton and Blair administrations.

• Taken the lead, with Mrs. Clinton, in planning the administration's activities marking the new millennium. These are not just celebrations. "He's written a couple of long, thoughtful memos on the new economy," says White House communications director Ann F. Lewis. "He's also helped on Medicare and child care."

• Encouraged Al Gore and his staff to explain why they believe the vice president's phone calls from the White House in which he solicited large campaign contributions didn't violate the Pendleton Act. "Sid said: 'Look, you guys believe this was legal, right? Well, let's make the case,'" recalls Gore chief of staff Ron Klain. "We have plenty of political people—I'm one of 'em—whose instinct was to come up with a bumper-sticker slogan. Sid's was: What are the facts we have to support us? He has confidence we can make a complex argument in the media. Sid is actually a perfect fit here. He has a journalist's eye and an advocate's heart."

• Midwifed a January 7 meeting of intellectuals and academics at the White House attended by the president, vice president, and first lady.

• Assisted in crafting Clinton's recent State of the Union address. (A picture of Blumenthal coaching Clinton during debate prep even ran in the *New York Times*.)

• Taken the lead, during a recent presidential trip to Argentina, in getting the president to address the sensitive issue of freedom of the press in Latin America. "We wouldn't have had the right tone without Sidney, and we wouldn't have put the emphasis on it," says White House counselor Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty. "He brings a level of understanding and sophistication about the press and the media that is unique in the second term. He enjoys the full confidence of the president and the first lady, so his views are listened to and supported."

But his area of greatest expertise, say his colleagues, is press relations. He helps the White House reward friendly media outlets and commentators—and do battle with those they see as hostile.

"Who do you call in the different [news] organizations? Who is the decision-maker up the line from the reporter? Who's up and who's down? Who has an agenda? He knew it all," says Fabiani's successor, former White House associate counsel Lanny J. Davis. "What Sid knows is the internal dynamics and personalities of the different news organizations."

Some of those on the receiving end of this expertise believe Blumenthal's press strategy borders on the Nixonesque. Investigative reporters covering Whitewater keep hearing that they are on a Blumenthal "enemies" list. Susan Schmidt, who has produced scoops on the Whitewater beat since 1993, says of Blumenthal, "I've never heard of anyone who purports to be a journalist giving the White House advice on how to undermine the credibility of other news organizations."

For his part, Blumenthal dismisses the enemies-list story as apocryphal, along with the claim that he had a diagram of the right-wing conspiracy on his office wall. But he doesn't conceal his antipathy for Starr, or his disgust with large segments of the press. Nor does he hide the fact that he has spoon-fed unfavorable items on Starr's investigation to columnists he thinks sympathetic—or that he cooperates with media critics who argue that the press has been too hot in its pursuit of scandal. Indeed, Blumenthal has been opening doors for David Brock, the writer who long ago broke the Troopergate story in the *American Spectator*. At the time, Blumenthal derided Brock as "a younger right-wing writer—I hesitate to call him a journalist." Now, Brock has left the *Spectator* and started to attack his former allies—and Blumenthal apparently has shed his reservations.

Blumenthal won't expound publicly on where he believes the right-wing conspiracy starts and stops, and he won't go near the question of how much of the Clintons' trouble they have brought on themselves. In fact, he won't say much of anything for publication these days. In a long, friendly, but off-the-record interview, he indicates that being quoted widely is not the best way for him to help the Clintons' cause. All he'll say is that he "loves" his current job. "It's great to be seeing things from the inside that, as a journalist, I only saw from the outside," he adds. "Working in the White House has given me a much deeper understanding of what goes on."

When Blumenthal joined the White House last summer, there was much joking in press circles to the effect that he was owed several years' back pay. He was known for his high opinion of his own intellect, his deftness as a political writer, his high-level contacts in liberal circles on both sides of the Atlantic —and, mainly, his relentlessness as a defender of the Clintons.

As a national political writer for the *New Republic*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New Yorker* in the 1980s and '90s, Blumenthal displayed a decidedly left-of-center outlook and openly rooted for Democratic candi-

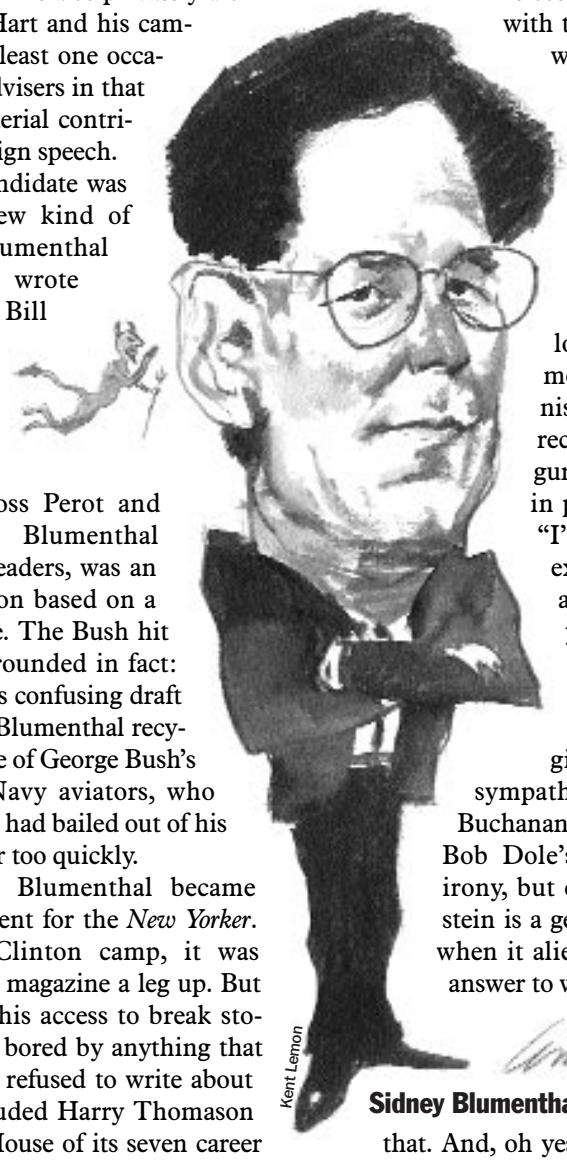
dates and causes. Moreover, he was identified with a specific faction of the Democratic party, the group that argued that if the Democrats wanted to recapture the White House, they needed "new ideas" with appeal beyond the party's traditional base of blacks, liberals, and labor. The first national candidate who fit the bill was Gary Hart—and Blumenthal fell for him hard.

He wrote glowing dispatches on Hart that were circulated by the campaign. He also privately dispensed advice to both Hart and his campaign aides, and, on at least one occasion, according to top advisers in that campaign, he made material contributions to a Hart campaign speech.

By 1992, another candidate was promising to be a "new kind of Democrat," and Blumenthal chose sides again. He wrote glowing pieces about Bill Clinton and was tough on the other Democrats seeking the nomination. In the general election, he was vicious toward Ross Perot and George Bush. Perot, Blumenthal assured *New Republic* readers, was an anti-Semite, a conclusion based on a single anonymous quote. The Bush hit was, if anything, less grounded in fact: At a time when Clinton's confusing draft record was being aired, Blumenthal recycled an old beef from one of George Bush's fellow World War II Navy aviators, who wondered whether Bush had bailed out of his crippled torpedo bomber too quickly.

After the election, Blumenthal became Washington correspondent for the *New Yorker*. His contacts in the Clinton camp, it was thought, would give the magazine a leg up. But Blumenthal didn't use his access to break stories, and he was plainly bored by anything that might spell scandal. He refused to write about Whitewater, actually lauded Harry Thomason for ridding the White House of its seven career travel-office employees, and dismissed Paula Jones as not only a tramp and a liar, but—what else?—a dupe of the right wing.

"She has left a trail of bent branches that winds through the reaches of the far right," Blumenthal wrote. "Territory occupied by abortion-clinic blockaders, television evangelists, professional media bashers, and profiteers in the martyr business."



Sidney Blumenthal

Eventually the *New Yorker* recruited Michael Kelly, a former *Baltimore Sun* and *New York Times* reporter, to provide some balance. As a condition of accepting the job, Kelly stipulated that Blumenthal would not be allowed to come into the office. "Too many people at the magazine believed he was sabotaging them," says Kelly, adding that Blumenthal had already applied for a job in the White House while covering the place. "He seemed to be in regular communication with the first lady as a sort of confidant. It was just not something I wanted around me."

Blumenthal is aware that many mainstream reporters believe he consistently crossed the line when he was a journalist. His response has been that he never pretended to be an ink-stained wretch working his way up from the police beat, following the star of objectivity. His models have been the towering columnists of yore, such as Joseph Alsop, who received a visit from JFK late on inauguration night; writers who were players in politics, not just impartial observers. "I'm not a reporter," Blumenthal once explained. "I don't believe that the accumulation of isolated fact upon fact yields some sort of pure truth, capital T."

Much of what Blumenthal wrote for the *New Yorker* was predictable, given his ideology and pro-Clinton sympathies: Al D'Amato is a brute, Pat Buchanan a menace, and the central feature of Bob Dole's character is not perseverance or irony, but cynicism. Meanwhile, Dianne Feinstein is a gem, the Republican party lost its way when it alienated Planned Parenthood, and the answer to who killed Vince Foster is easy: Washington. Blumenthal almost never used the word "conservative"; it was "right-wing" this and "far-right" that. And, oh yes, Richard Nixon was responsible for the Vietnam War.

On the other hand, not all his White House coverage was shallow or wrongheaded. Blumenthal certainly understood before most people how potent Tony Blair's "New Labour" appeal would be—and how strong the bonds would be between Blair and Clinton. Blumenthal also pointed out, early in the Clinton administration when the wise guys in both the Demo-

cratic party and the press were clamoring for Clinton to bring some graybeards into the White House, that the younger aides, George Stephanopoulos and his crowd, were the seasoned political warriors. It was their elders, such as McLarty, Foster, and Bernard Nussbaum, who were the novices.

Today, Blumenthal is the White House novice, but so far, both friends and critics believe he is well suited to the Clinton team. They see him as a natural political warrior who was trapped for almost three decades in the body of a journalist. "He must have had a severe identity crisis when he was a reporter," says White House press secretary Mike McCurry. "He didn't want to be in that profession."

The novice, moreover, is rising fast. It's no longer just Sid and Hillary who talk of conspiracies. Paul Begala went on the network talk shows last week and echoed Blumenthal's private view of Ken Starr: a "corrupt" man leading a "witch hunt."

The disquieting aspect of this strategy is that in an effort to keep the president's job-performance rating high, the Clintonites are risking damage to the country. The same surveys that show Clinton's job approval around 70 percent also show the public evenly divided on whether a shadowy conspiracy is attempting to destroy the Clinton presidency. This cannot be good for the nation. A few years ago, after Oliver Stone's *JFK* was released, I ran into a maitre d' I knew at my favorite racetrack restaurant, and nobody's fool. He had just seen the Stone movie. "That really shook me up," he said. "I'm so ashamed my government would do that."

There is something about an expensively produced Hollywood movie—or a smiling appearance on *Today* by a bright first lady—that gives it instant credibility with many Americans. Sidney Blumenthal understands both how the media work and how to take advantage of the American people's at least momentary susceptibility to conspiracy theories. The Clintons have benefited from Blumenthal's insight and are following his strategy. For now, it seems to be working, but sooner or later—and probably sooner—conspiracy theories wear thin and "the accumulation of fact upon fact" does yield the truth. ♦

Monica Envy

Women Who Talk Dirty and the President They Adore

By David Brooks

First, a warning. This article reports on the public statements that certain women have made about the Clinton-Lewinsky affair. Many of these statements are crude, vulgar, and sexually explicit. As a result, parts of this article may be offensive to children, men, and others not yet accustomed to the urbane feminine discourse that prevails in certain quarters.

Late last month, the *New York Observer* brought together 10 mostly middle-aged Manhattan women at Le Bernardin restaurant on West 51st Street to talk about Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. It was a distinguished group of well-educated professional women, moderately famous in their fields, and without exception they were wildly enthusiastic about Bill Clinton. "I for some strange reason like Clinton even more because of this," admitted former *Saturday Night Live* writer Patricia Marx. "He is the most incredibly charming man," gushed fashion designer Nicole Miller. "This virile president is suddenly fulfilling this forbidden fantasy of this old-fashioned taboo aggressive male. I think women are finding that appealing," said author Katie Roiphe.

Several of the women noted that their husbands were shocked by Clinton's alleged behavior. But the women were mostly tickled by it: "It's like every girl's dream. You can be the president, but you can f— the president too," declared writer Elizabeth Benedict. "All of my women friends and I would be happy to have sex with Clinton and not talk about it," declared Marx. Novelist Erica Jong recalled the time she performed oral sex on a young acquaintance because he possessed a first edition of John Keats's *Endymion*. But

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she seemed more excited at the prospect of doing what Ms. Lewinsky is alleged to have done, and she described it graphically. Writer Nancy Friday theorized that Mr. Clinton's sex life will only improve because there will be added danger: "His next b— is going to be the most exciting one he's ever had."

The women were not totally sanguine about the allegations. Susan Shellogg, who is identified as a writer and former dominatrix, injected a tinge of moralism: "I think the president is reckless for not practicing safe sex. If she has stains on her dress, she was not using a condom. That's a big story." The participants were otherwise ambivalent about Lewinsky. Roiphe thought she was merely average looking, while others suggested she is less than intelligent. Nancy Friday did say that men will be more attracted to Lewinsky from now on because they will want to do what the president did: "She can rent out her mouth."


THE OBSERVATORY

WAITING TO INHALE BILL

At the same time the panel was disgusted by independent counsel Kenneth Starr—a "fascist pig," as Erica Jong termed him. Friday and Marx suggested that he had never experienced sex. "Maureen Dowd called him a creep. Which was wonderful," interjected the *Observer*'s reporter, Francine Prose. And the entire panel agreed that taping a friend's phone call is far worse than anything Clinton or Lewinsky might have done.

Many people who read the *Observer* piece concluded that these are the worst women to ever walk the face of the earth and that, instead of putting a tape recorder on the table, somebody should have set off a roach bomb. But that misses the historic significance of the conversation. We have arrived at the epochal moment when certain advanced women are making a serious effort to be even more repulsive than men.

We used to think that men were raunchier than women. But you'd have a great deal of trouble rounding up 10 successful Manhattan males to talk as crudely—for attribution—as those 10 *New York Observer* women did. Moreover, the women didn't even come up with their own form of raunchiness. They simply aped the old male style. The *Observer* women praised the male adulterer for his virility, just as the locker-room pigs used to. They measured whether the adultery was worth it on the basis of the mistress's looks, just as the chauvinists did. They used vulgarity to prove their sophistication, just as men—or at least junior-high boys—used to do. They adopted a hard-bitten pose of sexual cynicism, just as male teenagers did. And they imply that they've done it all before and would do it again, just like the *Hustler* magazine set.

Men used to brag about their conquests, but now it is sophisticated women who do all the boasting. The rule of thumb for prominent feminists seems to be: One affair equals two book contracts. Read the books and articles by women like Erica Jong, and some of the prominent writers who are a prestige level up from the members of the *Observer* panel, such as Daphne Merkin, Naomi Wolf, and Candace Bushnell, and you are likely to be confronted with the lurid details of their most intimate experiences. Shere Hite and Nancy Friday have become fabulously successful by repackaging the graphic memoirs of women who did it and then talked.

Even at their worst, men rarely published their promiscuity, but if you skim through the current media, you run into a torrent of female bragging. Lisa Zeidner boasts in *GQ* about bedding a married professor while a student. *Salon* magazine responded to the Lewinsky affair with an article by its young staffer Jenn Shreve, who wants us all to know how loose she and her friends are. "Among my contemporaries," writes Shreve, "it isn't all that shocking to sleep with three different partners in a weekend, not all of the opposite sex. . . . Sleeping with an older man, even a married one, is regarded as a triumphant rite of passage." A few clicks over, *Salon*'s Susie Bright responds with an outpouring of sympathy for the commander in chief: "Face it, our president could use about a dozen b— right now, in rapid succession, from a series of adoring fresh faces."

Liberated women always wanted to be equal to

men. Who would have guessed that the particular man some of them wanted to be equal to was the publisher of *Screw*, Al Goldstein?

A quarter century after Erica Jong introduced us to the concept of ziplessness in *Fear of Flying*, we have arrived at a weird double standard. Sex talk by men is pushed out of public view, while sex talk by women is pushed into it. Male novelists like John Updike—who lavishly praised *Fear of Flying* in the *New Yorker* when it came out in 1973—have toned down the sex in their books. But women memoirists have radically increased the sexual content in theirs. Men who write about how much they like to be spanked have to post their stuff on the farthest reaches of the Internet. Women who write about how much they like to be spanked publish in the *New Yorker*. Men who talk endlessly about their sexually transgressive behavior are creeps. Women who do so are given tenure and invited to appear on conference panels. Start with the sexual revolution of the early seventies. The male line of descent leads to some scuzzy video store. The female line of descent leads to Camille Paglia and the *New York Observer* 10.

The *Observer* panelists are beneficiaries of three social phenomena. First, they picked up on cause marketing. Ben & Jerry's ice cream is linked to the rain forest. Benetton sweaters are linked to multiculturalism. The feminist exhibitionists linked their sex lives to high-minded social concern. They persuaded a lot of women that one of the ways to combat sexism is to show off and write about your private parts. Suddenly the use of the F-word became a great blow against the patriarchy.

Second, self-conscious vulgarati are beneficiaries of the awesome generational self-consciousness of the baby boomers. Old boomers like Erica Jong and young ones like Naomi Wolf interpret their own sexual experiences as if they have important implications for their entire age cohort. Sex is no longer just sex, it's sociology, so it's description and practice becomes something akin to academic research.

Finally, and most important, the *New York Observer* women know intuitively that they can get away with bad-girl conversation because it is relatively harmless. Men unrestrained can be truly savage. But the past few years have demonstrated that society can withstand a lot of Madonna-style exhibitionism. Recent studies suggest that sexual activity has declined slightly over the past several years, even among teenagers. In all probability, the women at that Manhattan restaurant are merely inverse hypocrites. They pretend to be worse than they are. And they are aware of one old truth that no sexual revolution will ever erase. Women who talk dirty always get plenty of attention. ♦

Sex, Lies, and Public Virtue

Bill Clinton Is No Alexander Hamilton

By David Frum

Recently Al Hunt, the Washington executive editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, published another in his series of columns in defense of President Clinton. Slyly, Hunt omitted any mention of the president. Instead, he drew a contrast between two Republicans: Senator John McCain, a heroic prisoner of war in Vietnam who busted up his first marriage by womanizing, and Steve Forbes, an exemplary husband and father, but a man untested in battle. Character, Hunt concluded, is manifested by one's public virtues and not by one's private morality.

It's an interesting point, if one less helpful to Bill Clinton than perhaps it was meant to be: This president is no John McCain. Still, Hunt's premise is a valid one. It's possible for men to be gallant, upright, and public-spirited and yet terribly flawed in their private lives. George Washington was boring, Abraham Lincoln shirked church, Ulysses S. Grant drank, and Ronald Reagan neglected his children. Those weaknesses were recognized even at the time; and yet Americans admired all four men regardless. And despite the national reputation for prudishness, Americans have shown equal realism about sexual miscon-

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duct: Martin Luther King Jr.'s promiscuous private life has not detracted from the country's respect for his noble public life. Americans understand perfectly well that public virtue and private virtue do not always march hand in hand, and most of us if pressed to choose would probably agree that it's more important for a man in public life to possess the former than the latter.

But this is actually beside the point. The story of Bill Clinton is not a story of public virtue and private weakness. It is the story of a man who has consistently betrayed his public duties in order to give a false appearance of private virtue.

A historical parallel throws some clarifying light on Bill Clinton's true nature. It is the story of the American Republic's first sex scandal: the Maria Reynolds affair. In 1791, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, married and the father of four children, engaged in an adulterous love affair with a woman named Maria Reynolds. Reynolds's husband, James, acquiesced in the affair—but demanded that Hamilton pay hush money to keep it quiet. The Reynoldses extracted several hundred dollars in blackmail from Hamilton (an impressive sum in those days) before the affair ended in the summer of 1792. The two Reynoldses then expanded their criminal careers, this time trying to defraud the U.S. Treasury. When they were caught, they attempted to escape prosecution by offering Hamilton's political opponents proof that the secretary was involved in their scheme: the record of the money he had given them. The only way Hamilton could exculpate himself from false charges of corruption was by confessing his illicit love affair to the three congressmen investigating. The congressmen believed him and promised silence. But in 1797, Hamilton's secret was exploded: A Jeffersonian newspaper editor published the Reynoldses' story and accused Hamilton in print of financial fraud. Hamilton was now faced with a stark Al Hunt-like dilemma. Congress knew the truth, so he was safe from prosecution. What was at stake was his reputation. He had to choose: Which mattered more—a reputation for private virtue or a reputation for public probity? For Hamilton, there could never be a doubt. He immediately published a pamphlet confessing the affair in excruciating detail and vindicating his unspotted reputation as a public official.

Skip forward two hundred years. At his deposition in the Paula Jones case, Bill Clinton faced a dilemma remarkably similar to Alexander Hamilton's. When he was asked about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, he could tell the truth—and confess a sexual transgression. Or he could opt to perjure himself—and betray his responsibilities as the chief law-enforcement officer of the United States. He chose to lie; and not only to lie, but to orchestrate an elaborate scheme of evidence-suppression, witness-tampering, and obstruction of justice. The Al Hunt defense of the president—that Clinton's private morals may be deficient, but that he takes his public obligations seriously—has it all backward: In fact, Bill Clinton is willing to violate any and all of his public obligations in order to fool the public into thinking him personally a good and decent man.

Ask yourself this: Why did Clinton feel a need to lie about his affair with Monica Lewinsky? The usual reason for keeping an affair secret—that it might jeopardize one's marriage—manifestly did not apply: The first lady has reminded us all this month that the president need not fear her. The affair did not break any law. Adultery is at most a misdemeanor in the District of Columbia. At no greater theoretical risk than a small fine, the president could have had every willing female intern in the White House—in Washington!—snaking in a giant conga line around the Executive Mansion waiting her turn to service him. So why bother with perjury?

THE CLINTONS ARE PEOPLE PREPARED TO COMMIT ALL MANNER OF WRONG TO PROTECT THEIR PUBLIC IMAGE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The answer may lie in another historical parallel, this one rather more recent: the White House Travel Office firing. Once again, Bill Clinton had every legal right to do as he did: dismiss employees who served at his pleasure in order to transfer their work to a friend and supporter. Patronage is an American tradition as old as the first Democratic president, Andrew Jackson. And yet, the Clintons lied—and the first lady may have perjured herself—in order to hide the truth that their administration had done something it was perfectly free to do. The common element to both the Lewinsky and travel-office stories is Tartuffery. The Clintons are, it appears, people prepared to commit all manner of wrong to protect their public image of righteousness.

Defenders of the president have lately fallen back on the excuse that perjury about sex is somehow different from other kinds of perjury. Katha Pollitt writes in last week's issue of the *Nation*, "I don't even care

that he may have fibbed in his deposition to Jones's lawyers, or asked Lewinsky to back him up, because they had no right to ask about consensual sex in the first place." Susan Estrich has been busily arguing the same point on television: Everybody lies about sex, you see, and so it's perfectly okay for the president to do it too.

This is, when you think about it, a very strange argument. The president's apologists want us to believe that what counts is public virtue not private virtue; and they also want us to believe that Clinton's lies to protect his Oval Office sex sessions are somehow more innocent than Eisenhower's lies to protect the secrecy of the U-2 missions or FDR's lies to accelerate America's entry into World War II. But from the point of view of public virtue, lies to cover up a personal indulgence are the least defensible sort of lie. Presidential lying, whether under oath or not, rips apart the bonds of trust between governed and governors. It is always and everywhere a bad and dangerous thing. As bad as it is, however, sometimes high reasons of state exist that make lying unavoidable, as Eisenhower and Roosevelt believed they did. But lying to cover up a sex scandal is not lying for reasons of state; it is lying for crass personal gain. Of all the forms of presidential lying, that is the most contemptible, not the most pardonable.

If Bill Clinton were the man his friends want us to think him—an essentially honest public servant with an unfortunate but ultimately irrelevant sexual weakness—he would have handled all his sex scandals in a completely different way. He would, if caught, have forthrightly argued that his sexual behavior had nothing to do with the job he could do as president. But he would have respected the integrity of the legal process: He would have scorned to lie, and he would never have dreamed of orchestrating a scheme of perjury and obstruction of justice. He would, like Hamilton, have accepted exposure as an adulterer rather than tolerate the smallest blot on his official integrity.

Instead, Clinton has repudiated one of his most sacred public obligations—to see that justice is faithfully done in the federal courts—in order to protect his reputation as a husband and father. Clinton did not have to lie to protect his freedom to have extramarital sex; he could have had the courage of his libertine convictions. But he lacked that courage, and so he lied and encouraged others to lie, both under oath and before television cameras.

In the current scandal there is at least this small potential for good: It reminds us that a man who has acquired the habit of lying at home is unlikely to be entirely horrified at the thought of lying to a judge, a jury, a voter. It reminds us that while private virtue and public virtue are indeed different, they are not so remote from each other as the president's defenders would like us to think. Hamilton may have shown us that it is possible to be a bad husband and an incorruptible politician. But he was an extraordinary man. Bill Clinton is something much more common: a man who is dishonest through and through. ♦

God and the Gulag

The Moral Life of Alexander Solzhenitsyn

By Alan Jacobs

After twenty years of exile, Alexander Solzhenitsyn made a triumphal return to his homeland in 1994. In the five years since the Soviet Union had begun to collapse, almost all his long-suppressed works had been published—beginning, at his insistence, with excerpts from *The Gulag Archipelago* in *Novy Mir*, the literary journal that had once made him famous and then scorned him. He had recently topped the bestseller lists in his homeland, and many looked to him to guide their fragile new country toward its proper future: Nearly half the voters polled in St. Petersburg considered him the best candidate for the Russian presidency (while eighteen percent supported Boris Yeltsin).

Now, four years later, such enthusiasm seems unimaginable, and Solzhenitsyn has no definable role in his native country. He has continued to articulate his vision for Russia—in books, articles, speeches before the Duma, even an abortive attempt at hosting a televised interview show—but no one seems to be paying much attention. In a vicious irony, many now link him with those figures he made it his life's work to expose and condemn: Lenin, Stalin, Beria, Molotov, and Solzhenitsyn belonging equally to a past best forgotten. The novelist Victor Yerofeyev proclaims Solzhenitsyn "comic" and "obsolete"; Dmitri Prigov treats the whole historical crew as figures of purely pop culture, like labels on so many Andy Warhol soup cans. And the bookstores of Moscow, their walls lined with translations of Stephen King and Harold Robbins, once again fail to stock *The First Circle* or *Cancer Ward*.

D. M. Thomas's new biography of Solzhenitsyn has many flaws, but perhaps its greatest virtues derive from its author's conviction that none of this—not the early celebration, not the current neglect—matters a whit. Solzhenitsyn may be a prophet without honor in his own country, or a man dwelling helplessly in an irrecoverable past; he may be an exemplary hero of resistance to tyranny, or a cruel and arrogant manipulator of those closest to him. But he is too large to be contained by the whims of popular opinion. David Remnick has rightly claimed that, "in terms of the effect he has had on history, Solzhenitsyn is the dominant writer of this century." The young Russian rock critic who calls Solzhenitsyn "passé" and asks, dismissively, "Why should anyone now care about *The Gulag Archipelago*?" can be so dismissive in considerable part because of the work at which he sneers. As Remnick says, "If literature has ever changed the world, his books surely have."

D. M. Thomas
Alexander Solzhenitsyn
A Century in His Life
St. Martins, 608 pp., $29.95

In *Alexander Solzhenitsyn: A Century in His Life*, Thomas—an English novelist and occasional translator of Russian poetry—has not produced a work of scholarship. He frequently acknowledges his reliance on the monumental labors of Michael Scammell, whose 1984 biography *Solzhenitsyn* and 1995 collection of KGB files relating to the author provide the bulk of the information on which Thomas relies. What Thomas has to offer, he tells us, is a fellow novelist's imagination and "fictive experience" (by which, in defiance of English grammar, he means experience in writing fiction). Indeed, Thomas inserts in his acknowledgments the disheartening sentences: "And may the spirits of Stalin's lawyers and judges, those sticklers for the literal truth, forgive me for having occasionally let imagination make an event more vivid." That Stalin's judicial henchmen would be invoked as sticklers for any kind of truth defeats comprehension—in a biography of Solzhenitsyn, no less, whose whole reputation rests on his determination to tell the truth at any cost, and whose most famous speech in the West condemned Harvard University for neglect of its motto, *Veritas*.

Fortunately, Thomas proves less imaginative than he threatens to be. To be sure, his commitment to Freudian interpretation leads him to devote too much space to Solzhenitsyn's childhood, and since the documentary evidence is scanty, Thomas ends up writing far too many paragraphs that begin "I imagine." Similarly, his novelistic instincts lead him to embroider some stories. Scammell, for instance, relates how Solzhenitsyn's grandfather confronted the Communist authorities by showing up at their offices with "a rough wooden cross round his neck." In

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Thomas's rendition—which cites Scammell—Zakhar becomes "a crazy old man bowed under a heavy wooden cross" on his back, a distortion Thomas reinforces by speculating that Zakhar's death shortly afterward might have been due to the crushing weight.

Thomas also likes to relate episodes from Solzhenitsyn's life in a style that mimics Solzhenitsyn's own writing. Some readers may find this clever, but most will wonder why they don't just read Solzhenitsyn himself. And in at least one respect Thomas's imagination utterly fails him: He acknowledges that Solzhenitsyn's Western (and indeed Russian) readers are dismayed and puzzled by Solzhenitsyn's religiosity—his insistence that the fundamental problems of the world have spiritual causes and must therefore find spiritual solutions—but it is clear that Thomas himself doesn't know how to account for such thinking, and he tends to ignore it.

Nevertheless, Thomas provides a serviceable and generally reliable account of the life for those who lack the interest or stamina for Scammell's exhaustive scholarship and Solzhenitsyn's own voluminous autobiographical writings. There is evident throughout the book Thomas's admiration for his subject and his contempt for Western liberals who refuse to acknowledge Solzhenitsyn's greatness (or the character of the empire he fought). The closing chapters certainly give an interesting update of events in Solzhenitsyn's life in the dozen years since Scammell's biography, and even given Thomas's moments of waywardness, the story he relates compels the reader's attention. Solzhenitsyn's experiences in the war, his abrupt arrest, his years in the Gulag, his tumultuous relations with his first wife, his amazing recovery from advanced cancer, his unexpected rise to Politburo-endorsed publication, his fall from favor, his exile, his triumphant return—all this could scarcely do less than compel.

Thomas devotes surprisingly little time to Solzhenitsyn's experience in the Gulag (perhaps feeling that this is something readers are likely to know already). But he describes in great detail the circumstances that led to the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, because the improbability of it all could not fail to impress a novelist: a

Archive Photos

Solzhenitsyn first discovered

writer only a few years removed from Stalin's Gulag having a story of that experience endorsed by Stalin's successor and becoming almost overnight one of the most celebrated men in Russia. (What Thomas fails to note is that it was precisely the unexpectedness of this fame that helped convince Solzhenitsyn he was a chosen instrument of God, an Elijah to the Central Committee.) Solzhenitsyn's subsequent fall from political grace—arising from his determination to tell the whole story of the camps—is far less surprising.

The reader of Thomas's biography will quickly discover that there is one problem Thomas will not let go: Solzhenitsyn's treatment of his first wife, Natasha. Again and again Thomas offers the most sympathetic reading possible of Solzhenitsyn's actions. He understands how the couple grew distant during the long prison years, and why Solzhenitsyn ultimately, after his release into exile in Kazakhstan, sought to renew their marriage. He even understands, up to a point, why, more than a decade later, Solzhenitsyn determined to divorce Natasha and marry one of his young research assistants. But the pattern of his treatment of Natasha defeats Thomas, as it has many other supporters of Solzhenitsyn.

Thomas is right to worry over this issue, because it goes to the heart of a question in the lives of many of the great: What price are we willing to pay—or rather, are we willing to have others pay—for that greatness?

When Natasha answered her husband's demand for divorce by taking an overdose of sleeping pills, Solzhenitsyn raged to his friends: "How could she do this to me? How dare she do this to me?" Such a reaction is outrageous, and Thomas shows that it is of a piece with the couple's whole history: All along Solzhenitsyn had spoken to Natasha of his expectations, never of his obligations. He insisted she work (as a chemistry professor) to pay his bills, cook his meals, type his manuscripts, and help him smuggle out his microfilmed typescripts. And he would later, Thomas notes, have the same expectations—though in less dramatic and dangerous circumstances—for his second wife when they moved to Vermont, where the writer worked on his last great project, *The Red Wheel*.

In Thomas's view, however, such selfish treatment of his wife (and indeed of the many friends whom, over the years, Solzhenitsyn condemned or abandoned) was necessary if Solzhenitsyn were to produce his masterworks: "Had he been gentle,

Solzhenitsyn at the peak of his fame

friendly, 'nice,' he could never have written [*The Gulag Archipelago*]. Had he lolled congenially in bars with . . . the *Novy Mir* editors he could never have written it." Had Solzhenitsyn treated other people with charity and compassion, the world of art would have suffered, and for Thomas the world of art means almost everything. He looks forward to the day when Solzhenitsyn will be seen clearly as "a writer rather than a fighter": "In the next century of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the embattled politics of his work will fall away and become . . . no more than a backdrop for an exploration of human anguish, fear, courage, cowardice, desire."

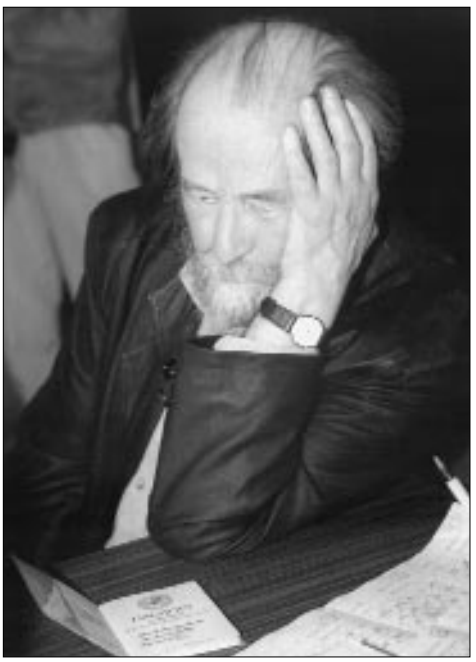
It is hard to imagine Solzhenitsyn's disagreeing with Thomas's claim that others had to make terrible sacrifices for him; it is equally hard to imagine his agreeing with Thomas's view of art. Solzhenitsyn is not a priest of art, like James Joyce or Balzac, and it has never been for any aesthetic object that he and others paid the price. Thomas's relative inattention to Solzhenitsyn's time in the Gulag leads him astray—for it was there that Solzhenitsyn came to believe in God and in Russia and in himself, and it was there that he experienced what determined everything (both good and bad) Solzhenitsyn would eventually become.

In a devastating last book, *The Drowned and the Saved*—completed just before his suicide in 1987—Primo Levi raises the question of all survivors of such experiences: Why me? Why am I alive and not another? Such survival might be ascribed to accident, or to having been chosen by God to tell the story of suffering. But Levi could never bring himself to believe in God, and he knew his survival was no accident—for Levi saw that it was the brave and the selfless who died first, while the cowardly and the selfish lived. Levi's existence became a badge of shame: Had he been better, he would not have lived. Unable to justify his survival, Levi threw himself down the stairs of his apartment building.

Solzhenitsyn too wondered about his survival. The pattern of his luck was too strong not to note. Soon after his arrest and removal from the battle front (for writing in personal letters derogatory comments about Stalin), the artillery battery he had commanded was wiped out by the German army. Then, in the camps, he repeatedly found himself in relatively privileged positions, merely in the "first circle" of Stalin's Inferno. So troubled was he by this that he found a way to get himself sent to a tougher camp. Even so, he always knew that he had never seen the worst of the Gulag. After his release, there was the cancer that, he was told at one point, left him no more than a few weeks to live; and yet he survived that too. Perhaps one, or even two, of these escapes could have been coincidental, but surely not all of them. The monster—a giant "improbable salamander," as he once called it—that had swallowed so many others spat him out.

This had not happened because he was good: Indeed, he would write that "in the intoxication of youthful successes" he had believed himself "infallible," but it was the Gulag that taught him he was "a murderer, and an oppressor." It was the Gulag that taught him that everyone has the capacity to be Stalin, and that therefore "the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart." Repeatedly in his account of the gulag he cries out, "Bless you, prison! . . . Bless you, prison, for having been in my life!" But—and this above all is what marks Solzhenitsyn as truly great—without retracting that cry of gratitude, he adds the quiet words: "(And from beyond the grave come replies: It is very well for you to say that—when you came out of it alive!)"

It is those voices from beyond the



Solzhenitsyn ignored

grave to whom Solzhenitsyn believed himself accountable—those, and the living voices who unaccountably survived the worst the Gulag could offer. In the presence of one such as Varlam Shalamov, author of *Kolyma Tales* (Kolyma, in the far northeast, was the most horrible of all the archipelago's camps), Thomas reports, even the impossibly arrogant Solzhenitsyn was meek. It was for the inarticulate Shalamovs, for those unable—because of death or shock or mere illiteracy—to tell their own story that he had to speak. This was his calling, and only by meeting this enormous obligation could he justify the repeated miracles by which he was made to survive.

Thus, when Khrushchev gave approval for the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962, Solzhenitsyn composed a prayer—a key document in his life, uncited by Thomas—which concludes: *All that I may reflect, you shall accord me, / And appoint others where I shall fail*. He could not tell everyone's story, or anyone's in full, but what he could tell, he would. And their voices, to borrow a phrase from Anna Akhmatova, would speak through his mouth.

Such a commitment does not justify Solzhenitsyn's miserable treatment of Natasha, and Thomas is wrong even to suggest that the task was incompatible with basic charity (as, once or twice, Solzhenitsyn has acknowledged). But one understands Solzhenitsyn better when one sees that he feared anything that might prevent him from advocacy for those who had no other advocate on this earth. Better to maltreat his wife than fail in his obligation to his former inmates: Her attempt at suicide was to be deplored primarily because it threatened to derail his work, only secondarily because of her pitiable suffering. Such thinking may be perverse, but it is comprehensible.

It also has nothing to do with art as Thomas conceives it. Upon receiving the Nobel Prize, Solzhenitsyn declared, "In the struggle against lies art has always won, and always will win." For Solzhenitsyn, that which is not true is not art; and, conversely, to present history "just as it really was" is the height of art. "I really cannot envisage any higher task than to serve reality," he said in a 1976 interview. "And I do not consider imagination to be my task or goal. . . . All that was needed was to recreate everything as it was."

To be sure, this requires a kind of creative energy properly called imaginative: The writer does not merely repeat what has happened, even if it were possible. But Solzhenitsyn's art concentrates reality rather than invents it: It is an art grounded always and firmly in historical actuality and will never transcend it. Nor need it do so.

Thomas's failure to grasp this explains his frustration with his subject's last great literary venture, *The Red Wheel*. Thomas can understand Solzhenitsyn's commitment to documentary fidelity in a work like *The Gulag Archipelago*, but he finds his inability to abandon the habits of exhaustive research fatal to a Tolstoyan historical novel. As Solzhenitsyn gathered archival material from Stanford's Hoover Institution, Thomas writes, "an artist died. He became, instead, a kind of obsessional 'hoarder'; nothing was to be left to the reader's imagination." Thomas wishes instead that Solzhenitsyn would be done with history and explore "the heart's dark forest," and he accuses Solzhenitsyn of lacking the courage "to turn a remorseless light upon himself" (this, of a man who, for all his failings, named himself "a murderer, and an oppressor"). In the end, Thomas seems to want Solzhenitsyn to have reinvented himself as John Updike.

Part of Thomas's problem is a failure of empathy: Solzhenitsyn spent his life in a world where reliable documentation did not exist; for such a man there is great satisfaction in the simple acquisition of information. But the greater problem stems from Thomas's assumption that Solzhenitsyn was in "exile from his great theme, Stalinism and the Gulag"—in other words, that Solzhenitsyn had discharged his obligations and was now artistically "free" to do as he pleased. *The Red Wheel* is more than anything else an attempt to follow the Gulag to one of its sources in the collapse of tsarism in the Great War. In *The Red Wheel* no less than in *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn is bound by the obligation to tell the historical story just as it was.

This does not, of course, answer legitimate questions about *The Red Wheel*. Thomas acknowledges briefly what needs to be stressed: "There is much unfashionable wisdom" in the book. And this unfashionableness raises many of the questions about Solzhenitsyn that remain to be answered: What is his attitude toward the West? Is he opposed to the entire idea of Western democracy or just to its current manifestations? How close is his vision for the future of Russia to that of nationalists like Vladimir Zhirinovsky (whom he has denounced as a "caricature of a patriot")? How fully is he imbued with the spirit and character of Russian Orthodoxy?

In his 1984 biography, Michael Scammell quotes the Mexican poet Octavio Paz describing what precisely it is about Solzhenitsyn that demands our attention: "His example is not intellectual or political or even, in the current sense of the word, moral. We have to use an even older word, a word that still retains a religious overtone—a hint of death and sacrifice: witness. In a century of false testimonies, a writer becomes a witness to man."

Paz reveals the hopelessness of Thomas's attempt to distinguish between the political-historical and the artistic Solzhenitsyn. All are bound together in his life and work. He came under an enormous weight of conviction that God had called him to bear witness to the experience

of the camps—especially the experience of those who never emerged to tell their own story. Only answering that call faithfully could justify his miraculous survival of war, the camps, cancer, the KGB. Those in Russia and elsewhere who now disdain or ignore him should remember the old Russian proverb that Solzhenitsyn himself cites: *Dwell on the past and you'll lose an eye; forget the past and you'll lose both eyes.* ♦

The Discarded Mirror

Hannah Arendt's Life of a Jewess

By George McKenna

Hannah Arendt was clearly one of the most original thinkers among the large group of German-Jewish intellectuals who came to America after fleeing Nazi Germany. She first won recognition in 1951 with *Origins of Totalitarianism*, an ambitious attempt to map out the dark "subterranean stream" that surfaced in the regimes of Hitler and Stalin. Over the next quarter-century, she wrote another ten books, including *The Human Condition*, *On Revolution*, and the controversial *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, a book whose focus on the Nazi bureaucrat's "banality" and "inability to think" was misrepresented by critics as an attempt to excuse his behavior.

By the time Arendt died in 1975, her writings had already attracted considerable attention, and since then there has been a deluge of books and articles on Arendt's life and on the important works she began writing in the 1940s. Indeed, the treatment of Arendt's mature writings has been so exhaustive that some scholars have now crossed into a less visited area: her immature writings.

One such work is Arendt's Ph.D. dissertation, originally published when she was twenty-three in Germany and partially revised thirty-five years later while she lived in America. Published in 1996 by Joanna Scott and Judith Stark as *Love and Saint Augustine*, the result is a nearly unreadable pastiche of 1929 Heidelberg and 1960s New York.

Hannah Arendt
Rahel Varnhagen
The Life of a Jewess
Johns Hopkins University Press,
416 pp., $29.95

Now comes another Arendt work from the same early period, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, completed (except for the last two chapters) in 1933. This is the third time around for this English translation by Richard and Clara Winston. It first came out in 1957, and a second edition was published in 1974. This one calls itself the "first complete edition," which is somewhat misleading since the earlier editions were also complete in substance. What the latest editor, Liliane Weissberg, has done is to add a useful new introduction and some endnotes citing Arendt's German sources.

The story behind *Rahel Varnhagen* is more interesting than the book itself. Early in the 1920s, one of Arendt's friends discovered some volumes of Varnhagen's published letters and diary entries, edited by her husband in the form of an *Andenken*, or souvenir book, and Arendt was so intrigued that her friend handed it all over to her.

At the time Arendt was trying to get over an affair she had been having with her professor, Martin Heidegger. Now here was Rahel Varnhagen, like Arendt a German-Jewish woman, whose garret salon in Berlin at the turn of the nineteenth century became a meeting place for Romantic poets, utopian reformers, and visiting tourists from the nobility. Like Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen fell madly in love with a German gentile, who, like Heidegger, broke it off to return to respectable society.

The parallels, however, go only so far. Although both eventually married gentiles, Arendt never rejected her Jewish identity, where Rahel spent her life desperately trying to assimilate. With Napoleon's invasion of Berlin in 1806 and the subsequent French occupation, Rahel's cosmopolitan circle was broken up. And the rise of the German bourgeoisie only meant a proliferation of gentile salons where she would be most unwelcome. So she changed her name twice, settling on a convenient marriage to a much younger Karl August Varnhagen. Still, it should not be surprising that Arendt, then a sensitive nineteen-year-old living in a garret and writing lovesick verses ("I think of him and of the love as though it were a distant land"), should be attracted to the lamentations of another ill-used *bohème*.

Arendt may or may not have gotten over Heidegger, but by the end of the 1930s she had clearly gotten over Rahel Varnhagen. She completed her manuscript "rather grumpily" in 1938, and only because her husband and the literary critic Walter Benjamin kept "pestering" her to do it. That is what she later wrote Karl Jaspers (her dissertation mentor, who had become something of a father-figure to her), adding that "this whole project has not been very important to me for a long time, actually not since 1933." These and other slighting remarks came in response to Jaspers's own rather harsh com-

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ments on the manuscript, which she had sent to him through a friend. In his long letter to Arendt, Jaspers began with ritual dustjacket praise ("powerful and significant . . . contains pages of extraordinary profundity"), but soon launched into a sharp critique: "Rahel seems to have awakened neither your interest nor your love. . . . You let Rahel dissipate herself in disjointed experiences."

Stung by his criticism, Arendt flatly declared, "I won't publish the book." Five years later the first edition came out. What had happened in the meantime was the opening of a New York branch of the Leo Baeck Institute, devoted to preserving archival records of German Jewry. Arendt had submitted her edited version of Rahel's diary entries and letters, the *Andenken*, to the directors, and they in turn invited Arendt to send her own manuscript. An English translation of *Rahel Varnhagen* soon appeared, published for the Institute by the East and West Library in London. Perhaps because it was poorly marketed, sales were so bad that the book never made back the five hundred dollars advanced to Arendt. In the meantime, though, she had started negotiating with a Munich publisher for a German edition. For this her motives were more complicated.

She was seeking restitution from West Germany for the loss of an academic career there during the Nazi period, but in Germany the precondition for a university post is not just a Ph.D. but the publication of a second thesis, an *Habilitation*. The German edition of *Rahel Varnhagen* was to be Arendt's *Habilitation*. After reading the introduction the publisher sounded enthusiastic, but after finishing the manuscript he sent a rejection letter full of extravagant praise: a wonderful, remarkable book, he said, but it provoked "a certain feeling of monotony."

Kent Lemon

Hannah Arendt

A year later, though, as Arendt was shopping it around to other German publishing houses, her mature writings were bringing her considerable renown in Germany. Perhaps wishing to get on the bandwagon, the publisher wrote back asking if she were still interested. She was, and so in 1959 the first German edition appeared. The point of it all came when Arendt got Jaspers to sign a letter saying that her book was substantially complete in 1933 and would have been approved as an *Habilitation* had Arendt not been forced to flee Germany. In 1972, Arendt finally received the financial award she had been seeking since the 1950s.

What can be said about the book? Arendt's German publisher said it all: *Rahel Varnhagen* provokes "a certain feeling of monotony." It is almost unrelievedly monotonous, and the reason is directly connected to Arendt's method. Instead of writing a conventional biography, Arendt pieced together Rahel's reflections on herself, in letters and diary entries, over the course of several years. "It was never my intention," she writes in the preface, "to write about Rahel. . . . What interested me solely was to narrate the story of Rahel's life as she herself might have told it."

What Arendt did, in effect, was to write biography as if it were the subject's autobiography, a dubious way to cover anyone's life but one particularly inappropriate for Rahel Varnhagen, a woman so absorbed in herself and her private dolors that we get only the foggiest understanding of what was actually going on. "Everything was over," Arendt writes, paraphrasing Rahel, "only life, stupid, insensitive life." A few pages later Rahel declares, "I must die, but I don't intend to become dead," and Arendt asks: "How, then, could one go on living when everything was over?" Further on, Rahel sighs again: "It's all over with me in the world; I know it and cannot feel it; I wear a red heart like others, and have a dark, inconsolable, ugly destiny." And the reader must plod on through another 125 pages of lachrymations and kvetchings: "What fault have I committed that one man should toss me into the hands of another until the

goddess herself calms me by turning me to stone?" And so on.

Not until the last two chapters, the ones written in 1938, does the book start to come to life, and that is because Arendt departs from her professed aim of telling Rahel's story "as she herself might have told it." Arendt sees, as Rahel did not, that the growth of German nationalism in the nineteenth century made those who tried to escape Jewishness all the more vulnerable to their enemies, "who rejoiced in having for once caught a wholly isolated Jew, a Jew as such, as it were, an abstract Jew without social or historical relationships." The snubs and insults Rahel Varnhagen endured finally forced her to accept her fate, but she could have dismissed them as incidents for which she was not to blame "if she had not centered her whole life around her 'disgrace,' her 'infamous birth.'"

At the end of her life, Rahel finally seemed to grasp that her former determination that "the Jew must be extirpated from us" was unrealizable. She now "unconcernedly wrote whole paragraphs to her brother in Hebrew characters, just as she had done in her girlhood." Yet she converted to Christianity shortly before she died (Arendt cut this from her edition of the *Andenken*) and referred to the Jews as a "deservedly despised nation."

Not surprisingly, by 1938 Arendt had no more desire to see everything from Rahel's perspective. "Grumpily" completing the last two chapters of this book was not the dreamy student who began it but an active Zionist, living in France and trying to resettle Jews in Palestine before the Nazis invaded. By then she had had quite enough of Rahel—of her anti-Semitism, her self-absorption, her adolescent mooning over failed romances, her strange passivity. By 1952 Arendt was calling her "insufferable." And so Varnhagen remains, even in this "first complete edition" of Arendt's early work: insufferable. ♦

Reagan Rides Again

PBS Takes a Second Look at the Fortieth President

By Jay Nordlinger

Public television has never been kind to Ronald Reagan. All through the 1980s, shows like *Frontline* and *Nova* assailed him, depicting him as a buccaneer, a menace, and worse. Conservatives, understandably, developed a thirst for eliminating PBS altogether.

Now, however, the world is a different place: Reagan is suffering gracefully in California, the effort to abolish public television has cooled off, and we have been given a PBS documentary on Reagan that, despite touches of ignorance, is a commendable achievement.

The American Experience, one of public television's more palatable series, is engaged in a study of recent presidents, and its Reagan installment airs on February 23 and 24. It was produced by WGBH in Boston, perhaps the most offensively biased PBS station in the country (which is saying something). *Reagan*, though, is remarkably balanced. It scores the usual points against our fortieth president, but at least it spares us deference to his current condition—nothing could insult a warrior more than to be treated with condescension.

The program opens with a common plaint about Reagan: that no one can "figure him out." Portraying him as simultaneously a simple man and a maddeningly complex one, the show decides that the theme of "rescue" is central to his life: the rescue of swimmers in a river, when the young Reagan was a lifeguard; the rescue of a country from self-doubt and economic distress; the rescue of the world from totalitarian aggression and nuclear annihilation. The show also lays out a couple of premises: first, that Reagan is a man of greater religious conviction than is widely known; and, second, that "we" have always "underestimated" him. (But as Reagan might say, what do you mean, "we"?)

The documentary is particularly compelling in its first forty-five minutes. The story of Reagan's growing up in small-town Illinois is a familiar one, but always absorbing: His father, Jack, was an itinerant shoe salesman—ever on the lookout for his "big break"—and a severe alcoholic. The future president, as a result, was remote, fretful, and relatively friendless. He harbored what the biographer Edmund Morris identifies as a "moral disdain" for his father: How could Jack be so weak and dependent? Reagan's mother, Nelle, was a devout woman, and Reagan soon adopted her fundamentalist Christianity, asking to be baptized. He never left his faith. During his presidency, he was mocked for his unwillingness to attend church—"He doesn't know the structure of a prayer!" Jesse Jackson once thundered from a pulpit—but he studied the Bible daily and strove to practice his religion unostentatiously.

At Eureka College, Reagan was in his glory, playing football, debating, and dabbling in theater. The documentary does not mention that Reagan also savored his first taste of politics there: He led a student strike and marveled at the power of oratory to move a crowd. After college, he failed to land a job at Montgomery Ward—another fact that the documentary omits, but one that Reagan has always considered crucial—and set out

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on the road, thumbing rides until he persuaded a radio-station owner in Davenport to let him announce ball games. The Depression had the Midwest on its knees, but Reagan was obstinately hopeful. The journalist Hugh Sidey, who was a boy in Iowa, later remembered, "There was something about that voice that made me think life was going to get better."

Then came Hollywood and Hollywood politics. Reagan fell in quickly with left-liberal activists, among them members of the Communist party. In 1940, he married the Warner Brothers beauty Jane Wyman, and the two became the darlings of the studio's publicity machine, symbolizing wholesomeness in a community famed for libertinism. But Wyman left Reagan in 1948, stunning and devastating him—it was a sadness of which historians have taken little note and of which Reagan has never, ever spoken.

Reagan also experienced a rude political awakening, discovering that Communists were something other than liberals-in-a-hurry. He watched them crack heads outside the studio gates and was himself subjected to threats: He once received a call from a Communist enforcer who vowed to disfigure his face. As president of the Screen Actors Guild, he fought strenuously against Communist influence (one of his many attempted "rescues") and put in an appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Here, the documentary provides invaluable footage—Reagan speaks with astonishing eloquence, pressing the liberal case for toleration of all political parties but not for lawbreakers. He never forgot what Hollywood taught him about Communist tactics: In his second term, when he was warming to Mikhail Gorbachev, an adviser said to him, "You know, Mr. President, some think you may be too trusting." Reagan responded, "Oh, don't worry about that: I learned all about Communists back in Hollywood."

Around 1950, Reagan's career began to falter. He was no longer winning the parts, and, when things were bleakest, he was forced to join a minor song-and-dance revue in Las Vegas. Nancy Reagan—giving in this documentary her first on-camera interview since leaving Washington—recalls the difficulty of the situation: "Sure, it hurt when his career dried up. Who wouldn't it hurt?" But Reagan regained his footing as host of television's *GE Theater*, a weekly show in which he supplied introductions to brief dramas.

Kent Lemon

It was then regarded as humiliating for a movie actor to descend to the small screen, but for Reagan it meant steady employment. And when General Electric asked him to serve as its corporate spokesman, he took up the role that prepared him for politics: For eight years, he traveled the country, speaking to audiences, honing his oratory, trying out lines and ideas. In 1964, he delivered his seminal "Time for Choosing" speech in behalf of Barry Goldwater, and, as Reagan later remarked, that occasion "led me on a path I never expected to take."

Reagan's first run for governor, in 1966, is related in a series of fascinating clips: He was nimble, spirited, and tough. And he was also having a rollicking good time. The Democrats burned with contempt for him. The incumbent governor, Pat Brown, charged that Reagan was all glamour and no depth, an ambitious lightweight suitable only for "such unforgettable screen epics as *Bedtime for Bonzo*." Reagan merrily responded, "You can't have it both ways": Either he was a smooth-as-silk star, hoodwinking the public with his looks and glibness, or he was a laughable failure, reduced to acting beside an ape. (Reagan, by the way, had no insecurity whatsoever about the course of his career. He used to sign pictures of himself with Bonzo, "I'm the one with the watch.") The Democrats never behaved more vilely than when they ran an ad that had a little black girl sitting on Governor Brown's knee: "You know," he told her, "it was an actor who shot Lincoln." Reagan thumped Brown by more than a million votes.

Reagan failed to wrest the Repub-

lican nomination from President Ford in 1976, but he went all the way in 1980, and the documentary gives us the scenes we know so well: the gas lines and the hostages; the convention in Detroit and Reagan's Labor Day kickoff in front of the Statue of Liberty; the grim desperation of Jimmy Carter and the jaunty self-confidence of his challenger. We remember, too, that Reagan had only nine weeks as president before he was shot, and that, in those nine weeks, he was markedly more sure-footed than he would be again. When he emerged from the hospital, says the biographer Morris, he had "lost his quickness," never fully recovered.

About Reagan's presidency, the documentary is ambivalent: It harshly criticizes his economic plan, playing ominous music as he signs the 1981 budget accord and laying heavy blame on him for the recession that peaked in 1982. We see farmers bewailing their plight, the jobless in line for government cheese, and homeless men sleeping in the cold. Meanwhile, White House chefs prepare elaborate meals, Nancy's china glitters brightly, and the Reagans appear in tuxedo and gown. This is the type of sleight-of-hand that filmmakers like to employ when they wish to tip the scales: What president has not held state dinners?

In foreign policy, the documentary is less grudging, crediting Reagan with discerning the fragility of the Soviet Union. The nuclear-freeze movement is shown to have been spectacularly wrong, and we are almost embarrassed for such figures as Robert McNamara and Ted Kennedy, who prophesied doom. The documentary applauds Reagan for his early recognition of Poland's Solidarity, but the spooky music returns for the Nicaraguan contras. The Reykjavik summit—one of the Cold War's key moments—is replayed with near-cinematic intensity. The Iran-contra affair is dealt with equitably.

Reagan, for many viewers, will be welcomed above all for its reminding: of the passion and momentousness of the times; of Reagan's matchless voice, which grew raspier as his presidency wore on; of the looks on the faces of students in Moscow as he addressed them in 1988. And it is simply asking too much not to contrast him with the current occupant of the Oval Office: Reagan never bragged, never whined, and when he had an admission to make, he did so manfully. Through the force of his beliefs, Reagan indeed shook the world. And PBS, at last—on these two nights—understands. ♦

Parody

The Washington Post

Cochran Defends Clinton

Promises Search for the "Real Creep"

By J.P. McGrath
Washington Post Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, Aug. 12, 1999—In a riveting summation that echoed eerily in an otherwise hushed Senate chamber yesterday, the president's lead impeachment defense attorney, Johnnie L. Cochran, held America and the world spellbound as he repeatedly invoked the phrase he's made famous in recent weeks: "If the dress don't fit, you must acquit."

Cochran was referring, of course, to last month's stunning demonstration during the Senate trial where, in the well of the Senate, Monica Lewinsky failed to cram her Rubenesque figure into the disputed size-10 dress that was allegedly a gift to her from the president. At the time, an apoplectic Orrin Hatch pointed out that Ms. Lewinsky had "recently ballooned in weight due to anxiety-bingeing" and, anyway, did not appear to be "trying very hard" to don the dress. Cochran's reply was cruel and compelling: "Would the distinguished gentleman from Utah please get a grip?" he said. "She looks like a walrus in a tube top—that girl *never* was a size 10." Since Ms. Lewinsky's precise size in 1996 had not been firmly established by investigators, most observers gave the point to the defense. Another Cochran moment.

There have been so many Cochran moments during the trial that it seems like ages since the silk-suited mouthpiece joined the presidential impeachment defense team. In fact, it was months ago, in March, just after the grisly hatchet slaying of special prosecutor Kenneth Starr at the hands of Ms. Lewinsky's deranged first lawyer, William Ginsburg. The wave of public revulsion that followed propelled the impeachment process through the House of Representatives and into trial. Cochran has conducted the defense ably in the view of most experts. The main points of his summation followed closely the themes the defense had pursued throughout the trial.

Perhaps the overarching theme of the summation, as of the defense case itself, was that there had been "a rush to judgment." Cochran claimed that the investigation jumped to one conclusion in its earliest days. "The person referred to on the questionably obtained tapes as the so-called 'creep' was just *assumed* to be the president," Cochran said. "Why? Why not, say, Harold Ickes or James Carville, instead? I don't mean to impugn these fine public servants, but they are quite creepy, are they not? And they were in and out of the White House at the time, were they not? But, no, there was a rush to judgment. Everyone assumed 'Big Creep' could only be Bill Clinton."

The only part of the summation that fell flat was an apparent attempt to sway wavering Democrats who might feel unable to issue a straight "not guilty" verdict. For them, Cochran offered yet another version of his signature phrase. Regarding the absence of "DNA evidence" on the much-disputed garment, he said some senators should consider a compromise position. As he put it, "If the dress ain't stained, why not abstain?" Even those with a taste for Cochran's rococo rhetorical style felt this might be going to the well once too often.

See CREEP, A12, Col. 1