the weekly
Standard

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UNRESOLVED EVIL: ON JUSTICE AND THE END OF THE UNABOMBER

BY DAVID GELERNTER

Clinton's Warriors • ANDREW FERGUSON
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Clinton's Lawyers • THE EDITORS

the weekly Standard

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Books & Arts

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How to Destroy U.S.-Israel Relations

The Clinton administration is about to unveil a proposal for divvying up disputed territory on the West Bank. It will do so knowing that the Israeli government will reject the plan, that U.S.-Israeli relations will then go into a deep freeze, and that the whole diplomatic fiasco will absolutely delight Yasser Arafat, who has agreed to the American scheme *only* because he knows it will be rejected by Israel and will destroy U.S.-Israeli relations. Why would anyone in the U.S. government think this is a good idea?

To understand the origins of this impending American diplomatic disaster you'd have to know a few things that the State Department correspondents of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* don't tell you.

You'd have to know, for instance, that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright felt humiliated during the recent Iraq crisis when she traveled through the Middle East and found little support for the Clinton administration's anti-Saddam policies. She caught an earful from American allies about the breakdown of the Middle East peace process and Israeli intransigence. The word is she came back from that trip furious at the Israeli government and insisting on a plan to get the peace process going again, which meant putting pressure on Israel to make more concessions.

Enter assistant secretary of state Martin Indyk. Indyk, who recently served as Clinton's ambassador to Israel, disapproves of Israel's present Likud government, and especially its prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. While he was ambassador, Indyk was so favorable to Netanyahu's opponents in the Labor party that he was all but declared persona non grata by Netanyahu. As if he needed more reasons to harbor a grudge, Indyk was also apparently a target of Albright's wrath during her infamous tour of the Gulf.

The idea to impose an "American plan" on Israel, knowing that it will be rejected, is Indyk's. Clinton's Middle East negotiator, Dennis Ross, opposes this strategy. And therein lies another irony. Ross and Indyk have worked hand-in-glove on the Middle East for more than a decade. But since being elevated to assistant secretary, the ambitious Indyk, long working in Ross's shadow, has split with his erstwhile colleague.

Who will be the victim of all this palace intrigue? U.S.-Israel relations.

Panetta: My Years on

Bimbo Patrol

The Best Interview of the Week Award goes to James A. Barnes of the *National Journal*, for the revealing quotes he managed to wrestle out of Leon Panetta. Panetta of course was White House chief of staff while the president was busy developing his "complicated human relationship" (Mike McCurry's phrase) with Monica Lewinsky. Panetta revealed to Barnes that impeding the development of just such relationships was always an uphill battle.

"We were sensitive to those issues," Panetta said. If "a woman wanted to ride with him [the President of the United States] in the limo, we took steps to make sure that didn't happen. In the evenings, we always made sure he had company when he was with friends."

The White House reaction to Panetta's remarks was instantaneous: All the former chief of staff meant, of course, was that the president had merely to be kept from situations that might be *misconstrued*, to avoid the *appearance of impropriety*. But that spin won't wash. Panetta's other comments to Barnes make it clear why these prophylactic (so to speak) steps were taken and what, precisely, the president's staff was guarding against when they refused to let him be alone with women.

"You never control all of the private moments," Panetta went on. "If it turned out that somehow his dark side prevailed in these moments of temptation, it would be a disappointment." And humanly complicated, too.

Out of Africa—the Sooner the Better

President Clinton managed a trifecta of shamelessness last week in the first half of his Africa trip. He apologized for America's having coddled anti-Communist dictators in Africa during the Cold War. Yet the goal of preserving freedom against the depredations of Moscow and its Cuban mercenaries was worth lots of unpleasant alliances. The Clinton administration, in contrast, coddles dictators merely to appease campaign contributors.

The president also apologized, in so many words, for the slave trade. *Pace* numerous liberal commentators, Africa is among the least appropriate settings for such contrition, since Africans were as much participants in, as victims of, the slave trade. If the descendants of the slave-owners owe an apology, a morally serious president as opposed to the self-absorbed and preening one we have,

Scrapbook

would deliver that apology to the descendants of the slaves themselves, on American soil, and not to the descendants of those who captured and sold those slaves in the first place.

Finally, there was the stunningly inappropriate speech in Rwanda, in which President Clinton said of the 1994 genocide of 600,000 Tutsis: "The international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy." The Clinton administration had full knowledge of the genocide as it was being carried out and thwarted efforts to head it off. Clinton's speech was a blasphemy, as Michael Kelly aptly called it in his *National Journal* column last week: "a lie to the survivors of genocide about one's complicity in that genocide."

The ACLU, Now More than Ever

As if more evidence were needed that the ACLU is less a civil-liberties organization than a particularly obnoxious arm of the Democratic party, consider the group's latest advertising campaign. Less than two weeks after the Monica Lewinsky story broke, the ACLU placed a costly, quarter-page ad in the *New York Times*, featuring a picture of a young woman talking on the phone. "Let me ask you something," the text began. "How would you feel if all your phone conversations last night were secretly taped and made public today? That's what Linda Tripp did to Monica Lewinsky. . . . Should such a betrayal by a friend or such conduct by a prosecutor be encouraged by the law? Do you want to live in a society where you have to wonder about the privacy of your conversations with close friends?"

In March, the ACLU ran a second ad on the *New York Times* op-ed page, again featuring a close-up shot of a pretty woman's lips. In many states, the ad informed readers, "oral sex is a crime. . . . Is how we express our love for one another any of the government's business?"

The ads, explained an ACLU press release, are part of a year-long advertising campaign and were designed to use "the investigation into President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky to question the dangerous combination of overzealous law enforcement and lax privacy laws."

The ads are scheduled to run once a month in the *Times*. Will the next one question the dangerous combination of sexual harassment and abuse of presidential power? Don't bet on it. Some dangerous combinations, it turns out, are more dangerous than others.

Help Wanted

The Weekly Standard is seeking a full-time assistant art director. Candidates must be proficient users of QuarkXPress and Photoshop; have experience scanning black-and-white and four-color images; possess good layout and design skills. Send résumé and work examples to The Weekly Standard, Personnel Dept., 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, DC, 20036. No calls please.

Correction

Last week's cover photograph of Bill Clinton doing his chin thing should have been jointly credited to Ken-

Casual

Waiting for Righty

A few months ago a parent at my kids' school asked me if I wanted to contribute to a piece of Communist propaganda. Well, sort of. Ari directs the theater program at the Jewish Community Center in downtown Washington, and he said he was reviving *Waiting for Lefty*, the famous agitprop play Clifford Odets wrote in 1935 while a member of the Communist party. Ari said he was adding some new scenes, to be called *Still Waiting*, and he wanted some "discordant material." He really wanted to present all sides of the issues, he emphasized, to question the leftist drumbeat of the original.

I was an easy mark for this pitch because in college I went through an intensive Odets phase. I read all I could about the Group Theater, in New York, where Odets made his creative home, and about Mordecai Gorelik, one of the intellectual forces behind the radical theater. So I had lunch with Ari at a downtown restaurant. The idea was that I'd talk to him and he'd write my views into the script.

Before our lunch I reread *Waiting for Lefty*, and this time I was disturbed by it. I've learned a lot about communism since college, and I covered the fall of the Soviet Union, and now I found the party line an impregnable barrier between me and the play (just as few of us could stomach an early Nazi-party play, even if it had nothing to do with the Holocaust). I tried to explain all this to Ari at lunch. I also gave him an introductory tour through conservative economic thought—of which he was blissfully ignorant. I must have mentioned Joseph Schumpeter at some point, because a few weeks later he told me he'd gone out and gotten a book by Schumpeter and was reading it. If he finished that book, he's a better man than I.

On opening night I went to the theater. The modern stuff Ari added made Odets look subtle. Ari's workers were even more victimized and noble, and his bosses were at least as villainous as Odets's. And in the middle of the first act there was a scene in which an editor at a conservative magazine is having lunch at a downtown restaurant with his girlfriend. He's a loud, overbearing jerk. He steals other people's water. He insults the busboy and the waiter. He is cruel and insensitive toward his girlfriend. And he delivers an unceasing stream of obnoxious comments about the world—two-thirds of which were vulgarized versions of things I had told Ari.

The actor who played me was charismatic, and the audience loved it. I can tell you it's weird to be in the middle of 250 people who are all laughing at a version of you. At one point the character says that members of the Hollywood 10 had supported the Hitler-Stalin pact (at lunch I had mentioned this in regard to a conversation Odets had years later with another former Communist, Elia Kazan). Far from slowing down the general hilarity, this prompted the audience to yelp louder.

My problem came when Ari started leaving friendly messages on my voice mail asking how I liked the play. All his assurances that my ideas would be fairly presented had been false, and it was clear from his depiction that he was at least mildly contemptuous of me. So probably I should have screamed at him. On the other hand, there were good reasons to be civil. Our daughters remain friends. I felt a little sorry for him because the *Washington Post* savaged his play as a work of well-meaning incompetence—the review was too harsh, even by my standards. Besides, Ari's depiction, while vicious, didn't actually hit me at my vulnerable spots (except the water-stealing business—I am a recovering aquaholic, and I did not abuse water during our lunch).

What I think I resent most is the way Ari violated Washington's code of ethics. The first rule is you don't screw people you know through your kids. The polemical combat zone is not supposed to come near the children. Second, there is the code of superficial civility, which he violated. As a conservative in a D.C. neighborhood that is massively liberal, I know that a certain percentage of the people I meet (about 20 percent, I estimate) are disgusted by me on purely partisan grounds. But the rule is they are not supposed to say so. And if they do, as Ari effectively did, they're not supposed to come back and want to be friends again.

In the end I tried to register my complaints to Ari in a tone of calm civility. And I hated myself afterwards. In the midst of my self-loathing, I even contemplated taking my kids out of the high-priced private school they now attend and enrolling them in a public school. At least there the parents wouldn't have such heavy proletarian consciousness.

David Brooks

Clinton's Courtier Press

By Jay Nordlinger

For the first five years of Bill Clinton's presidency, his opponents grumbled that the press was too soft on him, refusing to probe one scandal after another. When the Monica Lewinsky story broke on January 21, however, the press came alive, and it has been hot on the case ever since. Steve Roberts of the New York *Daily News* spoke for many of his colleagues when he concluded, "This whole notion that the liberal media elite is coddling Bill Clinton and always plays to the Democrats is absurd."

Maybe so. Yet the truly pro-Clinton press we will always have with us, a band of journalists who defend the president at practically every turn, who disparage virtually his every accuser, and who treat almost any criticism of his administration as a threat to enlightened government. We might say that these journalists are indistinguishable from official White House spokesmen—except that the officials seldom go so far. Margaret Carlson of *Time*, Eleanor Clift of *Newsweek*, Al Hunt of the *Wall Street Journal*, Lars-Erik Nelson of the *Daily News*, Joe Conason of the *New York Observer*—these are the ones who will stand by Clinton until (as the president himself likes to say) "the last dog dies." They are, indeed, the courtier press.

Prominent in Clinton's court is Carlson's employer, *Time* magazine. Its editors have apparently decided that, whereas their chief rival, *Newsweek*, will lead the journalistic investigation of Clinton, they will lead the counter-investigation. Even before Lewinsky became a household name, *Time* was friendly to White House spin, lamenting, for example, that Clinton was forced to "set aside the noble task of searching for his place in history—part of his preparations for the State of the Union address—in order to answer questions" from Paula Jones's lawyers. But at the end of what we now know to have been a traumatizing deposition, "Clinton departed in what sources close to him say was an ecstatic mood." The president, you see, "felt that the deposition had gone smashingly for him." A "person close to the President said, 'Everyone is going to sleep well tonight.'"

Jay Nordlinger is associate editor of The Weekly Standard.

At the front of *Time*'s first post-Monica issue, senior editor Nancy Gibbs wrote, "Last week even [Clinton's] apologists didn't know where to begin." Carlson, however, had no trouble over on page 49. She identified the villain of the piece as Kenneth Starr. "No one should lie" about sexual dalliances and their consequences, she avowed, but "Big Brother [that would be Starr] shouldn't ask." According to Carlson, all of us, no matter what our view of Clinton, should perceive that the "convergence of Jones, Starr and the FBI is not right." If the case against the president were ever taken up by Congress, the result would be "a show so repulsive it might even shame Ken Starr."

The magazine, though, was just warming up. In its next issue, it featured the independent counsel on its cover in a menacing pose, along with the legend, "Starr at War." Inside, there were additional scary photos of the prosecutor and his assistants, including one wrought in thuggish black and white, with shadows creeping about the walls. Nancy Gibbs seemed relieved that Clinton's poll numbers were strong, observing, "Americans are less puritanical and more forgiving than the cartoon version suggests, and this President is never better than in his worst moments." Gibbs also wrote that, after Clinton delivered his State of the Union address, "the White House did a very wise thing: it went silent" (not something normally applauded by a journalist).

Elsewhere in the issue, an article dissected Monica Lewinsky, another took an earnest look at the "vast, right-wing conspiracy" alleged by Hillary Clinton, and Carlson went to work on Linda Tripp. "Nothing in this mess," Carlson stated, "is more inexplicable than" Tripp's behavior. Tripp had not put her tapes "in a vault to be used defensively," but had "voluntarily played them for Ken Starr." And, really, "no one likes a snitch, especially one with so much to gain." Tripp "certainly can play the bitter secretary in the sure-to-come Lifetime movie."

But Carlson was saving herself for her peroration. Tripp had been secretary to Vince Foster, who, "in his last conversation with colleagues," said "he couldn't understand how so much of what he did or said found

its way into the press." And it was Linda Tripp who "sat just outside his office—delivered him his last meal, in fact." Carlson's conclusion? "Perhaps, like Lewinsky, Foster was too close to the wrong person."

A week later, *Time* had its cover declare that Clinton was facing "Trial by Leaks." Nancy Gibbs sighed that, at a state dinner for Britain's Tony Blair, "the capital's obsession melted away," if only for "one brief shining moment." Carlson, for her part, likened Tripp to Iago, "full of malice," and noted that, while Clinton's secretary, Betty Currie, had been "a victim of his carelessness," she had "also been the recipient of a hundred kindnesses." In that same issue, the magazine opened its pages to Monica Lewinsky's attorneys, William Ginsburg and his D.C. sidekick, Nathaniel Speights (who were afforded a most flattering photo). The lawyers claimed to be helping "a client who has told the truth, the complete truth, to the authorities." The problem was that Starr (again) "seems to think it's O.K. to break the law to enforce the law."

The next week, Carlson thundered against the independent counsel's questioning of Marcia Lewis, but what else could you expect in "Ken Starr's America"? Later, in its March 9 issue, *Time* told its readers that Starr had gone "subpoena crazy," and two weeks after that, the magazine seemed disturbed that Kathleen Willey had been "cozily escorted by FBI agents working for Ken Starr." (Linda Tripp, though, was no longer being permitted to work at home—"she'll just have to tape her friends at her desk.")

In the middle of March, Kathleen Willey gave her celebrated interview to *60 Minutes*, after spending many hours in conversation with reporter Michael Isikoff of *Newsweek*. *Time*, though, milked a source of its own, Julie Steele, who offered a wealth of derogatory information about her former friend Willey. The magazine reported in near-gleeful tones that Willey had "not been above baroque acts of deception," which included lying to a boyfriend about being pregnant and asking Steele to mislead Isikoff about what had occurred off the Oval Office. *Time* did not say, however, that Steele, according to Isikoff, kept changing her story or that she had been paid $7,000 by a tabloid for a photo of Willey with Clinton. *Time* also saw fit to publicize the most personal details of Willey's life—that, when a teenager, she had given up a child for adoption; that her husband had left certain items for her along with his suicide note. These and other morsels appear to have come from Willey's one-time confidante, Steele. Yet the magazine issued no denunciations of betrayal, and no one was called "snitch."

One of the few in Margaret Carlson's league is Eleanor Clift, famed for her impassioned defenses of the Clintons and her scorn of anything right of center. Clift, though still associated with *Newsweek*, has become primarily a television performer, and she plays her role to the hilt. On Day One of Monica-mania, she pointed out that Lewinsky was "still of age" and that, given our past presidents, "libido and leadership are linked" (one of the more memorable phrases to come out of the scandal). Two days later, she warned that, in Lewinsky's discussions with Tripp, "there may be a delusional quality involved." Thereafter, she concentrated her fire on Starr and his "witch hunt," charging that the independent counsel has "flaunted his right-wing connections" and turned "law enforcement into snoops." As for Willey, her credibility had been, not called into question, but "destroyed." Clift remembered a happier time, when, if "people lied about sex in private matters, we called it chivalry."

Al Hunt is more restrained than Carlson and Clift, and he labors in his *Wall Street Journal* columns and television outings to project an air of detachment. ("There are no heroes in this," runs a typical remark.) But his disdain for conservatives always manages to carry the day. He has been particularly harsh in his assessment of Starr, labeling him a "tainted prosecutor" who employs "storm-trooper tactics." Starr, according to Hunt, suffers from an "obsession with Clinton" and is "out to get him at any cost." Furthermore, Starr "wanted to use this post as a stepping stone, and that was his desire in the very beginning and I think that is why he was a bad appointment" (notwithstanding Starr's obvious longing to retreat to the relative obscurity of Pepperdine University). Hunt, like Carlson and Clift, holds Starr responsible for "most of the leaks" and quips that "for Ken Starr to say he's going to investigate the leaks is as believable as O.J. Simpson looking for the real killer."

Of Tripp and the literary agent Lucianne Goldberg, Hunt is utterly dismissive. They are "people with absolutely no credibility," he declares. "We can't trust what they say." We *can* trust Vernon Jordan, however. On the first *Nightline* of the scandal, Hunt vouched for his friend of "almost 20 years": "I respect [Jordan] a great deal, and it would stun me if that allegation is true. He's too smart. He's too good a lawyer. He's too careful. . . . That's not something Vernon Jordan would have done. . . . Would he have told Monica Lewinsky to commit perjury? I just find that impossible to believe."

Lars-Erik Nelson is a slasher in the Carlson and Clift mode—even fiercer. He states forthrightly, "I despise Starr." He is also, like Hunt, partial to Third Reich analogies, sprinkling them throughout his columns in the New York *Daily News*. He described

one conservative lawyer as "a graduate of the Gestapo School of Interrogation" and assailed "Kenneth Starr's snoopers, otherwise known as the Night Ambush Squad," for their "police state tactics." Yet he is also capable of variation, recalling at one point "a KGB that used tactics much like Starr's."

Nelson has a personal reason to loathe Starr (or "Big Brother," as he calls him). Sidney Blumenthal, who was once Clinton's most reliable supporter in the press and now does his work inside the White House, "handed my name over to Starr and then was called before a grand jury to be questioned about his efforts to plant hostile stories about Starr in the press." In Nelson's view, "Starr's operation fits no known definition of justice," as "this man is a threat to American liberties." Nor does Nelson believe that Clinton is guilty of a sexual relationship with an intern: "Clinton denies it, Lewinsky denies it; the only person who says it happened is the snitch, Linda Tripp; and the most visible figure in America who believes any and all sex gossip is" Starr. Nelson may be the most combustible polemicist in the country at the moment.

But it is the *New York Observer*'s Joe Conason who is regarded in journalistic circles as "the new Sid" Blumenthal—the reporter most heedful of the administration's needs. In 1992, he chided the press for its indifference to a rumor about George Bush: "The issue that remains too hot to handle is whether Poppy has been faithful to Bar." But six years later, when Matt Drudge introduced Monica Lewinsky to the world on his Internet site, Conason ridiculed Drudge for a "form of premature ejaculation, causing him to emit poorly sourced stories about the President, the First Lady and various Clinton aides." In Washington, wrote Conason, "it doesn't matter that Mr. Drudge's 'reporting' is on a par with his D- average in high school."

Conason is reluctant to acknowledge that the Clintons may have committed even the slightest infraction. Asked on TV to confront a growing body of circumstantial evidence, Conason held firm, responding, "How would you know whether [Clinton] did any of those things?" Well, are Monica Lewinsky's 37 visits to the White House, after she ceased to work there, significant? Answered Conason, "I don't know anything about any visits. I don't see any evidence of any visits." After a few more minutes of this, one of his exasperated interlocutors said, "One quick question, Joe: Does Monica Lewinsky exist?" Conason allowed that she did, adding, "I believe she may have been caught up in a right-wing conspiracy."

> AN EXASPERATED TV INTERVIEWER, AFTER SEVERAL MINUTES WITH JOE CONASON, ASKED: "ONE QUICK QUESTION, JOE: DOES MONICA LEWINSKY EXIST?"

And that conspiracy is one thing in which Conason very definitely believes. Appearing February 15 on *Meet the Press*, he said that "the country needs to know that . . . there has been a long-term, long-running, very costly effort by people on the right to undo the results of the last two presidential elections"—almost exactly the language that Hillary Clinton had used three weeks before. Wherever the anti-Clinton side is vulnerable, Conason homes in: He mused about whether Starr had instigated Tripp's taping; he sniffed along the trail of Richard Scaife's money; he depicted Kathleen Willey as a mendacious wreck; he speculated that one of Starr's deputies was motivated by vengeance; and he propagated the canard that Starr, while representing General Motors, had conspired in a cover-up ("Is it worse to commit perjury about sex with an intern, or about the cause of automobile fuel-tank fires that have killed hundreds of men, women and children?"). Even in a rough world, the Conason style is exceptional.

These, then, are the journalists at the heart of the courtier press. Their themes tend to be alike, expressed with a remarkable uniformity: "failed Arkansas land deal," "out of control," "trial by leaks," "obsession with sex." Over and over, they assert that "character" goes far beyond marital fidelity (Conason: "I consider feeding the poor and hungry a moral issue"). And they take immense pleasure from Clinton's poll numbers, marveling at the (newly manifested) maturity of the American people (Hunt: "They think this has been a good president; they don't want to hear any more about the particulars of l'Affaire Lewinsky, and they certainly don't want him driven out of office on this"). A few have even come to appreciate Billy Graham, for his easy "forgiveness" of Clinton (Carlson: "Billy Graham is in contact with the American people").

Of course, the pro-Clinton press is not entirely without legitimate purposes: Muck should be raked on all sides, and accusers should be scrutinized as closely as the accused. But Clinton's courtiers are a particularly adamant breed. For them, Clinton can hardly do wrong, and if, by chance, he is forced to go, they will be with him, wiping away tears as he choppers off the White House lawn. And as he arches out of sight, they will salute him—no doubt muttering curses about conspiracy. ♦

the weekly Standard

Affairs of State

On Friday, March 20, 1998, Bill Clinton's public and private attorneys made a novel claim in a Washington, D.C., federal courtroom. They claimed that nothing less than the United States Constitution gives the president authority to have sex with Monica Lewinsky in the Oval Office and to receive confidential advice from his staff about how to conceal that sex—even from a duly constituted grand-jury investigation into perjury and witness tampering. This is, needless to say, an extraordinary argument, even for proponents of a liberally interpreted "living" Constitution. It is an argument so mind-boggling, in fact, that its true import has almost completely eluded public notice.

Technically speaking, of course, what the president's attorneys did on March 20 was assert the protections of "executive privilege" for certain Lewinsky-related conversations involving Clinton consiglieri Bruce Lindsey and Sid Blumenthal. Both men have been subpoenaed for testimony about their knowledge of the facts at issue. Neither man can be forced fully to comply with those subpoenas, the White House now declares. The presidency's prerogatives, secured by executive privilege, forbid it.

The hypocrisy of this legal maneuver is undeniable. Once upon a time, as late as March 1994, in fact, President Clinton forswore any interest in the invocation of executive privilege. "It's hard for me to imagine a circumstance in which that would be an appropriate thing for me to do," he said. A few months later, White House counsel Lloyd Cutler transformed the president's words into a formal statement of administration policy. In an advisory memo to the general counsels of all the executive-branch departments and agencies, Cutler gave the following instruction: "In circumstances involving communications relating to investigations of personal wrongdoing by government officials, it is our practice not to assert executive privilege, either in judicial proceedings or in congressional investigations and hearings."

But "our practice" is now the opposite.

Other traditional practices surrounding executive privilege seem also to have been abandoned by the Clinton regime. It has been a convention of American presidents, ever since Richard Nixon was rebuked by the Supreme Court for withholding the Watergate tapes, to invoke executive privilege *personally*—and even then, only after careful, case-by-case staff review and only with the explicit concurrence of the attorney general. Here, by contrast, the attorney general was absent from the scene; the Justice Department declined, on conflict-of-interest grounds, to participate in the decision about Lindsey and Blumenthal. Here, for that matter, the president himself seems to have been out of the loop. Last week, in Africa, Clinton was questioned by a reporter concerning the propriety of his executive-privilege assertion. "All I know is I saw an article about it in the paper," he responded. "I haven't discussed it with the lawyers. I don't know. You should ask someone who does know."

Weird. Especially weird, since "the lawyers" back in Washington who surely do know all about it refuse, on the phony basis of "grand-jury secrecy," to explain the matter at all in public.

Weird, but in these respects, at least, not that surprising. The Clinton White House, Lindsey and Blumenthal aside for the moment, has long since stretched executive privilege to the breaking point. The White House counsel's office spent most of 1996 withholding—as "subject to" an executive-privilege claim—some 2,000 pages of documents sought by Congress for an investigation into the White House travel-office and FBI-files scandals. The attorney general was not consulted about this claim, either. And Bill Clinton cannot possibly have reviewed those documents individually. (One of which, it later turned out, included notes a White House lawyer had made about an appointment to get her legs waxed.)

What, then, is really so new and astounding about the Lindsey and Blumenthal executive-privilege claim? What's new and astounding is the *substance* of the testimony this latest claim means to forestall. Federal case law makes quite plain that the need for confidential White House deliberations, even when theo-

retically legitimate, must, as the Supreme Court ruled in *United States* v. *Nixon*, "yield to the demonstrated, specific need for evidence in a pending criminal trial." More to the point, federal case law makes quite plain that the universe of legitimate executive-privilege claims is narrowly circumscribed. The president's lawyers are now constructing their argument largely on the basis of a 1997 appellate-court decision about the independent-counsel investigation into former Clinton agriculture secretary Mike Espy. But the Espy decision contains a key sentence that White House spinners conveniently omit from their spin. Executive privilege, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled last June, "only applies" to advice prepared for the president "on official government matters."

No doubt Bill Clinton feels a personal interest in adulterous West Wing fellatio and breast grabbing. No doubt many of his aides feel a personal interest in helping him cover up such activities. But one searches Article II of the Constitution in vain for some sign that sex and lies are part of his job—or theirs. And yet that is what Clinton's lawyers are suggesting when they assert executive privilege over testimony about that sex and those lies. They are announcing that what Bill Clinton did with Monica Lewinsky was "an official government matter." And they are denying that there is any legally meaningful distinction between this particular president's personal and political interests and the long-term institutional prerogatives of the White House he temporarily occupies.

They are saying, in short, that Clinton is more like a king than an ordinary American president—that, as Clinton goes, so will go the presidency as an *idea*.

The mind reels.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Social Security's Moment?

by Fred Barnes

THE STAGE IS SET TO BEGIN reforming, modernizing, and partially privatizing Social Security this year. President Clinton desperately needs an issue that's bigger than the sum of his scandals—a point speaker Newt Gingrich made to the House Republican caucus last week—and overhauling Social Security qualifies. Democratic senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York has broken the ice for liberals, joining his Democratic colleague, Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, in proposing to use the payroll tax for personal retirement accounts that can be invested in stocks, mutual funds, and bonds. Among Republicans, Rep. Mark Sanford of South Carolina is no longer waging a lonely battle to privatize the Social Security system. He has noisy allies now, including John Kasich, chairman of the House Budget Committee. Kasich wants to devote the budget surplus to establishing a private account for every worker as a first step toward privatization.

Yet nothing may happen. Why? Moynihan says Social Security reform is a test for liberals, and not many are passing so far. "I want to go very slow on this," says Rep. Martin Frost of Texas, the influential chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "I'm very reluctant to do anything to privatize Social Security. The stock market doesn't always go up." The White House is content to have the issue merely discussed this year, notably at special forums around the country. On the policy choices, Clinton is conflicted. His chief of staff, Erskine Bowles, sent Moynihan a congratulatory note about his reform proposal. In fact, the White House may be ready to accept partial privatization as the price of a reform deal. But the president and his aides are apoplectic over another item in the Moynihan bill, a one-percentage-point cut in the annual cost-of-living increase for Social Security recipients.

Democratic timidity in reforming Franklin D. Roosevelt's greatest legacy is to be expected. It's GOP inertia that's surprising. Republican congressional leaders want more Democrats than just Moynihan and Kerrey to endorse serious reform and thus immunize Republicans. Otherwise, they fear their party will be demagogued once again for "destroying" Social Security. In his new book, *Lessons Learned the Hard Way*, Gingrich writes "now is the moment" for taking on Social Security. But by this he means talking, not acting. He would create a National Commission on Retirement to conduct a "national dialogue" for a year. As for Kasich's modest plan to use the surplus for what he calls "personal retirement savings accounts," Gingrich told me, "We're really exploring it." Kasich isn't so sure. "Everybody is very nervous about doing anything in the area of Social Security," he says. "Gingrich keeps dancing back and forth. I'm not sure where he's going to come down." Majority leader Dick Armey is even more wary of tackling the issue, Kasich adds.

It's not only GOP leaders who are skittish; it's most Republicans in Congress. "There's such an aversion to doing anything between now and November," says a Republican congressman. "The [House GOP] conference is playing four corners"—that is, it's stalling. Gingrich is willing to schedule votes on small measures like changing a worker's paycheck to show how much is actually paid in FICA taxes (by the worker *and* by the employer). "The trouble is, you can pass all these small incremental bills and still not change Social Security," the congressman says. Paradoxically, Gingrich is also worried about being preempted on Social Security reform by Clinton and Democrats such as Moynihan. It's not likely, but Gingrich is concerned enough to have raised this at a meeting of the GOP conference.

What's produced this new anxiety is Moynihan's bill. "It is a huge development," says Sanford, the Republican crusader for reform. True, the bill contains many of the hardy perennials of liberal Social Security reform. It would boost the ceiling on wages subject to the payroll tax from $68,400 to $97,500, cut the cost-of-living adjustment, raise the retirement age to 70 (in 2065), and tax roughly 95 percent of Social Security benefits. What excites conservative reformers, however, is Moynihan's (and Kerrey's) plan to cut the payroll tax rate from 12.4 percent to 10.4 percent and offer workers the option of investing the 2 percent on their own. Moynihan says he couldn't avoid at least some privatization. "That's where the energy is [in the Social Security debate]. If you don't acknowledge that, you shouldn't be in the political business." Kerrey says private investment accounts are "the solution to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. You don't do it by raising the minimum wage." The accounts wouldn't replace Social Security benefits in the Moynihan-Kerrey plan, only supplement them.

When Moynihan unveiled his bill on the Senate floor March 16, he was surprised by some of the praise he received. Republican whip Don Nickles of Oklahoma said he wasn't "joining as a co-sponsor now," but he left open that possibility. Majority leader Trent Lott extolled the Moynihan measure as "very interesting and thoughtful. We ought to get into that." Indeed, and there's no time like the present.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

BACK WHEN THE LYING BEGAN

by Andrew Ferguson

LAST WEEK I TOOK A TRIP BACK IN TIME—way, way back, to the distant days when James Carville seemed a refreshing, colorful rustic instead of a sputtering psychotic. I rented *The War Room*, a documentary about the 1992 Clinton campaign, which made stars of Carville and his diminutive sidekick, George Stephanopoulos. When it was released in 1993 it was a mild hit, as documentaries go, but it's hard to find in video stores now. That's too bad, because its value as a cultural document has grown with time. Watching *The War Room* today, you realize you're seeing the Clinton presidency in seedling form. And it gives you the creeps.

Clinton himself is only glimpsed in *The War Room*; he's a voice on the telephone, a flashing image on a TV monitor. And when we do see him he is doing what he does best: smiling, shaking his head in puzzlement or disgust, and—ceaselessly, endlessly—denying everything. A scrum of reporters surrounds him in New Hampshire to ask about Gennifer Flowers. "The charges are false," he says, with the studied ambiguity we now know so well. "It's sad that this could be published in a paper like the *Star*, which reports Martians walk on the earth. I mean, you never ask me whether Martians walk on the earth, do you?"

But the Clinton style embraces more than the man himself; it emanates from him, and radiates outward to encompass all those who assist him in his ambitions. Our first extended look at Carville comes as he gives a pep talk to New Hampshire volunteers, who appear briefly disconcerted by reports of Clinton's skirt-chasing and draft-dodging. "Listen," Carville tells the troops, "it's gonna come out that Roger Ailes is behind this stuff. Ailes, and of course Bush and Georgette Mosbacher." Georgette Mosbacher? Carville hadn't yet heard about Richard Mellon Scaife, apparently. "Any time anybody comes up here with fresh ideas, they take 'em out. Remember Muskie?" That would be old Ed "Fresh Ideas" Muskie. Tell it, James! "And if we win this, then you have knocked this s—back *fo-evah*!"

Then Clinton's famous "political viability" letter about the draft makes its way into the press. The campaign might have tried to explain the letter. Instead it attacks. "Here's the question," Carville hollers at reporters. "What is the Pentagon doin' leakin' some-

thin' like this?" Gov. Clinton hollers, too. "I want you to ask the president to call the Pentagon and find out who leaked this!" he tells reporters. A good question, perhaps, except that Bill Clinton would never ask it today, now that Pentagon leaks involve Linda Tripp's top-secret security clearance. Some questions lose their relevance.

The War Room is full of such eerie echoes, for the Clintonian approach to the press and the public has remained essentially unchanged. The Clintonites didn't invent the combination of cajolery, dissembling, and equivocation that we today know as "spin." But they practiced the art with an inexhaustible energy—so inexhaustible that it races along at high voltage even now. The lengthiest episode in the movie concerns Carville and Stephanopoulos's effort to plant an anti-Bush story with CBS News. CBS enthusiastically tries to verify the tip. A producer keeps the Clinton campaign informed of the Bush team's reaction and even offers to fax over a copy of the script for the broadcast. But then—tragedy. The story turns out not to be true. For some reason, CBS decides not to use it. Carville is crestfallen. He consoles himself by screaming over the phone at a reporter from the *Washington Post*, which had dared to run another Clinton-draft story on the front page.

Kent Lemon

James Carville

Jerry Brown confronts Clinton during a debate—some wild allegation about a failed Arkansas land deal. "You oughta be ashamed jumpin' on my wife," Clinton snarls in mock offense, to which Brown replies: "You're always trying to attack, Governor. You never answer the question." And so it goes. George Stephanopoulos appears on *This Week with David Brinkley* to answer questions about the governor's womanizing. "The American people care about jobs and education," he scolds Sam Donaldson. "They're not going to be diverted by side issues." As his eyes dart around, George's exasperation is palpable: It's like you-all think Clinton's going to get elected and start nailing the interns or something!

The conventional view after 1992 was that the Clintonites had finally beaten the GOP at its own game—that George and James and the rest were simply better at the cynical techniques of political manipulation invented by Republicans. There's some truth to this, though not much. In 1992, Clinton and his boys ran against a feeble incumbent and an extraterrestrial munchkin who chose "Crazy" as his campaign song, and they still managed to win only 43 percent of the vote. The Clintonites weren't "the best." They were just the most shameless. And lack of scruple can often take you further than mere ingenuity.

The real innovation came after the election, when the methods of Clinton-style campaigning were uprooted and transplanted, in their entirety, to the executive branch. This is why in 1998 we have a White House that is less an instrument of government than the headquarters for an endless campaign—just another war room, whose only object is to vanquish enemies, whoever they are, and to defend the leader, regardless of cost.

One *War Room* scene more than any other carries dim, premonitory rumbles of trouble in the distance. Close to the movie's end, Stephanopoulos takes a phone call from a Perot operative who threatens to go public with a now forgotten allegation about Clinton's private life. Pacing in his jean jacket behind his desk, Stephanopoulos beats the story back. "You would be laughed at and people would think you're crazy," he tells the caller. "We are not going to lose. We are going to win. He is going to be president. But think of yourself," he continues, his voice all the more ominous for its tonelessness. "I guarantee you, if you do this, you'll never work in Democratic politics again. You'll be embarrassed in front of the national press corps. Nobody will believe you. And people will think you're scummy."

Scummy? Did someone say scummy?

It's all here, in other words, preserved forever in a well-wrought and ultimately depressing movie: the blame-shifting, the bullying, the smears, and the attacks, no matter how preposterous, in the face of any threat to the president's political viability. *The War Room* makes it plain: We were warned.

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of **THE WEEKLY STANDARD.**

Yeltsin Fires the Right Guy

by Anders Åslund

On Monday, March 23, 1998, the irrepressible Boris Yeltsin sacked his entire government, including his prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin. The Russian president's move came as a bolt from the blue. In most countries, the unexpected demise of a government would generate uncertainty and prompt the stock market to fall. In Moscow, on the contrary, the stock index rose 2 percent in joy at Chernomyrdin's ouster. Apparently, the business community was more pleased to see him go than it was wary of the unknown.

In Washington, however, Chernomyrdin is widely thought of as a stalwart of reform. In particular, Vice President Al Gore has invested political capital in the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, dedicated to U.S.-Russian cooperation. The commission has held no less than nine sessions, enough to persuade Gore that the Russian premier is his good friend and that the two of them have "accomplished a great deal, for the benefit of both our peoples." Whatever its political merits, however, the commission has virtually nothing to show for five years of American efforts and Russian promises in the key area of oil.

This is despite Chernomyrdin's long experience with energy issues. He was the last Soviet gas minister. No free-marketeer, he nevertheless entered the reform government headed by Yegor Gaidar in May 1992, and his arrival marked a temporary halt to serious reform. In the fall of 1992, as Russia neared hyperinflation, Chernomyrdin favored massive credit expansion and price controls. In December 1992, he replaced Gaidar as prime minister.

Upon taking this office, Chernomyrdin instantly reintroduced price controls, vowing that Russia would be not a "bazaar" but a regulated market economy. Fortunately, he was forced to rescind price controls. In 1994, he ousted two strong reformers, Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fedorov, though a third, Anatoly Chubais, remained in the government and pressed ahead with his great privatization drive. Chernomyrdin busied himself frustrating reform and divvying up the spoils among the elite. In particular, he oversaw the privatization of his old ministry, the natural-gas monopoly, Gazprom. No one knows just how many seriously under-priced stocks the state-enterprise managers kept for themselves. But as a result of Chernomyrdin's lax fiscal policies, the ruble plummeted by 27 percent in a single day, October 11, 1994. President Yeltsin stepped in and sacked the three top economic policymakers, sparing Chernomyrdin, whose excuse was that he had been away on vacation. At this point, Chubais, his privatization project mostly complete, turned to macroeconomic stabilization, which he secured within a year. Chernomyrdin was unable to block him and remained weakened for some time.

In the second half of 1996, however, Chernomyrdin found himself virtually in control. His critics had been ousted, and President Yeltsin was taken ill. True to form, the prime minister opted for the status quo and put together a government primarily of old Soviet apparatchiks, several of them from Gazprom. By early 1997, public disgust with his do-nothing government was strong, and Yeltsin was forced to rejuvenate it by bringing in some real reformers, including Chubais and Boris Nemtsov as first deputy prime ministers. They chalked up serious accomplishments in the spring of 1997, eliminating privileges enjoyed by the big banks, regulating the state monopolies, forcing Gazprom to pay taxes, and paying all back pensions. At the height of their reform efforts, Chernomyrdin took four weeks' vacation so as to remain personally unsullied by policies he disagreed with. Meanwhile, Russia's new crony capitalists were growing restive as their subsidies dried up.

The high point of the Chubais-Nemtsov reforms came in July 1997 when one-quarter of the stock in the telecommunications holding company Svyazinvest was sold at an open, competitive auction. All hell broke loose as two of the most powerful of the crony capitalists, Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky, realized what the reformers were doing. With their three TV channels, their radio stations, and their many newspapers, Berezovsky and Gusinsky launched an all-out attack on the reformers, accusing them of—if you please—corruption, though the real struggle was over whether cronyism or the rule of law would undergird capitalism in Russia.

Predictably, Chernomyrdin sided with Berezovsky and attacked this most equitable of all the large-scale privatizations in Russia. In return, the media outlets owned by Berezovsky and Gusinsky supported Chernomyrdin for president, at a time when his popularity in the polls hovered around 3 percent. Only among the elites, whose corrupt dealings he condones, does Chernomyrdin enjoy impressive support. In October 1997, with help from the Communists in the Duma, Chernomyrdin and Berezovsky buried the draft tax code that is a precondition for the normal functioning of the economy in Russia. On the occasion of a merger involving Berezovsky's oil company, Chernomyrdin again revealed his true colors, publicly stating that Russian companies should not compete within Russia, but only abroad. In other words, Russia should not have a market economy.

Early this year, President Yeltsin appears to have realized that three powerful men had joined forces: Chernomyrdin, Berezovsky, and Anatoly Kulikov, the hardline minister of the interior who made his name advocating war in Chechnya. Yeltsin decided to put his foot down and end a stalemate in Russia's economic reforms that had lasted from late July 1997 till late January this year. He summoned Chubais to put the budget in order, push it through parliament, and revive the draft tax code. Most important, the reformers had had enough of Chernomyrdin. While he was widely seen as the best of the crony lot, he had done nothing to shield the reformers in the government from the Berezovsky-Gusinsky onslaught.


Boris Yeltsin

Kevin Chadwick

With the reformers again in the ascendant, Chernomyrdin tacked in their direction. Three days before his ouster, he signed a decree on the privatization of Rosneft, the last big state-owned oil company. This was the best privatization decree to date, guaranteeing an open and fair auction with foreign participation. Three bidding alliances were expected to participate. This last and best decision of Chernomyrdin's outraged Berezovsky, who had favored insider privatization that benefited him; Berezovsky even claimed to have sought Chernomyrdin's ouster, though in fact the initiative came from the reformers.

While Yeltsin's sacking of the government came as a total surprise, it actually makes a lot of sense. The president stressed that the purpose of his move was to "impart more energy and efficiency to economic reforms, to give them an additional impetus, a fresh momentum." The Russian government needed to be cleansed of Chernomyrdin and his old Communist apparatchiks and the last lingering Soviet practices. Today, Russia has enough well-trained young people to make this feasible. The original reformers are worn out, and the country is ripe for a new generation of leaders. Acting prime minister Sergei Kirienko would be a good candidate to lead the new reform efforts. Although he does not have strong political credentials, he is an outstanding representative of the new Russia, and he has largely favored competitive energy policies. Notably, it seems to have been Kirienko who convinced Chernomyrdin of the need for the competitive privatization of Rosneft, which so enraged Berezovsky. Indeed, Berezovsky's media outlets appear to prefer Grigory Yavlinsky—a reformer but a member of the opposition, whom Berezovsky and Gusinsky think they can control—to Kirienko.

Chubais had done his part and was ready to leave after seven combative years in the Russian government. He privatized 70 percent of the Russian economy, stabilized the currency, and did a great deal to secure democracy. Even before Yeltsin's move, in early February, Chubais had submitted his resignation. And Russia's market economy appears secure enough to manage without him. Happily, his voluntary departure helped bring about the exit of the powerful hardliner Kulikov.

Yeltsin's timing could hardly have been better. Russia is calm, with no crisis in sight. The next elections are nearly two years away. Parliament was in recess, and many deputies were abroad. This was the right moment for a calculated, radical shift. And its purpose is clear: to reinvigorate the government with new personnel, to clean house, and to spur social reforms. Chernomyrdin is no longer needed to conciliate the Communists or the crony capitalists, and he is definitely not a credible presidential candidate. Why keep him around? As so often before, the observer is left amazed by Yeltsin's boldness and political astuteness.

As for Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, a fair summing up of his achievement would be: He was prime minister in Russia from December 1992 till March 1998. This was a time when other members of his government undertook historic economic reforms, when Chernomyrdin was too weak to stop them. A hard worker, good administrator, and eminent conciliator, he remained a prisoner of vested industrial interests, particularly the oil and gas industry.

Just one puzzle remains: What was it about Chernomyrdin that Al Gore so admired?

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Unresolved Evil

On Justice and the End of the Unabomber

By David Gelernter

On January 22, the man known as the Unabomber struck a deal: He pled guilty to the murders and mayhem he had committed over two decades of terrorism and was sentenced to life in prison. It was a bad deal.

There never were any group meetings among us targets of the so-called Unabomber, but we nearly had one in Sacramento on the day the trial began. The FBI had set up a "witness room" where we could gather and get briefed, away from the press. Most of the survivors were on hand, together with other witnesses and assorted family members. I had come with my wife. Susan Mosser was there; her husband was murdered by a bomb in New Jersey. The Epsteins were there, with their son and daughter—Professor Epstein got blown up the same day I did. Epstein and I were among the first witnesses on the agenda. Part of the prosecution's job is to establish what happened; our assignment was to lay out for the jury what it's like when a package explodes in your face and you almost die.

The plan was to get us downstairs into the courtroom before the reporters got in. It came time for us to be escorted down in batches. There were (maybe) thirty of us, and one elevator, and a lot of after-you'ing as we arranged ourselves into elevator-sized groups. There was a bond among us after all, everyone was friendly and polite—and no one was in any hurry. The metal detector outside the courtroom is more sensitive than your standard airport model. I couldn't get through without setting off the alarm, on account of the metal in the fake thumb I wear strapped to the remainder of my right hand or, maybe, the shrapnel fragments still floating around in my chest. They tried me a few times, then waved me through.

Judge Garland E. Burrell Jr.'s courtroom is done up in mid-'60s Holiday Inn style. The furniture is austere; the walls are paneled in wood that has somehow been made to look plastic. The spectator pews are divided by an aisle down the middle. Prosecution-related people sat in front on the left, defense people on the right—"sort of like a wedding," an FBI man explained. The room lacks majesty, stateliness, bathrooms. The bathroom situation was a hot topic that morning. Rumors flew thick and fast. Some claimed that once the judge arrived, you weren't allowed out until recess. Others said that leaving was no problem, but you couldn't get back in. I never did hear the straight story.

The session was supposed to start at eight. We were seated by seven-thirty-

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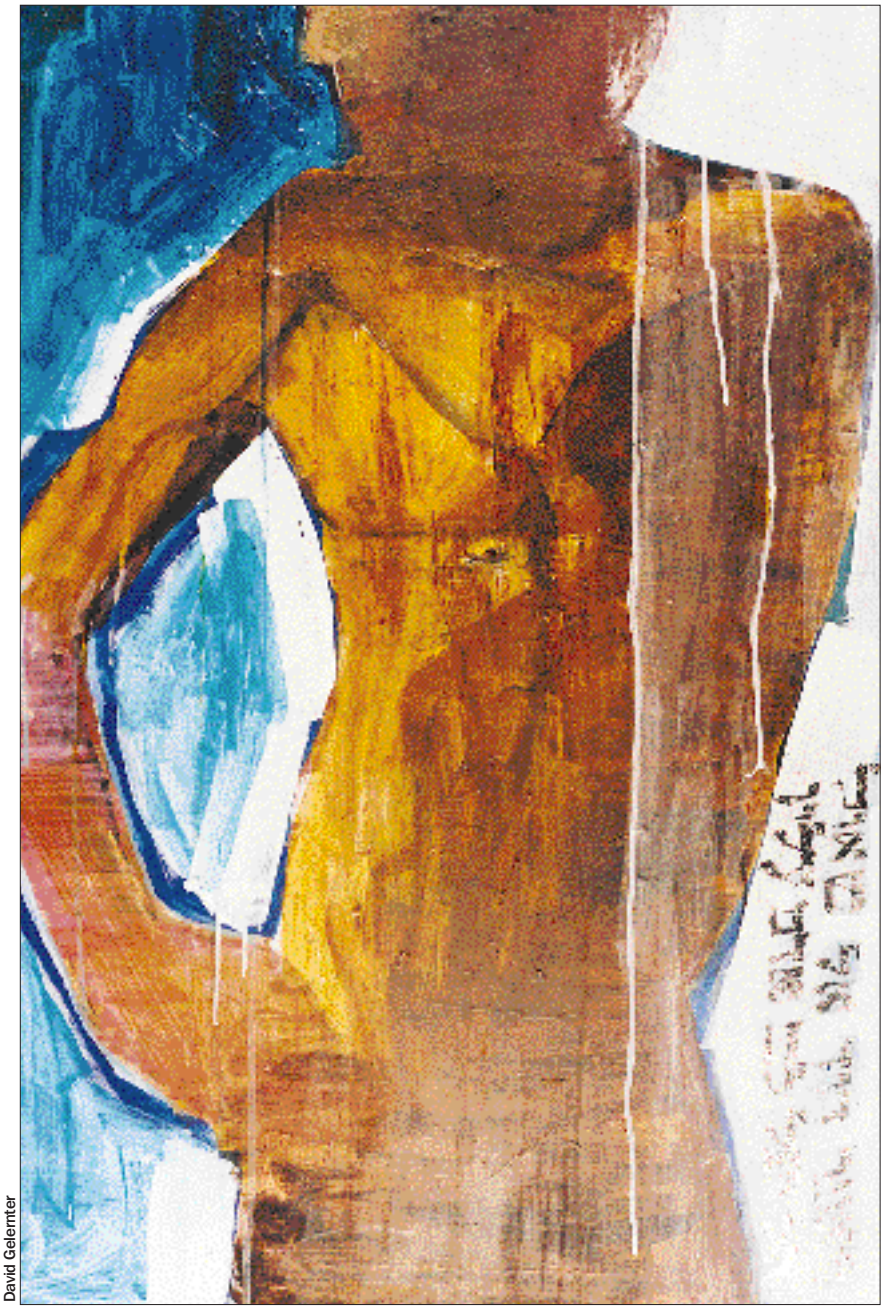


David Gelernter

"And David said to Saul: Let no man's courage fail him."

ish. The prosecutors were already there: Freccero, Cleary, and Lapham. I'd got to know Freccero and Cleary, and to admire them. Cleary was the head man—tall with a trim beard and dark piercing rabbinical eyes. I once saw him, when the judge said something he didn't like, lean back in his chair and stare silently at the ceiling as if he were exasperated with God and wanted God to know it. Freccero is broader, looks and moves like a boxer, speaks in grim slow-motion, like a Gary Cooper sheriff. His features are blunt and forceful; there is suppressed tragedy in his voice. He is not humorless, but I rarely saw him smile.

Cleary and Freccero both radiate intense moral seriousness. They believed

that evil had been done, and they knew who did it, and they knew what ought to be done with that man. And they were beleaguered and exhausted; they were bears at a bear-baiting. They were painfully discreet: Freccero praised the judge several times in our many long conversations, and never said a word against him. Occasionally he would criticize the defense or the press in quiet, guarded terms. The prosecution was colossally meticulous; their grids, their numbered charts, their endless roomsful of evidence could give you the queasy impression of a well with no bottom. They had dotted every *i* and crossed every *t*, but entering the funhouse of the modern U.S. justice system, you could feel them setting their jaws. When the prosecution team huddled in court, Cleary in the center, Freccero and Lapham leaning sharply toward him on either side, you could picture the heat-shimmer overhead.

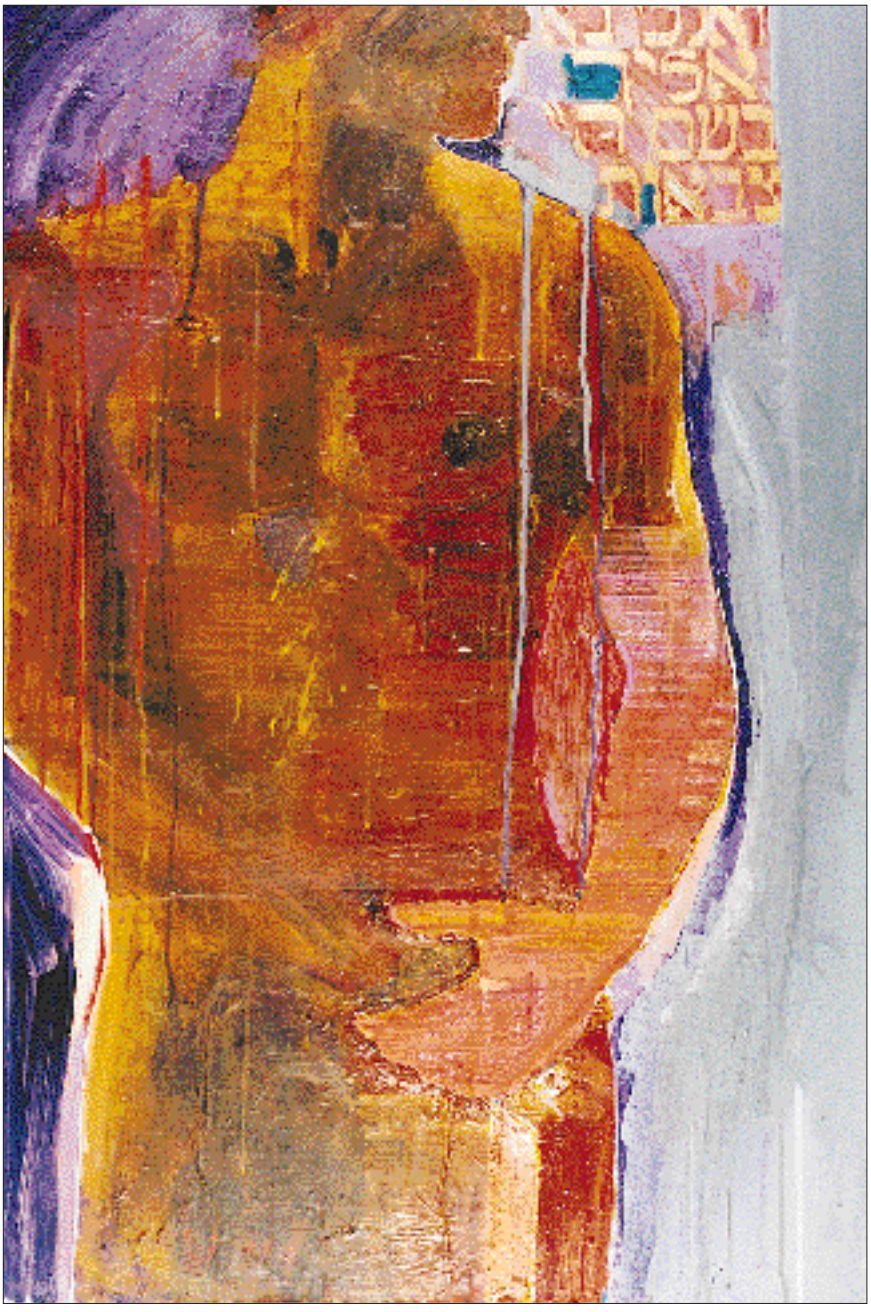
I dreaded the trial. I got ready for it by working on a series of three paintings that gradually elbowed all my other work aside, pictures of David getting set to take on Goliath; a self-aggrandizing theme, but absorbing.

A summary version of the evidence had arrived in the care of an FBI man, dozens of loose-leaf binders carefully arranged in what looked like a fancy shopping cart. The evidence had been put online too, and there was sophisticated computer equipment on hand. Amid all the grimness and high-tech: two sketch artists with neat ranks of Derwent colored pencils—such a whimsical, out-of-place touch, it made my day. One of them (I was told) made a sketch of me, and I decided that the next day I came to court I'd bring pencils and make a sketch of her. There never was a next day.

FBI agents do the legwork and handle trial logistics. They'd fetched us at the airport the night before, and they shepherded us around Sacramento in their white government-issue Chevy Luminas. The younger FBI agents are so nice it's alarming. I asked a couple of them what they thought of Director Louis Freeh, and they praised him by citing anecdotes about how much time he spends with his kids: how one child had told Janet Reno that Dad couldn't come to the phone because he was playing Nintendo; how the director had missed an official ceremony because of a boys' soccer match. In court I met a senior FBI man with a gruffer delivery and a hardboiled Tip O'Neill face, but he used the word "supportive" twice in one conversation. The whole FBI talks like a social-work agency.

We were ready. The prosecutors had prepared us well. They'd come to see me in New Haven several times and showed me FBI photographs of the crime scene: my office, a bathroom where I'd stopped briefly and pointlessly to wash out my eye, the staircase I'd walked down—everything drenched in blood. In a series of long conversations last fall they explained their strategy and kept us informed, and the preliminaries seemed to be on course. The date approached, and (with generous help from the FBI) we planned our trip. I dreaded it, naturally; the traveling itself, the courtroom scene, the press, the testimony. I got ready by working on a series of three paintings that gradually elbowed all my other work aside, pictures of David getting set to take on Goliath; a self-aggrandizing theme, but absorbing. When I wasn't working on the paintings, I carried them around with me, studied them for hours, stayed up nights reworking them. (A painting is a form of trapped energy, like a compressed spring or a rock at the top of a hill.)

So we sat in court chatting about the bathroom situation, waiting for the trial to start. Towards eight, my wife asked an FBI man when the defendant



David Gelernter

"But I come against you *in the name of the Lord of Hosts."*

would arrive. "He's already here," the answer was, "over at the defense table." The judge walked in. No one told us to rise. The first voice we heard after the judge's was the defendant's. A cool, collected voice: He and his lawyers were having a serious disagreement about how to proceed, he said. "I'm sorry I can't rise to address you," he added, "but the marshal told me to remain seated."

Bull's-eye. He'd waited till the whole cast was assembled, and we were on the verge of starting, then tossed his wrench into the works with casual arrogance and perfect aim and, sure enough, the machinery clanked to a halt. The judge adjourned to chambers, taking along the defendant and the defense

lawyers and a court reporter. When the trial reconvened later that afternoon, it was only to arrange a recess. Next morning we flew home to Connecticut.

A few weeks later the prosecution made a deal, and the trial was canceled. Kaczynski would plead guilty to the crimes that were charged in Sacramento, and his other crimes too, for which he might have been tried in other states—three murders in all, plus a bunch of attempted murders. Cost to the defendant (special deal, one time only): life in federal prison without parole. Yes he had, in the great American tradition, traded up; he *used* to live in an unimproved shack in the wilderness. And if you are an ascetic bent on winning fame by preaching against society and the state, you couldn't ask for a bullier pulpit than a federal jail cell.

The prosecutors tell me they did the best they could under the circumstances. I believe them. Nonetheless, they lost.

In retrospect I wasn't David; the prosecutors played that part. The Department of Justice is a powerful institution—but the community as a whole is more powerful, as it ought to be and has to be. Elite public opinion acts on the Justice Department, the jury, and the judge. The prosecutors believed that truth and justice demanded the death penalty. But elite public opinion tends to oppose the death penalty and seemed especially prone to oppose it in this case. The defendant himself was a proven first-rate manipulator, and our legal system is wide open to manipulation. Could the prosecution win anyway, succeed in getting the murderer condemned to death? Maybe. And if an appeals court decreed a second trial, could it win again? Maybe. But in the end (my impression is) there were too many maybes for comfort—and there was the worry in the back of everyone's mind that things could somehow go horribly wrong and the murderer could walk. Every big trial in modern America is a national humiliation waiting to happen. O.J. Simpson is merely the best-known example of what is today a regular garden-variety, Mister-Rogers'-Neighborhood American type—the murderer at large. The criminologist John DiIulio estimates that there are maybe half a million of them in our big cities.

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The prosecutors struggled but lost. Not because the murderer is alive and not dead. They lost—we lost—because the community was called on to condemn terrorist murder in the strongest possible terms, unambiguously, definitively—and we blew it. It was important that the man be sentenced to death, and whether the execution were ever carried out would barely have mattered. (Had he been condemned to death, apologized, and repented, I might have been inclined myself to commute the sentence.) Failure to hold the trial was a defeat in itself. We hold trials to deal justly with the accused, but that's not all; a trial is a powerful public ceremony, too, and we no longer trust ourselves to pull it off. (Ceremonies of all sorts are beyond us, from trials to political conventions to weddings.) A plea bargain in a case like this is an abrogation of the public's responsibility to face facts and come to grips with the truth.

How we dispose of the criminal doesn't matter. What matters is our communal response to the crime. Evil is easy, good is hard, temptation is a given; therefore, a healthy society talks to itself—in laws and editorials, court judgments and theater productions, public lectures, political speeches, university courses. When a criminal commits an evil act, a healthy society denounces it

David Gelemter

"And the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel."

as such. A sustained, unanimous hiss rises from the crowd—or at least is supposed to.

Such ritual denunciations strengthen our good inclinations and help us suppress our bad ones. We need to hear them, and hear good acts praised, too. We need to hear the crowd (hear *ourselves*) praising good and denouncing evil. Not commiserating and whining and preening, not promising to be non-judgmental and always to love one another just as we are (you wish) and showering each other with ersatz forgiveness like tinsel snow at a grade-school Christmas play—those are lollipop gestures, cheap and childish, sticky-sweet and with-

out moral substance—but *praising good; denouncing evil*. Goodness is unnatural, and we need to cheer one another on.

But ever since the intelligentsia took over the cultural elite, moral leadership is hard to find. The crowd babbles and sulks, and no one can understand it. What to expect of a society that no longer roots for its own best instincts? No longer talks intelligently to itself? Moral chaos. A third of babies born out of wedlock; half a million murderers at large. Children learning about sex instead of morality. Power and money ranking higher than childrearing on our moral scale. A president who grows more popular the worse he behaves. A terrorist murderer who is rewarded instead of punished.

Three unlucky men died to make Kaczynski's name at Harvard. He attacked us with bombs for exactly this purpose: to get famous, win attention for his ideas. Harvard rewarded his hard work with the thing he wanted most.

Which is exactly what happened to the murderer Kaczynski. Up at Harvard last term in Lit 129, "Reading the 18th Century Through 20th Century Eyes," the reading list included Beaumarchais, Diderot, Kant, Rousseau, Foucault, Kundera, and "Unabomber," among other distinguished thinkers. (I'm grateful to Thomas Lipscomb for pointing this out to me.) The same thing could have happened nearly (though not *quite*) anywhere in modern academia. I'd bet money that Harvard is not the only college with this particular terrorist on its reading lists.

And so what? Bad men can be good writers. Norman Mailer once stabbed his wife, and I've written about him myself and praised his books.

Trouble is, Kaczynski made the Harvard reading list not despite his vicious crimes but because of them. Some thinkers (I don't deny) agree with his anti-technology ideas. But no serious person ever claimed that his thoughts were new, or that his manifesto was well argued or well written. Kaczynski made that Harvard reading list on the basis of our shattered hands and shattered eyes, permanent injury and permanent pain—ours, the lucky ones who survived. Three unlucky men died to make Kaczynski's name at Harvard. He attacked us with bombs for exactly this purpose: to get famous, win attention for his ideas. Harvard rewarded his hard work with the thing he wanted most.

Should we decorate Harvard for guts at least, pin a medal on its chest for courting public outrage in defense of depravity? Of course not. Harvard risked nothing. Harvard knew perfectly well that, by and large, its faculty, students, and moneyed supporters wouldn't give a damn. (There are a few honorable exceptions, which are precious to those of us with a personal stake in the thing.)

Paris, 1893: A terrorist bomb explodes in the Chamber of Deputies. No one is killed but forty-seven people are hurt. The anarchist intellectual Laurent Tailhade is asked to comment. He speaks prophetically for the 20th-century intelligentsia and for Harvard University circa 1998: "*Qu'importe les victimes si le geste est beau?*" What difference do the victims make if the gesture is beautiful?

When a terrorist murders a man, it is a meaningless act. There are evil men in every society, and they do evil things; that's all. It's up to the community to redeem the evil and collectively transcend it, by responding with dignity, assurance, and absolute clarity. But nowadays we disdain to do that, and we are haunted as a nation by unresolved evil—we dine at Macbeth's every night, and pretend not to see Banquo's ghost. I wrote a book in which,

some people claimed, I blamed the intelligentsia for Kaczynski's crimes. Such an accusation would have been ludicrous, and I didn't make it. What I blamed on the intelligentsia was our morally bankrupt response—especially the press's response. We can't hold society accountable for failing to prevent every evil act. We can and must hold it responsible for failing to condemn every evil act.

Harvard's course makes no difference in itself. There's a lot worse going on in academia today. But it is a perfect crystallization of the credo we have learned to associate with intellectuals—not all of them, but too many: "*Si le geste est beau* . . ." Lit 129 speaks loudly in its own small way. My guess is that, two generations ago, a large majority of Americans would have condemned such a course as disgusting, and most intellectuals would have shrugged it off. And my guess is that, today, a bare majority of the public would still find it disgusting and a large majority of intellectuals would still shrug it off. Just a guess.

In police terms, which are important, our communal response to Kaczynski's crimes succeeded. We found the man and put him away. In moral terms, which are even more important, our response was a failure. Which leaves us today with a new responsibility: to respond to the response. Public life is a conversation forever, year to year, generation to generation. With the right communal response, we can redeem the prosecutors' bargain. The way to do it is by telling them, "You lost, no question—but we honor you for fighting." The community will either seal the defeat by shrugging it off or, by admitting that it *was* a defeat, and a painful one, turn it into a kind of victory: a reaffirmation that evil will always exist but we will never accept it; we will always fight it. For myself, I'm left with three painted Davids, one per prosecutor. You can't put everything in words; that's why we have paint too.

We can't hold society accountable for failing to prevent every evil act. We can and must hold it responsible for failing to condemn every evil act. In moral terms, our response to Kaczynski's crimes was a failure.

On that day I met her in the witness room, Susan Mosser was dignified and beautiful and dressed in black. She wouldn't have testified in Sacramento; the murder of her husband would have been tried separately in New Jersey. She had come to register support and see what happened. I'd written the Justice Department when it was pondering whether to seek the death penalty in this case; I pointed out that the Mossers' youngest child was 15 months old when her father was murdered, that no one remembers life at that age, and that the crime of erasing a father from his child's memory is the evilest crime I can imagine.

But when I met Mrs. Mosser I wasn't thinking about children; what came to mind for some reason was a promise I'd made my wife a long time ago, that someday I would buy her a house by the shore. Such houses don't come cheap, and I still haven't delivered; but someday I believe I will. When it's 3 A.M. and I can't sleep, I don't think, ever, about the evil coward who worked hard, burned the midnight oil, and made that Harvard reading list at last—an American success story; a dream come true. But I do wonder sometimes what promises Thomas Mosser made and will never keep. A famous passage in the Mishnah, tractate Sanhedrin, lays down that to murder a man is to destroy a whole world. We have come a long way since then. For sophisticates like us, destroying worlds is no big deal anymore. ♦

Mindless Science

The Brain and Edward O. Wilson

By Stephen M. Barr

Edward O. Wilson, research professor of biology and honorary curator of entomology at Harvard University, is a man who knows many things. In such books as *The Diversity of Life* in 1993, he helped popularize the environmental concept of "biodiversity." In the 1978 Pulitzer prize-winning *On Human Nature*, he helped father the sociobiology that now seems to dominate a great deal of the public imagination of human origins. He has authored much-admired books on ants, evolution, the birds of the Antarctic, the social life of insects, and the social life of naturalists.

But those many things that he knows never seemed to fit together particularly well, or at least there never seemed to be a theory of knowing that expressed the philosophical unity he could feel them to have. So, in *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, America's most famous biologist has attempted to put it all together and show how the pieces fit.

And fit they do, after a fashion—but that fashion turns out to be quite strange. Edward O. Wilson is perhaps best described as someone who is right about many things, but wrong about one very big thing. A biologist attempting in *Consilience* an enormous philosophical project, he is like the man who proudly shows us a large jigsaw puzzle he has assembled in record time, only to have us point out that he's missing half the pieces.

The thesis of *Consilience* is that all the branches of human knowledge are "consilient" with one another, forming a coherent whole in the same hierarchical or architectonic way in which the various branches of the physical sciences do. Zoology, for example, has roots in cell biology, cell biology in molecular biology, molecular biology in chemistry, and chemistry in particle physics. Astronomy and geology are similarly derived from the basic laws of physics.

William Blake, *The Ancient of Days*, from *Europe, A Prophecy*, Library of Congress

Edward O. Wilson
Consilience
The Unity of Knowledge
Knopf, 352 pp., $35

This profound unity of nature is, indeed, one of the greatest and most beautiful discoveries of science. Wilson argues that consilience extends upwards as well, from cell biology to brain science, from brain science to psychology, from psychology to anthropology, and from anthropology to all the social sciences and humanities. In his grand synthesis, everything from morality and art to economics and politics can be traced down to the neural circuitry of the brain.

Up to a point, he's obviously right: There is much to be gained by seeking the consilience of the humanities with biology. In particular, it can help us to recover the idea of human nature. As Wilson says, "The evidence accumulated to date leaves little room for doubt. Human nature exists, and it is both deep and highly structured." He describes how much mischievous nonsense has resulted from a failure of thinkers in many disciplines to attend to the foundations and "deep origins" of human nature. There is the cultural relativism that has long dominated the social sciences. There are the recent radical ideologies that try to hold that all meanings and relationships, and even gender itself, are "socially constructed." There are deconstruction and postmodernism, which claim that there are no fixed reference points that would allow one to mark out standards in any field, from art and literature to morality.

The consilience of which Wilson writes is real. He describes the work

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going on in many scientific fields, particularly those studying the brain, human behavior in various cultures, and animals (especially primates). And he explains how there has emerged from these fields a rich harvest of insights into the human mind—from color perception to incest avoidance, gender differences to non-verbal communication, fear of snakes to standards of female beauty.

Some of these discoveries are bound to have great cultural impact. "Gender differences," Wilson writes, "are already richly described in the psychological and anthropological literature. Their biological foundations are partly known, having been documented in the corpus callosum and other brain structures; in patterns of brain activity; in smell, taste, and other senses; in spatial and verbal ability; and in innate play during childhood. . . . These facts may not satisfy everyone's ideological yearning, but they illustrate in yet another way that, whether we like it or not, *Homo sapiens* is a biological species."

Sociobiology has received praise from some conservative critics precisely for this sort of willingness to dismiss as stupid and ill-informed the denial of gender differences (although in the January 12 issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD, Andrew Ferguson launched an extended attack on the sociobiological "evolutionary psychology" of Steven Pinker's bestselling *How the Mind Works*). But the big question is not whether we are a biological species; it's whether that is all we are.

For Wilson, the case is closed: "Virtually all contemporary scientists and philosophers expert on the subject agree that the mind, which comprises consciousness and rational process, is the brain at work." And as for why they are right to deny mind-body dualism, Wilson declares, "The brain and its satellite glands have now been probed to the point where no particular site remains that can reasonably be supposed to harbor a non-physical mind."

This is on a par with Nikita Khrushchev's announcement that Yuri Gagarin, the first human visitor to space, had failed to locate God. Does Wilson really suppose that if there were an immaterial component to the mind it would show up in a brain scan? It well might be that the structure of the brain reflects, in some way, the fact that it is open to the influence of the non-material. But *how* it would reflect that is, at present, beyond useful speculation, let alone experimental test.

Some humility is very much in order, for the danger of consilience is that it may lead one to disregard facts when one does not see how they fit. And there *are* facts that seem, to both philosophers and scientists of note, to imply a dualist picture.

One argument, derived from the philosopher Frank Jackson, is developed at length by David Chalmers in his 1996 book, *The Conscious Mind*. Jackson and Chalmers maintain that there is something about subjective conscious experience that cannot be explained simply by the laws of physics. Suppose, they say, that someday there is a scientist, Mary, who understands all of the physics and all of the brain circuitry that give rise to color vision in humans, but who is herself blind from birth.

If every aspect of perception follows in some way from the physics of perceivers and the things that they perceive, then so, in particular, should the experience of "redness." But it doesn't, for blind Mary—however much she knows about physics—knows nothing of what red actually looks like.

Wilson is unimpressed. "Although it is the nature of philosophers to imagine impasses and expatiate upon them at book length with schoolmasterish dedication, [this] problem is conceptually easy to solve." His solution is to say that, just as we, not actually being honeybees, cannot know what it is like to see as honeybees do, so Mary cannot know what it is like to have sight.

Unfortunately, Wilson's answer misses the point. We understand why Mary does not know what it is like to see red: She is blind. The question is not why Mary does not have the subjective experience of redness; the question is why the rest of us do have that experience—which is a question about consciousness, about what "it is like" to see red. This is not merely a philosopher's quibble. Many scientists, such as Erwin Schrödinger, have puzzled over the same question.

But Wilson has what he thinks is a simple explanation of consciousness. It consists, he says,

> of the parallel processing of vast numbers of . . . coding networks. Many are linked by the synchronized firing of the nerve cells at forty cycles per second, allowing the simultaneous internal mapping of multiple sensory impressions. . . . All together they create scenarios that flow realistically back and forth through time. . . . Who or what within the brain monitors all this activity? No one. Nothing. The scenarios are not seen by some other part of the brain. They just *are*. Consciousness is the virtual world composed by the scenarios.

Our ability to agree with all this breaks down when we consider other complicated systems that engage in the massive parallel processing of data, use that data to construct scenarios, and use those scenarios to guide their actions. Was the chess-playing program that beat Gary Kasparov conscious? Is the General Motors Corporation? Is the Navy? Is it "like something" to be a computer program, or General Motors, or the Navy?

Wilson's explanation of consciousness fails, at last, to explain. The materialist approach leads ultimately either to saying that everything is conscious, or to saying that nothing is—as when John McCarthy, a founder of the field of Artificial Intelligence, claims that even thermostats are conscious, or the eminent American philosopher W. V. O. Quine claims that human consciousness is an illusion.

Another line of argument relies upon a theorem of the great mathematical logician Kurt Gödel that asserts certain limitations on what can be achieved by any system that uses a fixed set of computational rules. Based on Gödel's "incompleteness theorem," the philosopher John Lucas and the physicist Sir Roger Penrose have argued that the human mind—particularly in its ratiocinative powers—cannot be understood as a computer. Lucas is a dualist, as was Gödel himself, who called the idea that the mind is purely physical "a prejudice of our time." While Penrose is a materialist of sorts, the arguments he makes undercut the orthodoxy, espoused by Wilson, that explains the human mind as mere neurons firing. In Wilson's *Consilience*, Penrose is dismissed in a two-sentence endnote.

A third kind of argument in favor of dualism has been made in a variety of forms by many philosophers, and in recent times very cogently by Karl Popper (perhaps the one modern philosopher generally respected in the scientific community). He asked, in essence, what becomes of abstract truth, or of the objectivity of truth, in the materialist's picture of the mind. This problem arises in a particularly acute form for the believer in "consilience." A physicist in Princeton grasps some truth about elementary particles, and neurons start firing away like mad in his brain. In Paris, perhaps a week later, a molecular biologist understands something about the synthesis of an enzyme in a cell, and his neurons start firing in some different pattern. And so it goes, for the zoologist in Massachusetts, the brain scientist in California, and the anthropologist in New Guinea. In what sense do all of these neuronal discharges, happening at odd times in odd crania, widely dispersed throughout the world, coalesce to form a consilient structure of truth?

There are quite a few other arguments in favor of dualism. Some great scientists—Sir Rudolf Peierls and Eugene Wigner, in particular—have argued from physics. Many philosophers have argued from the freedom of the will, the unity of the intellect, or the unity of conscious experience. One need not accept all or any of these arguments to recognize in them a formidable case for some kind of dualism.

Indeed, without accepting some concept of mind distinct from the brain, Wilson's project falls apart. He faces a first explanatory problem in just how much he has to ignore in the way of arguments and pieces of evidence that point toward a mind somehow distinct from the brain. And he faces a second problem in the fact that his materialism leads not just to a moral relativism, as he admits, but to an absolute relativism—a relativism about all truth that he himself very much deplores when he sees it in deconstruction and postmodernism. It is no accident that materialist philosophers have lately tried to claim (as the science section of the *New York Times* reported on February 10) that even mathematical truth is a mere construct of our brains, and that space aliens with differently constructed brains would have a different mathematical truth. Without the mind beyond the brain, there is no possibility of truth—much less the consilience of truth for which Wilson is on the hunt.

There is a great deal to admire in *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. But there's also a great deal not to admire, for Wilson is missing the biggest piece of the picture. And when at last he holds it up for us to see, his jigsaw puzzle falls to pieces and clatters to the floor. There is of course a real consilience to knowledge. But it is a far greater consilience than is dreamt of in Edward O. Wilson's philosophy. And we will never discover what it is until we recognize once again that the large gap in the puzzle of the brain can only be filled by the piece we call the mind. ♦

Romantic Politics

Andrew Motion Reads the Life of Keats

By Margaret Boerner

Like a nested set of matching bookends, the great English poets of the romantic era died in reverse order of their birth: the last born the first to die, the first born the last. From Wordsworth (1770-1850) to Coleridge (1772-1834) to Byron (1788-1824) to Shelley (1792-1822), their years progressively dwindle until, in the center, comes John Keats, born in 1795 and dead in 1821 at the age of twenty-five.

How much good poetry Wordsworth and Coleridge produced after their prime is open to question, but there seems no doubt that Keats died before he could exhaust his genius. Consumptively fading away from tuberculosis, he didn't even have his entire brief life in which to work. In the single year of 1819, at twenty-two, he entered the pantheon of English poets by writing "The Eve of St. Agnes," "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and his six magnificent odes: "To Psyche," "To a Nightingale," "On a Grecian Urn," "On Melancholy," "On Indolence," and "To Autumn." After that year, he was too sick to write much.

This combination—of early death and youthful production, of promise both fulfilled and unfulfilled—has proved irresistible to scholars and popular writers alike, and the shelves are bursting with biographies of the doomed romantic poet. There's the two-volume 1925 *John Keats* by the wealthy poetaster Amy Lowell, for example, and there's Robert Gittings's 1968 *John Keats*. In 1964 alone, Aileen Ward won the National Book Award for her biography of the poet and Walter Jackson Bate won the Pulitzer Prize for his. And now we have *Keats: A Biography* by Andrew Motion.

Andrew Motion
Keats
A Biography
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 636 pp., $35

Motion's own volumes of poetry include 1995's *The Price of Everything* and 1997's *Salt Water*, but he is best known for *Philip Larkin: A Writer's Life*, the extraordinarily well-received biography of the poet he published in 1993. Having written, in addition, studies of such poets as Edward Thomas and Elizabeth Bishop, and having edited a volume of selected poems by Thomas Hardy, Motion was well positioned to produce an interesting study of the life of his romantic precursor.

Unfortunately, in *Keats: A Biography* he decided to concentrate not on Keats's poetry, but on Keats's politics. And once he weds himself to the thesis that Keats's political commitments were integral to his poetic achievement, Motion cannot find a way to address the whole body of the poetry.

The bare facts of the poet's life are brutal. He lost his father to an accident when he was nine, his mother to remarriage and then to tuberculosis when he was fourteen, and his younger brother Tom to tuberculosis when Keats was twenty-three.

And yet, in other ways, his life was not so hard. Born into a relatively prosperous east London family, the son of a hostler who had married his master's daughter and later took over the business, Keats was not poverty-stricken in childhood. His mother was affectionate, though she tended to let her children shift as they might.

After boarding school, he completed the apothecary's course at Guy's and St. Thomas's hospitals in London, which could have led to his becoming a surgeon. But he decided instead to be a poet, living on a small inheritance from his parents and grandparents. Apart from a constant worry over his trustees' mishandling of his money, he fretted primarily about his height—barely more than five feet—and his lack of a thorough grounding in Latin and Greek. His friends regarded him as "cheerful, good-tempered, and clever." His touching concern for his family led him to nurse his mother and his brother as they died of tuberculosis—which almost certainly was the direct cause of his own death.

In addition to his poetry, Keats wrote hundreds of letters to his friends and family that, if we had them all (unfortunately, he periodically destroyed as many as he could), would provide an almost daily chronicle of his life and ideas. He made friends easily and kept them, and his surviving letters show a person bursting with energy and using all his senses to apprehend the world and to explore poetic effect, his own imaginative powers, and life itself.

Like all Keats's biographers, Andrew Motion has turned to these extraordinary letters in order to flesh out the life and to make his case that Keats was deeply influenced by the social and political culture of his age. "Embedding" Keats's life in his times and "examining his liberal beliefs," Motion wants to show how they "shaped the argument as well as the language of his work."

> Keats's writing . . . commemorates patriotic heroes such as King Arthur, Robin Hood, John Milton, Algernon Sidney. . . . He engages with the issue of military power, with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, with the repressive effects of the Corn Laws,

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enclosures and the Six Acts, with radicals such as Cobbett, Kosciusko [who led the Polish insurrection of 1794 and became a hero to the romantics], and his early mentor Leigh Hunt, and with the plight of people working in factories.

The facts are there. Certainly Keats was not unworldly. Neither was his experience "mainly literary," as the deconstructionist Paul de Man once claimed—echoing a long line of nineteenth-century readers who accepted Shelley's mythic reading of Keats in *Adonais* as a "pure spirit," "neglected and apart; / A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's [i.e., his reviewers'] dart." But it was of course tuberculosis, not the critics, that killed him. Keats's letters show him fully engaged in a world that he courageously recognized as "full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness and oppression."

Motion's difficulties making his case emerge primarily from the fact that he is not a historian—or at least not a sufficient historian to weave a tapestry of the times rather than merely list the historical events that occurred during Keats's life. He has done no original research, and, as he acknowledges, his thoughts "owe a big debt to the three biographies of Keats written in the 1960s." He claims that he has used previous biographies "not so much as things to read and reread but as subjects to interview." Far too often, however, Motion merely paraphrases or does no more than sum up what others have written—particularly Robert Gittings, who retrieved many new or overlooked details of Keats's life (as, for example, that Keats had caught syphilis from the whores in The Borough, which surrounds Guy's Hospital).

Throughout his book, Motion is regrettably dull. About a famous evening in October 1816—when Keats read George Chapman's translation of Homer and wrote his first perfectly finished poem, the sonnet that begins *Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold*—Motion is inadequate and general where Gittings is exciting, moving, and particular. And even about the poetry, Motion seems able to give only flat paraphrases.

Such blandness is surprising, not just because Motion is himself a poet, but because his biography of Larkin was crisply and often tenderly written, with an astute and imaginative understanding of Larkin's poetry. In *Philip Larkin*, he eschewed all the political correctness of the world of contemporary critics (much to Larkin's eternal relief, no doubt). In *Keats*, however, he seems afraid of getting too close to others' words (a fault he does not always avoid) and is much too entranced with his own thesis of Keats as a political poet.

Joseph Severn, Keats-Shelly Memorial House, Rome

Keats on his deathbed

Motion is responding in part to the aggressive hypothesis of recent criticism that all literature is political because "universal truth" is a cultural fiction. Critics now argue for the socio-political grounding of Keats's poetry in contrast to the aesthetic and metaphysical emphases of earlier critics. Keats's literary technique and themes are thus required nowadays to reflect his lower-middle class, his liberal, semi-deist family, his political mentors, and his era's reaction to the failure of the French Revolution. And so the Titans and Olympians in Keats's *Hyperion* are examined for their political relationship, the greed of the brothers in *Isabella* comprises an indictment of capitalism, and the poet's very style is declared to be "radical."

These are not necessarily false insights. The fact that something is fashionable doesn't necessarily mean it has nothing to contribute to our understanding. But Keats hated what he described as "poetry that has a palpable design upon us—and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket." The "transparently political" (that is, rebelliously irregular) style of *Endymion* carped at by critics of Keats's day was by and large that of Leigh Hunt, Keats's friend, political mentor, and editor of the radical *Examiner*—and the man from whom Keats most needed to free himself, not so much because of the weaknesses of Hunt's politics as the weaknesses of Hunt's poetic style.

Other than trendy professors, who would think to read Keats for his politics? We cannot know what he would have written, though it is not impossible that he might in later life have managed excellent poetry with a political charge. But in what we do have from Keats, there are no political poems as good as those of Milton, Marvell, or Dryden. Early in his brief career, he tried, producing in December 1816 the political sonnet *To Kosciusko*, which has the heavily enjambed lines, feminine rhymes, and barely relevant, lush imagery of a poetic style nurtured by Hunt. It begins:

Good Kosciusko, thy great name alone
Is a full harvest whence to reap high feeling;
It comes upon us like the glorious pealing
Of the wide spheres—an everlasting tone.

Contrast such floundering with the compelling way Keats opens *On the Grasshopper and Cricket*, an apolitical sonnet written in the same month, where his sensuous perception of the physical world bursts—

with magnificent monosyllabic force—out of the poetic form:

The poetry of earth is never dead.
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead.

Written in fifteen minutes on a dare, the sonnet already anticipates Keats's last great ode, *To Autumn*, and shows just how unhelpful any purely political reading of the poet must be.

Nonetheless, because there is in the course of Motion's six-hundred pages much plain fact laid out in historical order and copious use of Keats's letters, this new volume will give readers a haunting image of a very physical Keats—living the most imaginative of lives and dying the most miserable of deaths. Keats's early end has always made him a romantic figure, and Motion has at least managed to maintain the romance of the person, if not the poet, who was John Keats. ♦

Timely Religion

For Easter, PBS Presents a Jesus Without Easter

By Robert Louis Wilken

In 1896, Charles Monroe Sheldon published a wildly popular book on Jesus entitled *In His Steps*. In the buoyant optimism of the Gilded Age, Sheldon's Jesus had the look and feel of a confident and aspiring businessman—a man of eminent practicality and common sense, a trustworthy guide to the serious business of making money.

In 1861, during the Civil War, Julia Ward Howe gave us a patriotic and political Jesus in the last verse of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic":

In the beauty of the lilies
Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom
That transfigures you and me.
As he died to make men holy,
Let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

And even earlier, in 1804, Thomas Jefferson offered Jesus the sage, a teacher of moral wisdom. In his *Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth*, Jefferson "abstracted" what was really Jesus' "from the rubbish in which it is buried"—where by rubbish he meant whatever lent support to the idea of Christ's divinity.

There's something that inevitably brings such depictions to mind in *From Jesus to Christ*, the four-hour television series to be aired on the PBS program *Frontline* on Monday, April 6, and Tuesday, April 7, the first days of Holy Week. For what one gets in this series is yet another portrait of Jesus suited to the age in which it is painted. The first clue comes early, when the word "plurality" slips off the tongue of one of the commentators. No matter how deep you dig in the ancient sources, no matter how many layers of interpretation are peeled off, Holland Lee Hendrix, president of Union Theological Seminary in New York, tells us, "what you always find is a plurality of Jesuses."

The Jesus presented in this series is the one fashionable in late-twentieth-century academic culture. All we know, says L. Michael White, director of the religious studies program at the University of Texas, are the different ways Jesus' followers "told the story." The most that can be said of the truth behind those stories is that Jesus was a Jew who lived in Palestine two thousand years ago, that he was baptized by John the Baptist and became an apocalyptic preacher of the coming kingdom of God, and that he was publicly executed under Pontius Pilate.

The result of such a view is that Jesus comes across as a rather conventional figure ("miracle workers are a dime a dozen in the ancient world," says White), but his preaching of the kingdom of God must have sounded vaguely seditious to the Romans, and he had the bad luck to fall into the hands of the Roman governor of Palestine during Passover. To understand the rise of Christianity we must look to St. Paul and the authors of the Gospels—those men, the commentators tell us, who turned Jesus into Christ and created the images and stories we have of him.

There is, however, one story from the gospels conspicuously downplayed in this new *Frontline* presentation, and that is the story of the Resurrection—the story without which the emergence of Christianity is inexplicable. The narrator informs us that "the death and resurrection of Jesus lie at the very heart of Paul's preaching," but the only person to say anything substantive about the Resurrection is a Jewish scholar, Paula Fredriksen of Boston University. Among the many pictures displayed, none is of the tomb of Christ in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the holiest shrine in Christendom. The Jesus whose Resurrection Christians celebrate on Easter stays off screen, with no one ever suggesting that what happened two millennia ago is still a matter of some importance to Christian churches. The one exception is the time chosen to air the show: The producers presumably did not pick Holy Week by accident.

Robert Louis Wilken is the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia. His most recent book is Remembering the Christian Past.

In the first hour we learn that one way of breaking through the veil the early church cast over Jesus is through archaeology. Eric Meyers, professor of religion and archaeology at Duke, introduces us to the spectacular new discoveries at Sepphoris, an ancient city in Israel not too far from Nazareth, where archaeologists have found, for example, the floor of a villa with a mosaic of a beautiful Roman woman. These and other excavations show that Galilee (the scholars pretentiously use the Hebrew idiom and call it "*the* Galilee") was not a cultural backwater, a village society as pictured in the Gospels, but a sophisticated urban environment with social and economic ties to the larger Roman world. The narrator informs us that the discoveries at Sepphoris "challenge the conventional picture of Jesus' life," but we are never told in what way or why it makes a difference for understanding Jesus.

Then we are reminded that Sepphoris was also a thoroughly Jewish city and we are soon in the midst of a discussion of ancient Judaism. Again the theme of pluralism appears, but now it is the Jews who are pluralistic, and talk of different forms of Judaism leads down through the Judean desert to the Essene community at Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. After a few minutes, the narrator recalls that the point of this excursion was to shed light on Jesus's social environment, and returns to Jesus with the puzzling admission: "History offers no evidence that Jesus was influenced by the Essenes." We then turn to John the Baptist, unsure whether Jesus was urban or rural and wondering why we made the trek to Qumran.

But, of course, *From Jesus to Christ* is a television series, not a seminar, designed to entertain as it instructs. The visual and audio impressions sometimes complement one another, and sometimes race off in different directions. First there are the pictorial images: the stark brown cliffs of Masada rising up from the desert on the edge of the Dead Sea, the monumental theater in Ephesus, and ancient manuscripts or mosaics. Then there are the voice-over narrations: one giving chronological and historical information and the other reading passages from the Bible and ancient literature. To these are added the observations of twelve scholars, whose comments are not always related to the narration. And finally there is the music, a beguilingly exotic composition by the English composer Paul Foss adapted for this series.

The pictures are captivating, though they often pass by without comment, and the camera seldom lingers over any one scene. Like the music, they often serve merely to create a mood. There are exceptions—the mosaics at Sepphoris, the outlines of the army camps at Masada—when the commentator actually discusses what is being seen. But more often the camera focuses on a generic scene: an ancient forum or street, or a model of Jerusalem. In this sense the show is surprisingly unhistorical. In

the fourth hour, for example, when the script is telling the story of the martyrdom of Perpetua, the camera scans the ruins of two ancient amphitheaters but never tells us which one, if either, is the place where Perpetua was martyred. Instead of giving us the actual Golgotha where Jesus was crucified (which is inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), we get a picture of a large unidentified rock.

For viewers unfamiliar with the techniques of recent biblical scholarship, the third hour will prove the most perplexing. We are given a minicourse on the chief differences among the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. According to current historical scholarship the gospels were written after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the narrator introduces the segment by explaining how Christians responded to the crisis brought on by the destruction of the city and temple: "The followers of Jesus coped by telling stories about the man they had expected would deliver the new Kingdom on earth."

If there is any doubt about what is meant by "stories," the narrator clears it up for us: "These were not historical accounts but shared memories shaped by a common past." The historical naiveté here is breathtaking. By the time the Gospels were written, Christianity already had its first martyrs. When Christians came together, they were not looking back; their eyes were on the future. They listened to the words and recited the deeds of someone they believed was alive, present, and active in their midst. This was no fearful band huddled

together in dimly lit rooms spinning tales, it was a people on fire, filled with power, bold, even reckless, bursting with energy, its leaders on a mission. Paul died before the fall of Jerusalem, yet he had already founded churches in Asia Minor, Greece, and Macedonia and made his way to Rome. It is tempting to attribute to the producers this silliness about coping by telling stories, but the experts go along with it and use similar language themselves.

The final segment deals with the development of the early church up to the fourth century, when Christianity was recognized as a legal religion within the Roman Empire. As entertainment it is successful: Persecution, martyrs, and the first Christian emperor make for plenty of action. But as history it is painfully one-sided—driven by the mantra of pluralism, now understood not as different "stories" but as diversity and fragmentation. There were only "Christianities," says Hendrix. "We can't really imagine Christianity as a unified coherent religious movement."

The creedal formulas from the second century that are the basis of the Apostles Creed are ignored, more time is given to Gnosticism than to orthodoxy (Ignatius of Antioch, for example, goes unmentioned), and the role of bishops in leading and uniting the church is slighted. If one has eyes only for the periphery and cannot see the center that holds things together, if orthodoxy has nothing to do with the truth but is just another opinion, then everything is finally reduced to power—and it

will never be possible to give a coherent account of the development of Christianity.

Professor Elaine Pagels of Princeton also has difficulty imagining what the early church was like. Power is the only category she knows for speaking about the authority of a bishop, whose job she thinks was to keep folks in line. Irenaeus "didn't want people making choices about what to think," she tells us. "He wanted them thinking what the bishop told them to think." The narrator sets her up with the line, "Irenaeus thundered against those he saw as heretics," but Pagels does not point out that Irenaeus did not "thunder," he argued. His book on the heretics is a carefully reasoned interpretation of disputed passages from the Bible.

How one interprets Jesus and the early church is less a matter of imagination than of will, the will to understand even when one does not agree. The scholars on the program teach in divinity schools or departments of religious studies. Whatever their personal religious convictions, and despite their presumed scholarly detachment, they belong to an intellectual tradition and a professional guild that is keenly aware how its words will be heard in the churches. The implicit message they present on *Frontline* is that somewhere along the way something went wrong, and before the institutions, before the creeds and dogmas, before the fixed canon of books that make up the New Testament, before the bishops and priests, there was a truer, more authentic, more diverse, freer, more tolerant form of Christianity, and it is not to be identified with the historic church. There is great reluctance to acknowledge that institutional and creedal Christianity has proven more enduring and diverse than its heterodoxies—that the Jesus of the church has outlived his rivals.

Hubert or Jan van Eyck, *The Crucifixion; The Last Judgement*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

For all that, the program, even with its mischief, is worth watching. The pictures, the music, even the academic chatter are all artfully presented. As long as one does not expect "the real story of the rise of Christianity" (as the publicity material from *Frontline* puts it), *From Jesus to Christ* is an effortless and entertaining way to pass a pair of evenings. And even if the ideas are trendy, the assembled scholars have interesting and informative things to say.

There are even some poignant and affecting moments. The most moving comes in the story of Perpetua, a young woman, eight-months pregnant, who was executed in Carthage in A.D. 203. Her story is told with grace and simplicity. Her father and the Roman governor plead with her to cooperate, but she says merely, "No, I'm a Christian." The voice-over reads from the ancient account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companion Felicity: "The day of their victory dawned and they marched from the prison to the amphitheater joyfully as if they were going to heaven." As Perpetua is facing down the wild animals, "a young gladiator is sent into the arena to dispatch her," says Fredriksen. "His hand is trembling so much he can't . . . he can't cut her. And she grabs his hand and guides his sword to her own throat." She dies, says White, "with authority and stature and serenity." ♦

President Apologizes to Africans for Sins of the Past

—News item

Parody

COVER STORY

Clinton Apologizes Again

By Susan Page
USA TODAY

NAIROBI — Bill Clinton stunned his African hosts today when he descended from his Range Rover while touring a Kenyan game reserve and apologized to a pride of lions for what he called the anti-lion behavior of previous U.S. presidents, especially Theodore Roosevelt.

The president walked slowly and calmly up to a large male lion and addressed him in a measured voice: "King Mufasa, we Americans have not always respected the circle of life. Caught up in the Cold War between man and beast, we took your ancestors and turned them into throw rugs. I humbly apologize to you on behalf of all the American people."

Mr. Clinton then hugged the lion. It was a long hug. A very long hug. The lion gazed up at him as if to say, "Thank you for the apology, Mr. President. May I now remove my paw from your genitals?"

The drama of the scene left many of Mr. Clinton's admirers swooning. A team of reporters from Time Magazine, who have come to Africa to dig up dirt on Kathleen Willey's prehistoric ancestors, were especially gushing in their admiration. "It was like David in the lion's den," added one veteran network correspondent.

The event easily eclipsed what had been to that point the most exciting event of the day, Mr. Clinton's apology to the skull fragment of an early Homo Habilis for the atrocities that had been committed by gangs of marauding Australopithecines.

"Tragically, many hominids were persecuted simply on the grounds that their brow didn't protrude far enough," the president declared.

"Those of us who are lucky enough to call ourselves Homo-Sapiens-Americans are descended from the Australopithecines, and we have a duty to apologize for their sins, so long as our apology will go over well with the Democratic base. I happen to know of many early humans and hominids who were real lookers and had nothing to be ashamed of in either the big brow or the big hair department. There was that mummy they dug up in the Andes—fantastic-looking woman. And this jaw fragment right here is mighty attractive. . ."

The president was distracted before he could finish his thought. Press spokesman Mike McCurry was on the verge of making a witticism, but White House aides grabbed his mouth and wrestled it to the ground.

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