SPECIAL SUBLIMINAL ISSUE!!!

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# Year of the Democrats?

PLUS—REUEL MARC GERECHT on the Wen Ho Lee case

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the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

# Takes One to Smell One

By now there isn't a political reporter alive who hasn't written a story about the "serious question" whether Bush campaign media consultant Alex Castellanos deliberately inserted the word "rats"—as a subliminal message—into one frame of a television ad criticizing Al Gore's Medicare proposals. Because they are professionals, of course, all these press types have actually seen the ad in question, multiple times. And each has also made independent inquiries about what other, more obvious explanation there might be for the now-famous rodent sighting.

Consequently, every such journalist knows full well, and knew it when he was writing about Rat-gate, that: (1) the word "rats" in Castellanos's ad isn't "subliminal" at all; you can see it quite clearly; (2) "rats" isn't the word Castellanos would have chosen if he *had* intended to insert a subliminal message; (3) subliminal advertising is a folk myth in any case; (4) Castellanos would have to be an imbecile to bother with such a useless trick; (5) Castellanos isn't an imbecile; and (6) what we have here, instead, is an example of a ubiquitous Madison Avenue video technique: a computer-generated optical illusion whereby a few letters from some larger forthcoming caption (in this case "bureaucrats decide") are briefly flashed on screen—so that the full set of words then appears to fly onto the viewer's field of vision from behind his head.

In other words, not a single knowledgeable reporter in America actually believes it's possible that the Bush campaign and Alex Castellanos intended to do anything underhanded with this ad. Guaranteed.

But the newsies are nevertheless reporting the "controversial ad" as if it might be a genuine, deliberate dirty trick. And they are reporting the "appalled" reactions of know-nothing academic "media experts" and other Democrats as if those complaints might be sincere.

Why is that? ♦

## Joe Lieberman Borks Himself

In January 1989, at a meeting arranged by Connecticut state senator Regina Smith, Joseph Lieberman and several members of his staff had a private conversation with officials of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC). A few months before, during the closing weeks of his successful campaign against incumbent Lowell Weicker, Lieberman had appealed for support to the Catholic archbishop of Hartford, the late John Whealon. And word had since reached Washington about Lieberman's assurances to Whealon: If he were elected to replace Weicker, he would prove himself reasonably pro-life. So the NRLC had reason to be hopeful about the new man from Connecticut. And he did not disappoint.

According to a contemporaneous typewritten account of his get-together with the pro-life lobby, Lieberman said he would have voted to confirm Robert Bork to the Supreme Court had he been in the Senate at the time. And future such nominees? "I'm not going to vote against a judicial nominee just because he's pro-life," Lieberman promised. "I'm not going to apply a litmus test."

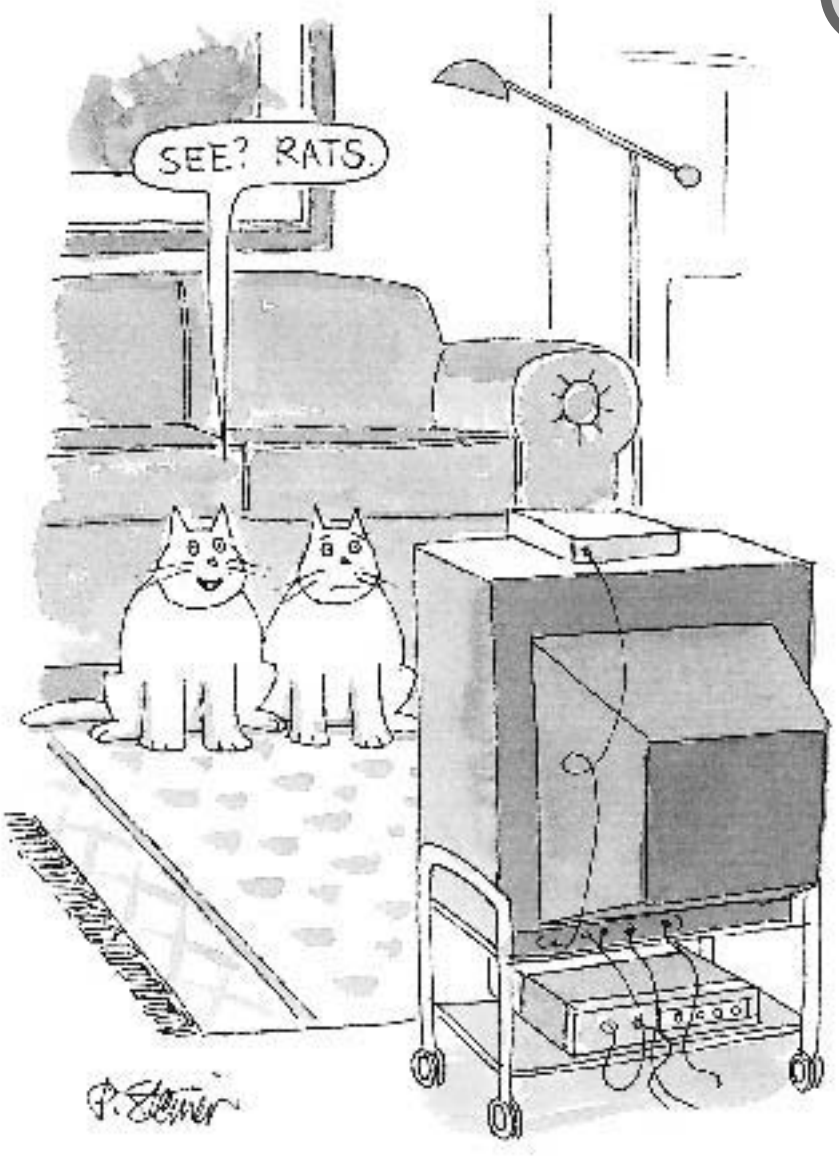
Nowadays, of course, Lieberman's running mate, Al Gore, insists that "a Supreme Court majority appointed in a Gore administration would support a woman's right to choose." Period. So how will the senator handle his apparent disagreement with Gore over the acceptability of judges opposed to *Roe* v. *Wade*? By denying the disagreement, naturally. Lieberman staffers have disputed the reports of two eyewitnesses to the Whealon meeting. No word yet about Lieberman's version of the NRLC meeting. ♦

## Bill and Susan's Little Heart to Heart

Turns out Susan Estrich, who describes herself as a good friend of Bill Clinton, was a guest at one of those White House sleepovers last year. And she didn't even have to pay for it. In fact, the president paid her—in the form of what would seem unusually sensitive confidences about his marriage. Which confidences Estrich has now disclosed, willy nilly, in the pages of *George* magazine.

Estrich told Clinton why she was soon to divorce her husband. And Clinton, she writes, told her precisely why he had avoided such a result. As Ms. Estrich quotes the president: "If Hillary had walked out, it would have made Monica an impeachable offense. . . . They think I got away with it. They have no idea what we went through to save this marriage, how hard we've worked to save it. Or perhaps how important it was that we did . . . not just for the country, but for the two of us."

THE SCRAPBOOK is flabbergasted by Clinton's blunt acknowledgment that his presidency was rescued not by the Constitution, but by his wife; had he lost Hillary, he'd have lost his job. THE SCRAPBOOK is not at all surprised, however, by Clinton's latest exposition of the cosmology of narcissism. "How important" it was "for the country" that he and his wife stay married! And "not just for the country"—a relatively small




thing, that, after all—"but for the two of us."

Make that the *three* of us—or really all of us. For how important it was, too, that the president shared these private thoughts with Susan Estrich—so that we might read about them in *George*. ♦

## Soon to be a Lippo Group Consultant

"We want to introduce you to the folks who are the heart and soul of American politics," CNN's Jeff Greenfield told his audience on the first night of last month's Democratic convention. So he introduced them to one Paul Adler, chairman of New York State's Rockland County Democratic party—a man, Greenfield explained, with a "passion" for public service.

Judging from the ensuing videotape, however, it appeared Adler's principal passion was for his cronies. Right there on national TV, Adler bragged about his Rolodex, pawing through it and narrating its trophies: "White House, Senate, congressional, statehouse, town hall numbers, private lines." Also: the phone number of a carpenter doing work on Hillary Clinton's Westchester County home.

Adler is a big chum of the first lady. He was early to tout her possible New York Senate race. Before she took up residence in Westchester, she frequently stayed overnight at Adler's place and looked to him for advice and crucial introductions. In short, Adler was a player—said to be next in line as New York state Democratic chairman.

Except that Monday of last week Adler was charged with eight federal counts of conspiracy, mail fraud, bribery, and extortion. It seems the "heart and soul of American politics" had pocketed hundreds of thousands of dollars to grease local real estate transactions in which he had a financial interest. He faces up to 60 years in prison and a $2 million fine. Given this development, what is Paul Adler's current relationship to the Clinton Senate campaign? A Clinton spokeswoman tells reporters: "Hillary knows that this is a difficult time for Paul and his family and she wishes him well." ♦

## Buy This Book

Admirers of legendary Harvard government professor Harvey Mansfield—which should include every reader of THE SCRAPBOOK—will be delighted by a new book of essays in his honor. *Educating the Prince*, edited by Mark Blitz and THE WEEKLY STANDARD's own William Kristol, is just out from the publishing house of Rowman & Littlefield. The volume contains an introduction by Kristol and 21 impressive and provocative essays, many by such STANDARD contributors as Paul Cantor, Kenneth Weinstein, Clifford Orwin, Jeremy Rabkin, and Charles Kesler. The book also contains a bibliography of Mansfield's writings, which alone should make it worth the price. *Educating the Prince* is available at your local bookstore—or direct from the publisher. Any SCRAPBOOK student who fails to grab a copy gets an automatic C-minus grade. ♦

# Casual

## Groupie Think

For all the luxuries journalists enjoy—the generous medical and dental, the regular bathroom breaks, the gratis ice water—there is one perk that's noticeably absent: groupies. Sure, you'll see the occasional fan slip by this magazine's lax security, donning his best starched Dockers, staring his Mark David Chapman stare, sweating through problem skin as he prays that Fred Barnes can break from newsgathering to sign his laminated CPAC program.

But there aren't nearly as many crush-nursing female fans stalking the lobby as one might expect at a premier journal of conservative political thought. Mostly, admirers lavish their attentions upon us writers through "nut mail." This is ungenerously defined as a communication from anyone who (a) disagrees with your stories, (b) in any way disparages your stories, or (c) praises your stories but does so in such bizarre fashion that you really wish he hadn't.

Take my colleague, for instance. Whenever he makes a particularly rousing C-SPAN appearance, he is courted by an ardent fan who showers him with poster tubes containing the Declaration of Independence, along with the fan's equally important personal pronouncements, all laid out on parchment in painstaking calligraphy.

Then there's my own best gal, Joan. Joan has a lot to say, but seems to have trouble saying it within the confines of letter-size stationery. Perhaps that's why she writes in the margins, on the backside, even on the envelope—in multi-colored magic marker. Though Joan seems kindly disposed toward my pieces on the rare occasions she alludes to something I've actually written, she is not shy about leveling stern admonitions such as "Watch Out! . . . Power Seekers" and "Satan Begone!" whenever the spirit moves. While it's an honor to serve as Joan's sounding board on the Apocalypse and the New Jerusalem, I sometimes wonder what it would be like to have more conventional groupies: the kind who squeal and ululate, who cause marital discord, the wanton strumpets who insist on rending your garments after you've executed a well-turned phrase or constructed a tightly reasoned argument.

Now, I can wonder a little less—thanks to *GroupieCentral.com*, billed as


"the first website dedicated to groupies." While I generally hold that the Internet is good for little besides helping eccentrics find each other so they can celebrate their irregularities, *GroupieCentral.com* is an important cultural artifact for anyone who has ever wondered what it would be like to import rock-star spoils into one's own dreary corner of the world.

The site contains encyclopedic supergroupie bios on everyone from Cynthia "Plaster Caster" Albritton to Sweet Connie Hamzy, who has bedded rock gods from Jimmy Page to Richard "Close to You" Carpenter, but who claims her most celebrated quarry was Bill Clinton, the one who got away (not because of his well-known aversion to slutty overtures, but because the two couldn't find a room to consummate their attraction after frisking each other by a Little Rock hotel pool).

The site not only dispenses invaluable news tidbits with teasers like "More of Madonna's sex secrets revealed" (who knew she still had any?), but also gives aspiring groupies a pragmatic idea of what it's like to hit the road in the service of their country, or at least their country's rock stars. For instance, if a fan finds herself coupled with Marilyn Manson, she might want to don protective eyewear, as he is allegedly fond of slapping groupies with raw meat. Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor has "mommy issues," while WASP frontman Blackie Lawless is allegedly a "psycho" with a "greasy, nasty hair weave." The lead singer for Type O Negative is said to suffer from a pyromania fetish, which has him burning underwear and small animals, lending dangerous new dimensions to the term "hot-sheets motel."

But besides all the message boards, the groupie classifieds (a band named "The Cake Shop That Sold Shoes" is asking ladies to ready their résumés), and the advice column stewed in existential angst ("Is This Boy Band Member Interested In Me?"), the website makes clear that the life of a rock star isn't all underwear barbecues and cold-cut smackdowns.

The site's news section tells the harrowing tale of Agnetha Faltskog, of Swedish supergroup Abba. She is being stalked by a 300-lb forklift operator named Gert van der Graf. As a child, he fell in love with her when she sang "Waterloo," wallpapered his home with pictures of her, sent her menacing letters, and even moved into a cabin a short jaunt from her home. Now she is afraid for her life and can't sleep without medication.

On second thought, who needs corporeal groupies? Agnetha can have her Gert. I'm sticking with Joan. Not only does she keep her distance, but she has excellent penmanship. Besides, when the Apocalypse is imminent, I'll be the first to know.

**Matt Labash**

## The Adoption Dilemma

I want to share with you my most sincere gratitude for Ira Carnahan's article exposing the true colors of Bastard Nation ("The Rise of 'Bastard Nation,'" Sept. 11). As an Oregon birth mother and adamant opponent of Measure 58 [Oregon's "open records" initiative], I can say it's about time someone started to look at this issue from a clearer point of view and see the harm being done by groups such as Bastard Nation with their "win at any cost" tactics.

The ability of Measure 58 proponents to produce and respond to articles and stories on their own behalf is overwhelming to those of us who find it virtually impossible to gain a fraction of their cohesion on behalf of our side of this issue. This fact alone is something the public does not understand and leaves many of us utterly powerless in our desire to have the value of our truth recognized. If the vote were put to Oregonians today, I would nearly bet my life that well under 57 percent would vote for it. The proponents were impressively deceptive in their simplification of the measure, and it worked—right up to the Supreme Court of Oregon and beyond.

The person whom I placed for adoption over 15 years ago cannot access my identity yet. But already the depth of betrayal I feel as perpetrated on me by the state of Oregon has taken its toll in my life. Not until Measure 58 was my unplanned pregnancy and subsequent adoption "secret"; it was private. Now, however, it *is* secret, as the nature of this issue in this state has polarized people in a way that makes it unsafe for me to share that part of my life with anyone who is not already aware of it.

I have always hoped I would be in a place where a mutual consent reunion might work for my birth child and me. Now I can only hope the person to whom I gave the life she deserved has learned dignity and respect and will go through mutual consent registries to contact me.

Name Withheld by Request
*Portland, OR*

I am a birth mother who was never promised and never requested any form of privacy, anonymity, or confidentiality, especially from my own flesh and blood. I was told that, because I was young and unmarried, I was "unfit" to raise my child, though I dearly wanted to. I was also told that I would "forget" (I didn't) and that having other children would "heal" me (it didn't). I was told it would be wrong of me to intrude on my own child's life. I was told to lie about the fact that I was a mother and to deny it to myself (it didn't work).

My daughter searched for me from the time she was 18 until she found me when she had just turned 33. I was ecstatic then, in 1993, and still am grateful to her for the search today.

Isn't it about time the media, as well as people like the very vocal Bill Pierce,


stepped out of the myth and fairy tales of our past and faced the real and present truth? Adoptees and birth parents are not going to stop searching for each other. Why continue to deny to a group of adults the same right all the rest of us enjoy as a matter of course, that right being the knowledge of our origins? Who is really being protected here?

I belong to a large group of birth mothers, over 400 strong and growing. We are coming out of the darkness of the shame in which we were hidden so many years ago. We are vocal, strong, empowered, and we won't go away. We ask—no, demand—that our children be given the gift that only we can give them. Their heritage is important. Their medical history is important. The knowledge of the circumstances of their birth and surrender is important. They deserve to know.

Robin K. Westbrook
*Sanford, FL*

As one of the founders of Bastard Nation, an adoptee, and a birth mother, I'm troubled to see The Weekly Standard champion two decidedly anti-conservative ideas: that the government ought to be able to conceal normally public and/or accessible records from its own citizens; and that certain people (birth parents) have the right to demand government assistance in covering up their pasts while the records of other citizens are concealed.

Instead of advocating personal responsibility and liberty, Carnahan has taken the side of government intervention. Those who bear unwanted children and relinquish them to adoption are to be given a level of "privacy" only surpassed by participants in witness protection programs. Worse, he advocates that adopted persons be denied the same rights that other non-adopted persons have: the right to access their own birth certificates.

We should not support laws that exist to soothe the feelings of certain individuals, and we certainly should not support these laws when they infringe on the rights of other citizens. I have sympathy for those women who made a bad decision regarding the concealment of their pasts. But the relinquished progeny of these women bear no responsibility for the bad decisions of their birth mothers. They should not be punished by having their birth certificates withheld from them.

Rev. Elaine M. Petersen
*Chicago, IL*

I take issue with Ira Carnahan's "The Rise of 'Bastard Nation.'" I am a lifelong conservative and an ordained Southern Baptist minister. I am a member of various pro-life groups and work diligently with my state's organizations for pro-life causes. I am also married to an adoptee. I am the person who searched for, and found, my wife's birth mother and birth father. I also sit on the leadership team of AWARE, Alabamians

Working for Adoption Reform and Education.

I searched for my wife's parents in a closed-records system. It took me three years of diligent work, but I found them. I started the search because I wanted to know where this person I love so much came from. Carnahan speaks of an adoptee's "desire" to know genes and blood as being a leaning to the left. Is it too hard to understand the fact that, though my in-laws were and are wonderful parents, my wife is nothing at all like them?

While the desire to know may not be a fundamental right, it should certainly be understood. I know my family. I love my family. I know that the older I get, the more I act like my father. Yet, my children and my wife are a mystery to me.

When our two children were born, my wife began to develop some medical problems. If she had known there was a history of such problems, she could have been checked years ago. All her life, she's had to fill out her medical forms with a simple phrase: "I'm adopted. I have no medical history." Carnahan says that medical records are available in most states, but that isn't the case. My wife was born in 1968. The only family medical history she had was prior to that year. A lot happens in over 30 years of medical developments, but after the adoption records were filed, no one called and updated the agency about the birth mother's family medical records. For that matter, no one called the birth mother to inform her that the records had been retroactively sealed in 1982. A brief medical history which is filled out by the birth mother when she signs the adoption papers is the extent of medical history offered by the states Carnahan mentions, and that is not enough.

Carnahan says that up to one-third of birth mothers do not wish contact. That math still indicates that the majority of birth mothers would like to know at least if their child is all right. He says that abortion rates are expected to increase in the states with open records because birth mothers will decide in favor of abortion rather than giving their child up in an open-records state. I can tell you that I've counseled young women who know it is best to give their children a chance at a better life through adoption. I can tell you that at least three of those young women have said to me that they will not consider adoption if they have no hope of ever hearing from that child again. They would rather keep the baby than give the child up in a closed-records system. You see adoption rates falling? Look at the statistics of young single mothers who decide to keep their children. The social stigma of an unwed mother is falling by the wayside and these girls are keeping their children.

Adoption reunions happen every day, even in closed-records systems. Birth mothers are not put into the witness protection program. They go out and live their lives the best they can. Most of them are honest with their families about the past. They know that in order to deal with it, they need to be up front about it. They also leave behind a paper trail that is easily traced once found.

We handled our search with respect and with great care not to interrupt the birth parents' lives. In return, we now know my wife's medical history. We now know why she acts the way she does and who our children look like. These gifts are taken for granted by people who are not adopted. It is impossible for anyone who has not been touched by adoption to know what it's like to be left in the dark.

I have to agree with Carnahan about Bastard Nation and their tactics. While I think they have presented humor to the sometimes harsh and cruel world that many adoptees face, I do not like the tactics they use. I have been openly against many of their strong-arm tactics in our AWARE forum. I certainly do not think the efforts of groups such as AWARE are going to harm adoption. I believe Bill Pierce has done some wonderful things in the world of adoption, but I also believe he is spreading misinformation and lies about adoptees he seems to consider ungrateful, spoiled children. They are not. They are adults looking for answers. I believe they have every right to find them.

Jeff Gilbreath
*Opelika, AL*

Bravo to Ira Carnahan for "The Rise of 'Bastard Nation.'" Being a birth mother, I can't tell you how disheartening it is to hear that a very personal and responsible decision I made many years ago is now regarded as complete irresponsibility, and that I should be "exposed" for the crime. It is a warped and weird society we live in, as more and more people demand that their needs be met by others instead of treating individuals with the respect and dignity that mutual consent would afford in adoption situations.

This claim of equal rights is nothing more than a sham, as illustrated by the continuous stories of reunions in the *Oregonian*. Let's hope that some people involved in adoption still recognize that birth mothers are not things to be used as means to a storybook reunion but are actually persons in and of themselves who deserve the respect and dignity that they so lovingly gave to the children they gave birth to.

Name Withheld by Request
*Boston, MA*

I am an adult, now 64, who found out a dozen years ago that I was adopted, then searched for and began a relationship with my real mother and birth family. As the parent then of three teens and one younger child, I felt that it was unconscionable that they had only 50 percent of their medical and genealogical history, that of their father. I am not some rabble-rousing, sign-carrying person. I have never been in a protest—yet.

Closed records affect more than just a birth mother's privacy. Each of us has children who will create another generation, and as a parent I can equip my daughters and son for life if I give them as much information as I can. Locating my mother also gave her a chance to heal the issues surrounding my relinquishment.

Shame on Carnahan for his casual remarks about there being no stigma now to adoption. Polite adults do not use the word bastard, but the secrecy of sealed records perpetuates the stigma of illegitimacy. As I grew up a "normie," only slightly hampered by secrecy and lies, I did not hesitate to claim what is mine, my name and heritage. It is ridiculous to tell any adult citizen that they have no right to know "who they are."

Judy Norris
*Moraga, CA*

the weekly Standard

# The High Road to High Office

There are now about two weeks until the first presidential debate. This means that the Bush campaign has just a short time to redefine the nature of the race. For if George W. Bush enters the debates and final frenzied month with the campaign still being fought on Democratic turf, it will be very difficult to regain the advantage.

Since the Democratic convention, the election campaign has sunk into a bidding war more worthy of a campaign for city council. Gore promises to give us all prescription drug benefits; Bush promises to give us better ones faster. Gore promises a middle-class tax cut; Bush promises an across-the-board tax cut. Gore promises to spend on the environment; so does Bush. But as the budget fights of the last few years amply demonstrate, Republicans are always on the defensive when the debate is about which set of politicians can deliver the most goodies to voters. They end up advocating half-baked programs they only half believe in—and still getting trumped by the Democrats.

Republican campaigns do better when they elevate the terms of debate to higher ground. They win when they can convince voters that a presidential campaign isn't about who can deliver the most chum; it's about America's purpose and greatness. It is, after all, a contest for the most powerful office on earth, not for some mayoral slot. In a broad and serious way, the Bush campaign is going to have to remind voters what George W. Bush's America would look like, and why it would be a finer country to pass down to our children than Al Gore's America.

There are many ways to elevate the race, but three obvious themes suggest themselves: the rule of law, America's mission in the world, and the renewal of American citizenship.

Begin with the rule of law. The Bush campaign hasn't been sure how or whether to raise the issue of the Clinton-Gore scandals. The low point so far was the sarcastic Bush commercial about whether Al Gore had invented the Internet. The campaign squabbled about whether to air the commercial, did so and reaped a week of bad publicity, then practically apologized for the ad, calling it a lighthearted jibe.

But the issue isn't whether Al Gore exaggerates. It's whether the executive branch is going to uphold the law or subvert it. It is an eight-year pattern of abuse of power—starting with the prosecution of the head of the White House travel office (acquitted by a jury in less than two hours), through the coverup and subversion of the Whitewater investigation, the serial bungling of Janet Reno's Justice Department, the 1996 fund-raising scandals, and Bill Clinton's perjury in the Lewinsky matter. This is an administration that has corroded the legal framework of American society and corrupted the legal process for its own petty and political advantage.

Instead of dancing around this topic with generalized comments about restoring integrity to the White House, instead of making a few pointed remarks to a gaggle of reporters on the tarmac, Bush could deliver a serious speech explaining how the Clinton-Gore administration has undermined the rule of law. He could remind voters why the rule of law is sacred; he could argue that to elect Gore is to turn a blind eye to the depredations of the administration in which the vice president has played so prominent a part; and he could point out that, under a Gore administration, there is every reason to believe the pattern of the past eight years would continue.

The second great issue available to Bush is America's role in the world. The Clinton-Gore types have allowed their ruthless political style to infect the conduct of foreign policy to an unprecedented extent. Over the past eight years, America has run a venal foreign policy, inordinately influenced by profits and polls. With its Commerce Department junkets for favorite donors, its pinprick sea-based missile attacks on foreign tyrants, and its politically convenient high-elevation bombing missions over troubled hotspots, this administration has always taken the easy way out.

The Bush campaign has thus far bungled the foreign policy issue by displaying the sort of ambivalence about American power that used to mark Democratic campaigns. Bush has called for greater military spending, but he has also been quick to complain that American troops are overdeployed. He says his administration will review

American commitments abroad, and that we are overextended—thereby suggesting a foreign policy of retrenchment rather than one that uses American power to ensure stability and advance the cause of liberty around the world.

Yet Governor Bush still has time to use foreign policy to illustrate America's highest ideals. Last spring, he proposed a bold missile defense plan, attached to a new post-MAD military doctrine. The America he described then was a country capable of undertaking ambitious technical challenges, and bold enough to reshape the world order on its own terms. There was a hint in that speech of the sort of assertive foreign policy that has always marked Republican presidential candidates successful at the polls, from Eisenhower to Nixon to Reagan to Bush. In their day, voters may have supported Democrats for alderman, but they preferred Republicans as commander in chief.

A third way to elevate the campaign is to talk about citizenship. Bush has built his candidacy on the idea that he is a compassionate conservative. At its worst, the message is merely that Bush is a nice person, unlike some of those other Republicans. On another level, it's just an updated form of noblesse oblige: Rich people should give a little more to poorer people.

But more profoundly, compassionate conservatism could be a call to renew American citizenship. It could be an argument that Democratic big government has not just been wasteful and ineffectual; it has suffocated citizenship. Professional bureaucrats have taken over roles that are best performed by active citizens. School choice, for instance, is good policy not only because competition leads to better schools, but also because it gets parents involved, rather than surrendering education to the professionals.

An appeal to citizenship is an antidote to the great anxiety plaguing America, that despite all our wealth, our common culture is deteriorating, with selfishness and indulgence replacing duty and virtue.

Citizenship can also be an antidote to the balkanization of America into mutually mistrustful ethnic and religious subcultures. Al Gore claims to be a fighter; he used that word 20 times in his convention speech. But Bush, on his best days, has used his compassionate conservatism to remind Americans of our common bonds. "These are not strangers," he has said of the poor, "they are citizens, Americans." By appealing to our dignity as a free and self-governing people, Bush is capturing a basic American ideal, and his united America is more attractive than the nation Al Gore describes, full of resentful squabblers.

The remaining weeks of this campaign need not be a mere continuation of the tit-for-tat games of gotcha that have marked the recent ones. The tactical pressure to punch and counterpunch will always be tremendous. But amidst the day to day jabbing, the press and the public would surely welcome a few aggressive but thoughtful addresses that elevate and redefine the campaign. It would, after all, be good to have a debate commensurate with the importance of the office. And incidentally, it's hard to see how George W. Bush wins without forcing such a debate.

*—David Brooks and William Kristol*

# Prescription for a Comeback

## Can Bush use political jujitsu on Gore's favorite issue? BY FRED BARNES

*Austin*

HERE ARE TWO obvious issues that have worked famously in past Republican campaigns: gays in the military and "big spending liberal." These issues have one thing in common: George W. Bush does not intend to use either one to undermine Al Gore and go on offense. The Supreme Court ruling on the Boy Scouts makes the gay issue exploitable again. But Bush "just won't do it," says an aide. And emphasizing the word "liberal," another Bush adviser explains, spotlights "an ideological fissure that the American public isn't interested in." So Bush is taking a counterintuitive approach. His main target now is Gore's prescription drug plan for Medicare patients. Gore believes this is his most popular proposal, and polls back him up. So what's Bush up to?

An unanticipated but clever departure in the Bush campaign, that's what. If all had gone well and Bush had found himself leading Gore on Labor Day, he surely would have stuck with the five positive issues he's been touting all year. You know: education, Social Security, defense, taxes, and the next step in welfare reform. Gore's late summer surge made that strategy untenable. So, Bush needed a hot issue. While formulating his own, less sweeping prescription drug plan in August, he found one. Now, two TV ads aired in 17 key states, one from the Bush campaign, one from the Republican National Committee, zing Gore's proposal and extol Bush's.

*Fred Barnes is executive editor of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

This defies both conventional political wisdom and the thinking of congressional Republicans. The normal view is that health care in any form is a Democratic issue that Republicans should stay away from. This simple calculation says: If it's on the table, GOP candidates lose. Believing this, Republicans on Capitol Hill have been terrified by the prescription drug issue for several years. Its popularity has spooked them, its ability to cause Republican defections has weakened them. They've tried to steer clear of it, even as Democrats and President Clinton pound them on the issue. One of their current fears is Clinton will demand they enact a Medicare drug benefit as the price of averting a budget impasse and government shutdown.

In the past few weeks, Bush strategists have gradually, and with some trepidation, come to see the issue far differently. They regard it as the converse of the issue Gore has targeted as most important, Bush's record as Texas governor. "If they can undermine Bush on the Texas record," says a Bush strategist, "they can undermine [our entire campaign]. And if we can undermine Gore on the prescription drug benefit—since he supposedly owns the issue—then he's got a problem, a real problem." A humongous problem, actually. The Bush camp believes Gore can't win if the Medicare issue is turned against him, and they might be right.

The historical precedent for all this is the Clinton health care plan that collapsed in 1994 without a vote in the House or Senate. The Clinton presidency fell apart and Republicans won a massive victory in the off-year elections. ClintonCare, the product of a task force headed by Hillary Rodham Clinton, was extraordinarily popular at first, and Republicans feared the public would demand some version of it. Then, over the winter of 1993-94, the measure was scrutinized by health care specialists and political experts. It turned out the devil really *was* in the details. GOP senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania produced a chart that showed ClintonCare as a Rube Goldberg scheme, vast and unworkable.

This August, the Bush campaign's policy staffers began developing a plan to modernize Medicare, including the addition of a prescription drug benefit. They hoped, at best, to neutralize the health issue. For weeks, Gore had been taunting Bush to produce the specifics of his drug benefit. The day after Labor Day, Bush announced his program in a speech in Allentown, Penn. Much of what he said wasn't new. He has long favored allowing Medicare recipients to get out of the government-run program and receive their benefits through private insurance firms. The fresh part of the speech was his attack on the Gore drug benefit. He noted seven specific "practical problems."

Many of these had been brought to the campaign's attention by a young Bush policy staffer named Sally Canfield. As she worked on the ingredients for Bush's plan, she examined Gore's scheme, which is the same as Clinton's. "When we looked at it closely, we said, 'This thing stinks,'" Canfield says. In effect, the Gore plan would put seniors in a government-run HMO. They'd have to pay $600 annually for the plan in 2008. They'd only have one chance to join up at 64 and one-half years old. And more broadly, Gore is not offering catastrophic health care insurance, covering all medical expenses in excess of $6,000, as Bush is. Canfield also came up with a flow chart like Specter's that shows the crazy complexity of government controls in the Clinton-Gore plan.

Bush's political advisers weren't instantly persuaded the drug benefit

could be used against Gore. Canfield and the campaign policy chief, Josh Bolten, had numerous talks with Karl Rove, the chief Bush strategist, and others. The Bush team watched a television ad by Republican senator Spence Abraham of Michigan, lambasting the $600 fee—an ad that has catapulted Abraham to a 12-point lead in his reelection bid.

Mark McKinnon, who produces Bush's TV ads, worried that Bush would be attacking a Democratic "hill" in vain. But he came around. Stuart Stevens, also a Bush media consultant, concluded that Bush couldn't defeat Gore if an issue as big as health care was stacked 80-20 against him. Which meant Bush had to fight back.

The more he heard about the Gore plan, Rove says, "the more it had the odor of HillaryCare, a sweet smell at the beginning but it very quickly turns bad." He says the issue, if handled deftly by the Bush campaign, could be devastating for Gore. "If you destroy his strong point, then you undermine the rationale of his candidacy."

It wasn't until after Bush's speech, outlining his own prescription drug benefit, that his campaign decided to step up the attacks on Gore's version. What persuaded them was the reaction of focus groups to a Bush ad that contrasts—favorably, of course—his position with Gore's on Medicare drug plans, taxes, and education. It cites the HMO argument. To the surprise of Bush advisers, the focus groupies (mostly soft Gore supporters) thought it was a positive ad, not an attack ad. (The separate RNC ad is devoted solely to the drug benefit.) "I thought the federal HMO thing would sell like hotcakes," one adviser says, and it did. "When people hear the details of the plan, they start to leave [Gore] very quickly."

The test now is whether Bush will bet the ranch on this issue, as Republicans did in 1994 in defeating ClintonCare. Only then might millions of swing voters react as they did against Clinton. It's risky, but sometimes history really does repeat itself. ♦

# The Red and the Black and the Veep

## Why is Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* Al Gore's favorite novel?

**BY DAVID FRUM**

IN HIS PURSUIT of the presidency, Al Gore has acquired something more than a new wardrobe—he's acquired a new reading list.

In a softball interview broadcast on September 11, Gore told Oprah Winfrey that his favorite novel was *The Red and the Black*, by the French writer Henri Beyle, better known as Stendhal. Last November, Gore told Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* the same thing. But Gore's literary tastes have not always been so exalted. Back in March 1988, during his first presidential run, he told the *Chicago Tribune* that his favorite novelist was James Michener.

Well, tastes change. People grow. But as always with Gore, there's something odd about this latest growth spurt.

Most of Gore's tastes are solidly mass-market. He told Oprah that his favorite musical group was the Beatles and that his favorite quotation was a line from a Bob Dylan song. In 1988, he told the *Chicago Tribune* that his favorite album was Bruce Springsteen's *Born In The U.S.A.* and that his favorite films were *E.T.*, the sentimental 1960s antiwar movie *King of Hearts*, and *Local Hero*. (Only *Local Hero* got his nod on Oprah's show.) While these tastes would fit nicely alongside a partiality for James Michener, they don't square well with an enthusiasm for early 19th-century French literature. (For what it's worth, Amazon reports that the books most often bought by Springsteen enthusiasts include a mystery novel, Eric Alterman's fervent biography of The Boss, and the heartwarming true story of Lance Armstrong. The musical tastes of purchasers of *The Red and the Black*, on the other hand, run to Antonio Vivaldi and John Coltrane.)

In fact, the mismatch between Gore's new literary taste and his taste in movies and music is so glaring as to raise the question whether he might not be polishing up his résumé a little. For by amazing coincidence, Gore is not the first politician to cite *The Red and the Black* among his favorite novels. Forty years ago, John F. Kennedy gave Hugh Sidey a list of his favorite books. It featured two works of fiction: *From Russia with Love* and *The Red and the Black*.

So maybe Gore was striking a Kennedyesque pose. But it's at least equally possible that he read the book and genuinely identified with it. And why shouldn't he? Its hero, after all, is a man very like himself.

The first time we meet Julien Sorel, he is being abused by his overbearing brute of a father. To escape him, Julien agrees to enter a vocation chosen by the old man that he himself despises: the priesthood. What Julien really wants is to be a soldier, like his hero Napoleon, but he first grudgingly and then enthusiastically follows his father's orders.

To adapt to his distasteful career, young Julien consciously makes hypocrisy the foundation of his character. He vows "never to say anything unless it seemed false to himself." And so he falls in with the conventional opinions of the powerful men around him, worthless as they are. Indeed, as the narrator of the book observes—and as Julien would agree—"public opinion . . . is as stupid in

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AP/Wide World Photos

the small towns of France as it is in the United States of America."

Julien is not exactly a villain. He's not cold-blooded enough and, truth be told, not competent enough either. "Though he thought himself very cautious, all our hero's first steps . . . were blunders." At one point, he even seriously considers a good friend's advice to give up on his dreams of glory and earn an honest living for himself: "Just remember that, even financially speaking, it is better to earn a hundred louis in a sound timber business, where you are your own boss, than to get four thousand francs from any government, be it King Solomon's."

From time to time, he feels pangs of very genuine regret for his cynical way of life. At a party in Paris, he meets Count Altamira, a grandee exiled from the Kingdom of Naples for leading exactly the kind of liberal revolution for which Julien secretly longs. In the end, however, Julien realizes that so bold a course is not for him. He "simply lacked the audacity to be sincere." Instead, he climbs through society by playing on the credulity of the women around him, seducing the wife of his first employer and the daughter of his second. When the first mistress interferes with his projected marriage to the second, he shoots her. She survives, but he is sentenced to death. At his trial, he denounces the injustice of the society that condemns him.

*You can see why this book would appeal to John F. Kennedy, not one overmuch impressed by middle-class morality.*

You can see why this book would appeal to John F. Kennedy, not one overmuch impressed by middle-class morality. But what does it mean that it speaks to Al Gore? Can it be that this conscientious man—a veteran, a devoted husband, a good father—really sees himself as a Romantic antihero, forced to seduce, manipulate, dissemble, and lie, contemptuous of the blockheadedness of the people he deceives? ("The great misfortune of small towns in France," the narrator notes, "and of governments by election, like that of New York, is that you are never allowed to forget that fellows like M. de Renal"—Julien's first employer—"exist in the world. In the midst of a city of twenty thousand inhabitants such individuals mold public opinion, and public opinion is a terrible thing in a country that has a constitution.") And if Gore does harbor such secret thoughts, can it be that he was using Dowd and Oprah to give us all some kind of fair warning that he is inwardly even weirder than outwardly he seems? ♦

# A Compassionate Foreign Policy?

## Bush's principle works surprisingly well abroad.

**BY PETER D. FEAVER & EDMUND MALESKY**

THE BUSH TEAM is advancing two distinctive visions for how to govern: compassionate conservatism at home and realpolitik abroad. Some critics see an inconsistency here—but whatever inconsistency there is could be easily removed by adding a compassionate conservative plank to the foreign policy part of his platform. This would make strategic sense and might be a political asset.

A compassionate conservative foreign policy would be realpolitik plus: power politics on the major issues, plus a sensible, measured commitment to the rest of the business of foreign policy. It would be judiciously realistic about the principal foreign challenges facing the United States, but it would also acknowledge that a superpower is necessarily involved (although not always militarily) in issues that are less vital to the national interest.

Bush's vision of a "distinctly American internationalism" is a reasonable framework for making sense of the most important foreign policy issues: relations among the great powers, the balance between our foreign security commitments and our military posture, the threat from weapons of mass destruction, and the like. But in such areas as foreign aid, human rights, and economic development, compassionate conservatism provides an even better framework. While these issues are rightly considered secondary, they are important and worth addressing well—certainly better than they have been addressed in recent years.

What would a compassionate conservative foreign policy look like? It would begin with the best of the realpolitik approach. It would not apologize for grounding U.S. foreign policy in our national interest. It would not embrace every notion, every institution, or every treaty that appeals to the first five international lawyers in a reporter's Rolodex; it would first see whether any given proposal made sense for the United States. It would get relations right with the great powers—friends, partners, competitors, and foes—but would do so through responsible pursuit of American interests, not through blanket appeasement or whimsical bluffing.

To this familiar stance, a compassionate conservative foreign policy would add three key principles: commitment, capacity building, and collaboration.

First, a nation as wealthy as ours should make a commitment to address a number of problems that do not directly threaten our life and liberty. A failure to do so at home builds walls that diminish us. A failure to do so abroad builds walls, too, and strengthens the growing forces of neo-isolationism. Compassionate conservatism recognizes that social Darwinism and the soft bigotry of low expectations are wrong, whether in Harlem or in Harare.

A compassionate conservative foreign policy would not be mere altruism, however. Helping the global poor helps America materially as well as spiritually. People stuck in poverty do not buy as many American goods as do those climbing out of poverty, and those on the road to full development are the best customers of all. There is a payoff on the military side, as well. Prudent investments in countries now can reduce the demand for troop deployments in the future. Finally, there is a payoff in terms of public relations. While our self-perception is that of a generous nation, the United States is gaining a reputation around the world for welshing on its international commitments.

We do not have an obligation to solve every problem, nor is every tragedy a national security crisis. A compassionate conservative foreign policy is the antithesis of both the global entitlement approach and the "everything is national security" approach advocated by the hard left. In the most important area, that of military intervention, it recognizes the limitations of military force in situations where the state has effectively ceased to exist. It also recognizes the need to temper humanitarian urges with unromantic calculations of national interest—hence, the need for clear criteria for those circumstances when humanitarian intervention should be contemplated.

A nation as blessed as ours can afford to give foreign aid, and a nation as skilled as ours can do so more effectively than it has in the past. Which leads to the second principle of compassionate conservatism, capacity building. Don't dole out fish, teach fishing—it is cheaper in the short run and more effective in the long run.

The first step in capacity building is to better integrate developing countries into the global market. Reduction and elimination of trade restrictions around the world is an easy Republican issue, and it should be a mantra of the Bush campaign. There is something inherently Republican about the slogan "Trade is aid."

But a compassionate conservative foreign policy would recognize that trade is not the entire answer; that some aid is needed to stimulate trade. Even here, however, a compassionate conservative approach to capacity

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Patrick Arrasmith

building would eschew handouts in favor of creative alternatives—for instance, James Miller's idea of replacing cash grants with intellectual property rights, a novel proposal advanced in these pages a few weeks ago.

A compassionate conservative approach would also press for responsible debt relief. The United States could lead, but our wealthy allies should follow; and in regions where they have a historical interest, they might have to shoulder most of the burden. Of course, a compassionate conservative approach to debt relief would not be a simple bailout of irresponsible lenders. Rather it would involve some combination of bank write-offs, perhaps in exchange for tax relief, and conditionality to insure more responsible lending in the future.

The third principle of a compassionate conservative foreign policy would be collaboration, leveraging the effectiveness of organizations already doing the work. This would mean leadership through strengthening and reforming national and multilateral organizations, particularly development organizations.

Such reform must begin at home, in the U.S. Agency for International Development. Washington's strategy for development assistance has suffered from ad-hoc accretion over 40 years and is in desperate need of systematic review. The goal would be to align it more carefully with foreign policy priorities; to focus on issues critical for long-term peace and prosperity, such as enhancing good governance and the rule of law, strengthening local government, and fostering sound banking laws and stable regulatory environments for private sector growth—all areas where America has much to offer the world. A Bush administration could better target states where the political will and other preconditions for change are in place. All this would undoubtedly require the integration of AID into the Department of State, which Republicans in Congress have advocated for years.

But fixing the Agency for International Development is only a first step. A Bush administration would need to take a close look at all of the multilateral institutions of which the United States is a member. Although there is certainly scope for increased accountability and other reforms in these institutions, a compassionate conservative foreign policy would understand that they remain a cost-effective means of leveraging assistance for development about which the United States cares greatly, such as environmental cleanup along the Mexican border in the wake of the NAFTA agreement.

Yet the genius of compassionate conservatism is its recognition that *non*-governmental organizations are often better at doing things than is big government. The essential thrust of a compassionate conservative foreign policy would be to create a climate conducive to others' coming to do the heavy lifting, whether for regional security or economic development. Public assistance is not a substitute for private aid and investment. The best the government can do is seek to create a climate hospitable to the private sector, by establishing the rule of law, transparency, and accountability.

Likewise, some of the best development work around the world is done by faith-based organizations. The U.S. foreign policy establishment has been even more skittish than domestic agencies about cooperating with faith-based organizations. As a result, opportunities for effective burden-

sharing are sacrificed and a hostile climate is needlessly fostered. A Bush administration should conduct a systematic review to ensure that the U.S. government is not duplicating, or worse, undermining, work that is better done by these organizations.

A compassionate conservative foreign policy would also champion human rights, but in a way that avoided counterproductive confrontations. Thus, Ronald Reagan used every private meeting with his Soviet counterparts to press for the release of specific prisoners of conscience. Many brave religious and political prisoners are alive today because of this understated diplomacy.

At the end of the day, a compassionate conservative foreign policy would neither win nor lose the election for George W. Bush. But that is not the point. The principles of compassionate conservatism can be integrated into an essentially pragmatic foreign policy in a fashion that ennobles, without eviscerating, realpolitik. The United States stands for more than near-term advantage. A compassionate conservative foreign policy would emphasize the distinctive moral foundation of American internationalism.

And who knows, it might just help at the margins in the campaign as well. These principles clearly differentiate Bush from the isolationist wing of his party, removing a potential arrow from Al Gore's quiver. At least as important, they should appeal to the center, which is where this election will be fought and won.

If George W. Bush can better integrate his foreign policy planks with his domestic policy planks, he will restore a degree of purpose and coherence in U.S. foreign policy not seen since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Governor Bush identified that purpose when he said in July 1999, "We are a wealthy nation. But we must also be rich in ideals—rich in justice and compassion and family love and moral courage." Compassionate conservatism helps provide that coherence and makes sense both at home and abroad. ♦

# A Declaration of Independence

## Here's a theme for the Bush pudding.

**BY WILLIAM TUCKER**

THE BUSH CAMPAIGN needs a new focus. "Compassionate conservatism" got it through the convention but has failed miserably ever since. What happened? While Republicans were worried about trying to put on a good front to blacks, women, single mothers, and the poor, Al Gore and the Democrats made a quick cut and started campaigning for Working Families.

Al Gore has made "the waitress and the truck driver" his target audience—and why not? These are probably the most important swing voters in the country. The waitress and the truck driver are stand-ins for people with income at or below the median. That's half the country right there. Moreover, people higher on the economic scale are able to empathize with waitresses and truck drivers. This is not the old Democratic solicitude for the welfare-dependent underclass. "Working families" are people who live on their incomes but do not have other assets or investments to buffer their fortunes. People with higher incomes do not cringe at helping them because it means strengthening families and supporting work *without* fostering social disorganization. It's a winning formula.

Now just because Al Gore tailors his campaign to "working families" doesn't mean he has their best interest at heart. "If Al Gore is so much in favor of working families, how come he's against repealing the marriage penalty?" is a simple way of putting that. Nor does it mean that working families support him. In fact—although no one seems to realize it yet—working families are now George Bush's most faithful supporters.

In a *New York Times*/CBS News poll released September 13, Bush trailed in every single income category *except* the $30-$50,000 bracket. Those people favored him 46-37 percent. The over-$75,000 group—the supposed natural allies of the "party of the rich"—went for Gore 47-39 percent. Bush also trailed in every age group except 30-44 year-olds. Other polls have shown married people going strongly for Bush while single people favor Gore. (The biggest shift since the conventions has been the stunning desertion of Bush by the college educated with incomes over $50,000—apparently put off by Bush's bumbling.)

Married, age 30-44, making $30-$50,000 a year. What would you call these people except "working families"? They are the old "Reagan Democrats," still looking for redemption. More than anyone else, they understand the implications of Gore's anti-business rhetoric and high-tax policies. Yet Bush has done almost nothing to appeal to them. More important, he has done even less in trying to frame their desires in a way that the rest of the electorate would find appealing.

So let's start by asking the simple question: What do working families really want?

The simple answer is this. Working families want exactly what everybody else wants—the chance to live prosperous, independent lives. They want the opportunity to make it on their own. They don't want welfare, they don't want something for nothing

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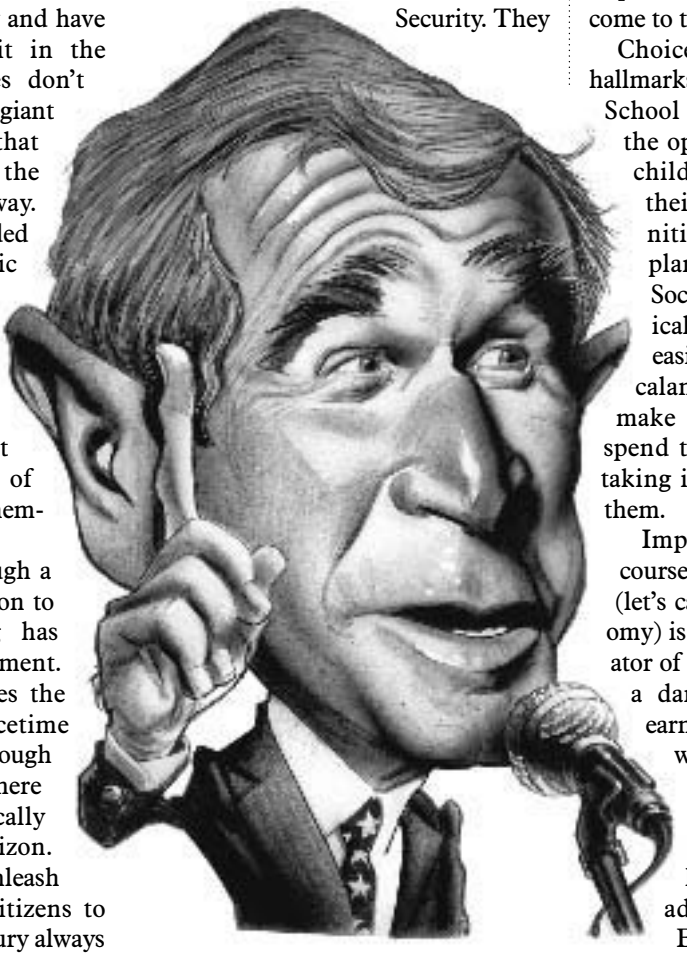
(particularly if it's free health care that requires dealing with government bureaucracies). They don't want to jump through hoops in order to qualify for some single sliver of a "targeted tax cut."

Working families want to become "Independent Americans." In fact, that's what we all want to become. We all want to live lives relatively free of catastrophe. We want the chance to do a day's work for a day's pay and have something to show for it in the evening. Working families don't want to be conscripted into giant government programs that probably won't deliver the promised benefits anyway. They don't want to be herded into inadequate public schools if there is something better available. They don't mind paying 25-30 percent of their income for basic public benefits and services, but they want to have the rest of their money to spend for themselves.

We have just lived through a century in which the solution to everything and anything has been to enlarge the government. The government now takes the highest portion of a peacetime economy in history, even though the Cold War is over and there is nothing catastrophically threatening on the horizon. What we need now is to unleash the power of individual citizens to solve problems the last century always viewed as the government's responsibility. We need a rebirth of the Independent American.

Who is the Independent American? Anybody who is eager and willing to make it on his own. The Independent American is not rich, not selfish, not "insensitive to the poor." He or she will readily acknowledge that *some* people—the very poor, the severely ill, victims of disaster—will always need government help. But that doesn't mean they want government assistance to become *the norm*. Independent Americans realize that self-government is essential to any decent society, but they don't want to *depend* on the government. All they want is the opportunity to earn their living, maintain their dignity, and live their own lives.

What does this mean in practice? Let's take Social Security, the biggest government program of them all. Independent Americans do not want to abolish Social Security. They do not want to leave older people to fend for themselves. But at the same time they *do* want older people (and themselves) to be given the *opportunity* to run their own retirement programs if they wish. Thus, George Bush's proposal to allow people to set up their own Social Security plans through private investment.



The same holds for health care. Independent Americans realize that many people cannot afford their own health insurance. But that doesn't mean they want a giant health program for *everyone*. As Bush has plainly proposed, the government should assist people with severe or chronic illnesses by giving them a choice of private subsidized insurance programs that will help cover prescription drugs and serious illnesses. But paying for *everyone's* prescription drugs is hugely expensive, and bashing drug company profits in the process threatens the new and improved medicines Americans have come to take for granted.

Choice and opportunity are the hallmarks of an Independent Society. School choice should offer people the opportunity to improve their children's education by seeking their own educational opportunities. Choice in retirement plans is the key to improving Social Security. Choice in medical insurance is the safest and easiest way to spread the risk of calamitous diseases. Let people make their own decisions and spend their own money instead of taking it and trying to spend it for them.

Implicit in this manifesto, of course, is that the private economy (let's call it the Independent Economy) is not only the *principal* generator of the nation's wealth—it's also a damned respectable place to earn a living. What's wrong with working for an oil company? What's wrong with having a private severance payment? Even Joe Lieberman himself has been known to admit that the Independent Economy is the source of the nation's prosperity. (And now that you mention it, has anybody bothered to ask Lifetime Legislators Gore and Lieberman about their government pensions?)

Elections are won not by winning debates but by setting the terms of the debate. Right now the debate is about what the government can do for Working Families. George Bush must shift that debate to his own natural advantages. The key question for this election should be, How do we foster and liberate a whole new generation of Independent Americans? ♦

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

# Credit Where Credit Is Due

## Everyone's getting applause for the surplus, except the Republican Congress. **BY STEPHEN MOORE**

WHO DESERVES the credit for balancing the federal budget? Coming after a 30-year string of budget deficits, this seemingly miraculous feat has large political ramifications. For many Americans, it is one of the great public policy accomplishments of recent times. Whichever party can lay claim to it may be rewarded politically by a grateful electorate for many years to come.

It is almost beside the point that deficits are actually an economic bogeyman. Economist Milton Friedman has preached for years that how much government spends is far more important than how its spending is financed—whether by taxes, borrowing, or inflation of the currency. Low government spending with a budget deficit is almost always preferable to high government spending with a budget surplus.

Nevertheless, in the 1980s, the nation was obsessed with the long succession of record deficits. Some economists complained that they would trigger higher interest rates and inflation. But interest rates and inflation dramatically fell. The effect of rising deficits and federal interest payments was less to crowd out private investment than to crowd out higher-than-otherwise expenditures on social welfare programs, on balance a good thing.

Indeed, considering the economic and political context of the time, the rising deficits of the 1980s were certainly worth it. Reagan's supply-side tax cuts, which lowered the top income tax rate from 70 percent eventually to 28 percent, were vital to ending the mini-depression of 1978-'82 and launching the now 18-year-long expansion that has lifted the Dow Jones Industrial Average from 800 in 1982 to 11,000. Similarly, the $2 trillion defense buildup was instrumental in winning the Cold War. What we bought with $3 trillion of national debt was the end of the Evil Empire and the longest wave of prosperity in this century, a prosperity that has generated roughly $20 trillion in increased national wealth. Thanks in large part to the growth policies of the 1980s, today's twenty- and thirtysomethings will be the wealthiest and safest generation of Americans in history.

It's impossible to pinpoint exactly what caused the deficits to give way to surpluses in 1998. Liberals point triumphantly to Bill Clinton's world-record tax increase in 1993 as the turning point, but they are wrong, as the numbers in Clinton's own budget documents prove. Two years after the Clinton tax increase, the deficit was still stubbornly above $200 billion. What's more, in early 1995, the White House budget office and the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office each independently drew up a long-term budget forecast assuming Clinton's policies. Both announced that progress in reducing federal red ink was stalled: They predicted $200 billion deficits until doomsday, unless fiscal policy were radically adjusted or economic conditions improved.

So what changed? In part, the election of a Republican Congress. The pivotal year in the deficit fight was not 1993, but 1995. That was the year when the Republicans, with their new majorities on Capitol Hill, engaged in nine months of hand-to-hand combat with President Clinton over the budget.

For all the vilification of Newt Gingrich, the man had a near-maniacal obsession with balancing the budget. Arguably, Gingrich's finest hour as speaker of the House came in March 1995 when he rallied his entire Republican caucus behind the idea of eliminating the deficit within seven years. At the time, it seemed another hollow political promise.

Back then, I was advising the House leadership on the budget, and even I thought the tax cuts and balanced budget might never happen. With deficits so long a fact of life and the Democrats determined not to cooperate, the odds were stacked against the Republicans. For them to bite the bullet unilaterally and make the necessary spending cuts seemed tantamount to swallowing a live hand grenade. Nonetheless, House Budget Committee chairman John Kasich constructed a heroic seven-year balanced budget plan. Somehow he would ultimately muscle it through the House and Senate—with almost no support from Democrats.

But first, Bill Clinton set up a war room in the White House to shatter the GOP budget plan. When Republicans released their balanced budget roadmap, the White House waged a shameless Mediscare campaign—a campaign that even the *Washington Post* editorial page slammed as "pure demagoguery." In the course of the budget battle royal, between April and December 1995, Bill Clinton had to submit not one, not two, but *five* budgets, until he finally submitted a balanced one. And that came nearly six months after the Republicans had submitted theirs. Clinton vetoed the first two GOP balanced budgets, bringing on the famous government shutdowns.

For Clinton now to take credit for the balanced budget is like King George III taking credit for the Declaration of Independence. The presi-

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dent insisted in his immodest speech to the Democratic National Convention last month that he wants to stick to "just the facts, ma'am." And so he should, for the numbers don't lie.

Here are the federal deficits forecast by the Congressional Budget Office in April 1995, assuming Clinton's policies remained unchanged, and the deficits that actually transpired after the Republicans took control of Congress and junked Clintonomics:

**FEDERAL DEFICIT**
(in billions)

| | Forecast | Actual |
|---|---|---|
| 1994 | $203 | $203 |
| 1995 | $175 | $164 |
| 1996 | $205 | $107 |
| 1997 | $210 | $ 22 |
| 1998 | $210 | +$ 69 (surplus) |
| 1999 | $200 | +$124 (surplus) |

Over this period, the national debt grew more than $700 billion less than projected under Clinton's policies.

But the House majority is not the only thing that changed. Some of the factors behind today's balanced budget were set in motion long before Clinton became president or the Republicans seized Congress. One was the Cold War victory. Today the military budget is almost $150 billion lower in real terms than it was at the height of Reagan's buildup in 1987. The peace dividend accounts for about one third of the deficit reduction over the past decade. It goes without saying that Bill Clinton was not a contributing factor to winning the Cold War.

By far the most powerful influence on the budget, however, has been the sizzling economy. In the 1980s, Reagan, Jack Kemp, Arthur Laffer, and other supply-side tax cutters were ridiculed—even by some Republicans, those of the old Rockefeller root-canal school—for believing in the "voodoo" theory that we could grow our way out of the deficit. But that's precisely what happened. The cumulative windfall effect of 18 years of prosperity is that the economy has finally outraced federal spending. Tax receipts have been pouring into the federal treasury—growing an average of 10 percent annually for the past four years, with no end in sight.

Clinton-Gore enthusiasts counter this by saying: Aha, but it was the 1993 tax hike that caused the prosperity and the surging revenues. Again, the facts are otherwise. The economy grew 4 percent in the 12 months before Clinton and Gore were elected. After their tax increase was enacted, the economy actually slipped, growing 2 percent to 3 percent in 1993 and 1994. The major economic rationale for the Clinton tax increase was to lower interest rates. But between November 1992 and November 1994, interest rates didn't fall. They rose by almost a full percentage point. Oops.

Yet despite Clinton's obstructionism, he deserves some credit for the good things that have happened to the budget and the economy on his watch. It's not a stretch to think that a lesser president could have screwed things up. Where Clinton was most effective, however, he was validating, not repudiating, the Reagan supply-side economic model, as when he promoted free trade, signed a capital gains tax cut (reluctantly), twice reappointed Alan Greenspan to the federal reserve board, and signed welfare reform (after vetoing it twice).

Clinton with a Democratic Congress was a recipe for disaster, but Clinton and a Republican Congress have produced a gravity-defying expansion. Since November 1994, the Dow has soared from 3,800 to 11,000 and the economy has grown at 4 percent without inflation.

Peace and prosperity balanced the budget. All that could cause these surpluses to vanish would be a new Washington spending spree. ♦

# The Secret of Gore's Success

*Whether it's with Oprah, the voters, or the media, flattery works wonders.*

**By Tucker Carlson**

*Chicago*

There are many reasons that Al Gore has been able to revive what until recently looked like a moribund campaign. But one of them, depressing as it is to admit, may be that he is the sort of politician who can do well on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

Gore made the pilgrimage to Chicago last week to appear on Winfrey's show. While he and his staff made their way to the studio at Harpo Productions, the press was shunted to a restaurant across the street to watch the program on monitors. A couple of reporters complained, but to no effect. Oprah's orders, explained a Gore aide. "She's got tighter security than the vice president."

And more florid promotional material. According to the "fact sheet" distributed by Harpo ("Oprah" spelled backwards), Winfrey believes the "mission" of her talk show is "to make viewers see themselves differently and to bring happiness and a sense of fulfillment into every home." The accompanying bio describes Winfrey as "one of the most important figures in popular culture," whose influence extends "beyond the world of television and into areas such as publishing, music, film, philanthropy, education, health and fitness, and social awareness."

There are grounds to suspect that Oprah Winfrey is susceptible to flattery. Gore, who is nothing if not well prepared for interviews, seemed to know this. Once on the set, he immediately went into full suck-up mode. He opened by congratulating Winfrey on the four Emmy awards she had won the night before. Then he gushed all over her show. Several years ago, Winfrey switched the program's focus from prurience to self-help. (Oprah was an early pioneer of the Transsexual-Priests-And-The-Men-They-Love genre.) Gore seemed positively thrilled by the transformation. "When you started believing in what you were doing—then look at you: You're a one-person media conglomerate."

Gore spoke with authority about Winfrey's career. He had memorized details from every stage of it. He recited the call letters of the local radio station where she worked as a teenager. He knew the name of the television station she moved on to from there. He even claimed to remember her from the early 1970s, when they both worked in journalism in Nashville. ("I remember specifically one crime scene we went to together. . . . I was at the newspaper. You were with Channel Five.")

Gore had mastered Winfrey's biography. But he had also been well briefed on her sensibilities. Oprah likes redemption stories. Gore provided one. After his son was hit by a car and badly injured, Gore said, he changed his life. Until then, "I had become a little bit of a workaholic." Since then, "family is first—family is first. Nothing goes onto the schedule until after all of the family time and personal time."

Even Oprah had trouble with this claim. Aren't you the guy who campaigned for 27 hours straight the other day? she asked. Gore drowned her skepticism with a torrent of mush about his wife and kids. In a pre-taped segment that was aired on the show, Gore and his wife sat cuddling on a couch, reminiscing about their marriage. "I gave her a bracelet a few years ago," Gore recalled, "with an inscription on the inside of it: 'To the bravest person I know.'" Tipper gazed at him lovingly. "In many ways," Gore went on, "the feeling that we have for one another is deeper and more intense now even than during the first romance."

It was all pretty over the top, and at times hints of Gore's clinical personality poked through. (His daily, scheduled phone conversation with Tipper, he said, "works extremely well" because "both of us bring the

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same set of expectations.") But for the most part it was an effective performance aimed with pinpoint accuracy at the show's largely female audience. At retirement centers, Gore talks Medicare. On *Oprah*, he brags about giving his wife jewelry.

There is much that is off-putting about this level of pandering, and Gore has been criticized for it, rightly, since he entered politics in 1976. But it helps during a campaign. What is instantly recognizable as shameless opportunism most of the time can suddenly look like useful flexibility two months before Election Day. Gore is very flexible.

From *Oprah*, Gore traveled to an elementary school in Belleville, Ill., a small town 25 miles from St. Louis, where he gave a speech to parents and teachers. Within about five minutes it became clear why George W. Bush has had trouble engaging Gore effectively on ideological grounds (apart from Bush's own natural reluctance to do so): Gore doesn't sound like much of a liberal these days, at least not in front of certain audiences. While campaigning in the Midwest, Gore rarely mentions abortion. He virtually never brings up affirmative action. When he talks about gun control, he is careful to include "homeowners" (along with "sportsmen and hunters") among the groups that would remain unaffected by his proposals.

On some issues, Gore even comes across as an unapologetic right-winger. Gore spent much of his speech in Belleville slamming "the popular culture," which he said "competes with parents in raising our children." Companies that market violent movies, music, and video games to underage consumers are particularly heinous offenders, the vice president thundered. And they had better knock it off. Now.

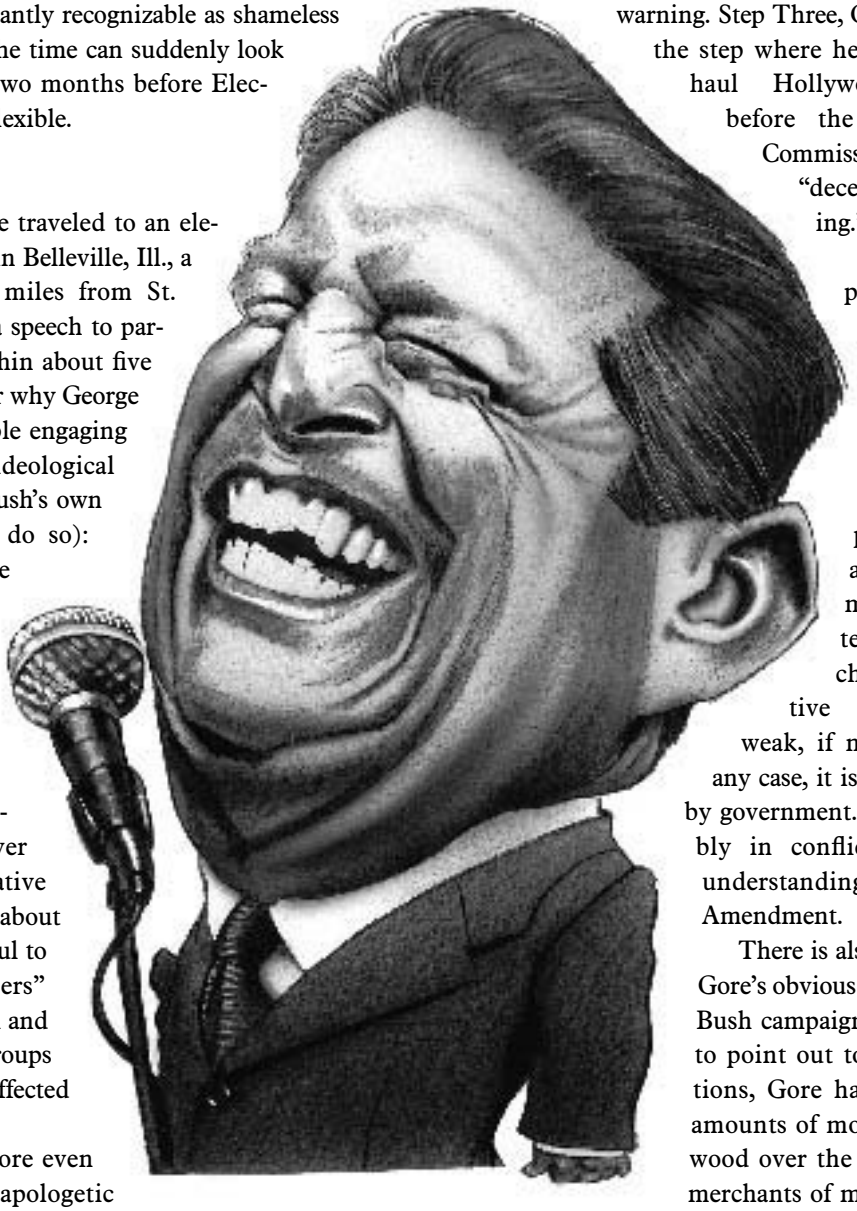

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

Gore told the crowd that, once elected, he and Joe Lieberman plan to give the entertainment industry six months to shape up. "If at the end of that six-month period there is not yet an acceptable industry response," Gore said, "then we're prepared to go to Step Three." The way Gore said it, "Step Three" sounded a lot like DEFCON Three—the crank-up-the-sirens, head-for-the-lead-lined-basement, there-could-be-casualties final warning. Step Three, Gore explained, is the step where he and Lieberman haul Hollywood executives before the Federal Trade Commission on charges of "deceptive advertising."

There are a couple of problems with this. For starters, it's not clear that the entertainment industry has ever formally pledged not to advertise violent material to teenagers. So the charge of "deceptive advertising" is weak, if not ludicrous. In any case, it is a wild overreach by government. And it is probably in conflict with current understandings of the First Amendment.

There is also the problem of Gore's obvious hypocrisy. As the Bush campaign frantically tried to point out to news organizations, Gore has accepted huge amounts of money from Hollywood over the years. The same merchants of moral ruin he savaged in Belleville continue to be among Gore's biggest supporters and contributors. Three days after his Illinois speech, Gore attended a fund-raiser in Manhattan hosted by Harvey Weinstein, the head of Miramax. The party was packed with actors and entertainment types, including Matt Damon, David Crosby, Lenny Kravitz, and Jon Bon Jovi. When Gore spoke at the end of the evening, he

thanked "the creative community" profusely. "I'm very, very grateful," he said. He didn't mention Step Three or the FTC.

It's easy to attack Gore's attack on Hollywood. But just because it was hypocritical and mildly authoritarian doesn't mean it wasn't significant. As I listened to the speech, my first thought was, Does Bill Bennett agree with this? Bennett has beaten up on the entertainment industry quite a lot over the years, often with Joe Lieberman at his side. Does he think the Federal Trade Commission ought to go after studio heads? The answer to both questions, it turns out, is "no." In other words, phony or not, Al Gore has officially taken a stand on the entertainment industry that is to the right of Bill Bennett.

Has Gore become a social conservative? That's unlikely, given his stands on gay rights and abortion (he is enthusiastically for both). But Gore has shown that he is willing, perhaps even more willing than Clinton has been, to borrow from the other side when it suits him politically. And when Gore borrows, he tends to amplify. Consider his rhetoric on crime.

Gore still talks about gun control, domestic violence, and the need for hate-crime legislation, but these are no longer the central planks in his crime platform. These days Gore is just as apt to cite the "broken windows" philosophy that inspired New York mayor Rudy Giuliani's successful war on crime. Or to call for a victims' rights amendment to the Constitution. Or to go on about why the death penalty should be imposed more often. At a speech in Boston last year, Gore said that as president he would make it a federal crime to "stalk our children on the Internet." He also promised to outlaw "gang-related clothing." (Neither Gore nor his campaign has defined either of these offenses more specifically.)

Gore has gone even further this year. At a crime policy speech in Atlanta in May, he assailed "the old Democratic approach, which was tough on the causes of crime, but not tough enough on crime itself." According to Gore, people who commit violent crimes against children should go to prison. But so should those who commit crimes "*in front of*" children. They should get "more time in jail," Gore said.

Al Gore has become a fanatic for law and order. This is not surprising. Gore instinctively moves to the fringes of whatever issue he takes an interest in: the environment, abortion, and now crime and children's entertainment. Republicans often accuse Gore of being a raving lefty. That is not quite right. Gore adopts many roles, not all of them consistent with doctrinaire liberalism. He overplays every one. Gore is not an ideologue. He is a zealot.

Why doesn't anyone seem to notice when Gore says extreme things? (*Gang-related clothing?*) The Bush campaign sometimes cites liberal media bias. This is true, but only partly. Reporters generally are liberal, but few have great affection for Al Gore. Gore is difficult to cover. He rarely makes himself available to the press, and when he does, his quotes are stilted and predictable.

On the other hand, he has a capable staff. Gore aides are quick with background information they think will help their candidate. (The night before the "RATS" story appeared on page one of the *New York Times*, the campaign held a midnight briefing so the traveling press could see the Bush ad with the supposedly subliminal message.) And they try not to senselessly antagonize reporters.

The Bush campaign could learn something from this. Bush's press handlers, for instance, have alienated some photographers by instructing them not to take pictures of Bush in a variety of scenarios: smoking cigars, carrying his own bags (too reminiscent of Jimmy Carter), wearing a necktie that has been loosened in an unpresidential manner, or holding a beverage of any kind, lest it be mistaken for an alcoholic beverage. Restrictions like these can cause resentment. (Bush's manners haven't helped, either; he has addressed at least two adult photographers as "boy," and been pointlessly rude to others.)

Gore's campaign has been less rigid and friendlier with photographers, and it has paid off. During the riverboat trip Gore took immediately after the Democratic convention, an inexperienced member of his advance staff hung a sign at one event that read "FAMILIES" in large print. From one angle, Gore's face obscured the first four letters of the word. It made for an embarrassing image (and a natural *New York Post* cover). The picture never ran—proof, says one of the photographers who shot it, that it's worth being nice to people with cameras.

Ultimately, details like this don't mean much, as Bob Shrum, Gore's chief media consultant, is quick to point out. Neither, Shrum says, do many of the nuances of campaign strategy. What really matters, he says, is what the man running for president says to win over voters. "It's like the old Bobby Kennedy quote. After the 1960 election, someone described him as a 'genius.' He said, 'Change 60,000 votes and I'm a bum.' Two months ago, they were the geniuses and we were the bums. Staff doesn't have anything to do with it. It's the candidate."

In Al Gore's case this is true. Gore has recovered in part because he understood early what many Republicans didn't: Even an awkward man with high negatives can become president if he's willing to be flexible enough. ♦

# The Wen Ho Lee Conundrum

*Spy agencies do use ethnicity in recruiting, but it rarely does them any good.*

**By Reuel Marc Gerecht**

Let us state the obvious: If Wen Ho Lee's name had been John Witherspoon, counterintelligence officers in the Department of Energy and the Federal Bureau of Investigation would not have highlighted him so prominently as a possible mole for the People's Republic of China. No doubt they still would've come calling on Lee, given the 800 megabytes of nuclear code he downloaded to an unsecured computer. But they might have been more circumspect in deciding that such an unauthorized action denoted malevolent intent on behalf of a foreign power. American scientists at sensitive national laboratories have reputations within the intelligence community for being little better than kindergartners at exercising discretion and common sense in matters of security.

National-security "ethnic profiling" is, to say the least, morally unsettling. It bends, if not breaks, the idea of equality before the law, and it does so over the fact that, on occasion, ethnic fraternity has motivated American officials to betray their trust in favor of foreign powers. Jonathan Pollard, the Jewish-American spy for Israel, is easily the most famous of these "ethnic agents." And Chinese Americans have been caught spying for Communist China. Larry Wu-Tai Chin, an analyst-linguist for the U.S. Army and the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service, successfully spied for 30 years before he was arrested in 1985. Though Chin was a paid asset, the ethnic-cultural magnetism of the "motherland" also nudged him toward betrayal.

Nevertheless, our conception of equality before the law—the political sine qua non for a nation of immigrants—makes us rightly distrustful of counterintelligence officers who find equal treatment under the law compatible with unequal liability to suspicion of guilt. Ethnic profiling places U.S. security officials—not generally a well-educated, well-traveled, cosmopolitan lot—on a slippery slope where discreet suspicion about foreign affections can easily become a crude analytical tool guiding an investigation. It is not a large jump in bureaucratic logic to envision Chinese, Arab, Iranian, or Jewish Americans, suspiciously tagged for possible overseas ties, politely excluded from certain top-secret positions by fearful, "true-blue" security officials. There are a few counterintelligence-generated civil rights lawsuits now pending by Jewish Americans, in particular the case of Adam Ciralsky, a former lawyer in the CIA's Office of General Counsel, that are disquieting.

That said, national-security ethnic profiling is inevitable. Such profiling is a critical element of espionage, and inseparable from its less glamorous twin, counterintelligence. Take ethnic profiling away from counterintelligence or from America's own espionage activity overseas, which reflexively tries to exploit minority self-consciousness in much of its targeting, and you've deprived U.S. intelligence of a significant psychological avenue in its pursuit of would-be traitors.

For purposes of recruiting, the CIA abroad must be highly attuned to divisions that could conceivably move men toward treason. Without attention to what might possibly separate an individual from others around him—for example, a Christian from Muslims, a Sunni Muslim from Shi'ite Muslims, a Kurd from Turks, an Azari Turk from Iranians, a Protestant from Catholics, a Jew from Christians, a Chinese from everybody else—the CIA would be floating in the open sea on a cloudy day searching for a means of dead reckoning. The CIA is, in fact, usually lost overseas, because such psychological divisions

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often don't exist, are hard to find, and are even harder to play with. But in theory, every foreign intelligence service is scanning, like a bottom-feeder on the ocean floor, for some elemental susceptibility that might make one man quietly separate himself from his own society. In those cracks, treason is born.

At home, too, the FBI and other counterintelligence services are looking for such cracks. First they do the obvious: check the bank account of a potential suspect, talk to his disgruntled wife or girlfriend or a nosy neighbor. And if that doesn't reveal a nefarious intent, the art of counterintelligence can quickly devolve into necromancy. Usually, it is a surprise "walk-in," often a member of the opposing intelligence service volunteering to rat on his own side, who informs you that you have a mole in your midst and sometimes even reveals the guilty party. In other words, counterespionage is a guessing game.

Let's look at Wen Ho Lee. We know that China's Communist government has run Chinese-American agents inside the U.S. government. Can we deduce that Communist China, one of the more ethnocentric societies on earth, might be inclined to encourage ethnic Chinese outside China—even those who emigrated because of communism—to secretly help the motherland? Certainly. The hubris of Beijing and the profundity of Chinese culture make this plausible. Moreover, we have seen official Chinese reports and manuals recommending espionage and contact with overseas Chinese as important means for collecting sensitive information. What do these facts and reasonable suppositions really mean?

Not much. A tenet of the American intelligence profession is the assumption that the more aggressive espionage operations are—the more case officers socialize with possible foreign targets—the more likely these operations are to succeed. Recruitment is the raison d'être of a case officer, both in spy novels and in fact. It is the almost mystical allure of secret intelligence that prompts Congress to keep the CIA's clandestine service rich but the overt and usually more knowledgeable foreign service of the Department of State poor. It is the fear of successful recruitment of agents by enemies that led Congress after Aldrich Ames was exposed as a KGB mole to flood the FBI, the CIA, and other agencies with counterintelligence funds and personnel.

Yet the truth of 50 years of American espionage overseas ought to lead us to be highly skeptical about the relationship between aggressive intelligence efforts and successful results. The CIA deployed thousands of case officers against the Soviet Union, yet the few great Soviet agents, the ones that may have made some difference in the course and conduct of the Cold War, were all volunteers. We did not recruit them. The most damaging spy working against America, the naval officer John Walker, who gave the Soviets critical information about the movement and capabilities of U.S. submarines and anti-submarine defenses, was a walk-in. So, too, Aldrich Ames. Ditto Ronald Pelton, the ex-National Security Agency official who volunteered his services to the KGB in 1979. All of these men just trotted into the Soviet embassy in Washington and cut deals.

If one examined internal CIA reports and training manuals throughout the Cold War, one could easily get the impression that the clandestine service had successfully sliced, diced, and penetrated just about everything of intelligence value in the world. The truth, however, was different. In most places, CIA case officers just spun their wheels, recruiting no really valuable spies. Less case-officer contact with potential recruits, and more of the soft, barely noticeable approach—virtually the opposite of the approach the Chinese and the Americans usually use to conduct their business—would have been much more productive.

AP / Wide World Photos

*Wen Ho Lee, a free man after nine months in jail*

There is no reason to believe that Chinese intelligence, which certainly would do us great harm if it could, has had or will have any greater recruitment successes against the United States than American intelligence had against the Soviet Union and other Communist countries and rogue states. The Chinese may well have scored a brilliant penetration of America's nuclear laboratories, as the congressional Cox Report of May 1999 asserts, but it isn't likely that any such success sprang from the well-executed seduction or blackmail of a Chinese-American scientist, which appears to be one theory behind the counterintelligence investigation of Lee.

Far more likely is a walk-in out of the blue, who might or might not be Chinese-American. Judging by the Soviets who offered their services to the United States and the Americans who offered theirs to the Soviet Union, the odds are good that such a walk-in would have had little to no prior contact with Chinese case officers. Lee's travel to China and his contact with PRC officials were similar to those of thousands of U.S. citizens with high-level security clearances. They do not indicate a suspicious character. Neither does Lee's failure to report a contact with, perhaps an approach by, a Chinese official: Unreported contacts happen all the time, since many U.S. officials consider them to be insulting and possibly detrimental to their careers if reported.

Inside the Soviet Union, though American successes included the recruitment of non-Russian "ethnics" who bore a grudge against the dominant people of the empire, most of the CIA's agents were native Russians. As the names Walker, Ames, and Pelton suggest, white Anglo-Saxons have performed similar service to the enemies of the United States. And greed is the common denominator of mankind. It's not unreasonable to guess that the Chinese, themselves apparently not averse to profit, may have recognized Americans' fondness for money.

The Cox Report has, to some extent, accepted the conventional wisdom in intelligence circles worldwide that case officers have exceptional charms that draw recruits into espionage. Thus the report warns that Beijing poses an extraordinary intelligence threat. But we need to be crystal clear about the nature of this threat. The Chinese, no doubt, would dearly love to diminish us in Asia, the Middle East, the Balkans, and wherever else our interests and principles collide with theirs. Their aggressive use of commercial ventures to collect sensitive information brilliantly exploits America's capitalist ethic and laissez-faire approach to world trade. In this domain, the Chinese have far surpassed the Russians.

But Chinese intelligence does not pose an extraordinary threat to Americans with access to top-secret information. We ought not ascribe to the Chinese powers that they probably do not possess, powers that if they existed would exceed ours throughout the Cold War and (except briefly between the 1920s and the 1950s, when the USSR still had allure for Western intellectuals) the Soviet Union's. The People's Republic of China simply doesn't have the magnetism to draw left-wing spies to her side, at least not yet.

It is possible, of course, that Wen Ho Lee is a Chinese mole—either a brilliant recruit or, more likely, a cunning walk-in. His extensive downloading of nuclear computer codes provokes very serious questions. Perhaps the U.S. government has solid information fingering Lee provided by its own walk-ins. The United States has certainly had Chinese walk-ins in the past, notably the one in 1995 who sparked the Los Alamos investigation, as the Cox Report recounts. But walk-in intelligence would likely be worthless in an American court. Perhaps the U.S. government will show, probably through officially sanctioned leaks, what it had on Lee. So far, however, the investigation of Lee has revealed only that America's counterintelligence is falling badly short—and that ethnic suspicion, not for the first time, got out of hand. ♦


Eliot


Frost


Pound


Moore

# The Good, the Bad, and the Extraneous

## *The Library of America collects twentieth-century verse.*

By Laurance Wieder

In 1861, Francis Turner Palgrave helped define Victorian taste by publishing *The Golden Treasury*, "a true national Anthology of three centuries" of British poetry that contained not a single work by William Blake, Christopher Smart, or John Donne. In 1874, Palgrave's American friend Ralph Waldo Emerson published an anthology of American poetry that left out Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe. It's most often in their omissions that anthologies of poetry grow interesting—for it's in the omissions that you can measure the risks the editor is willing to take.

So what are we to make of the first two volumes of *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century*, issued this year by the prestigious Library of America? Perhaps the reader can set aside the fact that the volumes contain no statement about the selection process, though that's a very bad sign. And perhaps the reader can set aside the fact that their title pages do not name *anyone* as the editor of record, which is an even worse sign. (A five-member advisory board is listed in the front matter, but no clue is given as to whom they are advising.) But that still leaves us faced with the fact that these volumes seem determined to omit almost nothing.

**American Poetry: The Twentieth Century**
*Volume One: Henry Adams to Dorothy Parker*
Library of America, 986 pp., $35

**American Poetry: The Twentieth Century**
*Volume Two: e.e. cummings to May Swenson*
Library of America, 1,020 pp., $35

Presenting the poets chronologically by date of birth, *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* opens with Henry Adams, born in 1838. Nearly two thousand pages later, the march of poetry


Bishop

AP / Wide World Photos


cummings

AP / Wide World Photos


Williams


Stevens

All pictures CORBIS, except where noted.


Millay


Robinson


Hughes


Crane

Kent State University

calls a temporary halt at May Swenson, born in 1919. Given the postwar population boom and the massive increase in published poetry after 1950, the Library of America is looking at a journey of ten thousand pages to complete its work. This is not anthologizing, but a riskless attempt at unedited inclusiveness. It's like reprinting a hundred years' worth of newspapers and calling what you're doing the writing of history.

This new collection follows upon the Library of America's *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century*. That fine two-volume work, published in 1993, actually has a named editor in John Hollander, who presents American poets from Philip Freneau (1752-1832) through Trumbull Stickney (1874-1904) in order of birth. Hollander's notes include a masterful thumbnail biography of each poet, and a time-line chronology clarifies the relations among the writers and their time.

Trading on the authority of its predecessor, the first two volumes of *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* announce on their dustjackets that they embrace "nearly 1,400 poems by over 200 poets . . . in a series that will ultimately survey the entire century."

But what is a twentieth-century poem? And who is a twentieth-century poet? Henry Adams (better known as an historian, journalist, novelist, and Brahmin), Lizette Woodworth Reese (1856-1935), Harriet Monroe (1860-1936, the founder of *Poetry* magazine, which launched Ezra Pound and modernism in America), the novelist Edith Wharton (1862-1937), and Edward Arlington Robinson (1869-1935) appear in both the nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthologies. Why these five and not, for example, the philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952)? (Though here, at least, one does find *someone* omitted from this endless anthology.)

Henry Adams's "Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres" follows five anonymous ballads as the first signed work in the collection. Adams once remarked in a letter that "all the notices from today to doomsday will never make an American public care for poetry—or anything else unless perhaps chewing gum."

Lindley Williams Hubbell (1901-1994) in "Beer Bottles" observes: *There are more poems in the world / Than empty beer bottles / So many millions of poems have been written! / What happens to them all? Who reads them all?*

In "Poetry," Marianne Moore (1887-1972) again sounds poetry's dissonant chord about itself: *I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle. / Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in / it after all, a place for the genuine.*

We have, as Moore points out, a real need for the genuine in poetry, and it's possible to learn from these volumes of twentieth-century poetry the difference between the genuine and the contrived. But that's not because all the work here is genuine poetry.

In fact, the all-inclusiveness of *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* does give us something, for it suggests the possibility of distinguishing four orders of descending importance in twentieth-century American verse.

Among writers born through 1919, the canon of major poets remains pretty much what it has been for the last forty or fifty years: Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), Robert Frost (1874-1963) and Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), Hart Crane (1899-1932), e.e. cummings (1894-1962), Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979), Theodore Roethke (1908-1963), and Langston Hughes (1902-1967).

Major poets write poems of the first order. They have a sizable body of work. What makes their poetry of the first order is the fact that their poems contain complete thoughts, and each poem is a new thought. Read Frost's "Provide, Provide," or Stevens's "The Man on the Dump," for good examples. Or Marianne Moore's "Is Your Town Nineveh":

*Why so desolate?*
*in phantasmagoria about fishes,*
*what disgusts you? Could*
*not all personal upheaval in*
*the name of freedom, be tabooed?*

*Is it Nineveh*
*and are you Jonah*
*in the sweltering east wind of your wishes?*
*I myself, have stood*
*there by the aquarium, looking*
*at the Statue of Liberty.*

Some poetry of the first order is written by less familiar poets, such as Robert Francis (1901-1987), in "By Night":

*After midnight I heard a scream.*
*I was awake. It was no dream.*
*But whether it was bird of prey*

*Laurance Wieder's* Chapters Into Verse: A Selection of Poetry in English Inspired by the Bible *has just been published by Oxford University Press.*

*Or prey of bird I could not say.*
*I never heard that sound by day.*

Sometimes work of the first order is produced by those whose poetry is a background activity, such as Henry Adams. Marsden Hartley (1877-1943) is best remembered as a painter, but his poem "Fishmonger" is so electric, it makes this anthology look like a good idea:

*I have taken scales from off*
*The cheeks of the moon.*
*I have made fins from bluejays' wings,*
*I have made eyes from damsons in the shadow.*
*I have taken flushes from the peachlips*
*in the sun,*
*From all these I have made a fish of heaven*
*for you,*
*Set it swimming on a young October sky.*
*I sit on the bank of the stream and watch*
*The grasses in amazement*
*As they turn to ashy gold.*
*Are the fishes from the rainbow*
*Still beautiful to you,*
*For whom they are made,*
*For whom I have set them,*
*Swimming?*

Poetry of the second order, however, articulates a familiar thought, or the same set of ideas over and over: time's passage, for instance, or the sting of injustice, the beauty of nature, love and desire, cruelty and yearning. Here are poetry's Great Plains, spacious and crossed by many; here is the home of the middle class; here one can make a life.

Poets of the second order (which is the largest party of poets in the collection) are skilled and accessible. Edward Arlington Robinson, Dorothy Parker (1893-1967), Kenneth Rexroth (1905-1982), and Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) are strong in single poems, but are difficult to stay with. Their problem is eventual monotony.

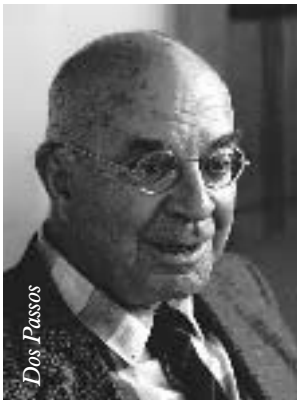
The third order of poetry may have no ideas at all. It can embody a sensibility, make gestures, proceed by method, or stand in opposition. Gertrude Stein's (1874-1946) "Stanzas in Meditation" and John Cage's (1912-1992) experiments with chance and arbitrary arrangement are higher forms of this art. Its lesser practitioners can start out amusing and end up unreadable. Here, for instance, are some lines from Abraham Lincoln Gillespie's (1895-1950) "A Purplexicon of Dissynthegrations": *punziplaze karmasokist DecoYen Pompieraeian / scaruscatracery timmedigets outrége Opinducts*. And this goes on for another fifty-nine lines. A less metaphysical essay is Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's (1874-1927) "Klink—Hratzvenga (*Deathwail*)," which begins: *Ildrich mitzdonja—astatootch / Ninj—iffe kniek— / Ninj—iffe kniek!*

The fourth and final order of poetry included in *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* are works that appear for social reasons. This accounts for contributions by Walter Conrad Arensberg (1878-1954, patron of the avant garde), John Reed (1887-1920, author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*), the novelist John Dos Passos (1896-1970), the critics R.P. Blackmur (1904-1965), Yvor Winters (1900-1968), and Edmund Wilson (1895-1972), the social philosopher Paul Goodman (1911-1972), and the playwright Tennessee Williams (1911-1983).

This anthology also contains a number of show tunes, folk songs, and blues lyrics. These are not poems. It's impossible for anyone to read an Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960) lyric, and not hear the music the words were written to and with and for. Just look at "Ole Man River" as it sits on the page. Poetry may embrace democracy, but it sure isn't democratic. It no more includes the lyrics of W.C. Handy (1873-1958), Ma Rainey (1886-1939), Charley Patton (1887-1934), Irving Berlin (1888-1989), Bessie Smith (1898-1937), Lorenz Hart (1895-1943), Ira Gershwin (1896-1983), E.Y. Harburg (1896-1981), Blind Lemon Jefferson (1897-1929), Bukka White (1909-1977), or Frank Loesser (1910-1969), say, than the Mosaic Law includes the Motor Vehicle code.

The difference is that poetry, no matter what outward form it assumes, has its own music. Samuel Taylor Coleridge talks about an even distribution of tone throughout the work, which gives rise to a living voice, recognizable even in the middle of the desert; John Ashbery calls it the magnetizing of language. Poems are written and sit on the page. They wait for the reader as the printed score waits for the soloist, or the conductor, to be realized. If the reader can hear a living voice addressing him, in a way he can attend to and understand, then he has performed the poem and animated its voice.

A song lyric, on the other hand, comes with a melody. Try to read Dorothy Fields's "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" as it is punctuated in these pages and not as it is sung. Who can value a transcription of a blues song


Dos Passos


Reed


Hartley


Wharton

when the original is out there, accessible, and probably better known than most of the poems in this anthology?

Generally speaking, poetry doesn't sell well in the bookstores. So it's one of those oddities of the marketplace that publishers call stuff poetry in order to sell it. It's as though the compilers of this anthology, by importing ringers from other genres, have attempted a little reverse marketing. But poetry is not a commodity. It is the publisher's bad conscience.

Reading this anthology, one begins to wonder what "American poetry" means. Is it written by citizens of the United States, either native or naturalized? Is it poetry written here, no matter what the legal status of the poet? Is it poetry that takes American places, people, and speech for its matter, but is written anywhere? Is it poetry written in American English? Can a person renounce being American, the way someone can choose to be American?


Parker


Johnson


T. Williams

These are questions *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* resolutely refuses to answer. You'll find here all the expected poems by the American expatriates. And you'll find as well poems by Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Helen Adam (who writes poems in Scots dialect), and Vladimir Nabokov—works that are American only because they were written in America. (I'm not suggesting these shouldn't be included, but I am curious to see how the series eventually will rule on W. H. Auden, Joseph Brodsky, and Paul Muldoon.)

The two long-standing traditions in poetry in English are the plain style and the golden. Of the twentieth century's major poets, T.S. Eliot and Robert Frost practice plain style. This tends to be direct, apparently unadorned, and sober. The voice is not distanced, and addresses the reader directly.

The golden style employs tropes and rhetoric, elaborate wit, is often self-conscious and referential, relying upon literary fancy rather than plain speech and moral order. The golden style is more playful, while the plain style appears more earnest. When Ezra Pound characterized T.S. Eliot as preferring Moses to the Muses, this is what he meant. The plain-style Frost and golden-style Stevens never tempered their mutual rivalry and mistrust. In his poems, Stevens always referred to himself in the third person.

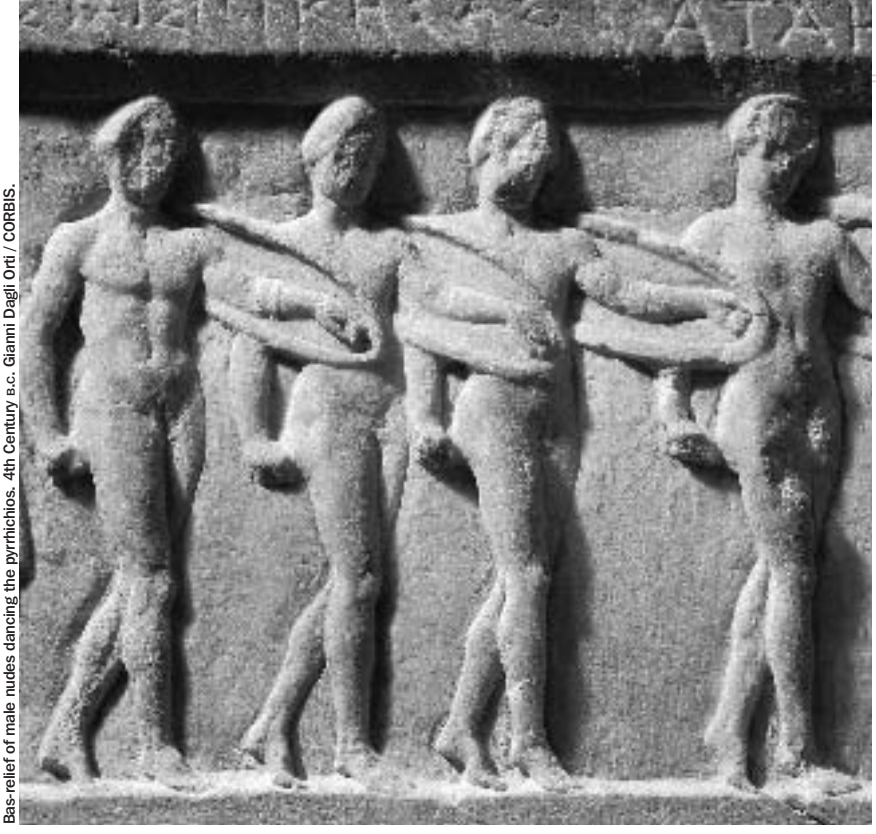
But there's another dichotomy. Frost and Stevens are eminently American poets. They lived in America, they wrote about the place and spoke its language. (Frost did launch his career in England, but only as a strategy to get his due back home.) Stevens didn't leave the country at all, except for vacations in the Caribbean; he kept up on art and philosophy through books, journals, and catalogs. Neither one of them shared in the glamour accorded the tribe of American expatriates active in Europe before World War II.

Pound and Eliot left America for the Old World with the explicit intention of promulgating what Pound called "World Literature." Following Dante's light as Dante followed Virgil's, Eliot became a British citizen and returned here only for lecture tours and other public occasions. His poetry conjures unreal cities and imaginary landscapes, an alien and eternal anywhere:

*Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining*
*We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other,*
*Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of sand,*
*Forgetting themselves and each other, united*
*In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye*
*Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity*
*Matter. This is the land. We have our inheritance.*

Pound, whose strongest poetry now appears to be the translations and imitations he wrote before 1920, invented a world of bards and troubadours, sages and scholar poets, truth-telling historians and displaced persons, which he inhabited as a man without a country. The early poems are so good, and Pound's social shadow so long and deep, that he cannot be disappeared from any history of poetry, no matter how disagreeable his politics, how poisonous his rage. And Pound, like Eliot, thought of what he did as world poetry rather than American. In his "perfect" Canto XIII, Pound's Chinese sage recalls *A day when the historians left blanks in their writings, / I mean for things they didn't know, / But that time seems to be passing.*

By grabbing nearly everything—plain style and golden, world poetry and local—the Library of America proves incapable of attempting to define twentieth-century American poetry. And *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* further muddies its own waters by mixing media—adding to the jumble an enormous set of songwriters, social critics, and extra-literary figures whose lives we have to forget well enough to judge their work. With the rise of electronic media—searchable and more inclusive than any book could ever be—this kind of vast, omnibus anthology is already a dinosaur. Selective intelligence is all editors have to offer readers when there is so much information available that it all looks like the chewing gum Henry Adams derided. Unless the Library of America wants to say that all this chewing gum is poetry. ♦



Bas-relief of male nudes dancing the pyrrhichios. 4th Century B.C. Gianni Dagli Orti / CORBIS.

# From Abraham to America

*Answering the question of why we still circumcise our sons.* **BY DAVID KLINGHOFFER**

Lately I've been noticing other men's private parts. It's not because I've decided to sample an alternate lifestyle, or because I've felt a new calling to urology. It has all been in a spirit of sociological inquiry, for I've been reading David L. Gollaher's *Circumcision: A History of the World's Most Controversial Surgery*, which claims that some 60.2 percent of American males have undergone the bizarre operation called circumcision.

I had expected the figure to be far higher and decided to conduct an informal study. So for a couple of weeks, after swimming each day at the local pool here on Mercer Island, Washington, I looked around in the public showers of the men's locker room. I saw not a single uncircumcised penis. In a Christian country like ours, where the Jewish obligation to circumcise infant males should be of negligible consequence, some large proportion of newborn boys have the tip of a highly sensitive bodily organ rudely snipped off. What compelling rationale could there be for this? Should more Americans consider letting their sons go uncut?

**Circumcision**
*A History of the World's Most Controversial Surgery*
by David L. Gollaher
Basic, 260 pp., $26

David Gollaher thinks so. In good, clear, pop-historical prose, he traces the story of circumcision from its earliest recorded appearance in Egypt, around 4000 B.C. Certain mummies from the period have been scanned by X-ray and found to bear signs of the surgery. A funerary bas-relief from 2400 B.C. shows priestly circumcisers doing the deed to young men, some of whom have to be restrained to keep them from fainting or running away. Under one scene a caption has the patient coaching the surgeon to "thoroughly rub off what is there," to which the doctor reassures him, "I will cause it to heal."

Still, it is unlikely that Americans would ever have embraced the surgery were it not for our Old Testament heritage. The patriarch Abraham was the first man ever to be commanded by God to undergo circumcision—at age ninety-nine and at his own hand, no less.

Over the 3,700 years that followed, Jewish commitment has occasionally faltered. Influenced by classical Greek culture, Hellenized Jews sought to hide or even reverse their circumcisions. (The objection had to do with modesty: In Greek eyes, the exposed glans made the Jewish male look as if he were in a nonstop state of arousal.)

Later Jewish religious radicals likewise sought to dispel the mystique of circumcision. Liberal German rabbis of the nineteenth century saw no reason that a Jew should not look like a German in every detail including his reproductive anatomy.

But out in the pews, ordinary Jews would have none of this particular reform. The ancient habit was retained, along with the Passover seder as the only two consistently observed aspects of biblical ritual among modern-day liberal Jews.

The rationale was never medical. As Maimonides, the medieval Jewish sage and physician, put it: "No one . . . should circumcise himself or his son for any other reason but pure faith." But one of the earliest promoters of circumcision American-style, Dr. Norman H. Chapman, in 1882 called Moses "a good sanitarian" and endorsed the surgery as a "precautionary measure" against a variety of complaints linked with an irritated foreskin, including paralysis and spinal deformity. As a prophylactic measure, circumcision was introduced in 1870 in New York City by that "Columbus of the prepuce," Dr. Lewis A. Sayre.

*David Klinghoffer, the author of* The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy, *is writing a biography of the patriarch Abraham.*

Since David Gollaher wants to make the case that Americans would be better off if we rejected circumcision, he focuses on the medical reasons for infant circumcision. As Maimonides anticipated, these reasons are pretty weak. The practice certainly offers a defense against irritation and inflammation of the glans. It probably gives some protection from penile cancer, since there is less penis there in which cancer cells may gestate. But penile cancer is an extremely rare condition to begin with.

Some research suggests that circumcised men are less vulnerable to sexually transmitted disease. It's unclear, however, whether this benefit comes more from the operation itself or from good sexual habits like self-restraint and hygiene. Though Gollaher doesn't say so, there also has to be a correlation between circumcision and socioeconomic status, and it figures that children from more privileged backgrounds stand a better chance of learning about how to avoid getting the clap.

Against these modest benefits is to be weighed the extreme discomfort of the infant boy. Anyone who has attended a *brit milah* (the Jewish rite of circumcision) will recall the baby's screams as he's carried back from the *mohel* (circumciser) to his mother. This is not gentle surgery, and Gollaher observes that in hospitals it is generally conducted without anesthetic.

Finally there is the diminution of sexual pleasure entailed by removing the protective sheath from the glans, ensuring that this once exquisitely sensitive skin will acquire a new leathery toughness from exposure to the wide world. (This effect was recognized by Maimonides, who saw it as an inducement to sexual moderation.)

At best, then, circumcision adds up to a medical draw. And as Gollaher points out, it's a basic rule of medicine that a surgeon shouldn't operate unless benefits *outweigh* risks. For circumcision opponents, this is pretty much all you need to know. Groups like NORM (National Organization of Restoring Men) and NOHARMM (National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males) have sought to turn public opinion against the surgery. Since 1971, the American Academy of Pediatrics has twice reversed its opinion. The latest view of its Task Force on Circumcision (1999) is that "existing scientific evidence supports potential benefits of newborn circumcision; however these data are not sufficient to recommend routine neonatal circumcision."

If the only benefits of circumcision were medical, then snipping off your newborn boy's prepuce would indeed be an unjust welcome to the world. But in his descriptions of traditional attitudes toward circumcision, Gollaher assumes that these traditions are merely of antiquarian interest—ignoring the possibility that they may have something of lasting value to say.

*Traditionally, circumcisions are performed in public, in daylight, as an indication that what a man does with his body is not just his business.*

Let us at least entertain the view in which, to put it simply, God cares about circumcision. After all, this biblical outlook is the only way of accounting for the fact that in our famously Bible-believing country, a peculiar practice like male genital cutting took hold. Only in his last two paragraphs does Gollaher gesture to this, the real reason that circumcision prospered here as almost nowhere else. For some three centuries, "through the forming of a nation and the trial by fire of the Civil War, American ideology [came to embrace] the idea that, in the divine scheme of history, America had succeeded Israel," becoming in Lincoln's phrase, God's "almost-chosen people." The true meaning of circumcision for America is then perhaps bound up with the meaning of this "ritual" for Abraham's progeny. And what is that?

As illuminated in the Talmud and Midrash, circumcision points first of all to the need for sexual self-control. Traditionally, *brit milah* is performed in public, in daylight, as an indication to all that what a man does with his penis is not just *his* business. This level of meaning has not been lost on the folks at NORM and NOHARMM. Gollaher notes that in recruiting adherents, the two groups have done rather well among activist homosexuals, to whom the appeal of considering one's choice of sex partners to be a purely private matter seems obvious.

Circumcision also has to do with nationhood. It's a sign of unity with other men of your nation. It also has to do with forgiveness. Along with the Sabbath, circumcision is understood as an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. Abstaining from creativity one day a week reminds us of His lordship of the impersonal world of human interactions, while chipping off a bit of your most prized organ (well, after the brain, maybe your second-most prized organ) calls to mind His mastery of the personal world of human relations as well.

The meaning of circumcision can speak to non-Jewish Americans as much as to Jews. That day on which the patriarch Abraham took himself in hand, he was not alone. Tradition tells us he also circumcised the several hundred members of his extended household. Abraham recognized that a household must be united by common values, and the values of his household were crystallized in the mark of *brit milah*. Despite an ethnic heritage that was diverse in the extreme and today grows ever more diverse, America has likewise drawn strength from the common values of its people.

So, I don't really think it's too much of a stretch to say that American values, which overlap with biblical values to a remarkable degree, are manifested by the little mark at the tip of 60 percent of American penises. ♦

# Low-Budget Highbrow

*Classic Arts Showcase has a little bit of everything.* **BY RICHARD KOSTELANETZ**

To my culturally critical mind, the richest show on television these past few years has been an austere program known as Classic Arts Showcase. Consisting of excerpts from decades-old films, videos accompanying classical music, concert performances, and related highbrow stuff, Classic Arts Showcase is produced by a Los Angeles foundation for free distribution to public stations.

In New York City, hour-long modules appear on Long Island public television, the Board of Education's station, and the City University station. I watch it whenever possible.

Actually, it's more correct to say that I videotape it. The program is hard to watch as broadcast, containing as it does a lot of classical warhorses accompanied by bucolic scenes from one or another obvious landscape—the Czech Republic for Dvorak, Penshurst Place for Elgar, American prairies for Copland, and so on—and then too many slick clips from a 1950s Firestone television program on the arts.

Videotaped, however, Classic Arts Showcase is far more acceptable: The viewer can use the fast-forward button on the remote control to zip through the junk. Indeed, since the City University channel broadcasts the program for several hours through the weekend nights, I customarily record an entire VHS tape every weekend for playback on my own time during the week.

Here are some of the gems I have seen:

- Footage of live performances by the legendary diva Maria Callas, who must be seen for her reputation to be believed.
- The classical-music abstractions by Oskar Fischinger (1900-1967), who taught Walt Disney how to do *Fantasia* before he quit the project.
- Marian Anderson singing the spiritual "Crucifixion" to the accompaniment of a quiet piano.
- Scenes from the Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger film *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951), which I'd never seen before, which I now identify as the first and perhaps the greatest opera movie (as distinct from the filming of an opera) ever made.
- Classic silent shorts by George Méliès, among others, often with more recent soundtracks, and the Pathé comedy *The Policeman's Little Run* (1907).
- A great live performance at night in Verona of Giacomo Puccini's "Invocation to the Moon" from *Turandot*.
- Scenes from a 1939 film of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* performed by the D'Oyle Carte company.
- Van Cliburn's legendary, prize-winning performances in Moscow in 1958.
- John Eliot Gardner conducting Claudio Monteverdi's *Vespers* in Venice's San Marco, and Colin Davis conducting Mozart's *Requiem* at the Herkulesaal in Munich.
- A Dave Fleischer cartoon, *Greedy Humpty Dumpty* (1936), where the protagonist speaks in couplets and two composers get credits.
- Scenes from Buster Keaton's *The General* (1927), Cecil B. DeMille's *King of Kings* (1927), Marcel Carne's *Children of Paradise* (1945), Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* (1930), and Walter Ruttmann's *Symphony of a Great City* (1927).
- A succession of jazz pianists, including Fats Waller and Art Tatum.
- Margot Fonteyn's duets with Rudolph Nureyev in the 1960s.
- Lily Pons in 1946 singing "The Bell Song" from Léo Delibes's *Lakmé* as no one has done that virtuoso vehicle since.
- Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914), with original titles by Gabriele D'Annunzio.

The Everett Collection

*Josephine Baker in* Zouzou

*Richard Kostelanetz is a widely published poet and critic whose latest collection of essays,* More on Innovative Music(ian)s, *will appear later this year.*

• Josephine Baker in *Zouzou* (1934), wearing only pasties above her waist, looking as classically beautiful as any woman who ever lived.

• Scenes from Bruno Bozzetto's marvelous *Allegro Non Troppo* (1976), the feature-length European competitor to *Fantasia*.

• Glenn Gould playing Bach's *Partita, no. 6*, Ralph Kirkpatrick playing Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* on a harpsichord in 1978, and Andres Segovia's thick hands at eighty-three playing a Bach gavotte.

• Billie Holiday performing with Roy Eldridge, Gerry Mulligan, and Ben Webster in a 1957 telecast.

• Bing Crosby in 1933, before he became slick, singing *Auf Wiedersehn, My Dear*.

• The Russian ballerina Maya Plisetskaya performing a dying swan to Camille Saint-Saëns's music.

Otherwise, remote control securely in hand, I've seen performances filmed in the late 1940s in the shell of the Berlin Philharmonic; Arturo Toscanini conducting Beethoven's setting of "Ode to Joy"; great singers I'd never known before and haven't heard anywhere else (beginning with the countertenor Jochen Kowalski); passages from Hans-Jürgen Syberberg films of Richard Wagner operas that I would never otherwise have seen.

Lord knows where the producers find this stuff. Of course, one's appetite comes away from the Classic Arts Showcase's excerpts more often whetted than satisfied. You also get the impression that within their generally high levels the producers can't distinguish what is merely good from that which is great: When I watch the six hours I've recorded on a VHS tape, I usually lament the inclusion of excerpts I've already seen, zipping through what only ruthless fast-forwarding can correct. But when I finish, I find that at least one excerpt (out of several dozen) persuades me to keep the tape, rather than put it on the pile for rerecording.

This review, of course, has turned into a catalog of masterpieces identified only by name. But in that respect, it resembles the potpourri of the Classic Arts Showcase: There's no other way to suggest the richness and variety of the Classic Arts Showcase.

Be warned: This is low-budget highbrow programming, which keeps costs down by making almost no gestures of explanation about the things it shows. If many of the artists and works I've mentioned aren't already familiar, perhaps the program is best avoided. But if you want to move beyond the middlebrow and are willing to do a little fingerwork with the remote control, the Classic Arts Showcase is the only television to watch. ♦

# Reviving *The Exorcist*

## *A 1970s horror classic gets a new lease on life.*

**BY JOHN J. MILLER**

There's a scene in *The Exorcist*—the book, not the movie—in which a motion-picture director shares a trade secret: "Darling, all you really need is a brilliant cutter." Many readers of William Peter Blatty's novel believe *The Exorcist*—the movie, not the book—suffered from too much cutting.

That's because the book makes clear something the motion picture leaves a bit opaque. Did the priests who performed an exorcism on a 12-year-old girl defeat the demon that had taken possession of her, or did the demon defeat them? In the book, there's no question: Good beats Evil, even though there's a casualty list. Some moviegoers, however, come away with a different impression. "The Devil is the victor in the film," said Juan Cortes, a Jesuit psychologist in a 1974 *Newsweek* cover story on the movie, which will be re-released in theaters on September 22, with eleven minutes of new footage salvaged from the cutting-room floor.

The confusion emanating from the original film is understandable, even though the movie is a reasonably faithful adaptation of the book. Blatty himself, in an interview for the film's twenty-fifth anniversary, complained, "Many people to this day interpret *The Exorcist* as a downer. . . . I don't want them to think the Devil won." In the new version, it will be difficult to come away with this thought—or to interpret *The Exorcist* as anything but a deeply felt expression of Catholicism.

The basic storyline by now is well known: A demon surreptitiously takes over the mind and body of Regan MacNeil (famously played by Linda Blair). Her mother, a well-known actress living temporarily in Georgetown, watches her sweet daughter's behavior transform over the course of several weeks, with increasingly grotesque results as Regan turns into a cursing, convulsing, and crotch-grabbing hellion. Doctors run test after test, but can't explain her condition. Finally the mother, an atheist, looks in desperation to the Catholic Church for an exorcism. After some deliberating, a pair of priests performs the old rite on Regan in her bedroom. At a climactic moment, Lankester Merrin, an experienced exorcist, dies from a heart attack. Damien Karras, a younger priest who recently has doubted his faith, must then complete the ceremony.

Here's where matters become muddled. Karras invites the demon into his own body—"Come into me!" he shouts—and it does, vacating Regan. The priest then crashes out of an upstairs window—it's not clear whether he jumps of his own will or whether the devil makes him do it—and drops to his death. A third priest

*John J. Miller is national political reporter for* National Review.

Warner Brothers

*Max von Sydow and Jason Miller drive the Devil from Linda Blair in* The Exorcist.

arrives on the scene to perform last rites on Karras, who is taking his final breaths. In the book, Karras's "eyes [are] filled with peace; and with something else: something mysteriously like joy at the end of heart's longing." In the movie, however, the last time viewers get a look at Karras's eyes is right before the defenestration, and they glow with demonic intensity. It's a creepy sight, and no wonder it leaves plenty of viewers guessing.

Regan immediately recovers, and has no memory of what she's just gone through. Anybody who has watched the movie, of course, never forgets the shocking aspects of her possession: the guttural cussing that staggers even today's jaded sensibilities, the pea-green projectile vomiting, and, perhaps most unsettling, Regan's bloody masturbation with a crucifix.

By pushing the boundaries of what's acceptable to put in a film, *The Exorcist* launched a generation of gross-out flicks. Many of them felt free to exploit the trappings of Catholicism. *The Omen*, released in 1976, may be the best example of this phenomenon. In it, an adopted boy turns out to be the Antichrist. And where was he adopted? At an Italian hospital run by priests and nuns who knew his real identity.

In the American imagination, there's still something vaguely exotic about Catholicism, with its all-male priesthood, confessionals, Latin Masses, rosary beads, saints, and statues of Mary—all set to the backdrop of an ancient religion that considers itself authoritative. Exorcism contributes to the exoticism by formalizing an encounter with sinister supernatural forces. Toss in the horror genre's residual anti-Catholicism—stretching back to the 18th century with Gothic novelists like Anne Radcliffe and finding a home as recently as last year in the appalling film *Stigmata*—and it's no surprise Catholicism on screen can easily be made to seem menacing. It's hardly a coincidence that Showtime's *Possessed*, an original movie about the 1949 exorcism that Blatty used loosely as the basis for his novel, will premier on Halloween.

Catholics are not the only Christians who practice exorcism, of course. Yet the ritual remains most closely associated with Rome. Earlier this month, Pope John Paul II made headlines for conducting one in St. Peter's Square when a girl went into hysterics. (It is said to be only the third of his entire papacy.) Exorcism remains a key part of the adult initiation ceremony, and is even a routine aspect of the faith. When I converted to Catholicism three years ago, the priest conducted an exorcism by blowing air from his mouth into my face. (Exorcisms may also be performed on infants during baptism, but this is less common.) Many denominations wholly reject the idea of exorcism. When *The Exorcist* first hit the theaters, the *Christian Century* lambasted the film because it "uses the human fear of evil to create an emotional response and then provides—by our Protestant standards—a completely impossible solution."

At least it's a solution. A film like *The Omen* ornaments itself with Catholicism for distinctly non-Catholic purposes. Its message is hardly spiritual, and it ends with evil ascendant. It wants us to think the Antichrist walks among us, to quiver as we clear the theater, and to turn on a nightlight when we go to bed. The point is not to inspire or even instruct, but to freak out for the sake of freaking out. The religious dimensions are incidental—a religious means to a non-religious end.

Catholics have had a difficult time embracing *The Exorcist* because of its blatant blasphemies. (Portions of the book are even more revolting than the film, especially a description of the Black Mass.)

The new movie version, however, makes clear the point of the blasphemies by restoring a critical piece of dialogue between the two exorcists immediately before their showdown with Regan's tormenter. "Why this girl? It makes no sense," mutters Karras. "I think the point is to make us despair—to see ourselves as animal and ugly, to reject the possibility that God could love us," replies Merrin. The demon's purpose is not to humiliate Regan, but to spread hopelessness like a contagion among the rest of us. We can fight it off only through faith.

Both priests finally give their own lives to free Regan, which has always cast a dark shadow over the conclusion of *The Exorcist*. Yet the girl remains the moral center of the work. Her liberation from the demon, on both page and screen, ought to be regarded as a triumph.

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown," wrote the American horror writer H.P. Lovecraft in the 1920s. In *The Exorcist*, the devil certainly moves in mysterious ways—he's as terrifyingly unknowable as the Blair Witch. Yet for all its dabbling with the fear of the unknown, *The Exorcist* does say, forthrightly and in an age of skepticism, that confidence in faith will see us through. ♦

"His favorite book—next to the Bible ('everybody has to say that,' Gore said)—is *The Red and the Black* by Stendhal, the pen name of the 19th-century French author Marie Henri Beyle, which tells of a young man dealing with love and ambition in France after Napoleon."

*—Knight-Ridder*

"A new magazine profile by author Gail Sheehy diagnoses the gaffe-prone George W. Bush as probably dyslexic and speculates that he also suffers from attention deficit disorder."

*—New York Daily News*

**MEMO**

**TO:** Boss

**FROM:** The Old Roverino

Sheehy won't hurt. Public abominates and abhors the woman and will agree with your assessment that article is "abdominal" and "aberrant."

Veep hit us hard with Red & Black remark. Don't worry: French vote mostly in Massachusetts (Mass.). Rapid-response team ready to counter, and I mean immediately—a week at most.

Debate only two weeks away. Conferencing all a.m. looking for your answer to the "novel" question. Due respect to Old Man, focus group results aren't good for Stover at Yale.

Had research staff look everywhere, but couldn't find Bad Movie (Flaubert adultery book you described). Hemingway's See the Old Man also couldn't find. Huck Finn maybe too risky before live mikes.

Karen says Jane Austen not related to Stephen. Also came up with something called To the Lighthouse. Told her if we have to worry about the yachting vote, we'd better go home right now!

Finally settled on something by Stanislaw Przybyszewski. (Just kidding, Boss.)

The Rovemeister

P.S. Condoleezza says no need to apol for that Condominium thing. Says friends call her that all the time.