

Political Writings

by

T.L. Hubert Jr.

Preface

The following essays were originally written between 1996 and 2004 and appeared online at my former website on AOL, "Tom's Virtual Cultural Empire." With the discontinuation by AOL of web hosting, I decided to assemble these pieces in one package and make them available at my new site, pennuto.com.

In any set of writings going back several years, it is perhaps natural for an author to have second thoughts. Clearly I was very often mistaken in my attempts at political prognostication, such as when at the end of the first essay ("Clinton: Taking the Path of Nixon?") I suggested that then-President Clinton's actions might result in him leaving office prematurely, as Nixon did. (I doubt that in November 1996, anyone really foresaw the extreme lengths to which Clinton would go to remain in the presidency.) Nevertheless, I think that the extensively-documented pieces in this collection comprise a valuable record of the latter years of Clintonism and beyond. I have therefore not made any significant revisions other than the deletion of some obsolete links and occasional substitution of more current ones, and a few typographical corrections.

--T.L. Hubert Jr., Nov. 1, 2008

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Clinton: Taking the Path of Nixon?

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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Readers of the coverage of President Clinton immediately following the 1996 election, especially the fawning reportage of the *New York Times*, might be pardoned for thinking that only cooperative noises emanated from the White House during this period. For example, the *Times* write-up of Clinton's first post-election press conference spoke of a "big effort" on the President's part "to encourage stirrings of bipartisanship."^{1} But this apparent olive branch had to be set beside another, far less widely-reported piece of news, which was thus given in *USA Today* under the title "Clinton to 'go after' detractors":

President Clinton has told political supporters in Arkansas he will devote a lot of time going after detractors who pursued him on Whitewater and other ethical questions. He also called political attackers "a cancer" and vowed to "cut (them) out of American politics." The remarks, at an early Wednesday election party in a Little Rock hotel, were reported Thursday by The Associated Press. He said his political enemies have "hurt a lot of people in our state," and vowed to end "that kind of systematic abuse."^{2}

One is reminded forcefully of Nixon's observation, post Watergate, that when you hate your enemies, you destroy yourself. And there has been little room for any but the most rabid Clinton partisans to deny that the current president does indeed hate his enemies. The anti-Republican venom in the typical presidential speech, seemingly drained from the fangs of a good-sized adder, amply demonstrates that Bill Clinton is the most divisive politician on the current national scene. Now that there are no more campaign speeches to serve as an outlet for the president's vitriol, the other ways in which Clinton's hatred of enemies manifests itself may sow the seeds for his political destruction.

One Arkansas reporter who chronicled Clinton's years as governor of that state astutely remarked after the 1992 election that, "while Bill Clinton has been a winner, a leader of near-messianic appeal, he has never mastered the art of winning."^{3} This remained true in the way that his re-election was achieved. Witness his cynical ad campaign on Christian radio stations trumpeting his signing of the "Defense of Marriage Act," a bill widely regarded by gay voters--for the most part a solid pro-Clinton voting bloc--as against their interests.^{4} Witness also the fact that, as *Newsweek* admits, "the really effective negative campaigning had been done all along not by the Republicans but by the Democrats, with their 'Doleingrich' Medicare ads."^{5} However, consistent with a style refined in Arkansas (where one newspaper editor recalled that "**Bill Clinton was *the* dirty campaigner . . . He kept hollering about [his opponent]'s dirty campaigning, and he was running the dirtiest campaign of all**"),^{6} the president not only commissioned ads accusing Dole of offering nothing but "negative attacks,"^{7} but personally attacked his opposition in many campaign speeches. One of the more interesting was his

accusation that Republicans are, in his words, "**obsessed with my wife**"!{8} (Apparently the fact that fewer Americans believe her than believe him regarding Whitewater, or that her negative approval ratings remain high, has escaped presidential notice.){9}

Of course this belies Clinton's claim, when asked a question on MTV regarding how he would respond to "character attacks," that he would ignore them: ". . . *I do not intend to respond in kind I just don't think that it's good for America and I'm going to try to make this election about big things that touch the people we just saw on the side of the road there.*"{10} The "big things" never made it to the surface. Few people have a clear idea of what this re-elected president will do in a second term.{11} The only constant seems to be the recurring demonization of the president's enemies.{12}

Thomas Paine once said that "It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself."{13} Possessed of a considerable intelligence, Clinton has a lengthy record of making his intellect subservient to the needs of the moment. One could cite his labored rationale, during his college years, justifying himself in joining ROTC to avoid the draft but preserve his "**political viability**."{14} Or his plan to knock off Colin Powell as an opponent in the election by comparing him with George McClellan, the Civil War general whose entering the presidential race against Lincoln in 1864 was "an act of disloyalty" and "almost treasonous."{15} Or even Clinton's mis-citation in a stump speech of Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, which even after two tries he could not correctly identify:

Our friends on the other side, they complain about government all the time. They set it up as the enemy, it's government versus the people. The last time I checked, the Constitution said, "of the people, by the people and for the people." That's what the Declaration of Independence says. . . . {16}

Meanwhile, he is just one step ahead of numerous scandals that threaten his administration. This January, the case of **William Jefferson Clinton v. Paula Corbin Jones**, in which Clinton is accused of sexually harrassing a low-level employee of his while he was governor of Arkansas, will come before the U.S. Supreme Court. Stuart Taylor, writing in *American Lawyer* magazine, characterizes Paula Jones' evidence as "highly persuasive" and "far stronger than the evidence supporting Anita Hill's allegations of far less serious conduct by Clarence Thomas."{17} Besides this, there is "Filegate," the saga of snooping on 700 FBI files presided over by former bar-bouncer Craig Livingstone.{18} There is Whitewater, which Ross Perot predicted could snowball into "Watergate II."{19} There are the White House travel office firings and the recent questions regarding contributions to the Democratic party by Indonesian interests.

And we have not even mentioned the dubious dealings in which several past and present Clinton associates have found themselves. As Mark Hearne has noted, "It is simply not possible to consider the incredible number of Friends Of Bill who are under indictment, under investigation by independent counsel, in jail, or awaiting sentencing, and conclude that all the charges against Clinton are false."{20}

Given all of these pending scandals, it would seem incumbent upon Clinton to try to ruffle as few feathers as possible among the incoming Congress, which is still Republican-led. Although Bob

Dole stated that Clinton's re-election would mean that "he's going to spend half his time next year with investigations,"{21} the conciliatory post-election tone taken by the Speaker of the House{22} suggests that the president could make life easier for himself by trying to work with Congress rather than indulging in his usual campaign-style demagoguery.

But as Ross Perot pointed out, it is implausible that "a grown man in his middle age" will suddenly "have a personality change." {23} No doubt, with as much vigor as Nixon once pursued the punishment of those on his "enemies list," Clinton fully intends to keep his promise to go after his detractors. Our most divisive political figure will continue to attempt polarization of the nation. And inevitably, congressional Republicans will meet his political tactics with some of their own: specifically, renewed investigations. It will not take much for the press to become engrossed in the unfolding story of this administration's possible ethical lapses. The potential for impeachment of Clinton or indictment of the First Lady remains substantial. And the president's penchant for "divide and conquer" strategies could provide the spark that ignites the powder-keg of administration scandal.

Three hundred years ago, John Locke pointed out that, when the chief executive of a government leaves off acting by the "publick Will" with which he is empowered, "and acts by his own private Will, he degrades himself, and is but a single private Person without Power, and without Will, that has any Right to *Obedience*" {24} Richard Nixon found this out in a second term. And if Bill Clinton continues planning to "cut [enemies] out of American politics," he may find himself taking the same walk Nixon took in 1974: to a presidential helicopter waiting to take him back to his home state for good.

(November 11, 1996)

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- {2} Downloaded from *USA Today's* Web site (<http://www.usatoday.com>) 11/9/96.
- {3} Meredith L. Oakley, *On the Make: The Rise of Bill Clinton*. Washington: Regnery, 1994.
- {4} "Clinton ad pushes gay marriage ban," AP story carried in *Arizona Gazette*, 10/15/96. In at least one market (the present writer's), Clinton's campaign was even running ads on Rush Limbaugh's radio program!
- {5} "Kid Gloves," *Newsweek*, 11/18/96.
- {6} John R. Starr, qtd. in Oakley, p. 265.
- {7} "Masters of Disaster," *Newsweek*, 11/18/96.
- {8} "Clinton assails GOP as `obsessed with my wife,'" *Washington Times*, 11/4/96.
- {9} Richard Brookheiser, "Throwing the Book at Her," *National Review*, 2/12/96, p. 24.
- {10} "08-30-96 President Interview by MTV," downloaded from AOL's "White House Forum."
- {11} See "The Real Bill Clinton Still Hasn't Stood Up," *Arizona Gazette*, 8/31/96; Todd S. Purdum, "Clinton's Mandate Is Unclear," *New York Times*, 11/6/96; Joe Klein, "The Running Is Done," *Newsweek*, 11/18/96; Joseph Mianowany, "What Now, Mr. President?" (AOL weekly commentary feature), week of 11/7/96.

{12} See Kingsley Guy, "Easier to Demonize the Opponent than to Take Issue with the Point of View," (Ft. Lauderdale) *Sun-Sentinel*, 5/4/95, p. 25A; and "Who are the Extremists?," *Wall Street Journal*, 4/25/96, p. A20. As an example, see "Clinton Blames Republicans for Bitter National Mood," Reuters, 10/24/96, where the president claims that Republicans "**figure if they can make people mad enough and disoriented enough, they will just lash out at whoever's in**"--which says a great deal about Clinton's view of both the Republican Party and the American people!

{13} *Rights of Man*, Part One. Cited from Eric Foner, ed., *Thomas Paine: Collected Writings*. NY: Library of America, 1995, p. 448.

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{15} "The Road Not Taken," *Newsweek*, 11/18/96.

{16} "10-17-96 President Remarks to the People of Orange County CA," in "White House Forum."

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{19} Ernest Tollerson, "Perot Says Whitewater Will Hobble a Clinton 2nd Term," *New York Times*, 10/29/96.

{20} Mark F. (Thor) Hearne II, "To My Democrat Friends," originally posted to the Town Hall Forum on 10/11/96, as read on the *Rush Limbaugh Show*, October 21, 1996. (Downloaded from <http://www.frc.org/townhall>.)

{21} Qtd. in Terence Hunt, "Clinton Problems Could Mount," Associated Press, 11/4/96.

{22} Francis X. Clines, "Gingrich Offers Clinton Olive Branch," *New York Times*, 11/7/96.

{23} Tollerson, "Perot . . . ," op. cit..

{24} John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988, p. 368 (II, para. 151).



Shake Hands with Bill (or Else!)

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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There is a lesson to be learned from the story of the **Rev. Rob Schenck**. And from the story of **Patricia Mendoza**. And from the story of **William J. Kelly**. It is that criticizing the President of the United States can be hazardous to your freedom. An improper word at a Christmas Eve service can get you detained by the Secret Service. Declining to shake Mr. Clinton's hand at an impromptu stop can prompt an interrogation of your "*sexual orientation*," and court charges. And an inappropriate question at a town meeting can win you twenty-seven hours in police custody, shackled in handcuffs and leg irons.

It is likely that few people have heard the stories of Rev. Schenck, or Mrs. Mendoza, or Mr. Kelly. Newspaper coverage of their stories has been extremely slight. However, the Mendoza case did become a *cause célèbre* on talk radio, and the conservative *Washington Times* tracked its progress, which caused the mainstream press to offer some begrudging reporting on it. Apparently speaking for the media elite, Rekha Basu of the *Des Moines Register* poured scorn on Rush Limbaugh and other conservative talk radio personalities for "making a heroine" of Mrs. Mendoza. In righteous indignation, Basu asked, "*Since when do you earn heroine status for profaning a president?*"^{1} (The use of the verb "**profane**" is intriguing, as it appears to reveal Mr. Clinton's demigod-like status in the minds of his media "priests." As Gideon's father once said to a similarly idolatrous group, "*Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save him?*"^{2})

The **Schenck** incident occurred at Christmas at the Washington National Cathedral. The *Washington Post* reported Rev. Schenck's account of it, that "while waiting to receive communion, he leaned over the altar rail toward the president's nearby seat and quietly told Clinton: '*God will hold you to account, Mr. President.*'" Apparently the comment was intended in reference to the president's notorious veto of the partial-birth abortion ban. There was no further interaction between the two men, but Rev. Schenck was nevertheless physically detained by the Secret Service while leaving the cathedral, had his wallet searched and his driver's license extracted, and during this search was told he could not contact a lawyer. One of the agents "quoted the president as having complained . . . that Schenck had '**said words**' to him."^{3} Not surprisingly, a Secret Service spokesperson later vouched for the appropriateness of the agents' actions.^{4}

Now it is true that the Secret Service's job in protecting the president is a thankless one, and it would be understandable if in isolated cases they did overreact to prevent a potential threat. Several alleged threats on this particular president's life have already been acted upon by the Secret Service, including some via e-mail, a plot by a white supremacist group in the Midwest,

and an incident involving a Montana man who said that "demons" had told him to kill the president.{5} Barricades were erected on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House during Clinton's first term, apparently as a security measure.{6}

Surely it was in poor taste, at the very least, for the Rev. Schenck to say what he said in the midst of a church service, even though his detention was out of proportion to his perceived crime of having "**said words**" that the president didn't like. But given the new dangers against terrorism both abroad and at home, and the rise of domestic crackpots such as the pilot of a plane which crashed into the White House in 1995,{7} one could perhaps chalk up an isolated incident like that involving the Rev. Schenck to overzealous, but not malicious, performance of security functions.

However, there is also the case of **Patricia Mendoza** to consider. Mrs. Mendoza and her husband were attending a festival in Chicago on July 2, 1996, when President Clinton, making an impromptu campaign stop, approached her to shake hands with her.{8} Mrs. Mendoza reportedly told Clinton, "*You suck, and those boys died*"--a reference to the deaths of 19 servicemen in a bombing in Saudi Arabia the previous month.{9} Following this, according to a videotape of the incident, Clinton pointed Mrs. Mendoza out to White House Deputy Counsel Bruce Lindsey, and a black Secret Service agent pulled aside another agent and gestured in the woman's direction. After Clinton's departure, two Secret Service agents questioned her, and the Chicago police arrested her and her husband, alleging disorderly conduct.{10}

Several features of the whole affair-- such as the length of time between the incident and the Secret Service's intervention,{11} questions during the interrogation about the woman's "sexual orientation,"{12} the failure to file federal charges (despite claims initially that a threat on the president's life had been made),{13} and the fact that, even after the disorderly conduct charges were dropped, city officials made noises about filing municipal charges against the couple{14}-- suggest a vendetta executed with Clinton's tacit approval. Rep. Robert Livingston, Louisiana Republican, put it this way:

Is this going to be the norm? If you criticize the president, are you going to be arrested by a bunch of federal agents and thrown in jail overnight? That's a frightening thought. . . . I think on the heels of this FBI investigation, with these FBI files in the White House, this kind of symbolizes an appalling lack of respect for human rights and for the rights of people to speak out in this country.{15}

No doubt the Clinton White House did not expect the outrage that followed the incident and its highlighting on *C-SPAN* and several talk radio programs.{16} The Secret Service quickly backpedaled from the issue, while complaining of "continuing media interest." {17} A brief hearing was held in Chicago on August 27--the second day of the Democratic National Convention--at which time the case was postponed. (A member of the Mendozas' defense team commented that "*we all know the reason the case was continued. They want to wait until the convention is out of town.*"{18}) Then, in October--as previously noted--the disorderly conduct charges were dropped.

Nor is the case of the Mendozas unprecedented. Ruth Larson of the *Washington Times* noted similarities between it and that of **William J. Kelly**, described as "a Chicago-area activist," who was seized and detained by police for more than a day, after he asked President Clinton an embarrassing question at a July 1993 town meeting. After Kelly's challenge to the president to honor his middle-class tax cut pledge, "**Clinton went berserk,**" according to Kelly; "**he pounded the podium, his face got red, and then he started lecturing me.**" Kelly was allowed to leave the hotel where the president was speaking, but three hours later police arrested him at his parents' home and held him for 27 hours. Perhaps no one should be surprised that the charges against Kelly, like those against the Mendozas, were dropped six months later.{19}

Of course one would not be completely fair to the president if one did not record that there have been some incidents in which the Secret Service does not appear to have been called out to detain, harass, and/or intimidate an ideological opponent. Valerie Parker of Bloomington, Illinois, interrupted a Clinton jog in California by shouting that he was "*a disgrace to the office of the presidency, to [his] gender, and to this nation,*" as well as a "*draft-dodging, yellow-bellied liar*" and numerous other insults. However, on this occasion, there was apparently no need for the Secret Service to do more than ensure that Ms. Parker kept a respectable distance from Clinton, since a supportive crowd shouted her down.{20} It is interesting that Parker, whose reported invective could easily have seemed threatening in the eyes of the president's security detail, **did not** receive the treatment afforded the far less threatening Rev. Schenck or Mrs. Mendoza. Perhaps Mr. Clinton feels that when the bystanders are already behind you, having your opponent arrested in front of them does not serve your public relations interests!

The case of an AIDS activist who calls himself "*Luke Sissyfag*" is even more notable. In December of 1993, just over four months after Kelly's forcible detention, Mr. "Sissyfag" interrupted a Clinton speech at Georgetown Medical Center in Washington by shouting, "*Talk is cheap, and we need action. You're hiding behind the quilts. You are doing nothing.*" However, the president showed even more magnanimity to this individual than he would later show Ms. Parker. "Part of my job is to be a lightning rod," said Mr. Clinton, "to lift the hopes and aspirations of the American people, even though there's no way I can now keep everybody alive who already has AIDS." Mr. "Sissyfag" was **not incarcerated**,{21} and he **went on to heckle Health Secretary Donna Shalala's speech** the next month at the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League,{22} and **to disrupt another event attended by the president**, an Easter service at Washington's Foundry United Methodist Church{23} (shades of the Rev. Schenck incident?). Perhaps Mr. Clinton reasoned that his need to avoid appearing "politically incorrect" by detaining a homosexual activist outweighed Mr. "Sissyfag's" potential menace to presidential safety.

It appears, then, that an AIDS activist can harass the president and his administration with impunity. And an average citizen like Parker, if she's lucky enough to catch Mr. Clinton while he is buoyed by favorable crowd vibes, can also tell him off without any reprisal. But one cannot count on this luck at all times, as the cases of Mrs. Mendoza, Mr. Kelly, and most recently Rev. Schenck warn us. Freedom of speech has definite restrictions when it comes to the space around this president--not for leftist AIDS activists, but for those on the right of Clinton. (In fact, perhaps the interrogation mentioned above regarding Mrs. Mendoza's "**sexual orientation**" can

be best understood when we consider it in light of the "Sissyfag" episode. One wouldn't want to mistakenly incarcerate an AIDS activist, especially before an election!)

The lesson to be learned from these events is clear. If, like Mrs. Mendoza, you find Bill Clinton barreling toward you to shake hands with you, please keep yourself from going to jail by **shaking his hand** and **keeping your mouth shut**. (You can always use *a good strong hand soap* afterwards!)

(January 1997)

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{10} Larson, "Husband tells . . .", op. cit..

{11} Joseph Curl, "Mendozas' court case postponed until October," *Washington Times*, 9/8/96, p. 8.

{12} Larson, "Husband . . ."

{13} Curl, "Mendozas' . . ."

{14} Richard Boudreaux, "Charges Dropped After Pair's Clinton Insults," *Los Angeles Times*, 10/30/96, p. A-9.

{15} Larson, "Couple's . . ."

{16} Larson, "Husband . . ."

{17} Larson, "Couple's . . ."

{18} Curl, "Mendozas' . . ."

{19} Larson, "Couple's . . ." A transcript of the exchange can be found at the White House's Web Page (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>), albeit in a form which, conveniently enough, omits most of what Mr. Kelly has to say ("*Remarks by the President to the Conference on the Future of the American Workplace, Sheraton Chicago Hotel, Chicago, Illinois,*" 7/26/93). The fullest report I have found of the exchange occurs in John Coyne Jr., "Rebel with a cause," *National Review*, 5/2/94, p. 24.

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The Biggest "Breach"

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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In recent weeks, President Clinton has garnered some favorable press coverage by receiving spiritual counsel from the Rev. Robert Schuller, pastor of the Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, California. The *Washington Post* revealed that Schuller supplied Clinton with a biblical text which the president constantly quotes in his current speeches,

Isaiah 58:12:

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Professing to have been inspired by these words, Clinton has been busily "preaching reconciliation," according to the *Post*, "and casting himself as a unifying force in a divisive world." {1} Recently he waxed eloquent at a National Prayer Breakfast, exhorting those in attendance "to think about who is in the breach if we're supposed to be repairers of the breach." One of the groups Clinton claimed was in the breach was "politicians":

This town is gripped with people who are self-righteous, sanctimonious, and hypocritical; all of us are that way sometimes. I plead guilty, from time to time. We also tend to get -- we spend an enormous amount of time here in Washington trying to get even. And it doesn't matter who started it. I remember when I came here one time, I got so mad at our friends in the Congress and the Republican Party because they were real mean to me over something. I went back to the White House and I asked somebody who had been there a while in Washington, and I said, now, why in the world did they do that? They said, it's payback time. I said, what do you mean? They said, well, they think the Democrats in Congress did this to Republican Presidents. I said, I didn't even live here then, why are they paying me back? They said, oh, you don't understand, you've just got to pay back. So then, pretty soon I was behaving that way. I'd wake up in the morning and my heart was getting a little harder. Now, who can I get even with? You think -- this happens to you, doesn't it? . . . {2}

The sheer mendacity of the concocted White House conversation detailed above--where President Bill, no doubt fresh from trashing Republicans as cutters of Medicare or polluters of air, has a sudden lapse of memory and stands bewildered at why the other party is "real mean" to him--is astounding, but incidental compared to the goal Mr. Clinton's "whopper" is apparently intended to serve. Having been urged by Schuller to govern "with a pastoral heart," {3} and having just after the 1992 election "let on that he harbored some pastoral ambitions in the Oval Office," {4} the president seems to be campaigning for the role of Breach Repairer in Chief. Forget his past improprieties, and freshly discovered ones such as the renting of the Lincoln

Bedroom to Democratic party donors.{5} Forget that the Washington bureau chief of the *London Sunday Times* recently noted that our friends overseas deplore "the **decline of the office of the presidency**," and the "tide of sleaze that has washed right through Washington at every level, which has . . . degraded the office of the presidency, and at the same time diminished the standing of America in the world."{6} The president is too busy seeking, to borrow a Schuller phrase, "*the emotional resources to practice leadership*"{7} to worry about such niceties. He strikes an ecclesiastical note by promising to lead us over his much-touted "bridge" to "a blessed land of new promise." He reminds us that "all the world's wealth and a thousand armies are no match for the strength and decency of the human spirit."{8} One must "embrace with joy and gratitude this phenomenal opportunity and responsibility" or be part of the "toxic atmosphere of cynicism" that our pastor--er, *president*--deplores.{9}

But one *must* be cynical, for the president's shifts in his religious attitudes have closely trailed his political convenience throughout his political life. Meredith Oakley's biography of Clinton noted that "*his lusty singing with the choir while strategically ensconced behind the preacher during televised Sunday services at Immanuel Baptist Church, particularly during his two-year hiatus from public office in the early 1980s, was pointedly noted by critics throughout his Arkansas political career.*"{10} And Clinton's present highlighting of religious themes in his speeches should be compared with the following information reported by *Time* magazine in the spring of 1993:

. . . Unlike Jimmy Carter, who made his born-again experience as a Baptist a public testament to his integrity, Clinton is deeply reticent about his faith, even **showing mild disdain for those who would play up their faith in any way.** "He would turn off the TV angrily whenever a beauty contestant said her success was due to Jesus Christ," his mother Virginia Kelley once said.{11}

Obviously Clinton's reticence has given way to a desire to showcase his own "integrity" by alluding often to religious themes. And gaining an ally like Schuller, who was displayed prominently next to the First Lady at the State of the Union address,{12} was no doubt fortuitous for Clinton. Ron Sider, a professor at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, told the *Washington Post* that Schuller "is an example of an evangelical who puts a straight emphasis on self esteem and feeling good about oneself . . . It's not clear that the full historic Christian affirmation of sin is as clear in his preaching as it might be."{13} This seems a nice way of putting the fact that Schuller's teachings, which even *Newsweek* suggests are "**an inversion of the Gospels**,"{14} are comprised more of self-esteem and "*possibility thinking*" than of repentance for sin and faith in the atonement of Christ.

Few will find it hard to imagine the appeal to a man like Clinton of a religion that does not insist on an individual's getting right with God. Unlike Shakespeare's King Claudius, the president has seemingly never asked himself,

*Try what repentance can. What can it not?
Yet what can it when one cannot repent?*{15}

Rather, his actions reflect a comfort in clothing himself with the words of the faith he professes, while missing the very essence of Christianity. Even people of good will who do not share the Christian faith, such as Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists, can empathize with the disgust of many Christians for a man who claims their faith without matching it with his actions. This president has found that hypocrisy is, as Molière wrote, "**an art whose imposture is always respected, and even when it's uncovered, no one dares to say anything against it.**"{16} And having long ago mastered that "art," Mr. Clinton brazenly continues to mouth platitudes and pretend that his counterfeit spirituality, despite its lack of life-changing impact, is "the real thing."

The truly sad thing is perhaps not the falsification and evasiveness of this president, repeated with such regularity that the traits seem almost pathological by now. More tragically, it is still generally the case that "**no one dares to say anything against it.**" Rather than outrage, many Americans betray apathy{17} or rickety "judge-not" rationalizations regarding Clinton.

For example, Schuller asserts, "**There are real character accusations against him, but you can't pass judgment until they're proven. . . . I'm a Christian and Jesus didn't say, 'I love you, if.' Jesus specialized in loving sinners.**"{18}

But one would be hard pressed to find the **marshmallow Jesus** that Schuller implies in the Bible. Indeed, Jesus *did* love sinners, but the sinners who congregated around Christ **repented**. To those who would not repent, such as the Pharisees, Christ remained open but uncompromising; one never finds Him telling them to open up to "possibility thinking," but rather putting them on notice that their very souls depended on their reaction to Him: "**And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life**" (John 5:40). In another biblical incident, Jesus loved the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21), yet allowed him to walk away--without "*repairing the breach*" between the ruler's love of possessions and his desire to follow Christ, so he could keep a foot in both worlds. Anyone who feels that Jesus would tell Bill Clinton to "*let his hurt be his halo*," or be taken in by the president's glib and frequent professions of faith, has obviously forgotten the Savior's reprimand to some who professed Him: "**And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?**" (Luke 6:46)

Also, compare the people who followed Jesus, who were inspired to suffer torture and death for Him, with the rather unseemly bunch gathered around the president. The exposures of Vice President Al Gore's fundraising calls from the White House,{19} Hillary Clinton's involvement with an aide's "cloning" of a database of donors,{20} and her chief of staff's acceptance of a \$50,000 contribution to the Democratic National Committee while in the White House{21}--to take only examples from the week in which this essay was written--show that this administration's unrepaired "breaches" are ethical ones. The influence of the president has been detected by at least one commentator in Gore's questionable fundraising tactics,{22} and it is likely that the mad scramble for campaign cash by this administration's minions derives directly from Clinton, who as governor of Arkansas kept himself politically alive by raising huge sums of cash for his reelection.{23} However, the response on these issues from the man with whom **the buck stops** has been anything but forthcoming:

And I also don't think it's good enough to say "it is legal." I think we should be held to a higher standard than just "it is legal." But what I do want you to know

is, when it is obvious that we have a disagreement, when I read reports or see them on television and I think you see this in a certain way and I just honestly see it in a different way, I think it's helpful to the American people and to you and to me for me to tell how I see it. That's all. . . . But I -- but if I honestly disagree with you about what's right and wrong, I should be free to say that. But in the end, the answer to this is to pass a reasonable campaign finance reform bill this year. That's what I really believe. {24}

The president's moral subjectivism is quite convenient, and may be a great help to numerous **defense lawyers** currently shepherding their clients through the justice system. ("*Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I think you see armed robbery in a certain way and my client just honestly sees it in a different way . . .*") But how Mr. Clinton feels himself worthy to heal the nation's ills, or to repair *any* kind of **breach** in our society, remains a mystery. After all, one has to have *standards* to be a moral leader.

A good reason for refusing to take Clinton's breach-repairing aspirations as anything other than sanctimony appears in the very chapter of scripture that he has bent for his own purposes. After all, a few verses before the "repairer of the breach" reference, we read that the Lord promises to respond "[i]f thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity" (Isa. 58:9). Given Bill's spending-cut hocus-pocus with his most recent budget (98% of the cuts occurring only after he leaves office),{25} his eagerness not to alleviate the "yoke" of the federal deficit is obvious. And his abilities at "putting forth the finger" {26} to blame Republicans and "speaking vanity" are legendary!

One hopes that sometime this president will proceed on to the following chapter of Isaiah, where we read that "**the LORD's hand is not shortened**, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: **But your iniquities have separated between you and your God . . .**" (Isa. 59:1-2). As long as the same "crooked paths" (59:8) are traveled by this White House, the biggest "**breach**" facing Bill Clinton will be a mental one: the yawning chasm between his vainglorious self-image and the sordid reality of what is done by his administration.

(March 8, 1997)

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*"I do not know that Englishman alive
With whom my soul is any jot at odds
More than the infant that is born tonight.
I thank my God for my humility"*

--seems eerily Clintonian, like the pious reading by the president of Romans 12:16-21 (in "President at National Prayer Breakfast," op. cit.), weighed against his post-election remarks "**call[ing] political attackers 'a cancer' and vow[ing] to 'cut (them) out of American politics'"** (see my related essay "Clinton: Taking the Path of Nixon?" for the reference).

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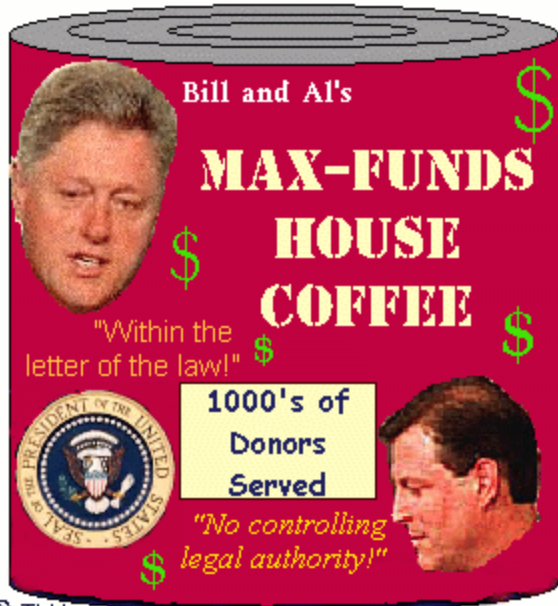
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{26} Cf. NKJV, which renders this phrase "*the pointing of the finger.*"



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Bill's Lasting Legacy

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.
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Charges that the Clinton administration had effectively "sold" waivers for burial in Arlington National Cemetery provoked a brief but amusing flurry of media activity in November 1997. Although the *Army Times*, in an article the previous summer, was the first to mention that the high number of waivers granted by Secretary of the Army Togo D. West Jr. had "generated allegations of favoritism," {1} the story really erupted after *Insight*, a conservative magazine, published an article by Paul M. Rodriguez, "Is

There Nothing Sacred?" in its December 8 issue. On the basis of "several senior military, legal and VA officials," *Insight* charged that

... far more than Lincoln Bedroom sleepovers and presidential kaffeeklatsches were exchanged for large donations to the Clinton-Gore campaign or DNC. In fact, Clinton & Co. may have 'sold' not only burial plots for recently deceased but also future rights to those hallowed grounds without regard for the deceased's status as a veteran.

Following this and some administration stonewalling (refusing to release the names of those granted waivers) and rhetoric (Mike McCurry accusing "the hate-radio talk circuit" of spreading the story), {2} West staged a press conference on Nov. 21st to release a list of 69 people who had been granted waivers by the Clinton administration. {3} The mainstream media seized upon West's assurances with what looked like a collective sigh of relief: the *Washington Post* announced, throwing objectivity to the wind, that **"the administration successfully defended itself against unfounded allegations that waivers for burial at the national cemetery had been granted to Democratic campaign donors."** {4} Even the *New York Times'* Maureen Dowd, usually more prudent, wasted no time in putting the whole incident into the past tense: "The horrible thing is that it sounded so plausible." {5} Despite a spirited follow-up by *Insight's* Rodriguez, {6} who stands by his story and points out several facts conveniently glossed over by the Clintonites and their fellow travelers in the media, the mainstream press has already demonstrated its extreme reluctance to revisit this news item. As far as the press is concerned, this is the Clinton scandal that never was.

Which, of course, leaves only Whitewater, Travelgate, Paula Jones, campaign contributions allegedly acquired via various dubious means (such as selling the Lincoln Bedroom), and heaven knows what else dogging this administration. Despite the president's attempts to "seduce history," as columnist Dowd phrases it, {7} by crafting a presidential legacy for himself, the legacy has already been formed. But things like requiring drug companies to test their products

in children,{8} negotiating a treaty to counter fossil-fuel emissions (alleged to affect global warming),{9} and various race initiative projects such as “diversity training”{10} and celebrating the 40th anniversary of Little Rock’s desegregation of schools{11} are likely to be little more than footnotes when the annals of Clinton’s term are written.

- These will have less of a lasting impact than the videotapes of the president shaking hands at a White House coffee with an Indonesian donor who tells him, “**James Riady sent me,**” or Clinton boasting on said tapes that TV campaign spots funded with so-called soft money have been “**central to the position I now enjoy in the polls.**”{12}
- They will have less impact than the spectacle of a White House “*trying to run out the clock*” on Sen. Fred Thompson’s committee investigating campaign-finance abuses,{13} or performing “*document dumps*” to minimize the impact of damaging news.{14}
- They will certainly have far less impact on the imagination of future generations than the recent speculations regarding *Peyronie’s disease* as the “**distinguishing characteristic**” alleged in the Paula Jones lawsuit.{15}

The number of Clinton’s scandals was recently illustrated in a striking way by **Bill Garner**, editorial cartoonist for the *Washington Times*. Underneath a quote from the president--“*One of the things I was taught as a child is that if you see a turtle on a fence post, the chances are it didn’t get there by accident!*”--, Garner drew a series of fence posts with turtles on them--marked “Whitewater,” “Travelgate,” “Chinagate,” “Filegate,” and so forth. (One turtle had a bra dangling down his fence post, with only the caption “*You know!*”!){16} Can anyone think of a previous administration whose public embarrassments would have been extensive enough to have provoked a similar cartoon? Most presidents would be good for perhaps one “turtle” apiece, not the wide stretch of fence that Clinton has already embellished.

Based on these scandals--the *hallmark of this administration*--, the verdict of history will probably echo that of Everett C. Ladd, executive director of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research:

We have no precedent of a president in our history who has committed as many violations, both personal and public, as he has committed . . . The Clinton presidency has served to diminish the idea that public men and women must meet the highest standard of integrity. Clinton has contributed to the erosion of public trust. {17}

Nor is the accumulation of scandals the only thing that can be laid to Clinton’s charge. Even if this president had led an utterly blameless life--one free of the whispers of adultery, the need to slander others to bolster his political goals,{18} and repeated instances of disloyalty to close friends{19}--, there remains a man who “*understood all sides of most arguments because he had often believed them or soon would,*”{20} and whose tenure reflects his apparent lack of core values. There remains someone whose desire for reelection basically lost him the renewal of “fast-track,” because he delayed pushing for it until after winning in 1996.{21} There remains a chief executive whose ability to surround himself with people like **Johnny Chung, Craig Livingstone, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, and Sara Lister**{22} bespeaks the quality of his judgment. There remains, most of all, as Maureen Dowd puts it, “*an artful dodger, the man who has now*

settled into the role of the highly rewarded rogue, the man whose motto is 'The Buck Stops There.'"{23}

But what will happen *after* this adrift presidency, during which Saddam Hussein has continued to build up his stockpiles of anthrax and other biological weapons,{24} and during which Clinton has striven to "*ease restrictions on nuclear exports to Communist China*"--possibly a former campaign contributor of his--despite *concerns that China is selling such weapons to Third World countries?*{25} What will the lasting consequences be of this man's ethical vacuum, his lack of fidelity to anything but the next campaign?

It has been said that one of Clinton's fears as he searches for his legacy is that he may "disappear into the second rank of forgettable Presidents." {26} This is precisely what has been predicted by some historians, who speculate that "*Clinton's place will be on the order of able but not very memorable presidents,*" men such as James Polk and William McKinley. {27} One would like to be so charitable, but such a benign legacy appears increasingly unlikely for this president. Even if we are spared the worst of the foreign dangers which loom on Clinton's watch, it seems clear that the impact of "Slick Willie," the talent for **obfuscation** and for **staying just one step ahead of scandal**, will far overshadow any positive contributions claimed for him.

If, as Shakespeare once wrote, "*Men's evil manners live in brass,*" {28} President Clinton, who has enough brass to supply a high school marching band with a warehouse of saxophones, will probably have a Herculean task in justifying his presidential actions on various political-affairs programs after he retires. It's a good thing he's still a relatively young man!

(December 1, 1997)

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Behind the President's Stone Wall



by T.L. Hubeart Jr.
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Those who are on the reactionary side of the ledger have an enormous publicity machine that never quits It's 24 hours a day. They have networks that basically mouth their point of view, they have radio stations that get their faxes every day from sources in Washington about what the line of the day might be, they have newspapers that tow the party's line and we have nothing on the other side to speak of.

(--Hillary Rodham Clinton.){1}

It's interesting that an administration that once released a 331-page document called "*Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce*," detailing the way the media is allegedly manipulated by "right-wing think tanks and individuals,"{2} would choose a media-based strategy of defense for the president in the wake of his latest sex scandals. The overheated rhetoric of Hillary "Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy" Clinton{3} and James Carville{4} alleging unfair treatment in the media is belied by the fact that they obviously know the value of a propaganda campaign, like their current one against the independent counsel, waged in a sympathetic press. As George Will commented regarding Hillary's appearance on NBC's *Today* show, "It is a lawyers' axiom: If you have the law on your side, argue the law; if you have the facts on your side, argue the facts; if you have neither, pound the table."{5}

So it perhaps comes as no surprise that the way the Clintons and their devotees have chosen to fight the latest charges against the president--who is alleged to have had an affair with a White House intern and, in conjunction with friend Vernon Jordan, to have influenced her to commit perjury{6}--is via the media. While the president has gone back on his promise to answer all questions about these charges "sooner rather than later,"{7} his wife and his allies have waged a tremendously noisy campaign to divert attention from the allegations and Clinton's non-answers about them, and to accuse Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr of trying to destroy the president

for political reasons{8}--a campaign that even the *Washington Post* in an editorial called a **"transparently demagogic political counterattack."**{9}

Who's Really "Dangerous"???

That it is, no doubt. The attempt to make Kenneth Starr into "the most dangerous man in America," as the *Boston Globe's* David Nyhan called him in a recent screed that could have been drafted by Hillary herself,{10} defies credulity. It has been noted that Starr's attempt last year to resign from the investigation and take a position at Pepperdine University suggested a lack of "fortitude" rather than a "mad-dog" approach to Clinton.{11} Furthermore, Starr's dismissal of the possibility that the death of Vince Foster was anything other than suicide,{12} despite continued questions by Chris Ruddy and others,{13} certainly passed up an easy opportunity to blacken the president further.

If his approach to his work as independent counsel has seemed to the public to yield little so far, this may be simply the result of his attempting to keep the information he has been gathering confidential. Although as this is being written several leaks have brought new information to light, and some have assumed that Starr or his subordinates are at fault for this, the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page suggests that **"White House tacticians are leaking precisely because they calculate that the other side will be blamed,"**{14} and *Newsweek's* Michael Isikoff seems to confirm that the leaks emanated from *"sources close to the president's defense."*{15}

Such a possibility is even more troubling than the propaganda offensive against Starr, although that is bad enough. The prospect of a White House not only sending out its attack dogs to wage a political war against the independent counsel, but also leaking information and attempting to blame him for them, both in federal court and in the public forum,{16} seems more redolent of totalitarian regimes than of the American form of government. It's not as though a legal method of removing Starr--were he really as corrupt as the Clintonizers suggest--does not exist.{17} Obviously this administration finds it preferable to take its cue from George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and adopt a strategy worthy of Comrade Napoleon: Kenneth Starr, like the book's Snowball, has torn down the windmill, stolen the corn, broken the eggs, leaked grand jury testimony, planted Monica Lewinsky in innocent Mr. Clinton's employ, and probably loosened the bolts on the wheelchairs of a few unsuspecting senior citizens in his free time. Focusing the attention of the people on a "public enemy," especially when said enemy can be credited with additional mischief you have planned, can be a very convenient way of getting yourself out of a sticky situation!

The Real Issue

However, it cannot be said that the spin-doctoring of Hillary, Carville, and their coworkers on the TV and radio circuit have gotten the attention of everyone off the real issue here. Many of the nation's more thoughtful political commentators have refused to fall into the administration's trap of wringing their hands over the alleged misdeeds of "Snowball" Starr. As Michael Kelly points out,

The Lewinsky matter is not about the minor and personal question of whatever an individual does in the pursuit of happiness behind closed doors. And it is not about the diversionary question of prosecutorial misconduct. It is about the largest, most central and most public of questions: whether we demand that the president obey the law, whether we accept that the president lies to us.{18}

The *Wall Street Journal* makes mention of the fact that "**White House stonewalling**" has been so marked over the past five years that the sudden questions about Starr's alleged misconduct are "just too rich." {19} The *Washington Times* noted that Clinton partisan Paul Begala's application of Lord Acton's axiom "Absolute power corrupts absolutely" to Starr was not felicitous; after all, it was not Starr who "sicked the mighty FBI . . . on an innocent longtime White House travel office staffer" in Travelgate, or grabbed up 900 confidential FBI files on Republicans in Filegate, or "tried to use the office of the presidency to shield [himself] from Paula Jones' sexual harassment charges," and so on *ad nauseam*. {20}

Disillusioned Clintonites and Die-Hards

Even Clinton's supporters--at least the intellectually honest among them--find the real issue unavoidable. Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* writes that, having "identified with many of the domestic, and some of the foreign, policies of the Clinton agenda," he and others made "a Faustian bargain" to support this president. However, Clinton "broke the bargain" and thus, says Friedman,

. . . what worries me now is not that he is going to be impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors, but that he has impeached himself with low crimes and Miss-demeanors. It is one thing for a President to have low poll ratings. A President with low poll ratings can change policies to reverse his standing, or wait until his policies vindicate him. But what do we do with a President whose character is impeached, but who is himself not impeachable? . . . It is hard to really hear what a President has to say when you are too embarrassed to look him in the eye.{21}

And Amy Dickinson remembers "being really surprised, shocked even, when Gennifer Flowers surfaced in 1992," but believed Clinton's denials of Flowers' story of her relationship with him: "**And so I voted for him. And then I voted for him again. Boy, do I feel had.**" {22}

Even more devastatingly, columnist Richard Grenier makes the following comment regarding Clinton's most recent denials of having "sexual relations" with Lewinsky: "*In hard fact, among the knowledgeable political classes in Washington, I know not a single person of either sex, of either party, who believes him.*" {23}

But it would seem that, to the Clintons, there are worse things in this world than not being believed. Bill Clinton would rather be, in Charles Krauthammer's apt phrase, "**an Oval Office O. J., denying what everyone knows he did**" {24} than allow himself to resign. He demonstrated this with one word--"*Never*"--in responding to a journalist's question as to whether

he would consider resignation.{25} In addition, George Stephanopoulos recently opined on ABC's *This Week* that the president's "allies" would be willing to engage in what he called "the Ellen Romisch strategy"--exposing the dirty linen of his political adversaries (or, one assumes, inventing some if necessary). **"The president said he would never resign,"** said Stephanopoulos, **"and I think some around him are willing to take everybody down with him."**{26} ("This is just the latest step down on the Clinton moral escalator," laments Maureen Dowd.{27})

Such a scenario of *mutually-assured-destruction*, coming from a credible source who worked closely with Clinton, certainly gives the lie to the president's claim, in explaining his commitment to "never" resign, that "I think the American people know . . . that I care very much about them, that I care about ordinary people whose voices aren't often heard here."{28} Flinging charges and counter-charges around to "take everybody down with him," in a way that would make the national crisis of the Nixon resignation look like a walk in the park by comparison, does not suggest a president who "cares very much" if the American people lose confidence in their government. But it does seem quite of a piece with the Clinton documented in my earlier essays, and the one who is trying at this moment to hinder the Starr investigation with every possible propaganda weapon.

It should be remarked, though, that the present administration would hardly have survived an adversarial press of the kind that Republican presidents and politicians have had to face. The soft press that the Clintons have generally received has not gone unnoticed; Richard Benedetto of *USA Today* remarked, just before the Monica Lewinsky story broke, on the **shortage of "hard-nosed reporting out of the White House."** Benedetto commented on just two instances--favorable press coverage of Clinton's upcoming budget proposals and the supposedly-covert footage of *"the first couple dancing on the St. Thomas beach in their bathing suits"*{29}--, but he might have cited many others, such as repeated attention to inane stories like the naming of the president's new dog. And Stuart Taylor, speaking of the Paula Jones case, suggested that "the political orientations of most reporters, editors, and producers are at work here. It's no accident that in a survey by The Freedom Forum and the Roper Center of 139 Washington, D.C., bureau chiefs and congressional correspondents, 89 percent of respondents said they had voted for Bill Clinton in 1992 and 7 percent for then-President Bush." Taylor quotes Mickey Kaus, formerly of the *New Republic*, who **called Clinton "the best president we've had in a long time"** and explained the restraint on the Jones story by saying that **"Few journalists want to see the president crippled."**{30} In addition, it has been claimed that TV news failed to pick up on stories like Whitewater and allegations of suspicious commodities trading because "such stories don't fit easily into television's model of journalism."{31}

Only a severe denial of the daily-accumulating evidence could account for such media retreats from reality as Mike Feinsilber's Associated Press piece *"What if Clinton Is Telling The Truth?"*{32} or the proclamation of the *Boston Globe's* Thomas Oliphant (who, judging by his columns, never met a Democrat he didn't worship or a Republican he didn't scorn): **"Clinton has denied it all, and I believe him"!**{33} These seem rather pathetic when weighed against Richard Grenier's statement, cited above, on lack of Clinton-belief even within the Beltway itself.

The Polls and Their Possible Meanings

But it is not hard to suppose that these and the constant reporting of polls allegedly reflecting astronomical approval ratings for Clinton have had a "hall of mirrors" effect on the American public's view of this scandal. If a CBS News poll asking whether Starr is "conducting an impartial inquiry or a partisan investigation" finds that his numbers have slipped from 36% (Jan. 26) to 26% (Feb. 8),{34} what does that tell us? Perhaps only that the White House's propaganda machine has been able to define Starr in a way that it would not be professional for him to counteract. Can one imagine the outcry from the press, public, and (of course) the White House spinmeisters if Starr had waged his own blitzkrieg on the airwaves to answer the Clintons' allies point for point? That would be a blatant politicizing of the investigation, and the fact Starr makes only the most laconic statements denying the White House's continued charges says something for the ethics of the independent counsel that cannot be said for the Clintons.

Besides this, some have claimed that the polling data merely reflects "that the voters aren't going to let sensationalism or cynicism take control of the American political system" just because all of a sudden reporters have discovered what the press has been largely ignoring for the past five years: that the numerous questions about the Clintons' ethics are newsworthy.{35} James Q. Wilson sees a basic inconsistency in the polls reflecting an "*unwillingness*" to reconcile contradictory views about what should happen if Clinton lied about an affair which the public believes happened with Lewinsky, as well as some partisanship and an understandable reluctance to consider politics as very important to their daily lives. As Wilson remarks,

It would be better if people said that they are waiting for proof, and until it appears they do not wish to act on their suspicions. Instead they are saying that they don't want the investigation to continue (why wait for facts if you don't want facts to appear?), they don't trust the media or Mr. Starr (who else will get any facts?), and they think that lying under oath is worse than lying to the people (how can one lie be worse than the other?).{36}

A Warning from Rome

The paradoxes in public attitudes will, one assumes, reconcile themselves sooner or later, and we must hope that such corrections as appear are in favor of some standards of morality in public life rather than an attitude of "everyone does it." "**It so happens,**" Thomas Sowell insists, "**that everyone does not do it.**" He warns that if Clinton is guilty and evades punishment for his actions, "**the time will surely come when everybody does do it, because there will be no penalty for getting caught--not even a political penalty of losing public support.**" Sowell draws a comparison with the Roman Empire, which "could not survive the constant erosion of its moral standards, and neither can we." {37}

This comparison is poignant, especially when one considers the career of Procopius, a sixth-century historian of the Byzantine Empire, the eastern half of the Roman Empire which continued after the western half collapsed. Stifled in writing the truth about the flagrantly-unjust emperor Justinian and his wife and virtual co-emperor Theodora (the cynical may draw parallels between the close cooperation of the royal pair and that of Bill and Hillary), Procopius left a

book entitled *The Secret History* which filled in the sordid details omitted in his "official" works. Although this book could not be safely circulated during the historian's lifetime, Procopius maintained a long-term perspective in the face of the emperor's seeming omnipotence: "**One of these days Justinian, if he is a man, will depart this life,**" said Procopius. ". . . **Then all who chance to be still living will know the truth.**" {38}

In similar wise, one of these days Bill and Hillary Clinton will leave the White House, and the scandals of these times will no longer have such an impact on our daily lives. One can only hope that with all the spinning, stonewalling, and other Machiavellian tactics going on, the damage that is being done to our American system of government will not prove to be so severe that repairing it will be beyond the capacities of our future leaders.

(February 15, 1998)

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Bill Clinton's "So What?" Speech

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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President Clinton's speech to the nation on August 17th may well be remembered as the beginning of the end for his presidency, given that it was less an apology than an attempt to fasten most of the blame for his current troubles on Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr. The president also sounded a defiant note in stating that the matter was "private" and "nobody's business" but his and his family's. One wonders how the possibility that the president committed and/or solicited perjury can be any more off-limits than a dishonest employee's off-the-job drug use can be out-of-bounds for an employer, or how a public figure can reasonably assert that unethical behavior committed in the White House should be left alone by the public to whom the White House actually belongs. Nor are these all the questions that Clinton's unsatisfactory address left lingering in the air.

Perhaps such illogic as the president's is the logical consequence of having nowhere left to hide after seven months of stonewalling. The reaction of Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, immediately after hearing the president's address--"*Wasn't that pathetic? I tell you, what a jerk*"^{1}--is rather understated compared to the comments that columnists across the political spectrum have made. On August 19th alone, both the conservative *Washington Times* (in an editorial named, simply, "**Lies**") and the liberal *Washington Post* ("**Mea Not So Culpa**") weighed in, as did the former newspaper's Tod Lindberg ("**The Speech: Beginning of the end . . .**") and the latter's Michael Kelly ("**A Pathetic Speech -- And Untrue**") and David Broder ("**Truly Nixonian**"). And beyond the capitol, one found Debra J. Saunders' "**A President Above the Law**" in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Thomas Oliphant's "**Truth or consequences**" in the *Boston Globe*. Oliphant, one of the most liberal columnists I have ever read, obviously wants to believe the president but admits that Clinton can put "*a real wall between an acknowledged personal relationship and the abuse of his office . . . only if the bricks in that wall are made of truth.*" And even Oliphant urged that a transcript of Clinton's testimony be made public and that we be told what the president says the truth is, "*in English*"!

Broder puts his finger on the heart of the matter when he says that "**Clinton acted -- and still, even in his supposed mea culpa, acts -- as if he does not recognize what it means to be president of the United States.**"^{2} Any responsibility that the president is supposed to have to be an example for the nation, as well as to discharge the duties of his office, is clearly not recognized by this president. One media consultant commented, "**Here's what I got out of that speech: 'I did it. So what? I'm moving on now.'**"^{3} This attitude of "*So what?*" has been, in my opinion, exemplified by this president from the earliest days of his administration. "*So what?*" if Chinese missiles are pointed at American cities?^{4} "*So what?*" if pursuit of campaign dollars involves selling nights in the Lincoln Bedroom?^{5} "*So what?*" if time, money, and effort are

used to stonewall and slime the independent counsel--a man whose "lifelong reputation for honorable behavior" (as Thomas Sowell puts it) is such that he was asked to read Sen. Robert Packwood's diaries and "give an assessment of them that members of both parties would respect"?{6}

And now we seem to have come to "*So what if I lied to the American people and my closest aides about Monica Lewinsky for seven months, costing millions of dollars in taxpayers' money and untold anguish to my family and friends?*" We come to the point where the American public must face the reality that their president is a liar, and very likely unfit to hold office. George Farquhar wrote that "**Truth, sir, is a profound sea, and few there be that dare wade deep enough to find out the bottom on't.**"{7} Bill Clinton's conduct has drawn the nation on to ever more profound depths, until all but the most ideologically blinded have had to admit their disappointment in his lack of ethics and honesty. This speech has shown us the bottom.

It remains to be seen whether the country will continue to support such a man, or whether--as happened with Nixon, and as I believe may well happen here--Clinton's support will erode to the point where even he will agree that there is no choice but to resign in disgrace.

(August 19, 1998)

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Who are the "Clinton Haters"?

by **T.L. Hubeart Jr.**
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No one, except the hard-core Clinton foes, is getting any pleasure out of seeing a President who started with so many dreams live through so much censure.
--Maureen Dowd.¹

It has become something of a media commonplace to refer to those who oppose President Clinton, because of his policies or his ethics or both, as "Clinton haters" or "Clinton bashers." This terminology, which derives from six years of White House propaganda stigmatizing opponents as part of a "hate culture" against the president,² has become pathetically easy for the president and his sympathizers to employ as a shorthand to avoid the need for the American public to think.

- In addition to Maureen Dowd's quote above, one might cite Clarence Page of *the Chicago Tribune*, who asserts that his recent call for the president to resign "has much more impact than when you're a **regular Clinton-basher**." ³
- Consider also the phrasing of Charlie Cook of *National Journal*: "I think really for **the hard-core Clinton haters** you could surround the polling places with armed guards and these people would rush the place to still vote." ⁴
- Consider the *New York Times*' comment in an analysis piece that "the Republican ranks are full of hard-edged conservatives -- **Clinton-haters**, some call them -- who want impeachment to move ahead."⁵
- Even those who regard Clinton's current troubles as "vindication" of a sort have at times adopted the terminology-for instance, Debra J. Saunders of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who remarks in a column condemning the president's August 17th address that "Some readers will dismiss the above words as the rantings of a **Clinton hater**."⁶

At this writing, in fact, as the president has started to go further than he chose to do on August 17th in making apologies for his behavior⁷--even while his lawyers are sending out repeated responses to Kenneth Starr's report of September 9th--⁸ it seems possible that he is setting the stage for manipulating the public to accept his alleged contrition, or be tarred with the dreaded epithets "Clinton hater," "extremist," and so forth. Alluding to King David at an annual prayer breakfast at the White House on September 11th,⁹ Clinton claimed to be trying to "maintain both a broken spirit and a strong heart," declaring that "good can come of this for our country as well as for me and my family."¹⁰

No sale here

I must say that for my own part I do not buy it. As my previous essays have demonstrated, I have never considered Bill Clinton worthy of public trust. And it seems that people around the country are waking up to this fact as well, judging from the protesters who have started to appear alongside his passing presidential limousine, holding signs like "Mr. President, Stay Away From

Our Daughters," "Get Lost," and "Time to Impeach."¹¹ Numerous columnists of various political persuasions have already called on Clinton to resign.¹² Amy Dickinson remarks that according to her own informal poll immediately after the August 17th speech, "People are starting to hate this guy."¹³ And a recent Pew Research Center poll, taken before delivery of the Starr Report, states that 62 percent of the public responded to the question "Do you like Bill Clinton as a person?" with the answer "No."¹⁴ That's an awfully large number of "Clinton haters"!

But I think the whole notion of "Clinton haters" needs to be reexamined by fair-minded Americans. True, there are very many in our country who hold negative feelings about our president. There were also many who held negative feelings about Presidents Reagan and Bush,¹⁵ yet I do not recall any comparable terms for "Reagan haters" or "Bush haters" ever gaining currency in the press. Are there people who hate Bill Clinton for pathological reasons? I'm sure there are, just as there are people who love him for reasons just as questionable; the reporter who admitted being "quite willing to . . . be ravished" by the president and declared "I'd be happy to give him [oral sex] just to thank him for keeping abortion legal"¹⁶ comes instantly to mind. If it is not fair to judge all of Clinton's backers by the mindset that produced such deranged comments--very many staunch Democrats I know, particularly some of my black friends, are as moral and upright as anyone you would ever meet--, it is also not right to judge those against Clinton by the fringe element among his opponents.

Political opposition is American

I think the very ability to oppose political adversaries is demonstrably American. One historian remarks that George Washington was "peppered in the Jeffersonian press" while he was president, particularly by Benjamin Franklin's grandson and namesake, Benjamin Franklin Bache.¹⁷ Abraham Lincoln also had his share of detractors, who accused him of botching the Civil War, running "a government of misfits and thieves," and trampling on the people's rights; in fact, some in his party attempted to dump him before the election of 1864 and replace him with another candidate.¹⁸

Some detractors have been exceptionally heroic, as in the case of Thomas Paine, who rallied the American colonists with "Common Sense" and subsequent pamphlets. Paine called King George III of England a "Royal Wretch" fated to "eternal ruin," an "inveterate enemy to liberty," and a "Savage,"¹⁹ and offered to embalm the British commander, General Sir William Howe, in tar and feathers!²⁰ In responding to a loyalist writing under the name of "Cato," Paine also had something important to say regarding the role of personal reflections in political writings like his:

. . . [T]he political characters, political dependencies, and political Connections of men, being of a public nature, differ exceedingly from the circumstances of private life: And they are in many instances so nearly related to the measures they propose, that, to prevent our being deceived by the last, we *must* be acquainted with the first. A total ignorance of men lays us under the danger of mistaking plausibility for principle. Could the wolf bleat like the lamb, the flock would soon be inticed into ruin; wherefore, to prevent the mischief, he ought to be *seen*, as well as *heard*²¹

But this principle is something that has never been accepted by Clinton, except when it comes to his denunciations of his opponents. One commentator just after the president's second term began observed that

Clinton appears to be operating ambivalently on both a bipartisan and a partisan track. Part of him seems to be the statesman, building his bridge and writing his page in history. Part of him is the "chronic campaigner," as President Lyndon Johnson once said of Richard Nixon. And like Nixon, Clinton is full of anger at his foes in politics and at the press, whom he sees as intent on diminishing him and his wife.²²

This is a kind way of saying that the president dishes it out but can't take it; hence his Nixonian comments immediately after the 1996 election, reported in *USA Today*, calling his enemies "a cancer" and vowing to "cut [them] out of American politics."²³ Thus Clinton diminishes the American-ness of anyone who opposes him, contrary to the grand traditions of this country. Meanwhile, he plays the hypocrite in doing to Republicans the same thing he deplores their doing to him (for example, when in 1992 he claimed that "Every time [President] Bush talks about trust it makes chills run up and down my spine. The way he has trampled on the truth is a travesty of the American political system").²⁴ This is one of the things I despise most about Clinton.

Above the law?

Another is the tendency this president exhibits of thinking himself above the law. Most recently, the flagrant misbehavior he committed in the White House, according to him, should be disregarded by the American people.²⁵ The country must "move forward," says Bill.²⁶ Of course it never seems to occur to him that he does not receive a pass for perjury just because his misdeeds seemingly had no ill consequences, other than his own embarrassment. His actions in the Oval Office could have compromised national security, had the person pursuing him not simply been a silly, star-struck intern. What if instead of Monica Lewinsky, it had been an agent of the Chinese government or a terrorist operative who "[i]n the course of flirting with him . . . raised her jacket in the back and showed him the straps of her thong underwear, which extended above her pants"?²⁷ Does a man who allows himself to be so easily seduced seem likely to be a good upholder of the U.S. Constitution and guardian of our country's safety?

What about a man who has conveniently omitted to come clean about what he did for seven months, and then expects his nation and the world to simply resume its violated trust in him? Liberal columnist Thomas Oliphant summarizes Clinton's current dilemma very well: "**Someone who has not told the truth is invariably and appropriately faced with some version of the following: If you didn't tell the truth about X, how can your statements about everything else be worthy of belief?**"²⁸ With trouble flaring up in Iraq,²⁹ North Korea,³⁰ and other spots around the world, can we afford to have a man who will not be believed by other world leaders? The fact that this is a president who would lightly put our country in danger, and then expect the American public to allow him to continue to endanger it with his political weakness, is another thing I detest about Clinton.

"Spinmeisters" at work

Another contemptible aspect of Clintonism has been the use of people like Dick Morris, James Carville, Sidney Blumenthal, and David Kendall to invent public relations strategies to sell sometimes half-baked policies, and to spin bad news in order to defuse public reaction to it. One amusing example of the "spinmeisters" at work, recounted by Bob Woodward in his book *The Agenda*, is the "Hallelujah! Change is Coming" memo devised by Paul Begala early in Clinton's presidency. The memo advised administration insiders on how to talk up the president's new economic plan: avoiding specifics while insisting that *"Your body language, attitude, and confidence will be infectious. . . . Now go forth and spread the good news."*³¹

This speaks to the essential emptiness of this presidency. The man who promised a grand scheme of government health care took credit instead for the Republican Congress' welfare reform initiative.³² This is but one of the ways in which Clinton has promised one thing and, when opposed, has stolen his opponents' issue (Dick Morris' "**triangulation**" strategy) and taken credit for it. While such incremental moves to the right have been somewhat good for conservatives like me, the man who essentially has sold out his Democratic constituency repeatedly for his own political survival is, once again, not someone I consider worthy of any admiration.

But one of the most deplorable things about Bill Clinton is that he is not, and has never been, the kind of leader who considers the people he leads to be more important than himself. As *USA Today* remarked in an editorial, "**The least any American can expect of a president is that in crisis he will readily put the welfare of the nation he leads ahead of his own well-being.**"³³ That no one expects Clinton to do this is perhaps one of the saddest things about him, or about the fact that he holds such high office. George Stephanopoulos, former Clinton adviser, believes that we will see "a long ground war for the president's survival in office," with Clinton "drawing on private reserves in order to ride out the storm."³⁴

Such exquisite selfishness is hardly shocking from the president anymore; people are increasingly realizing that this is the measure of the man. As the *New York Times'* Bob Herbert remarks, "It was all there more than two decades ago at the very beginning of Bill Clinton's political journey: the thoughtlessness, the recklessness, the wanton use of friends and associates to cover up his ugly behavior, the willingness to jeopardize the hopes and dreams of people who were working for him and trusted him, the betrayal of those closest to him."³⁵ The wreckage along the side of the road travelled by Bill Clinton includes people close to the president, like Monica Lewinsky; those who were minor cogs in the White House machine, like the unnamed aide whose "faith was shattered by Clinton's Aug. 17 confession . . . and his repeated lies about it," and who "is leaving the White House in the next few weeks and does not expect to work in government again";³⁶ and even people who have never personally met Clinton, like Eva Piccin, the senior citizen who emptied out her bank account responding to Democratic fund-raising letters soliciting money for the 1996 presidential campaign.³⁷ In other words, we have a complete inversion of ideal presidential priorities: Bill Clinton first and foremost, with the needs of the nation and its citizens running a distant second. I find this not only distressing but disgusting.

Why the endgame satisfies

And this is why I beg to differ with Maureen Dowd's quote above *that "no one, except the hardcore Clinton foes, is getting any pleasure"* from Clinton's troubles. I think a kind of satisfaction is only natural for someone who has seen all along the true character of this president--not a joy or glee, of course, in another's troubles (even though well deserved), but a sense of fitness. It is a feeling similar to watching the last act of a drama, in which the misdeeds of the protagonist are finally catching up to him and producing the poetic justice required by the plot. For an excruciatingly long time, Clinton, with the help of a sympathetic media culture, has been able to slide through trouble without it catching up to him. The pattern of evasion has always been there--through the letter to Col. Holmes, the claim that he "never inhaled" while smoking marijuana, the interview alongside Hillary on "60 Minutes" to defuse the Gennifer Flowers question--, but we were assured that these were only the lapses of a likable rogue who really did want to put the country first, whose personal character would have no impact on the job he would do for the nation. Now it is not possible for even the staunchest Clinton defenders to argue this.

I can only speak for myself, of course, but I do not hate Bill Clinton. I do, however, think it would have been better for the nation had he never emerged in our national life. His mendacity and demagoguery, in my opinion, have had a corrosive effect on our country, in addition to the essential wrongness of his ideas.

It is hard not to deplore a man who has been bad medicine for your country, harder still not to be compelled to the conclusion that resignation or impeachment is the proper resolution to the current crisis. I feel very sorry for the people who truly believed in Bill Clinton and have watched their beliefs shattered. Nevertheless, the man himself, who used such people as the raw material to gain power and who cast them aside as garbage later when his strategy required it, deserves little besides contempt.

I believe that when history has the final say on the president, its verdict will not be favorable. And none of the administration's allies will then be able to intimidate the chroniclers of our times by calling them "Clinton haters." The words of rhetoric will be meaningless; all that will matter will be the deeds of Bill Clinton. And these will speak too loudly for anyone to reach a false conclusion on what this president has done to our country.

(September 17, 1998)

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²This phrase is White House press secretary Mike McCurry's (specifically with regard to Hillary Clinton), in Paul Bedard, "Clinton assails GOP as 'obsessed with my wife,'" *Washington Times*, 11/4/96. Also see Roger Simon, "Deny, Deny, Deny--The White House's Favorite Strategy," AOL News, downloaded 7/30/98, and George Stephanopoulos, "The Betrayal," *Newsweek*, 8/31/98 (e.g., "I was right there on the ramparts--accosting any reporter who dared to question

our story, insisting that Clinton had never been drafted and never 'pulled strings,' arguing vehemently that this obsessive focus on Clinton's past was part of a **right-wing plot** to deny the country a progressive president who would shake things up").

³Qtd. in Howard Kurtz, "They're Jumping On the Bandwagon: Columnists Say Clinton Should Call It Quits," *Washington Post*, 8/26/98.

⁴Qtd. in Greg Pierce, "Inside Politics," *Washington Times*, 9/9/98.

⁵R.W. Apple Jr., "News Analysis: The Dangerous Road Clinton Must Navigate," *New York Times*, 9/13/98.

⁶Debra J. Saunders, "A President Above the Law," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8/19/98.

⁷See James Bennet, "The President: Tearful Clinton Tells Group of Clerics, 'I Have Sinned,'" *New York Times*, 9/12/98.

⁸The second Clinton response is even entitled an "*Initial Response*" to the Starr Report ("We have sought in this **Initial Response** to **begin** the process of rebutting the OIC's charges against the President" [from final paragraph of 9/12 response; emphasis added])! Also in progress: attempts to smear and/or intimidate adversaries by digging up dirt on them, most recently Rep. Henry Hyde (see David Stout, "Hyde Admits to Affair With Married Woman," *New York Times*, 9/17/98). It seems evident that Clinton will stop at nothing to save his wounded presidency.

⁹This is not the first time Clinton has attempted to link himself with this biblical figure; see Priscilla Painton, "Clinton's Spiritual Journey," *Time*, 4/5/93. Also see my online article "The Biggest Breach" (3/8/97) for more on the president's religiosity.

¹⁰Gustav Niebuhr, "The Religious Issues: King David Inspires Plea for Pardon," *New York Times*, 9/12/98; Bennet, "The President"

¹¹Dowd, "View"

¹²Kurtz, "They're Jumping"

¹³Amy Dickinson, "Bill's Excellent Adventure," AOL News, downloaded 8/23/98.

¹⁴Richard Grenier, "Is this the president Americans deserve?," *Washington Times*, 9/11/98. Lest some readers assume that the poll was taken by a biased surveying group, I should add that Grenier refers to Pew Research Center as a "bipartisan polling organization."

¹⁵For example, consider a typical rant from the Rev. Jesse Jackson regarding a series of Atlanta killings of black children: "It is open season on black people **These murders can only be understood in the context of affirmative action and Ronald Reagan's conservative politics.**" (Qtd. in Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, NY: HarperCollins, 1996, p. 227.) From this nadir Jackson moved on to condemning "**mean-spirited attacks**" on the Clintons by "the

Newt Gingrich-Contract on [sic] America-right-wing assault on our elderly, our students, our civil rights" (qtd. from Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1996 Democratic National Convention speech, downloaded from AOL 8/28/96). Apparently "mean-spirited attacks" are defined in Rev. Jackson's mind as *anything spoken against his political allies*, while Reagan and other Republicans can be fairly accused by Jackson as *accomplices to murder*. Jackson is now said to be providing "private spiritual counseling" to Clinton and his family (--Evan Thomas & Matthew Cooper, "Extracting a Confession," *Newsweek*, 8/31/98).

¹⁶Howard Kurtz, "A Reporter With Lust in Her Hearts," *Washington Post*, 7/6/98.

¹⁷Joseph J. Kelley Jr., *Life and Times in Colonial Philadelphia*, Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1973, p. 224.

¹⁸Philip B. Kunhardt Jr., et al., *Lincoln: An Illustrated Biography*, NY: Knopf, 1992, p. 306.

¹⁹Eric Foner, ed., *Thomas Paine: Collected Writings*, NY: Library of America, 1995, pp. 56, 29, 47. (From "Common Sense.")

²⁰*Ibid*, p. 152. (From "The American Crisis, Number V.")

²¹*Ibid*, p. 66. (From "The Forester's Letter II." Emphasis Paine's.)

²²Daniel Schorr, "Look for politics as usual in 2nd term," downloaded from MSNBC 2/7/97.

²³See this news item cited in full in my online commentary "Clinton: Taking the Path of Nixon?" (11/11/96).

²⁴Qtd. in John McCaslin's "Inside the Beltway" column, *Washington Times*, 9/8/98.

²⁵"Now, this matter is between me, the two people I love most -- my wife and our daughter -- and our God. . . . It's nobody's business but ours" (--President's Speech of 8/17/98, as given by various news sources).

²⁶Bennet, "The President"

²⁷Quote from Starr Report, "C. November 15 Sexual Encounter."

²⁸Thomas Oliphant, "Truth or consequences," *Boston Globe*, 8/18/98.

²⁹See Fred Hiatt, "The Betrayal of Scott Ritter," *Washington Post*, 9/6/98.

³⁰See Rowan Scarborough & Bill Gertz, "North Korea fires new missile over Japanese airspace," *Washington Times*, 9/1/98.

³¹Bob Woodward, *The Agenda*, NY: Pocket Books, 1995, p. 304.

³²For remarks on the current status of welfare reform, see Rep. Bill Archer, "Welfare Reform's Unprecedented Success," *Washington Post*, 8/10/98.

³³"A matter of integrity: Clinton should resign," *USA Today*, 9/13/98.

³⁴George Stephanopoulos, "Why He'll Try to Fight to the End," *Newsweek*, 9/21/98.

³⁵Bob Herbert, "Still Doesn't Get It," *New York Times*, 9/13/98.

³⁶John M. Broder, "The White House: With Sense of Foreboding, Aides Are Braced for Battle," *New York Times*, 9/10/98.

³⁷Mike Barnicle, "Was robbery necessary, Bill?", *Boston Globe*, 3/9/97.

Impeach^{ED} Clinton!



by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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On December 19, 1998, the House of Representatives passed two articles of impeachment against William Jefferson Clinton, an action which sends the matter to the Senate for trial. Although four articles had been referred to the full House by the Judiciary Committee, the House rejected Articles II and IV, largely due to many Republicans voting "no" on both of them. (All but five Democrats followed the party line by voting "no" on all four articles.) But Article I passed 228 to 206, and Article III 221 to 212.{1}

What is perhaps most astonishing about this development is that impeachment seemed like a dead issue only a few weeks before. In the aftermath of the November elections, in which Republicans actually slightly diminished their congressional majority (contrary to historical trends for off-year elections, where the party not holding the presidency generally picks up seats), Clinton's aides were reported to be "privately buoyed by the election results, which they viewed as ammunition for their case against impeachment." {2} One Democratic Judiciary Committee staffer even crowed that "**Every bit of the enthusiasm in the Republican Party for this thing [impeachment] has been sucked out.**" {3} It was perhaps this kind of overconfidence which led President Clinton to answer eighty-one questions submitted to him in writing by the committee in an evasive and even--some felt--a contemptuous manner. {4} Several other missteps, such as the attempts of White House lawyers to stall the committee's impeachment hearings by demanding four days to present a defense of the president (they eventually got two days) {5}, and a misguided attempt by Clinton on December 11th to address the issue without admitting that he lied {6}, did not help matters. A *Washington Times* headline characterized the trend of undecided House members to declare that they would vote "yea" as a "**tide of impeachment.**" {7} Despite the antics of House Democrats, and the conveniently-last-minute decision by Clinton to bomb Iraq, the vote went ahead and resulted in the president's impeachment. {8}

Not surprisingly, a great deal of smoke has been intentionally blown in the faces of the American public to obscure the real issues surrounding this impeachment. Democrats have spoken at length recently about censure as an alternative to impeachment. What is less generally known is that--as Jeff Jacoby of the *Boston Globe* recently pointed out--the same Democrats who now vociferously demand censure, and complain that the Republicans will not allow them to vote on it, actually *ridiculed the idea* this past spring, when impeachment seemed nearly impossible. Consider Rep. **Barney Frank** (D-Mass.) on the subject this past March: "**Faced with a choice,**

they go for symbolism over substance. That is what censure is." And **Robert Drinan**, the former congressman turned priest who appeared on Clinton's behalf at December's impeachment hearings, went so far in March as to claim that censure had been "*invented by Trent Lott*"! Drinan went on to argue, "**The framers deliberately said impeachment is the one thing you can do to the president and the only thing.**"{9}

Now, however, that the Republicans in the House have decided to do the "*one thing . . . and the only thing*," they have been branded as staging a "*putsch*" against the president.{10} They have also been assailed with every form of partisan static known to man, by Democrats intent on demolishing civil debate in the hopes of salvaging a president whose behavior is indefensible. I am not alone in this assessment. Donald Weatherman, writing in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, condemned the "**mean-spirited name calling**" and "**rudeness**" exhibited by Democrats such as Rep. Maxine Waters, law professor Alan Dershowitz, and Princeton historian Sean Wilentz.{11} Ross K. Baker added the names of Representatives John Conyers, Barney Frank, and Robert Wexler to this roll call of shame, remarking that "**the committee Democrats acted like a pack of Tasmanian devils**" and "**were as much to blame for the acrimony that infected the panel as the GOP members. More so, perhaps.**"{12}

The Democrats went from incivility to hypocrisy to outright noise in trying to throw roadblocks in the way of impeachment, such as the criticism and posturing with which they reacted to Republican doubts on the timing of the bombing of Iraq.{13} But one of the most telling moments preceding the impeachment vote occurred when Speaker-elect Robert Livingston took the House floor to speak. Livingston, who had acknowledged two days before that he had been unfaithful to his wife after details of an expose on him had been (conveniently) leaked, addressed the president to state that "*you have the power to terminate that damage and heal the wounds that you have created. You sir, may resign your post.*" The *Washington Post* reports that these words

. . . triggered an angry wave of catcalls on the Democratic side of the chamber, where members began calling out, "No! No!" Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) banged her open palm on the table in front of her and, along with several others, began shouting, "You resign! You resign!"

In his next sentence, Livingston *did* resign: "*I can only challenge you in such fashion that I am willing to heed my own words.*" He stated that he would not serve as speaker and would leave the House within six months. This bombshell left the Democrats sputtering, but only momentarily, as they soon made speeches *imploing Livingston to reconsider his resignation!*{14} Such an about-face is hard to explain in any other way save as an indication that these Democrats only care how much noise, distraction, and poison they can spew into the air, in hopes of getting their (political) way.

Such Democratic politicians have many followers who are as mean-spirited as they themselves; some of the most notable of these are the public figures who have been supporting Clinton. Actor Alec Baldwin **called for the death of House Judiciary Chairman Henry Hyde** on the Conan O'Brien television program,{15} while feminist Betty Friedan termed the committee's Republicans "*a bunch of dirty white men*" who are destabilizing the government.{16} Alan Dershowitz, mentioned above, threw a tantrum on the Geraldo show: "**A vote against**

impeachment is a vote against bigotry--it's a vote against fundamentalism--it's a vote against anti-environmentalism--it's a vote against the radical right--it's a vote against the pro-life movement." {17} And one hardly needs to mention again the continuing ranting of James Carville, who has now declared war on all the House Republicans who voted for impeachment ("**These people are going to pay for what they did**"). {18}

Sadly, many Americans who lack the time and patience to follow this continuing saga are swayed by demagogues like these, simply because the latter shout loudest or happen to give the best soundbites. Those who argue from the polls that *the people do not want impeachment*, and therefore it should not happen, lack a broader historical perspective that would produce more informed comments. Would America even exist if it were not for leaders who drove public opinion, rather than being driven by it? Let our Declaration of Independence give the answer:

. . . mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

Initially, most of the colonists would have preferred to have continued under English rule, which is why men like Thomas Paine worked so hard to shape public opinion to support independence. {19} What about slavery? Men like Stephen Douglas expressed the sentiments of many Americans when he stated that the practice should be left alone: "*I hold that under the Constitution of the United States, each State of this Union has a right to do as it pleases on the subject of slavery It is none of my business whether slavery exists in Missouri or not.*" {20} One can cite numerous other examples of shifts in our national life and law where the people did not initially support something that later became accepted as just and right. If our leaders had continuously governed by polls, a great many injustices would never have been addressed or resolved.

In addition, it is worth asking how many of those "majorities against impeachment" which so impress pollsters and media talking heads really know what impeachment is. A recent Polling Co. survey found that 55 percent erroneously equated House impeachment with "**immediate removal from office**"! {21} Hence, those who argue merely on the basis of polls that Clinton should not be impeached are either ignorant or intent on deception.

Of course, now that the president has actually been impeached, such arguments are moot. And Clinton is in fact going ahead with the next phase of his fight to remain in office, including challenging the very impeachment vote itself on legal technicalities. {22} It is hard not to find a certain ironic humor in Clinton's post-impeachment remarks, in which he said, "**We must stop the politics of personal destruction We must get rid of the poisonous venom of excessive partisanship, obsessive animosity and uncontrolled anger. That is not what America deserves.**" {23} After all, who has been more of an apostle of the politics of **division and destruction** than this president, who just before the '98 election sunk to the depths of playing the race card, accusing Republicans of, in his words, "*actually or threatening to try to intimidate or try to invalidate the votes of African Americans*"? {24} Few politicians are more accomplished at spewing "**poisonous venom**" than Bill Clinton, a situation implicitly noted by *USA Today* in an editorial remarking on the "curious scene" of President Clinton

. . . freshly impeached, standing on the White House lawn surrounded by his partisans and attacking partisanship. . . . As serious a problem as partisanship is, it is a separate issue. And in any case, it's one on which the president's hands are not clean. His demonization of anyone who dared challenge his abuses intensified the polarization that has so infuriated the public through this process. And his inability to rise above the political fray and acknowledge his lying and obstruction of the justice process for what they are have continually frustrated allies who have tried to engineer a compromise solution.{25}

Thus the writhings of this man in struggling to escape the consequences of both his own actions and his attack-dog political style (which, it is easy to imagine, may have made Republicans all the more tenacious in calling him to account on the Lewinsky matter) can only be accounted contemptible.

It may be that the person who preposterously explained his misdeeds with the line "*Quite simply, I gave in to my shame*"{26} is incapable of shame, for otherwise he would already have taken the course of Nixon and Speaker-elect Livingston and resigned. But even if he escapes removal from office, the very fact of his impeachment pays Bill Clinton in a coin that even he seems to understand. One unnamed advisor to Clinton was quoted in the media as saying, "*My goodness, how do you think he is? . . . This guy reads history books on every President. He can cite you details about every president. So on the one hand he's devastated about what this will do and has done for his legacy . . .*"{27}

Indeed, Clinton seems to have alluded to this in citing a famous quatrain from Edward Fitzgerald's translation of "*The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*" during his December 11th comments.{28} More apropos to his aspirations and the course on which they have led him, perhaps, is the following verse{29} from the same poem:

**The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes--or it prospers, and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two--is gone.**

The "Worldly Hope" that led this president to think himself unaccountable for his misdeeds has indeed turned ashen, leaving him the mark of impeachment to wear throughout history. This is indeed a bitter fate--but no one can be held responsible for it but the man whose actions caused it.

(December 21, 1998)

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{2} Bill Sammon, "Hyde won't delay process for impeachment hearings," *Washington Times*, 11/5/98.

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{4} See Wesley Pruden, "The buzz is back--the prez is smokin'," *Washington Times*, 12/1/98.

{5} Joyce Howard Price, "White House accepts chance to offer defense," *Washington Times*, 12/7/98.

{6} "Clinton's Rose Garden Statement," *Washington Post*, 12/11/98 (internet).

{7} Nancy E. Roman, "More 'yeas' add to tide of impeachment," *Washington Times*, 12/16/98.

{8} Given the widespread misunderstandings surrounding impeachment, it would be well to cite Thomas Sowell's cautionary note: "**About 40 percent of the American public doesn't even know what impeachment is. They think it is removal from office, when in fact it is nothing more than sending the case to the Senate for a trial.**" (--Thomas Sowell, "Polls and Partisanship," *Jewish World Review*, 12/16/98.) See also the mention of the Polling Co. survey further on in the main text.

{9} Jeff Jacoby, "The case against censure," *Boston Globe*, 12/17/98. Even political commentator David Broder candidly admits, "*Censure is, in my view, a very dubious idea. It raises serious questions about the separation of powers and lacks any constitutional authority. But it was clear that a substantial majority of voters and a significant bloc of House members favored censure.*" (--David S. Broder, "Hard Faces of Partisanship," *Washington Post*, 12/19/98.)

{10} One of many commentary pieces to use this inflammatory and inaccurate term is Richard Cohen, "Bad for the Nation," *Washington Post*, 12/11/98. For an even more wildly intemperate piece of agitprop disguised as commentary, see the ravings of David Nyhan in "GOP leadership stubs its toe," *Boston Globe*, 12/18/98.

{11} Donald Weatherman, "The demise of civility," *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 12/18/98.

{12} Ross K. Baker, "Democrats, Too, Poisoned the Impeachment Well," *Los Angeles Times*, 12/17/98.

{13} Wesley Pruden, "We can't make love, so let's make war," *Washington Times*, 12/18/98. A *New York Times* op-ed piece states why some "suspicion" of the president's motives is not unthinkable: ". . . **if a President is willing to lie to the American people, lie in a civil deposition and lie to a grand jury, might it be in his nature to order an attack on Iraq when that would not otherwise be the appropriate response?**" (--Peter J. Wallison, "Opinion: Leading, Under a Cloud," *New York Times*, 12/17/98.) In fact, there is good reason to believe that this is exactly what happened; see Rowan Scarborough, "Did White House orchestrate a crisis?", *Washington Times*, 12/18/98 (quoting former U.N. inspector Scott Ritter).

{14} Baker & Eilperin, "Clinton Impeached"; also "Text of Remarks by Rep. Livingston," transcribed by Federal Document Clearing House, 12/19/98.

{15} For the quote, see Greg Pierce's "Inside Politics" column, *Washington Times*, 12/17/98. For a reaction from Hyde, see the same column for 12/18/98. Columnist Suzanne Fields offers this and other celebrity examples, and an analysis, in "Hollywood to the Rescue," *Washington Times*, 12/21/98.

{16} Weatherman, "The demise" See also Al Neuharth, "'Dirty old white men' vs. middle-age creep?," *USA Today*, 12/17/98.

{17} Qtd. in Pierce, "Inside Politics," 12/17/98.

{18} Pierce, "Inside Politics," 12/21/98.

{19} A special issue of *Time* magazine published in the 1970s (dated "July 4, 1776" and commemorating the American Bicentennial) records that "perhaps nine out of ten Americans opposed independence and favored reconciliation with England" at the beginning of 1776 ("A Prophet Honored," *Time*, "July 4, 1776" [actually 1975], p. 64).

{20} As given in Harold Holzer, ed., *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (NY: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 303.

{21} Cited in John McCaslin's "Inside the Beltway" column, *Washington Times*, 12/21/98.

{22} Ruth Marcus & Helen Dewar, "Clinton Team Considers Legal Fight Against Trial," *Washington Post*, 12/21/98. According to this report, Clinton's team is considering contesting the legitimacy of the impeachment vote based on the fact that it was done by a "**lame-duck**" Congress; however, the article goes on to state that this argument flies in the face of findings by the Congressional Research Service, and the precedent of judges being "impeached by the House in one Congress and tried by the Senate in the next."

{23} Qtd. in Baker & Eilperin, "Clinton Impeached"

{24} As qtd. in Bill Sammon, "Clinton accuses GOP of trying to intimidate black voters," *Washington Times*, 11/3/98.

{25} "Partisanship rickety shelter for president," *USA Today*, 12/21/98.

{26} "Clinton's Rose Garden Statement"

{27} James Bennet, "Clinton Is Said to Brace Himself for Continuing Struggle," *New York Times*, 12/19/98. The advisor continues with "*But on the other hand, he looks at how it's being done as pure politics*"--a form of denial and evading personal responsibility that we have come to expect from this president.

{28} "Clinton's Rose Garden Statement . . ." The president does not give the attribution (introducing it with only the words "**An old and dear friend of mine recently sent me the wisdom of a poet who wrote . . .**"), but the relevant verse, "*The Moving Finger writes, and, having writ . . .*", is quatrain 71 in Fitzgerald's translation.

{29} Ibid., quatrain 16.

"Remember When America Had a Real President?"*

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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. . . if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else?

--Ronald Reagan, *First Inaugural Address* (January 20, 1981).{1}

The beginning of 1999 provided a vivid demonstration of the consequences of having someone not "capable of governing himself" governing the nation. In watching the impeachment, Senate trial, and ludicrous acquittal of Bill Clinton--the last a foregone conclusion because the same Democratic senators who condemned the president's actions as "immoral," "disgraceful," and "reprehensible" {2} voted in a partisan bloc to find him "not guilty"--,{3} it has been hard not to remember a time when the president stood behind his word. It has been difficult not to miss the presence of a leader who, it seems more and more evident, will be regarded as one of the great presidents of the 20th century. That leader is Ronald Reagan.

Reagan's presidency, while fairly recent, was a simpler time in many respects. The explosion of information available on the Internet, and its transformation of the way we obtain news, lay in the future. The political landscape itself was less volatile; when Stephen L. Carter in his otherwise excellent book *Civility* attempts to trace the path of negative political advertising, the worst ad he can cite from Reagan's campaigns is the 1984 "bear-loose-in-the-woods" TV spot against Mondale,{4} which addressed a policy difference by way of analogy and (if memory serves) never directly mentioned the Democratic candidate at all. Compare this with the 1996 attack ads of the current president,{5} which Carter is noticeably silent on, but which began earlier and continued longer than those of any previous presidential campaign.{6} But this trend where "[p]olicy disputes are disguised and take the form of moral assault" {7} was already taking shape during the latter years of Reagan, as exemplified during the Democratic blitzkrieg unleashed against Robert Bork's Supreme Court nomination.{8}

Reagan and "Reagan-haters"

The contempt directed at Ronald Reagan throughout his presidency by Democrats and liberals seemed to have no boundaries. Anita Hill, patron saint of feminists, is remembered by one

colleague as being "one of the most liberal people I've ever met. She always said she hated Ronald Reagan" {9} Jesse Jackson blamed a series of murders in Atlanta on "Ronald Reagan's conservative politics." {10} Justin Kaplan, editor of the last revision of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, responding to the paucity of Reagan quotes in his work (and the malice evident in the selection of those that appeared), said, "**I'm not going to dispute the fact that I despise Ronald Reagan.**" {11} Clark Clifford termed Reagan an "*amiable dunce*," and Gore Vidal wrote a 1987 essay ridiculing "Ronnie" as being completely out of touch, capping the essay with a quotation from Reagan that opined that communism was "another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written." {12} The current president and his minions also make a habit of trying to enhance their own stature by knocking Reagan, as when presidential adviser Paul Begala recently and preposterously claimed that Bill Clinton "*is surviving . . . because of his ideas And I counterpoise that with President Reagan, who got into trouble on Iran-Contra and dropped 20 to 30 points because we didn't like his ideas anymore.*" {13} (Setting aside the matter of Begala's presumably mythical polling data, {14} and his inane conclusions, it is observable that Reagan at least did not become a byword among our nation's children for lying, unlike our current commander-in-chief. Take, for example, the recent case of the four-year-old who blurted out "**The President is a liar**" to his surprised mother, or of the Sunday School class in which one kid told another, "**You're just like Bill Clinton.**" {15})

Perhaps a measure of the greatness of Reagan is how little he let the constant attacks bother him, not concocting elaborate theories of media "conspiracy" {16} or plotting "revenge" against political foes. {17} "**The judgment of history is left to you -- the people,**" Reagan said at the dedication of his presidential library. "**I have no fears of that, for we have done our best.**" {18}

The life of Reagan

Born February 6, 1911 in Tampico, Illinois, {19} Ronald Wilson Reagan graduated from Eureka College in 1932, where he had studied economics and sociology, and participated in football and school theater productions. He became a radio sports announcer until a 1937 screen test won him a contract with Warner Bros. in Hollywood. Over the following two decades he would appear in fifty-three films.

Reagan also became politically active after World War II. Serving as president of his union, the Screen Actors Guild, he became increasingly concerned with the issue of communism in the film industry. This and his movement towards more conservative views on government caused him to switch his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican in 1962. His move toward conservatism was encouraged by his marriage to Nancy Davis in 1952 and by his eight years working as a public relations speaker for the General Electric Company.

Elected governor of California in 1966 by a margin of a million votes, Reagan would eventually serve two terms in that office. He also aspired to the U.S. Presidency, making unsuccessful attempts for the Republican nomination in 1968 and 1976. Nominated in 1980 with George Bush as his running mate, he won the presidency, getting 489 electoral votes compared with

incumbent Jimmy Carter's 49. In 1984 Reagan won a landslide re-election against Democrat Walter Mondale.

Ronald Reagan's bedrock belief was that **"government is not the solution to our problem,"** that it should be curbed and lessened in size and pervasiveness to allow all Americans an equal chance to prosper and to be free:

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it is not my intention to do away with government. It is, rather, to make it work--work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it.{20}

President Reagan did everything possible to implement his vision of government, cutting taxes and reducing government expenditures, but also strengthening national defense. He has been called *"the first president to challenge the once extant idea that Communist victories were irreversible and to act on that challenge."*{21} In the short term, these strategies seemed to fail as the country entered a deep recession in 1982, but an economic turnaround began the following year that allowed the re-elected President Reagan to point with pride to *"25 straight months of economic growth."*{22} A very good case can be made for crediting much of the current American economy, still robust at this writing, to Reagan's initiatives in the 1980s.{23} In fact, it was Reagan who originally appointed Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan in 1987, whom many economists say deserves the largest share of praise for today's economic health.{24}

The London *Economist* gave the following summation of Reagan's legacy, obviously begrudging but for the most part accurate:

Judged strictly on his own terms, Ronald Reagan was a great president. He said he would reduce regulation; he did. He said he would cut taxes; he did. He said that he would spend the Soviet Union into submission; he did. He was a successful president not because he "focused" -- few men can have done so less -- and not because he was the "great communicator," but because he knew who he was and what he believed in.{25}

Another matter in which Reagan proved ahead of his time is in ordering a feasibility study for the "Strategic Defense Initiative," or a missile defense system for the United States.{26} The president noted in his second inaugural address that he had

approved a research program to find, if we can, a security shield that would destroy nuclear missiles before they reach their target. It wouldn't kill people, it would destroy weapons. It wouldn't militarize space, it would help demilitarize the arsenals of Earth. It would render nuclear weapons obsolete.{27}

Reagan's desire for such a program was widely ridiculed by the Left,{28} who dubbed it "Star Wars," but ten years after Reagan left office, Congress is finally agreeing that America needs a missile defense against long-range attack.{29} A special bipartisan commission indicated to Congress in July 1998 that the U.S. could be vulnerable to missile attack within the next five years, particularly from such potentially hostile parties as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, not to

mention as a result of instability in Russia or China.{30} Thus a missile defense plan can come not a moment too soon for U.S. national security. Again, as we are driven back to the Reaganesque policy of "peace through strength" as the best insurance against threats from abroad, Reagan's legacy marches on.

Reagan's inclusiveness

Reagan's nickname of "the Great Communicator" was not bestowed in vain. Despite his age, as one writer has noted, "we could connect with him as we did to our grandparents who never were the enemy."{31} Perhaps one reason he was dismissed as an "amiable dunce" by the Left was because he did not attempt to come across as a man of intellectual or moral superiority, or disparage the American-ness of those who disagreed with him. In a way scarcely achieved since, Reagan succeeded at being not only *the American President*, but the *president of all Americans*. That this was a conscious goal of his is apparent from his own words:

. . . As an older American, I remember a time when people of different race, creed, or ethnic origin in our land found hatred and prejudice installed in social custom and, yes, in law. There is no story more heartening in our history than the progress that we have made toward the "brotherhood of man" that God intended for us. Let us resolve there will be no turning back or hesitation on the road to an America rich in dignity and abundant with opportunity for all our citizens. Let us resolve that we the people will build an American opportunity society in which all of us--white and black, rich and poor, young and old--will go forward together arm in arm. Again, let us remember that though our heritage is one of blood lines from every corner of the Earth, we are all Americans pledged to carry on this last, best hope of man on Earth.{32}

As with any presidency, there were successes, such as the summits with Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and there were failures, such as Iran-Contra.{33} There was the problem of the federal deficit, although it is demonstrable that "tax cuts for the rich," a phrase much used by liberals to revile Reagan's economic plan, had nothing to do with it.{34} Nevertheless, the strengths and the coherency of the vision of Ronald Reagan have created an enduring legacy; as Tod Lindberg remarks, "In many startling ways, 10 years after his departure, the political debate in Washington is still on the terms he set."{35}

Unfortunately, at this writing Reagan is unable to enjoy the vindication of his ideas. Having disclosed in November 1994 that he is afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, the former president has retired from public view. Even in admitting to having a debilitating disease that gradually steals one's memory and puts tremendous burdens on loved ones, Reagan showed the courage that had always distinguished him: "**I now begin the journey,**" he wrote, "**that will lead me into the sunset of my life.**"{36} At special events honoring Reagan, such as the recent 88th birthday celebration held at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, his wife Nancy now appears on his behalf.{37}

Reagan's legacy

It remains for posterity to make the judgment which Reagan, having done his best, never feared. And it may well be that in the short term, historians with ideological biases against him will have their say in an attempt at revisionism, as Tony Snow points out has occurred on several other occasions in recent years--and is occurring as the fallout from Bill Clinton's scandalous behavior is reinterpreted as a failed Republican vendetta led by Kenneth Starr.{38} Indeed, given the way that 400 historians prostituted themselves last year in issuing a brazenly-political statement opposing Clinton's impeachment,{39} it will not be surprising if many appraisals of Reagan in the near future are written with poisoned pens out of a similar sense of polemical necessity. But the abundance of data which remains will allow future generations to judge Reagan for themselves. And in doing so, more eternal values will rule the day than petty partisanship. Two thousand years ago Cicero addressed the question of winning a reputation by endorsing the words of Socrates: "**Make yourself the sort of man you want people to think you are.**" Cicero went on:

For to suppose that any permanent reputation can be won by pretence, or empty display, or hypocritical talk, or by putting on an insincere facial expression, would be a serious misapprehension. A genuine, glorious reputation strikes deep roots and has wide ramifications, but pretences of every kind wither away like wilting blooms; nothing counterfeit has any staying power.{40}

Ronald Reagan was the genuine article, a man who meant what he said and stood by it. Without floundering in search of a legacy, he achieved a reputation that no historian can disparage without calling his own judgment into question. We can only hope that this example of "a real president" inspires others not only to emulate his successes, but his character as well.

(February 21, 1999 [links updated October 30, 2008])

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* [The title of this essay was borrowed from the slogan on a bumper sticker that was extremely popular during the presidency of Bill Clinton.—TH, 10/30/08.]

{1} This quotation is taken from <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres61.html>, where the text of this address appears in full.

{2} The words are Sen. Bob Graham's (D-Florida), as quoted in Nancy E. Roman, "Harsh words belie certain vote to acquit," *Washington Times*, 2/12/99. See also "Excerpts: Senators Offer Some Reasons for Their Decisions in Clinton's Trial," *New York Times*, 2/13/99.

- {3} Howard Fineman, "The Survivor," *Newsweek*, 2/22/99.
- {4} Stephen L. Carter, *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy*. NY: Basic Books, 1998, p. 119.
- {5} "Election '96: Going Negative," *Newsweek*, 11/18/96.
- {6} James Bennet, "On TV, Liberal Use of 'Extremist' Is Winning Strategy," *New York Times*, 11/7/96. The same article reports that the Dole campaign actually withheld some of its ads as "too harsh" and toned down another that suggested Clinton was a liar.
- {7} Robert H. Bork, *The Tempting of America: The Political Seduction of the Law*. NY: Touchstone: Simon & Schuster, 1990, p. 342.
- {8} Ibid, pp. 271ff..
- {9} David Brock, *The Real Anita Hill: The Untold Story*. NY: Free Press, 1993, p. 318.
- {10} Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline*. NY: HarperCollins, 1996, p. 227.
- {11} As qtd. in John McCaslin, "Inside the Beltway" column, *Washington Times*, 11/26/98.
- {12} Thomas Sowell, *The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy*. NY: Basic Books, 1995, p. 84-5. Given subsequent events like the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Soviet Union, "Ronnie" was obviously more in touch with reality than Vidal was.
- {13} Bill Sammon, "Clinton relishes 2nd comeback in New Hampshire," *Washington Times*, 2/19/99.
- {14} An article on "The Reagan Presidency," at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library site (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/pressketch.html>) remarks that "**As his second term ended, polls showed that more than half of the American people gave him a favorable rating**"--which if Begala is to be believed must have meant that Reagan's pre-Iran-Contra ratings were through the roof. Compare this with the Clinton record: "**Poll after poll shows that Americans overwhelmingly do not trust Clinton as a man. These polls show that most believe he lies, has engaged in criminal wrongdoing and has demeaned the presidency. Most of us don't even like him. In fact, about the only thing he has going for him, these polls say, is that the economy is good. He didn't do that; we did.**" (--Paul M. Rodriguez, "Commentary: They Are Not Us!", *Insight*, 9/14/98.)
- {15} Jennifer Preston & Joseph Berger, "The Public: Republican Stronghold Bears Scars," *New York Times*, 2/13/99.
- {16} Compare Clinton; see Paul Bedard, "Fabiani report outlines media conspiracy theory," *Washington Times*, 1/9/97.

{17} As Clinton is planning; see James Bennet, "The House Race: Clinton Vows Revenge in 2000, Advisers Say," *New York Times*, 2/11/99. The first target is apparently Rep. Jack Quinn, R-NY, an ally of labor, who, however, dared to vote for Clinton's impeachment; Clinton "**pointedly snubbed Quinn's outstretched hand**" after the State of the Union address and a day later held a huge rally in Quinn's district while Hillary Clinton quietly promised local Democrats to campaign for whoever opposed Quinn in 2000 (--Michael Grunwald, "Labor Targets Ally Who Crossed Line," *Washington Post*, 2/18/99).

{18} Ronald Reagan, Library Dedication Day, November 4, 1991. [Original link no longer available; quote also given in Miriam A. Drake, ed., *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science, 2nd Edition* (NY: CRC Press/Marcel Dekker, 2003; ISBN 0824720806), [p. 2456](#).]

{19} The biographical data summarized here comes from the White House Web Site (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/rr40.html>) and the article on Reagan in *Microsoft Encarta '96* (© 1993-1995 Microsoft Corp.).

{20} Reagan's First Inaugural Address; see note 1.

{21} Arnold Beichman, "A Republican revolutionary," *Washington Times*, 2/8/99. Beichman attributes the insight to former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick.

{22} "The Reagan Presidency," op. cit.; and Reagan's Second Inaugural Address, January 21, 1985, as given at <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres62.html>.

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{26} "The Reagan Presidency"

{27} Reagan's Second Inaugural Address, op. cit..

{28} Tod Lindberg, "When Reagan rode," *Washington Times*, 2/2/99.

{29} Bill Gertz, "Senate panel OKs bill on missile defense," *Washington Times*, 2/10/99.

{30} "Editorial: Every rogue his missile," *Washington Times*, 7/20/98.

{31} Rodriguez, "They Are Not Us!"

{32} Reagan's Second Inaugural Address.

{33} "The Reagan Presidency. . . ." *Microsoft Encarta '96* calls Iran-Contra "*the worst U.S. political scandal since Watergate*"--a judgment of little worth now that Bill Clinton has brought us "Monica-gate" (and dubious even without considering that scandal). One assumes that this phrase will be deleted from future editions of *Encarta*, unless an especially liberal historian is put in charge of the revision.

{34} As Thomas Sowell (op. cit., pp. 82-3) demonstrates, the federal government under Reagan actually collected more tax revenues each year than it did during any year under previous presidents.

{35} Lindberg, "When Reagan rode"

{36} Lawrence K. Altman, "A President Fades Into a World Apart," *New York Times*, 10/5/97.

{37} Beichman, "A Republican revolutionary"

{38} Tony Snow, "Wake up, Republicans!", *Jewish World Review*, 2/18/99.

{39} Bruce Fein, "Historians flunk impeachment history," *Washington Times*, 11/3/98. See also the same paper's editorial "The Clinton Legacy," 2/15/99, where a poll taken by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. for the *New York Times Magazine* was revisited (emphasis mine): "Recently, the Washington Times editorial page contacted many of the historians who contributed to the Schlesinger poll to see if the events of the last year had dented their view of Mr. Clinton and his presidency. **Not one bit. In fact, quite the reverse.** The few professors who had thought Mr. Clinton a cretin were still of that opinion. But several fence-sitters found that the president had risen in their esteem. And **some who had listed him as 'above' average now consider him 'great.'** This, not for any particular accomplishment in the last year other than **just sticking it out.** 'The man has nerves of steel,' a few said by way of explaining their new-found admiration." It is intriguing that *the man who won the Cold War* can be summarily dismissed by such historians, while *the man whose greatest exploits heretofore have involved interns, perjury, and stonewalling* can be elevated to the Pantheon of great presidents.

{40} Michael Grant, trans., *Cicero: On the Good Life*. NY: Penguin, 1971, p. 142. (The quotation appears in Cicero's "On Duties," Book II.)

Al Gore vs. the Electoral Process

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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*I'm not like George Bush. . . . If he wins or loses, life goes on.
I'll do anything to win.*

--Al Gore.¹

In the wake of the events following the U.S. presidential election on November 7, 2000, no one should doubt that the Vice President means the above words—spoken to an aide in 1999—quite literally. In fact, his entire campaign up to the election also gave clues to the informed observer that Gore was willing to do anything, say anything, and try anything to win the election. Who can forget the manic behavior he exhibited during the three presidential debates: rolled eyes, theatrical sighs, and numerous exaggerations during the first one;² an “overly subdued” manner in the second one;³ and for the third a moment in which Gore actually walked threateningly into George W. Bush’s personal space, prompting a *Washington Post* columnist to remark, “**For a second you didn't know what would happen. Would Gore actually hit Bush? Is it possible we've come to that?**”⁴ The degradation of Sen. Joseph Lieberman, Gore’s running mate, whose positional flip-flopping and pandering erased his reputation for integrity, was another warning light signaling Gore’s win-at-all-costs strategy.⁵

But now it has become clear that Gore is waging a post-election campaign to declare himself the winner of the presidency. After calling Bush to concede the election at 2 am on Wednesday, November 8th, following the projections of major television networks which had given Florida and the presidency to the Republican candidate, Gore withdrew his concession, sending his campaign chairman William Daley out to speak to supporters rather than go onstage himself to read a prepared concession speech in his hands.⁶ Then Gore, as the *New York Times* recognized, “**escalated the atmosphere of combat surrounding the presidential election results with his decision to go to court in Florida,**” transforming “**a complaint that the ballot in Palm Beach County was confusing . . . into a claim that it was illegal.**”⁷ The Rev. Jesse Jackson also conveniently appeared in South Florida immediately after the election to lead a protest rally, after which he spoke of a “**need to keep the pressure on.**”⁸ A recount of all the votes in Florida’s 67 precincts reduced Bush’s lead over Gore but did not change the results.⁹ Gore’s representatives then demanded manual recounts in certain heavily Democratic precincts, taking legal action against local elections boards who attempted to say no.¹⁰ When it became clear that the ongoing recounts would not uncover enough votes to put Gore over the top, Democrats pushed for the consideration of “dimpled” ballots—ballots which have “**indentations without perforations**”—in the manual

recounts, and this was allowed by a circuit court judge in Palm Beach and the Florida Supreme Court.¹¹ At the same time, Gore's lawyers stood ready to challenge every possible absentee ballot cast by U.S. military personnel stationed abroad.¹²

I find it interesting that Gore's actions have not been more widely deplored in the press, although public sentiment against him is clearly rising. (One indication of this is the ingenious twisting of the "Gore-Lieberman 2000" logo by some shrewd individual into a sign that reads "**Sore Loserman 2000**," which has been proliferating at rallies and on the Internet.)¹³ Indeed, many on the left of the political spectrum, including some of my friends, openly worried during the Clinton impeachment process that their president was the target of a "**coup**," or that former Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr was, in the words of the Boston Globe's David Nyhan, "**the most dangerous man in America**."¹⁴ It seems to me odd that they should be silent just at the moment when a real coup—"an **abrupt seizure of power by unelected forces**"¹⁵—is arguably taking place. And it seems bizarre that a man whose public career has provided repeated indications that, to him, political survival trumps following the rules should not be more clearly seen as "**dangerous**."

What Gore has achieved by indulging his reckless disregard for the election process is nothing less than destabilizing the credibility of all future elections. The precedent has now been set for those who lose elections but do not wish to concede, even in the face of a recount validating the original determination of a winner, to present endless challenges to the results in court. After all, as the wrangling over ballot "chads" and "dimples" and exposure of the subjectivity of manual recounts has demonstrated, those indisposed to accept a final result to an election will be able to find infinite grounds to call the whole thing into question. And even if the courts eventually rule against them, they can still wage war against their opponents via a public relations campaign designed to paint an election victor as "illegitimate."

The mischief that this can cause, particularly on a national scale with regard to the presidency, will be obvious to every thoughtful reader. Indeed, the man or woman on the street may wonder why we should regard *any* election as legitimate. Malleable as the results from this election seem to be, maybe it really is all just a matter of who counts the votes and what standards they feel like applying. If this perception takes hold, how long will our democratic process survive?

But I would not be surprised if the potential of destabilizing our electoral system, and hence the government itself, were less than a live issue for Al Gore as he continues to orchestrate challenges to the outcome of November 7th. Gore has clearly taken to heart, perhaps even more than his mentor President Clinton, the principle stated by Machiavelli:

. . . it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities.¹⁶

There are certainly those who ascribe to Gore all manner of virtues, who point to his carefully-crafted official persona and attempt to argue that it reflects the essential character of the man himself.¹⁷ However, when one sets against this Gore's readiness to jettison positions when they are no longer politically advantageous, such as the pro-life stance he held until the 1980s;¹⁸ when one considers the dubious ethical line he repeatedly crossed during his time in the Clinton administration, where he made the phrase "**no controlling legal authority**" (in)famous by invoking it seven times to excuse his telephone solicitation of campaign funds from the White House;¹⁹ when one considers his willingness to stretch the truth until it snaps;²⁰ when one finds, in a grossly-underreported developing news story, that Gore may well have made an illegal secret pact with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin involving arms deals between Moscow and Iran;²¹ then how is it humanly possible to regard Gore as a fit individual to assume the presidency? Isn't it clear that Gore's chameleon-like ability to change his stances, ethics, and tactics foreshadow a Gore administration (assuming there is one) whose ethical crises will rival Watergate and the Clinton scandals in damaging the executive branch of government?

The kind of campaign that Gore has waged, continuing even as these words are being written, now has been turned against the U.S. Constitution itself—although perhaps even the Constitution is "no controlling legal authority" to a man with battalions of lawyers and William Daley at his disposal. In fact, one environmental scientist, on the basis of statements in Gore's book *Earth in the Balance* and long-term observation of the Vice President, goes so far as to say, "**Gore apparently believes that his mission to save the planet is worth the destruction of the way we elect presidents.**"²² Despite repeated intimations by senior Democrats that Gore should consider giving up his fight,²³ it appears increasingly unlikely that Gore will do so.²⁴

When asked prior to the election to characterize the campaign his opponent was running, Gore said, "**I don't know yet. Nietzsche once said, 'The end of a thing is its nature.'**"²⁵ We now know the "nature" of the Gore-Lieberman 2000 campaign by virtue of the way it is ending: in his utter refusal to accept defeat, and his constant attempts to challenge results that do not go his way—even including further court challenges to Palm Beach County's manual recount because it does not include as many of the "dimpled" ballots as the Gore team needs to win!²⁶—, the Vice President has shown not only the character of his campaign, but also what makes him tick. When Gore, after the Florida Supreme Court prevented the Secretary of State from certifying the election pending their hearing Gore's petition, called the election "**a matter that must be decided by the will of the people as expressed under the rule of law,**" he significantly added, "**law which has meaning as determined in Florida now by the Florida Supreme Court.**"²⁷ From between the lines the message emerges that Gore believes the "rule of law" has

“meaning” only when it supports his long struggle towards achieving and retaining power; however, when law or commonly held ethical standards obstruct his movements, then Gore gives way to no “controlling authority” at all.

Perhaps the saddest commentary on the Democratic Party’s last two candidates for the White House comes from a comparison with one of the most despised presidents in U.S. history, Richard Nixon. It is, of course, well known that Nixon chose to resign his office in 1974 rather than face impeachment, while Bill Clinton chose to face impeachment and to tough it out with spinmeisters and lawyers; Clinton even told *Esquire* magazine, in what must rank as a truly pathological utterance, that congressional Republicans should have *apologized to him* for his impeachment!²⁸ It has also been pointed out by several commentators, including Peggy Noonan, that after the vote count was tallied for Nixon’s 1960 presidential bid showing that he had lost by a narrow margin, he was urged to contest the results. Even though Nixon had good reason to believe that Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley had committed “last minute electoral chicanery” to put John F. Kennedy over the top, Nixon resisted. Noonan writes:

Do you remember why the famous bad man didn't challenge the results? If you're of a certain age you do. He thought it would be bad for the country. It was a patriotic act--even his great foes admit as much, and have lauded his statesmanship in this instance.²⁹

The historical fact that Richard Nixon *of all people* held to a higher standard of ethical probity and self-denial than the current president and vice president—whose behavior, unlike Nixon’s, has not even come close to forcing either of them to withdraw in disgrace from office—should make all Americans very fearful for the future of our nation.

(November 26, 2000)

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² See Andrew Cain, “Gore to try to get ‘details’ right,” *Washington Times*, 10/11/2000.

³ The descriptive phrase is from Bill Sammon, “Gore staffer admits debates were costly,” *Washington Times*, 10/23/2000.

For a penetrating critique, see Tony Snow, “The Night Al Gore Went to Reform School,” *Intellivu*, 10/12/2000.

⁴ Joel Achenbach, “Rough Draft: And In This Corner...,” *Washington Post*, 10/18/2000. *Newsweek* gives a behind-the-scenes look at Gore’s odd behavior:

The Gore advisers who had negotiated the debate formats told the veep that Bush’s team had dickered endlessly about a “zone of comfort” into which the other candidate could not move. For Gore, who liked to throw elbows under

the basket during pick-up games, this was an invitation to ignore the rules. “I think this guy doesn’t like somebody in his face. I’m going to get in his personal space,” Gore announced.

(--“The Inside Story: Face to Face Combat,” *Newsweek*, 11/20/2000, pp. 108-9.)

Gore’s tendency to “**ignore the rules,**” here and elsewhere, is a troubling indicator of what kind of president he would make.

⁵ Cf. “Where’s the Old Joe Lieberman?”, House Editorial, *Washington Post*, 10/25/2000.

⁶ Howard Fineman, “A Whiff of Victory . . . But Now It’s War,” *Newsweek*, 11/20/2000, p. 13ff; Ceci Connolly, “Gore Decides to ‘Stay and Fight’ For Victory,” *Washington Post*, 11/8/2000.

⁷ “A Fateful Step Towards Court,” House Editorial, *New York Times*, 11/10/2000.

⁸ William Glanz, “Jackson leads angry rally in Palm Beach,” *Washington Times*, 11/10/2000. Interestingly, however, the same Gore team which was too busy invoking the ‘will of the people’ to object to Jackson’s “pressure” later dispatched Sen. Lieberman to complain about Republican rallies in Miami-Dade as “**orchestrated demonstrations**” which were “**clearly designed to intimidate**”! (See David S. Broder and Juliet Eilperin, “Analysis: The Politics,” *Washington Post*, 11/25/2000.) Apparently, when the Democratic Party finds the ‘will of the people’ going against it, it finds it more convenient to portray the protest as mob rule and lawlessness rather than listen to find out what the people’s ‘will’ really is.

⁹ “The Recount’s Over—Now What?”, *Fox News*, 11/10/2000.

¹⁰ John Fund, “Broward Says No: The Gore campaign suffers a setback--and threatens a lawsuit,” *OpinionJournal (Wall Street Journal)*, 11/14/2000; Linda Deutsch, “Fla. High Court Rejects Gore’s Recount Petition,” downloaded from *WashingtonPost.com*, 11/23/2000.

¹¹ Andrew Cain, “‘Dimpled’ counts may be Gore’s last chance,” *Washington Times*, 11/22/2000; Susan Schmidt and Dan Keating, “Gore Is Dealt Recount Setbacks,” *Washington Post*, 11/23/2000.

¹² Rowan Scarborough, “Disqualification of ballots by Democrats ‘systematic,’” *Washington Times*, 11/21/2000.

¹³ See Paul Farhi, “Gathering for Laughs at the Online Water-Cooler,” *Washington Post*, 11/25/2000.

¹⁴ See leftist journalist Christopher Hitchens’ witty send-up of the term “coup” as used at this time in his excellent book *No One Left to Lie To: The Triangulations of William Jefferson Clinton*, NY: Verso, 1999, p. 66. Nyhan’s phrase appears in his column “The

most dangerous man in America is out of control,” *Boston Globe*, 2/4/1998. It should, however, be pointed out that, to his great credit, Nyhan also put himself on the record early in support of Gore’s conceding the election, despite his own clear Democratic sympathies; see David Nyhan, “Gore should accept a Bush victory,” *Boston Globe*, 11/10/2000.

¹⁵ So defined by Hitchens, p. 66.

¹⁶ Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Luigi Ricci & E.R.P. Vincent, NY: Mentor Books, 1952, p. 93.

¹⁷ See, for example, David Ignatius, “Al Gore’s Character,” *Washington Post*, 10/22/2000. Ignatius, a classmate of Gore’s at St. Albans School, goes so far as to call Gore **“a good man--a throwback, in his way, to the qualities of another era.”** One can easily see that Ignatius’ near-hagiography results from the understandable personal friendship he appears from the article to retain with Gore; he is simply too close and too emotionally involved with his subject to take the full measure of the man.

¹⁸ Compare Gore’s 8/22/1984 statement to a constituent **“It is my deep personal conviction that abortion is wrong”** with his later assertion during a debate with Bill Bradley (1/26/2000) that **“I have always supported *Roe v. Wade*. I have always supported a woman's right to choose. And let me say that if you entrust me with the presidency, I will guarantee that a woman's right to choose is protected.”** (Quotes downloaded from <http://www.nrlc.org/news/2000/NRL03/pres.html> at the National Right to Life Organization’s web site.)

¹⁹ See Charles Krauthammer, “Gore’s Meltdown,” *Washington Post*, 3/7/1997, and John Gerstein, “Charles in Charge: Gore Counsel Ascends to Top Post,” *ABCNews.com*, 8/9/99.

²⁰ See Dave Boyer, “RNC says it caught Gore in a lie,” *Washington Times*, 10/12/2000.

²¹ Bill Gertz, “Senate to probe Gore's pact with Russian leader,” *Washington Times*, 10/20/2000.

²² Patrick J. Michaels, “Guest Comment: Why Al Won’t Quit,” *National Review Online*, 11/13/2000.

²³ Cf. Andrew Cain, “Gore may be urged to bite political bullet,” *Washington Times*, 11/13/2000; and David S. Broder, “On Road to Courts, Yellow Light Is Flashing,” *Washington Post*, 11/23/2000.

²⁴ See John Heilprin, “Gore to Contest Miami-Dade Results,” *Associated Press*, 11/23/2000.

²⁵ “The Rolling Stone Interview: Al Gore,” Rolling Stone no. 853, downloaded 10/20/00 from Rolling Stone’s web site.

²⁶ Roberto Suro and George Lardner Jr., “Gore Gaining, But Perhaps Too Slowly,” *Washington Post*, 11/26/2000.

²⁷ “Text: Vice President Gore on Fla. Supreme Court Order,” downloaded from *WashingtonPost.com*, 11/17/2000.

²⁸ Bill Sammon, “Clinton miffed remarks released before election,” *Washington Times*, 10/31/2000.

²⁹ Peggy Noonan, “Morning Noonan Night: One for Our Grandchildren,” *OpinionJournal (Wall Street Journal)*, 11/8/2000.



The Curtain Drops on Bill Clinton

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.
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Degeneracy, rather than signaling the downfall of a society, as it once did, will now signal peace for a troubled world.

--John Kennedy Toole, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, ch. 11.¹

At last, the Clinton Presidency is over. In its final weeks it was commemorated, discussed, and for the most part eulogized by various publications. For example, the *Atlantic Monthly's* February 2001 issue featured a cover painting of a jovial Bill Clinton in top hat and white tie, headlined "Thanks

for the Memories," although under this appeared the phrase "Thoughts from fourteen contributors on Bill Clinton and his consequences" (see top left). The word "**consequences**," a less positive term on its face than, say, "achievements," perhaps reflects the *Atlantic Monthly's* consciousness of the decidedly-mixed fruits of eight years of Clintonism. No doubt the years of Clinton's presidency coincided with a robust economy--one which by the way was already on the way up in 1992 and already slowing before the election of his successor--, and it is at least fair to acknowledge that this president for the most part maintained a policy of non-interference which allowed the boom to continue. It is not hard to imagine a President Mondale or a President Dukakis, or indeed any Democrat not aligned with Clinton's particular mode of "triangulation," taking advantage of rising economic conditions to raise taxes and escalate governmental spending in a way that would have shattered the boom almost before it began.

At the same time, Bill Clinton leaves a legacy of scandals, of shadiness, of the good of the nation endlessly subordinated to the personal needs of one man--things that I have documented repeatedly in earlier essays on these pages. The man whose hand a teenaged Clinton shook, John F. Kennedy, famously stated that one should not ask what one's country could do for him, but what he could do for his country. Bill Clinton's tenure notoriously stood Kennedy's dictum on its head. Not only were the immense resources of the chief office of the land for eight years subordinated to the remarkable egotism of one man, but even the English language was redefined--"**It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is**"²--in order to facilitate his continuance in power. A good example of the prevalent corruption of Clintonism occurred during the last 48 hours of President Clinton's term, when he cut a deal with Independent Counsel Robert Ray to save himself from indictment and disbarment, and also issued 140 pardons and commuted the sentences of 36 other individuals--"us[ing] his waning power to bail

out his friends-and infuriate his enemies . . . less than an hour before work crews arrived to rip up the Oval Office carpet," as *Newsweek* reported. The recipients of Clinton's clemency included brother Roger Clinton, former business partner Susan McDougal, and fugitive commodities trader Marc Rich, indicted in 1983 on 65 counts of tax fraud-whose wife, conveniently enough, contributed substantial sums to the campaigns of Clinton and his Vice President Al Gore.³

And yet, it is strange to say that this president's actions did not create more of a sense of outrage than they did. Part of the reason is probably Clinton's personal magnetism, part is probably due to his political party, and some part of it is likely admiration for the epic scale of his corruption and his ability to survive in office through it all. Henry Fielding wrote in his novel *Jonathan Wild*, praising a similar "great man," that "**while it is in the power of every man to be perfectly honest, not one in a thousand is capable of being a complete rogue . . .**"⁴ Clinton's numerous falsifications seem to cast into question the first half of Fielding's statement, but no one will doubt that in sheer brazenness and self-confidence, Clinton is "one in a thousand." Nevertheless, a significant number of Americans--more than the media's attempts to marginalize them as "Clinton-haters" might lead one to believe--regard Clinton with a sense of disgust and loathing. The *Washington Post* reported that at a commencement speech at Carleton College last June,

. . . one young woman walked straight past the outstretched hand he extended to each graduate. The woman said later she cannot abide Clinton. The president, confidants say, especially hates it when young people reject him (a year before when several graduates at the University of Chicago would not shake his hand, aides say, he stewed for days).⁵

Obviously, this president takes it personally when people express outrage at him because of his misdeeds, much as he is said to be currently "stewing in his new home in New York over the uproar caused by last-minute pardons and other final-days controversies,"⁶ such as the trashing of the White House by outgoing Clinton Administration staffers.⁷ These controversies have provoked a great deal of negative reaction in the media⁸ and even some guarded disapproval from members of the Democratic Party.⁹ There is also considerable outrage in Congress over the \$650,000 the former president requested annually for prime office space in Manhattan--an amount "more than that of all living ex-presidents combined."¹⁰ In an effort to quiet the uproar, Clinton and his wife, now New York's junior U.S. senator, announced on February 2nd that they would pay for approximately half the gifts they accepted just before he left office, and that the Clinton Presidential Foundation would pay \$300,000 of the annual cost of the ex-president's pricey Manhattan office rent.¹¹

The Clintons' instantaneous response to public outrage is interesting, and I believe that not all of it can be explained by the need to preserve Hillary Rodham Clinton's political hide as a senator. When called on such dubious activities, or rejected by his fellow Americans because of them, the former president shows an oddly pathological and compulsive demeanor. In a previous essay, I referred to *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer's January 1998 description of Clinton as "**an Oval Office O. J., denying what everyone knows he did.**"¹² I do not think that the parallels with O.J. Simpson ended there. Like Simpson, Clinton patently has a burning desire to manage to convince everyone that he's really a swell guy and a great American whose every misstep should be attributed to the malice of shadowy enemies out to get him. It's not enough for either one to escape from the consequences of what most people reasonably believe either one

did; both crave affirmation and support from those around them. On the rare occasions when they find "true believers," both Clinton and Simpson absorb the atmosphere manically, like divers gasping for air on reaching the water's surface after running out of oxygen below.

In fact, in my considered opinion, Clinton in temperament was less than ideally suited for a job like the presidency, although his cheerful amorality and lack of scruples plainly squeezed the office for all it was worth. After all, there are those messy details like the U.S. Constitution and freedom of the press that get in the way of the satisfaction of one's desires, requiring extensive energy and "spin" to subvert and get around. If he had been born a couple of centuries earlier, Clinton might have entered history as an absolute monarch in the mold of Frederick the Great of Prussia and Louis XIV of France. Certainly in his sexual dalliances, his willingness to use governmental power to reward his friends and confute his enemies,¹³ his refusal to leave his "throne" during impeachment, his insistence of having truth malleable so as to serve his momentary convenience, and his constant need for not only respect but also adulation, Clinton is much closer in temperament to a king or an emperor than to any previous U.S. president. Clearly his personal philosophy has never been as close to the Declaration of Independence's "all men are created equal" as to the sentiment expressed in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* that "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."¹⁴ Clinton is, in his own mind, the "more equal" animal who by intrinsic merit deserves \$650,000 office space at taxpayer expense--a figure now cut in half thanks to what he obviously considers his largesse and beneficence--, not to mention public admiration for his scandal-ridden presidency.

It is, however, his personal misfortune to exist in an age where he must outlive his power and, instead of commanding respect, become obliged to try to wheedle the benefit of the doubt out of his fellow citizens one more time. In reporting on the Clintons' agreeing to pay half of the value of their gifts, the *Washington Post* noted that while the ex-president specifically answered criticisms of his pardon of Marc Rich,

*[h]e took pains . . . to acknowledge that the case was difficult, and that he could understand why some people were angry. **The remarks appeared as much a plea for people to accept his good intentions as they were a defense of the legal merits. "I just did what I felt was right, and I think on balance it was the right thing to do," he said. Rather than acting for political reasons, Clinton said the politically smart thing to do would have been to avoid all controversy and grant no pardons.***¹⁵

Setting aside the last sentence (since there is no way this president would have granted "no pardons" at all, as this would not have been to the benefit of his brother or of his ally Susan McDougal), the aw-shucks, Gomer-Pyle-like appeal to "**right**" and "**the right thing to do**" have become almost second-nature for Clinton, a defense mechanism to escape serious scrutiny of the fishy business in which he is repeatedly the vortex. But it also, I think, signals a constant need to look over his shoulder and make sure that people (or at least some people somewhere) still like him, that they still believe in him no matter how preposterous the explanation or how sordid the situation.

I cannot quite agree with columnist George F. Will's assessment of Clinton as "*a remarkably inconsequential president, like a person who walks across a field of snow and leaves no*

footprints."¹⁶ I do believe his two terms were remarkably consequential, though not in a positive sense. The quote from John Kennedy Toole's comic novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* at the beginning of this article--uttered by Toole's delusional protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly, who is crafting yet another grandiose scheme to reform society to his liking--can be taken in all seriousness as a motto for the presidency of William Jefferson Clinton. The moral degeneracy of Clintonism, although condemned by a sizable plurality of Americans, is shrugged off by their countrymen--many of whom simultaneously speak of George W. Bush in terms worthy to be used of the Antichrist. This latter group feels that times were good and the nation was at peace, so who cares if the resources of the federal government were repeatedly abused and violated? Who cares who was demonized in the press (Kenneth Starr, Linda Tripp), harassed by the IRS (Paula Jones, the Mendozas), or paid a human cost by being dragged into the vortex of the president's legal troubles and investigations (Monica Lewinsky, Betty Currie)? As Christopher Hitchens has well said, **"The impression has been allowed to solidify that there was no price to be paid for all this; that the very definition of political skill was an ability to act without conscience."**¹⁷

But the price has been the cheapening of the presidency, the debasement of our society, and possibly a pattern for future presidents with more single-minded ruthlessness than even Clinton himself showed. After all, Clinton, for all his unscrupulousness, really did not have any other fixed agenda than remaining president for as long as possible; when his first-term plan to federalize health care failed, he was just as happy to take credit for signing welfare reform, a Republican initiative. A future president who is just as shameless and who also (unlike Clinton) has a specific agenda that will harm the American people only needs to look to the way the Clinton Administration sucker-punched the U.S. Constitution while brilliantly manipulating the media and public opinion; that will provide a nearly-perfect template for a leader who wants to use the presidency as a springboard for an organized strategy of mischief.

In the end, Bill Clinton will likely live out his many expected years of life polishing his damaged reputation and that of his presidency, on an O.J.-like quest for "true believers" who will wholeheartedly accept him and his revision of history. I do not doubt that the gregarious, extroverted ex-president will find very many people who will do just that. But many others will certainly react like the young people at Carleton College and the University of Chicago who refused Clinton's outstretched hand. Many will certainly have a reaction like the philosopher Epictetus, who, when a noted scholar caught in an act of adultery entered his class, responded with indignation and bewilderment:

. . . As what am I to treat you, fellow? As a neighbour, as a friend? Of what kind? As a citizen? What confidence am I to place in you? If you were a vessel so cracked that it was impossible to use you for anything, you would be cast forth upon the dunghills and even from there no one would pick you up; but if, although a man, you cannot fill a man's place, what are we going to do with you? . . . For all that will you say, "Nobody cares for me, a scholar!"? No, for you are an evil man, and useless. It is just as if the wasps complained that nobody cares for them, but all run away from them, and, if anyone can, he strikes them and knocks them down. You have such a sting that you

involve in trouble and pain whomever you strike. What do you want us to do with you? There is no place where you can be put.¹⁸

Like the scholar who boasted to Epictetus of his scholarship and understanding, Bill Clinton obviously believes that his ability to "**feel your pain**" and his two terms as president should command welcome and acclaim wherever he goes. And perhaps among those people for whom party looms so large that they cannot see past it to consider principle, he will always be given accolades, just as even post-resignation some diehards continued to cherish Richard Nixon. But those who review the damage done by the presidency of Bill Clinton with any measure of serious attention, and who see the measure of denial in which Clinton continues to remain regarding his "**consequences**," will be hard-pressed to find anything in the last eight years worthy of honor or praise.

(February 6, 2001)

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¹NY: Wings Books/Random House, 1996, p. 317.

²"President Clinton's Videotaped August 17, 1998 Grand Jury Testimony," as given in Phil Kuntz, ed., *The Starr Evidence*, NY: Pocket Books, 1998, p. 387.

³Debra Rosenberg & Michael Isikoff, "Thinkin' About Tomorrow," *Newsweek*, 1/29/2001; Joseph Curl, "Was a pardon a quid pro quo?", *Washington Times*, 1/22/2001.

⁴Henry Fielding, *Jonathan Wild*, ed. David Nokes, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982, p. 220. But Dr. Samuel Johnson's words, which on the surface read like a contradiction of Fielding's, also seem applicable to the kind of "greatness" that is Clinton's: "**BOSWELL. 'Does not Gray's poetry, Sir, tower above the common mark?' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir: but we must attend to the difference between what men in general cannot do if they would, and what every man may do if he would. Sixteen-string Jack [a famous highwayman] towered above the common mark.'**" (--James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. R.W. Chapman, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980, p. 744 [Friday, 12 April 1776].)

⁵John Harris, "Clinton's Final Bid for Redemption" (Part 2, "The Last Chance Presidency"), *Washington Post*, 9/7-10/2000.

⁶John F. Harris, "For the Clintons' Last Act, Reviews Don't Look Good," *Washington Post*, 1/27/2001.

⁷See Howard Kurtz, "Back on the Grill, Gore Gets Barbecued," *Washington Post*, 1/25/2001 (citing material which originally appeared in the Drudge Report); Joseph Curl, "GAO to investigate White House vandalism," *Washington Times*, 2/1/2001.

⁸See the citations in "Oooh, Oooh, Oooh: Journalists discover Clintonian corruption. Hey guys, where've you been for eight years?", *Opinion-Journal*, 1/26/2001.

⁹"Clinton exit gives party shudders," *Boston Globe*, 1/31/2001.

¹⁰Joseph Curl, "Istook balks at cost of Clinton's office," *Washington Times*, 2/2/2001; see also Charles Krauthammer, "The Presidential Corruption Index," *Washington Post*, 2/2/2001.

¹¹John F. Harris, "Clintons Will Pay for Half of Gifts," *Washington Post*, 2/3/2001.

¹²Charles Krauthammer, "The Limits of Credulity," *Washington Post*, 1/30/1998.

¹³It is clear either that the IRS was used in this fashion by Clinton's administration or that there were a series of remarkable "coincidences," since numerous individuals troublesome to the administration were singled out for IRS audits: Paula Jones, Jennifer Flowers, Elizabeth Ward Gracen, Glenn and Patricia Mendoza (see my previous article about them), and Katherine Prudhomme. Prudhomme had the misfortune to ask former Vice President Al Gore whether or not he believed that Clinton had raped Juanita Broaddrick during a town-hall meeting in December 1999. (--For the list of those targeted for audits, see Bill Sammon, "Woman who questioned Gore now faces IRS inquiry," *Washington Times*, 8/30/2000; for a transcript of the exchange between Prudhomme and Gore, with on-target commentary on Gore's "**positively freakish lack of curiosity**" as to the veracity of the charges, see Christopher Hitchens, *No One Left to Lie To: The Triangulations of William Jefferson Clinton*, NY: Verso, 1999, pp. 103ff..)

¹⁴George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1946, p. 112.

¹⁵Harris, "Clintons Will Pay . . . "; emphasis mine.

¹⁶George F. Will, "Clinton's Mark," *Washington Post*, 1/11/2001.

¹⁷Hitchens, p. 150.

¹⁸W.A. Oldfather, trans., *Epictetus: The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, Vol. 1* (Loeb Classical Library 131), Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1925 (1998 re-typeset edition), pp. 229-31 (Book II, 4:3-7). Lest anyone object to comparing Clinton to wasps, there is an even less flattering comparison implied by leftist journalist Christopher Hitchens: "**By chance during that bizarre and shame-faced closure** [i.e., the impeachment acquittal of Clinton by the Senate] **I heard a zoologist talking in Georgetown about the relationship between mammals and reptiles. 'The reptile,' she said, 'can break into the mammal's nest and destroy and eat all the young, and be burrowed into the still-warm and living flank of the mother, before any reaction is evident. Our anthropomorphic verdict would be that reptiles don't even know that they are lucky, while mammals don't really believe that reptiles can exist.'**" (--Hitchens, pp. 149-50.)

Were the Terrorists “Good Muslims”?

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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One of the core meanings of Islam is peace Therefore, the inhumane and horrific events at the World Trade Center, which caused innocent casualties—including many Muslim victims—[are] clearly, without a doubt, completely un-Islamic.

--statements distributed outside an Islamic worship service in Manhattan.¹

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which destroyed New York’s World Trade Center and a portion of the Pentagon in Washington D.C., certain commentators and columnists have ascribed the motivation for these acts to **“fundamentalist Islam.”** Such terminology, linking this mindset with other “fundamentalisms” (such as “right-wing” Christianity), is probably on one level a manifestation of traditional media prejudices about religion and society.

However, it also displays a rather uncritical mindset about Islam, because in many respects the “fundamentalist Islam” of the terrorists who killed the passengers of four planes and workers in the attacked buildings—as well as that of their leader Osama bin Laden, if he is in fact responsible—is **hard to reconcile with genuine Islam.** By confounding terrorist “Islam” with what our fellow citizens who are Muslim believe, we run the risk of perpetuating stereotypes at this time of national crisis that could harm these fellow citizens. We have already seen the beginnings of attacks on mosques, and on Americans of Arabic descent by non-Arab Americans,² and these attacks are unworthy of our nation.

Obviously I am no Muslim, and hence far from an expert on *Al-Qur’an* (also known as “The Koran,” the holy book of Islam), but because even a non-Muslim can discern certain things about what Islam is that disagree with the terrorists’ behavior, I thought I would try to dispel some confusion among my fellow Americans by pointing out the following:

1. It has been reported that not only were the terrorists Muslims, but **“Muslims worked in the World Trade Center and had established a mosque in one of the towers.”** Believers were in fact present and worshipping on the morning of the attack, but are at

¹ As quoted in Steve Miller, “New York Muslims Fear Vigilantes,” *Washington Times*, 9/17/2001.

² See, for example, Lynette Clemetson & Keith Naughton, “Patriotism vs. Ethnic Pride: An American Dilemma. Arab-Americans Worry About a World of Hate,” *Newsweek*, 9/24/2001.

this writing missing.³ It is hard to believe that, given the preparation that the terrorists must have done to plan this attack in detail, they could not have been aware of this fact. And if they were aware of it and did not care, then they are condemned by Islam. *Al-Qur'an* has this to say (4:92-3):

**It is not for a believer to take a believer's life
except by mistake
Any one who kills a believer intentionally
will be cast into Hell
to abide there for ever,
and suffer God's anger and damnation⁴**

Not only would knowingly killing the Islamic believers in the World Trade Center be condemned by Islam, but so would the fact that the mastermind of these attacks took advantage of the deaths of those who executed his terror plan. As one expert on Osama bin Laden has said, “*Suicide is something money can't buy You don't need a lot of money to carry out these operations, but you can't buy someone's willingness to commit a suicide. That's priceless.*”⁵ How does one Muslim's sending other Muslims to commit suicide square with Islam? If it cannot be shown to do so, then the above quotation from the *Qur'an* condemning the act would seem to apply, at least as far as anyone who truly believes in Islam is concerned.

2. In their final days before committing their actions, certain of the suspected terrorists are now known to have indulged in drinking and in “**cavorting with lap dancers at the Pink Pony Nude Theater.**” The same report bearing this news also carried the following verdict from a Muslim authority:

*Islam does not condone killing innocent people in the name of God. Nor can a devout Muslim drink booze or party at a strip club and expect to reach heaven, said Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, a professor at Temple University in Philadelphia. The most basic tenets of the religion forbid alcohol and any sex outside marriage.*⁶

3. Even more strangely, perhaps, the owner of the Pink Pony turned over credit card receipts and a **copy of *Al-Qur'an* “left behind by bar patrons,”** who boasted to employees of the “bloodshed” that Americans would soon see.⁷ The leaving behind of the Muslim holy book can be seen as very significant if one knows the reverence with which Islamic believers handle it. Just as the American flag has certain protocols for its handling, so does *Al-Qur'an*; I was once admonished by a Pakistani man who saw me with a copy of it to “keep it very clean” and not to let women touch it because they might be going through their menstrual periods (and thus would be considered unclean; see *Al-*

³ Douglas C. Lyons, “Americans Must Work Harder on Awareness,” (South Florida) *Sun-Sentinel* (www.sun-sentinel.com), 9/15/2001.

⁴ Citations of *Al-Qur'an* are from Ahmed Ali's translation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990).

⁵ Nicholas Kralev, “Bin Laden said to be consumed by hate for West,” *Washington Times*, 9/13/2001.

⁶ Jody A. Benjamin, “Suspects' Actions Don't Add Up,” *Sun-Sentinel*, 9/16/2001.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Qur'an 2:222). For the terrorists to leave this book *abandoned in a nude club*, where *people of all sorts* (including women) might handle it, would be far from an acceptable thing to do given what Muslims believe.

Then again, that Osama bin Laden's attitude towards *Al-Qur'an* may be less than traditional is strongly suggested by a quote attributed to him by the *Washington Post*: **"You cannot defeat the heretic with this book alone You have to show them the fist."**⁸

4. Furthermore, Alan Reynolds of the Cato Institute argues in a *Washington Times* op-ed piece that **"Terrorists who cite Islam an excuse for terrorist acts against Jews and Christians are not fundamentalists but heretics."** Citing several passages from *Al-Qur'an* to show that it "demands respect of all monotheistic religions," he writes that it "never excuses a Holy War or Jihad against fellow monotheists -- Christians or Jews -- but only against those who worship idols (idolaters) or many gods (polytheists). Even in the case of idolaters, [it] honors peace agreements." Reynolds concludes from this as follows:

*When we speak of "fundamentalist" Christians and "orthodox" Jews, we mean those who follow quite strictly the teachings of the New Testament or Torah. If "Islamic fundamentalist" likewise means strict adherence to the Koran, then the phrase cannot be properly applied to those who attempt to terrorize Christians and Jews. The Koran demands respect of all monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), and does not condone war against any of them, much less cowardly acts of terrorism.*⁹

To the best of my knowledge, Reynolds does not speak from within Islam or as a Qur'anic scholar. Nevertheless, he cites a great deal of evidence that it would seem difficult for a Muslim to argue against even if he wanted to do so.

In fact, a great many more Muslims seem to agree with Reynolds' interpretation of Islam as a tolerant religion than with the terrorists' interpretation of it as mandating murder. Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, asserts that the series of attacks on September 11th **"violates the very foundations of Islamic law."**¹⁰ And another prominent Muslim in this country has spoken out in no uncertain terms on this subject:

*"I cannot sit by and let the world think that Islam is a killing religion," said former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, a convert to Islam. "These radicals are doing things that God is against. Muslims do not believe in violence. If the culprits are Muslim, they have twisted the teachings of Islam. . . . Islam does not promote terrorism or the killing of people."*¹¹

⁸ Caryle Murphy, "Bin Laden's Radical Form of Islam," *Washington Post*, 9/18/2001.

⁹ Alan Reynolds, "This Is No Holy War," *Washington Times*, 9/16/2001.

¹⁰ Kenneth L. Woodward, "A Peaceful Faith, A Fanatic Few," *Newsweek*, 9/24/2001.

¹¹ Quoted in Murphy, "Bin Laden's Radical Form of Islam."

Al Qur'an itself proclaims, “**Woe to those who pray/But who are oblivious/of their moral duties**” (107:4-5). By the light of their own religion, as well as that of basic morality, the terrorists stand condemned. Because of their inner darkness, they have used “Allah” and “Islam” as meaningless coverings for their determination to kill the innocent. No one should use the terrorists as an excuse to harass or injure innocent American citizens who are also Muslims.

(September 16, 2001; some additions made September 19, 2001.)

Streisand's Shakespeare Gaffe

By Any Other Name, This Author's Definitely Not the Bard

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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A double embarrassment befell singer **Barbra Streisand** at the end of September 2002, both incidents reported first by [Drudge Report](#) cyber columnist Matt Drudge. A memo sent to House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt on behalf of Streisand by Margery Tabankin, described by news reports as Streisand's "political advisor," contained political strategy suggestions amidst numerous flagrant misspellings; Drudge headlined his story "STREISAND TO 'GEBHARDT': DON'T ATTAQ IRACK."¹

Following this, it was reported that at a Democratic fundraiser, Streisand had attributed the following quote to William Shakespeare:

You know, really good artists have a way of being relevant in their time—but great artists are relevant at anytime. So, in the words of William Shakespeare, "Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor, for patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword. It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind. And when the drums of war have reached a fever pitch and the blood boils with hate and the mind has closed, the leader will have no need in seizing the rights of the citizenry. Rather, the citizenry, infused with fear and blinded with patriotism, will offer up all of their rights unto the leader, and gladly so. How do I know? For this is what I have done. And I am Caesar." Imagine that was written over 400 years ago. It's amazing how history without consciousness is destined to repeat itself.²

Drudge traced the words to "a William Shakespeare hoax . . . circulating on the internet,"³ and his breaking of this story attracted widespread media attention and even elicited a response from Streisand herself via a "Truth Alert" on [her website](#).⁴ Noted conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh had great fun ridiculing Streisand both on the air and online: "*Never mind looking it up, Barbra, much less ever having picked up a copy of Shakespeare so that you know how to identify his quotes.*"⁵

This Caesar's not much of a Roman

Some might think Limbaugh's comment unduly harsh, but those would have to be people unfamiliar with any significant amount of Shakespeare's works. We will probably never

know the context in which the hoax quote was written, unless someone steps forward and credibly claims authorship, so any definitive verdict on the intelligence or lack thereof on the part of its author is likely impossible.

Nevertheless, it is easy to speculate. Streisand herself used superlatives about the quote being “*powerful and true and beautifully written*” and claimed the author “*should be writing their own play.*”⁶ I think the unknown author was either suffering from an over-inflated ego in trying to rival one of the world’s greatest writers, **or** brilliantly built into his quote signals that would tip off the educated reader to its spuriousness but would be missed by the unwary. Most noticeably, the cadences of iambic pentameter are lacking from the pseudo-Caesar’s speech, which contrasts with the fact that the actual text of *Julius Caesar* is 93.8% verse and only 6.2% prose.⁷ Also, the use of the word “citizenry,” which occurs twice, is distinctly an anachronism; no use of “citizenry” is recorded in English until 1819, over two centuries after Shakespeare’s death!⁸

Nor is the handling of history in the hoax quotation impressive. Even Shakespeare’s use of his source material in *Julius Caesar*, chiefly *Plutarch’s Lives*, has been called a “free handling of historical material.”⁹ But at least much of the substance is from Plutarch rather than invented wholesale. The hoaxer, by contrast, models his “Caesar” more on the lines of a twentieth-century dictator like Hitler or Mussolini than along Roman lines. The historical Caesar may have “bang[ed] the drums of war,” but it was to fight such enemies of the state as the Gauls, not “to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor.” Having control of armed forces allowed Caesar to build his power base, not without liberal use of bribery¹⁰ and not without outflanking his rival Pompey by making a temporary alliance with him.¹¹ It is also arguable that “to save the Roman world from chaos a new type of government had to be created,”¹² since the rivalry between Pompey and Caesar had caused such a vacuum in governmental order.¹³ But perhaps it was part of the joke, if it was a joke, for the hoax artist to make his “Caesar” sound more like **a twentieth-century demagogue** than like an ancient Roman.

Do we really need “Funny Girl” making policy?

If this were an isolated instance of self-embarrassment, Streisand’s words could be quickly forgotten. However, the “Shakespeare” incident is part of a pattern. Bear in mind that *Microsoft Encarta* calls Streisand an “American singer, stage and motion-picture actor, director, and producer,”¹⁴ and no less a musician (and self-described “Streisand freak”) than Glenn Gould insisted that “the Streisand voice is one of the natural wonders of the age.”¹⁵ That would seem a fairly substantial resume, but Barbra obviously has further ambitions that include influencing the world of politics.

The grossly-misspelled “Gebhardt” memo mentioned above is only one of the most recent examples of this kind of ambition. In the spring of 2001, Streisand authored another memo to Capitol Hill Democrats advising them to oppose President George W. Bush, prompting CNN’s Bill Press to exclaim, “Thank God for Funny Girl! At last, a Democrat with backbone.”¹⁶ She has lectured at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government (on, one wonders, what qualifications?), tarring conservatives as

“dangerous.”¹⁷ She is a past contributor to ex-President Clinton’s legal defense fund¹⁸ and raised millions in one fundraiser brunch for his presidential library.¹⁹ She has even, at a “**political meeting at her home**,” floated the idea of having “**a group of Democrats . . . buy a cable-TV network so they don't have to watch GOP talking heads.**”²⁰ This is a person who says she “find[s] George Bush and Dick Cheney frightening,”²¹ who claims our chief executive “stole the presidency through family ties, arrogance and intimidation,”²² and who wants Democrats to “go on the offensive” against Bush on Iraq.²³ Of course, at the same time this self-appointed guardian of citizen liberties has, along with neighbors like David Geffen and Steven Spielberg, attempted to build chain-link fences to keep the “**citizenry**” off *public beaches* bordering her beachfront estate.²⁴

What Tunku Varadarajan says of Hollywood’s glitterati in general—“**Their conception of politics is often anarchically emotional and divorced from fact and reason**”²⁵—very clearly describes the ranting speech and laughable rewrite of Streisand’s 70s hit “The Way We Were” that were presented at the fundraiser where she committed the Shakespeare *faux pas*, and which can be read at this writing on her website. One of the most humorous parts of the song rewrite is the claim that when Democrats had a majority, the diva “*could sleep nights,/not weep nights*”!²⁶ It is hard to imagine such crudely propagandistic drivel being sung with a straight face, but its very existence is probably a measure of the blindly ideological and proudly ignorant mindset that quotes an Internet hack as “Shakespeare.”

Some recommended reading for Mrs. Brolin

To have her avoid further embarrassment and perhaps become a person of greater intellectual depth, I would really recommend to Ms. Streisand the actual reading of the words of William Shakespeare; after all, as she herself has said, “**great artists are relevant at any time.**”

She should read first the tragedy *Coriolanus*, paying special attention not only to the gullibility of the people, but also to the characters of Brutus and Sicinius, whose contempt for those whose votes they need finds its contemporary echo in the attitudes of her party’s political leaders like Dick Gephardt, Tom Daschle, and Al Gore. If you want to talk about “**frightening**,” what she said at her Democratic fundraiser last month is eerily close to what the people say in the opening scene of this play, where the noble Menenius tries to reason with them:

Menenius. . . . Alack,
You are transported by calamity
Thither where more attends you, and you slander
The helms o’ th’ state, who care for you like fathers,
When you curse them as enemies.

I. Citizen. Care for us? True indeed! They ne’er cared for us yet. Suffer us to famish, and their storehouses cramm’d with grain; make edicts for usury, to support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act establish’d against the rich, and

provide more piercing statutes daily to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us.²⁷

Transplant that citizen to the 21st century—where, as Ann Coulter has truthfully said, “ad hominem attack is the liberal’s idea of political debate”²⁸—and he could be demagoguing for the Democratic National Committee. Or perhaps, if of a lyrical bent, he could help retool further hits from the Streisand catalog into propaganda vehicles.

After that, Streisand may wish to read (the real) *Julius Caesar*, paying heed to the lack of caution shown by Caesar in not taking care of the danger threatening him from the conspirators led by Brutus. (In fact, Caesar’s death comes midway through the play, which as a whole is more about Brutus than him, contrary to the drift of the hoax quotation.) Here again, the people are shown to be endlessly changeable, first siding with Brutus against the dead Caesar, then turned by Antony into a mob ready to burn Brutus’ house down and kill even those unlucky souls bearing the same names as the conspirators (III.ii, III.iii).

There are many other portions of Shakespeare’s works—such as the two tetralogies on English kings—that show how deeply the poet thought about government and the public good, and which it would perhaps be of benefit to Streisand to read. The advice of two of Shakespeare’s colleagues, well-known as it is, bears repeating in this context:

*Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to vnderstand him. And so we leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can lead your selues, and others.*²⁹

When she leads, should anyone follow?

Unfortunately Streisand seems to feel emboldened to “lead herself and others” when she has not the faintest idea where she is leading. Her ridiculous screed against George W. Bush bears striking similarities to not only the Citizen in *Coriolanus*, but also to the words of that 18th century sage who darkly referred to “**lawyers and men of learning, and moneyed men that talk so finely, and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill**”—which in this case was *the U.S. Constitution*—because “[t]hey expect to be managers of this Constitution, and get all the money into their own hands.”³⁰ Two kinds of people indulge in such talk as in these three examples, **ignorant folks and demagogues**, but it is not for me to say which of these classes the diva falls into.

Some of the above words may seem severe, but I find myself highly offended by Streisand’s behavior, not only as a Shakespeare lover who thinks it is despicable to prostitute that author’s reputation by foisting on him words he never wrote (while remaining willfully ignorant of the what he did say), but also as an American who deplores her unjustified comments about our president. While I would never deny freedom of speech to people like Streisand—a favor that I doubt would be returned by

those with her level of rabid intolerance—, I think it is not only fair but also important to point out **how wrong she is**.

Rather than projecting her neuroses onto the president and deciding to “weep nights,” maybe Streisand could spend her evenings doing something more constructive—such as building further chain-link fences to keep the riff-raff off the beach!

(October 9, 2002)

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² Quoted in [Drudge Report](#), “Streisand: I Was Duped by Internet Hoax,” 10/1/02; Greg Pierce, “Inside Politics,” *Washington Times*, 10/2/02; “Barbra Streisand Helps Set New Fund-Raising Record for Democratic Congressional Campaign,” downloaded from [barbrastreisand.com](#) on 10/2/02; “The Reliable Source: Streisand, Beware the Quote!”, *Washington Post*, 10/1/02. All of these sources differ slightly in layout and punctuation; the [barbrastreisand.com](#) piece leaves out a word (“So, in the words William Shakespeare...” [sic; “of” is missing]) and breaks the pseudo-Shakespeare up into lines, although these do not scan as anything close to iambic pentameter. All sources agree on the lapse of style in the second quote sentence (one would expect either “It both emboldens the blood and it narrows the mind” [parallel construction] or the omission of the word “both”). I’m still not clear on what Streisand means by “**history without consciousness**,” unless she perceives of “History” as a sentient entity that somehow decides events.

³ Drudge, op. cit..

⁴ “Julius Caesar Quote Used In Democratic National Gala Speech,” *Truth Alert* downloaded from [barbrastreisand.com](#) on 10/2/02. The stated purpose of Streisand’s “Truth Alerts” is: “If...sometime within the last 7 days a falsehood has been written in print, spoken on radio, or aired on television about Ms. Streisand...the TRUTH ALERT will contain a statement made by Ms. Streisand and/or her representatives to correct that falsehood.” However, since Matt Drudge’s report was nothing close to a “falsehood,” but was absolutely correct, Streisand’s site’s designation in the present case is an obvious *misnomer*.

⁵ “People, Who Make Up Quotes About People...Are The Luckiest People In The World!”, [rushlimbaugh.com](#), 10/1/02.

⁶ “Julius Caesar . . .”, *Truth Alert*.

⁷ Statistics from Alfred Harbage, ed., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works (The Pelican Text Revised)*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969, p. 31.

⁸ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, and the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition.

⁹ Frank Kermode in the introduction to this play in the *Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997, p. 1147.

¹⁰ “Caesar, on the other side, was more and more vigorous in his proceedings, himself always at hand about the frontiers of Italy, and sending his soldiers continually into the city to attend all elections with their votes. Besides, he corrupted several of the magistrates, and kept them in his pay . . .” (—*Plutarch’s Lives*, Vol. 2, “Pompey”; Dryden-Clough translation, NY: Modern Library, 2001, p. 117).

¹¹ He betrothed his daughter Julia to Pompey; see *Plutarch’s Lives*, Vol. 2, “Caesar,” p. 208.

¹² Michael S. Cheilik, “Caesar, Gaius Julius,” *Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2003*. © 1993-2002 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

¹³ Cf. “[O]n Cato’s standing up, everybody expected that he would have opposed [a motion to make Pompey sole consul], but after silence made, he said that he would never have been the author of that advice himself, but since it had been propounded by another, his advice was to follow it, adding, that *any form of government was better than none at all* . . .” (—*Plutarch’s Lives*, Vol. 2, “Pompey,” p. 114, emphasis added).

¹⁴ “Streisand, Barbra,” *Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2003*.

¹⁵ Glenn Gould, “Streisand as Schwarzkopf,” in Tim Page, ed., *The Glenn Gould Reader*, NY: Vintage Books, 1984, pp. 308 (“Streisand freak” description) and 309.

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- ¹⁶ Bill Press, “Democrats Get a New Leader—Streisand,” CNN.com, 4/3/01.
- ¹⁷ Sean Hannity, *Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty over Liberalism*, NY: ReganBooks/HarperCollins, 2002, pp. 231-2.
- ¹⁸ George Archibald, “Clinton legal-defense fund seeks \$3.9 million more,” *Washington Times*, 8/24/00.
- ¹⁹ Charles Babington, “Clinton Receiving Hero's Send-off,” *Washington Post*, 8/14/00.
- ²⁰ Pete L. Zanko, “Names & Faces,” *Washington Post*, 4/14/01.
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- ²² As qtd. in Press, “Democrats . . .”
- ²³ John Mercurio, “Streisand to Dems: ‘Go on the offensive,’” CNN.com, 9/27/02.
- ²⁴ Ann Coulter, *Slander: Liberal Lies About The American Right*, NY: Crown, 2002, p. 30.
- ²⁵ Tunku Varadarajan, “Election Madness!”, *OpinionJournal*, 11/3/00.
- ²⁶ “Barbra Streisand Helps Set New Fund-Raising Record . . .”
- ²⁷ *Coriolanus*, I.i.74-86, as given in the *Riverside Shakespeare*. (Speech headings modified.)
- ²⁸ Coulter, *Slander*, p. 10.
- ²⁹ John Heminge and Henry Condell, “To the great Variety of Readers,” in the *Shakespeare First Folio* (1623; a facsimile of this preface can be found in *Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 95).
- ³⁰ As qtd. in Isaac Kramnick, “Editor’s Introduction,” *The Federalist Papers*, NY: Penguin Books, 1987, p. 14. The words were spoken by Amos Singletery of Sutton, Massachusetts at his state’s ratification convention for the new Constitution.
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John Kerry: A Position for All Seasons

by T.L. Hubeart Jr.

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“I think the most effective thing I can do is just really go after the Republicans, because I can’t say an incredible amount of good things about Kerry.”

--Brian Berkey, New York
University student[1]

“At this point, if it was Bush versus a gerbil, they’d vote for the gerbil.”

--Matt Schwarz, Kerry campaign
volunteer[2]

“Perhaps more troubling for Mr. Kerry is that, despite the barrage of attacks on the president's judgment and character by his political opponents, many Americans are still not liking their alternative.”

--Gary J. Andres in the *Washington
Times*[3]

“I'm going out there and introduce myself to the American people,' [Kerry] adds, convinced they'll find that he offers 'a real choice about real issues.' Some Democrats worry the public will decide something else--that he's deadly dull. 'Al Gore, but without the charisma,' is one jibe making its way around the Internet.”

--*Reader's Digest*[4]

“...Mr Kerry has yet to articulate why he should be president...[He] has come up with a few interesting ideas, notably on health care, and a few dodgy ones, notably on outsourcing; but the repeated image is of a man saying what he thinks his audience wants to hear. One reason why there is no danger of Mr Edwards contradicting Mr Kerry is because it is not clear what Kerryism is.”

--*The Economist*[5]

In view of the above typical quotes reflecting the current election season, it would be remarkable if anyone could be found who thinks John Forbes Kerry is an exciting and promising choice for President. Some have called George W. Bush “the Accidental President” due to the closeness of, and contention over, the 2000 election, but John Kerry is even more worthy of being called “**the accidental candidate.**” Having coasted in Howard Dean’s wake during much of the campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination, he benefited from Dean’s taking most of the hits as the early frontrunner and subsequent implosion, making Kerry the default choice of his party. Now some of his supporters would go so far as to portray him as “**the new JFK.**”[6]

Certainly his service on his swift boat in Vietnam would seem reminiscent of Kennedy's command of PT Boat 109 during World War II, and the Democratic National Convention in July 2004 where Kerry accepted his party's nomination capitalized on his military record in a big way.[7] What was not highlighted at the convention was his subsequent activism against the Vietnam War, culminating in testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on April 22, 1971; there, he asked Congress to take action based on "the will of the people," which he believed demanded "that we should be out of Vietnam now." [8] Scott Swett comments that

the efforts of Kerry and the [Vietnam Veterans Against the War] focused on a single objective: to convince the public that America's military was committing vast numbers of atrocities in Vietnam; that they did so casually and routinely, as a matter of policy. And they succeeded. Many American soldiers returned home from the war to find they were spat upon in the streets, reviled as baby-killers, and treated as pariahs by former friends.[9]

"You better go listen to that John Kerry fellow"

Considering that the man who shouldered so much of this effort is now running for President, the mainstream media has shown a remarkable lack of curiosity about this portion of the candidate's life. Even if one refuses to consider some of the more sensational charges against him, it is clear that a wide streak of opportunism and of self-promotion characterizes John Kerry. We find an inadvertent testimonial to this effect that goes back three decades from Garry Trudeau, whose more recent *Doonesbury* cartoons regularly mock President Bush and, in this observer's opinion, clearly are aimed at helping Kerry win the White House.[10] But in 1971, Trudeau's outlook on Kerry was far different: one strip shows two *Doonesbury* regulars being told, **"If you care about this country at all, you better go listen to that John Kerry fellow,"** and that **"He speaks with a rare eloquence and astonishing conviction. If you see no one else this year, you must see John Kerry!"** When the speaker leaves, one of the regulars asks, **"Who was that?"** and the other responds, **"John Kerry."** In another strip, after a speech denouncing the war, Kerry is shown raising his arms in a victory gesture (or peace gesture, take your pick) strangely reminiscent of Nixon, while receiving the adulation of his listeners and thinking to himself, **"You're really clicking tonight, you gorgeous preppie."**[11]

More troublingly, the group Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which has received relatively little attention from the press until recently, is this month publishing their book *Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry*. [12] Of course the Kerry campaign has worked to "create the impression that the veterans [in that group] were not credible because they were not independent"—though in fact the independence of the former veterans who support Kerry is far more questionable based on the fact that **"all contacts with the Kerry veterans have to go through the Kerry campaign"** and that **"the campaign subsidizes the veterans' testimonials."**[13] That has not prevented the campaign from having to do damage control regarding Kerry's reminiscences of spending Christmas Eve 1968 in Cambodia, where the memory that was supposedly

“seared” into him turned out to be incredibly flexible both as to place and date.[14] It is very much worth remarking that Kerry, who vehemently resents anyone questioning anything connected with his Vietnam and post-Vietnam record, does not bother to extend the same courtesy to his opponent's National Guard service, which has been similarly attacked and questioned in the press:

. . . The story of the day is not a good one. The TV images are all about Kerry and Vietnam and the ribbons he earned there--and threw away to protest the war. Kerry's eyes slide over to the screen again and again. "This is absurd, what's going on," he says. "I'm not going to let the President's campaign and this President-- *who still cannot prove that he showed up for duty in the National Guard in Alabama*--diminish my service, and my choice to oppose the war, and to do with my medals what I want to do." [15]

Also noteworthy is the fact that it is difficult to find any positive accomplishments from Kerry after his antiwar activism. *Boston Globe* columnist Jeff Jacoby notes the extreme oddity of Kerry's convention speech, where the candidate said, "I ask you to judge me by my record"—and then said almost nothing about any accomplishments after his military service. There was one “throwaway line about his time as a prosecutor,” no mention of his being lieutenant governor of his state, and “three sentences about his 20 years in the US Senate.” In contrast, as Jacoby points out, **“all night long—all week long—there is only one part of Kerry's long record that the Democrats have wanted Americans to notice: the part that ended 35 years ago when he came home from Vietnam.”**[16]

A negative campaign of “optimism”?

It's worth asking why this is the case. It is as though the Democrats want to run a stealth campaign, featuring a nebulous candidate with positions no more solid than a pool of water, simply reflecting back to different groups of voters differing images of what they want to see in a candidate. Does it really advance our knowledge of Kerry in the least to hear him boast, “I can fight a more effective, smarter and better war on terror that actually makes America safer”? [17] Like the schoolboy who boasts that his dad is smarter or richer than another boy's dad, or that his dad can beat up anyone else's, the claim is long on noise but falls far short of proof. Or are we any closer to knowing what “Kerryism” is all about when the candidate spouts such rhetoric as this?

. . . George Bush has no record to run on. He has a record to run away from. He can't come to a city and talk about creating jobs, because he hasn't created them. He's lost them. He can't come anywhere and talk about health care for all Americans, because he has no plan. He can't come and talk about keeping the promise to our children and our schools because he broke it and he doesn't fund it. He can't talk about cleaner air or cleaner water because he's going backwards on those policies. So what does he do? He distorts my record. This president not only misleads America about my record; he misleads his own administration. He misleads his security adviser. He misleads his secretary of state about his own planning for a war.[18]

It is worth pointing out that when President Bush does *run on his record*, as when he recently released a TV ad called “Solemn Duty” that recalled the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Kerry campaign’s reaction continues to be vitriolic: “This is Bush’s idea of an optimistic campaign?” scoffed Kerry campaign spokesman Chad Clanton, adding, “If you ever wanted proof that the Bush campaign has reached the point of desperation, now we have it.”^[19] It is interesting that when the President talks about Kerry’s vulnerable record, he is condemned for *distortion* and *misleading America*, while Bush’s reflecting on his own record is painted as *negativity* and *desperation*. Apparently in *the Kerry alternate reality dimension*, the only way that George W. could run a “fair” campaign is by placing masking tape over his mouth until November to allow Kerry to be elected without contest—or maybe by moving out of the White House now so John and Teresa can move in and claim their self-appointed destiny immediately.

Kerry vs. Kerry on the issues

I doubt very much that Kerry’s rhetoric, or his absurd attempts to lay claim to representing “optimism,”^[20] would be what Thomas Paine had in mind when he defended the need to know about the characters of those involved in political debates, warning that “**A total ignorance of men lays us under the danger of mistaking plausibility for principle.**”^[21] The present campaign in support of Kerry has instead taken pains to minimize firm principle and push plausibility—or rather, multiple plausibilities according to the group being pandered to at any one time. Sometimes the plausibilities even appear in the same sentence and cancel each other out—such as “**I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it,**”^[22] which even *Time* magazine called “a statement that makes sense only in the have-it-both-ways world of the U.S. Senate.”^[23] More often, the plausibilities can sound good in isolation, but are shown to be absurdities when placed side by side, as Brendan Miniter demonstrated recently in the *Wall Street Journal*:

With a wink and a nod John Kerry is running for president. He says he’ll keep the troops in Iraq, even as he calls the war they are fighting optional. He promises to aggressively fight the war on terror, even as he promises to work better with France and his supporters rally to repeal the Patriot Act. And he’s running as a fiscal conservative, even as he lays out a vigorous new spending agenda.^[24]

And this is by no means an exhaustive list; for instance, Kerry has recently **claimed to oppose gay marriage**, but in 1996 opposed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), charging in the gay magazine *The Advocate* that, “**Echoing the ignorance and bigotry that peppered the discussion of interracial marriage a generation ago, the proponents of DOMA call for a caste system for marriage. I will not be party to that.**”^[25] His current stand on this position, judging from a subsequent interview in the same magazine, is anything but unambiguous.^[26] Another example is how he has both denounced the fence being built on the West Bank by Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (“**We don’t need another barrier to peace**”) and spoken in favor of it (“**The security**

fence is a legitimate act of self-defense erected in response to the wave of terror attacks against Israeli citizens”).^[27] From all of these position shifts, the only thing that one can count on from John Kerry is that if you wait long enough, he’ll eventually profess agreement with you on some issue! ^[28] This is truly a candidate with *a position for all seasons*.

Demonizing Bush while navel-gazing with Natalie Maines

Of course, to promote the candidacy of “a man saying what he thinks his audience wants to hear” (as *The Economist* phrased it above), the current President must be portrayed as someone so evil and so devastating to the country that even voting for “a gerbil” would be preferable to his reelection.^[29] The hysteria has intensified as propagandist Michael Moore with his movie *Fahrenheit 911*,^[30] and several celebrities such as Bruce Springsteen and a consortium of other musicians touring under the auspices of the MoveOn political action committee^[31], have denounced Bush, making statements ranging from the ferocious to the ferociously stupid.

As an instance of the latter type of comment, consider Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks, who last year told a London crowd she was ashamed that Bush was from Texas^[32] and effectively destroyed her group’s career among country music fans. Maines now says that **“There’s never been a political climate like this, which is so the polar opposite of me as a person and what I believe in.”**^[33] That statement surely reflects the quintessence of narcissism; Maines has apparently never reflected on the possibility that her **“person”** and her preferred beliefs do *not* always coincide with the direction of the nation, especially when millions of other **“persons and what they believe in”** have the right to an equal vote with her.

John Edwards and “on-the-job training”

This climate of mindless Bush hatred will, I think, need to intensify even more before the Democrats can win back the White House, so that people are not able to think rationally when voting and can be made to vote against the current administration. After all, thinking people in general are not going to go hog wild over a candidate like John Kerry. Not only is his persona lackluster, but we have not seen much to be impressed with in Kerry’s judgment, where it has gone beyond hinting at “enormous cards to play” in foreign affairs that he’s “not going to play...before [he’s] president,”^[34] or that he would pursue a “more sensitive war on terror that reaches out to other nations and brings them to our side.”^[35] One major action that Kerry has accomplished (as opposed to idle boasting like this about what he *would* do as president) is the selection of his running mate John Edwards, and this pick should give any reasonable person ample cause to doubt the soundness of Kerry’s judgment in general. A generally positive profile of Edwards in the *Economist* begins as follows:

In 1997, a Democratic political consultant in North Carolina got a phone call from an unknown lawyer in Raleigh. The caller had never run for public office, had not always voted and was unsure whether he initially registered as

a Democrat or Republican. But the previous year his 16-year-old son had been killed in a car crash and the personal tragedy had turned his mind to politics. He asked about running for a Senate seat. The state Senate, assumed the consultant. No, came the ambitious reply, the United States Senate.[36]

Democrats in 1988 laughed heartily when Vice Presidential candidate Lloyd Bentsen told his rival Dan Quayle, “*Senator, you’re no Jack Kennedy.*” But as is evident from the above, John Edwards, who has not even completed his first term as a U.S. Senator, is *not even a Dan Quayle*. One telling criticism of Edwards, that “**This is not the time for on-the-job training in the White House on national security issues,**” came from *John Kerry himself* during the campaigning leading up to the Democratic primaries![37] Now not only is Kerry leaping into Edwards’ arms so regularly that Jay Leno set a video montage of Kerry-Edwards hugs to the Joe Cocker song “You Are So Beautiful,”[38] but Kerry also wants to place the untested Edwards one heartbeat away from the presidency. In these times of unprecedented challenges such as terrorism, that decision not only seems unwise but flagrantly irresponsible. Indeed, the *Wall Street Journal’s* editorial page comments that Kerry’s choice of Edwards “strikes us as a mistake in judgment by Mr. Kerry, and perhaps also a political error.”[39]

And if Edwards is not even a Dan Quayle, what is John Kerry himself? Like one of the ridiculous characters in an Oscar Wilde comedy, Kerry the candidate spouts absurdity after absurdity, and most of his utterances tend to conflict with some other position he has taken at some other date. Perhaps in more frivolous times, his vacillating political persona would not be as dangerous as it is for our country today. But after the terrorist attacks of 9-11, we should realize that we can no longer indulge in a holiday from history.

A presidential perspective

Some presidential remarks seem timely and appropriate here given the current campaign season:

And the American people here with this sort of partisan, negative stuff pounding on them day in and day out, they do not know what we have done. We haven’t had time to talk, we’ve been busy doing. . . .You cannot get anything done in a world where people determine the course of history unless people are in a good frame of mind. You think about whatever it is you do and wherever it is you work and how well you would do if two-thirds of the people showed up every day convinced what you were doing was in the wrong direction and nothing good could ever happen. . . .That is what our political adversaries actually try to create every day in the minds of the American people. . . .[40]

Although this statement by the President does accurately evoke the desperation and shamelessness of the John Kerry campaign, it was not actually uttered by George W. Bush. These are instead the words of President *Bill Clinton* speaking in 1994 about *Republican* adversaries. But the words are applicable today because the Democrats have wholeheartedly adopted the negative strategy of which they accused Republicans during

the last administration. Putting a smiley face on their tactics and calling them “optimism” will, I hope, not fool enough of the American people to win John Kerry the White House.

But it could happen if the Democrats are able to patch together their ramshackle coalition of opposing interests until November, like a severely damaged racing car that a pit crew is trying to repair just enough to have it get across the finish line before it falls apart. “Soul-searching is natural for a candidate who *loses* an election,” Minter points out. “For Mr. Kerry, ‘What now?’ will suddenly loom large if he *wins*.”^[41] The cracks and potential rupture points of the Kerry coalition are clearly visible, including a strained relationship with the African-American community, certain segments of which are tired of having Democrats take their votes as a given.^[42] Kerry may squeak by with a victory, but the vacillations and panderings of the man in campaign mode are a recipe for disaster in actually governing the nation.

Whatever happens, we’ll have four more years of G.W.

And for that reason I personally believe that no matter who wins this election, America will have, one way or another, “**four more years**” of **George W. Bush** (Teresa Heinz-Kerry to the contrary). A Kerry victory will immediately be succeeded by the practicalities of governing a heavily divided nation. Failures and missteps will inevitably follow, and the “rapid response team” of press handlers that Kerry has assembled for his campaign will be working overtime to deflect blame from the new administration: “*The reason we can’t restore relations with France and Germany is because George W. Bush left them so damaged. And the reason John Kerry hasn’t improved the economic outlook? Because of Bush ruining the economy! And the reason why your taxes have to be raised sky-high? Bush created the deficit!*” For the next four years, anything the Kerry administration fouls up will be effectively laid at the doorstep of George W. Bush by administration spin-meisters and mouthpieces. Meantime, the country will flounder in a way not seen since the presidency of Jimmy Carter—and, I am afraid, the enemies of America will be significantly emboldened and more of our citizens will be placed in danger, either through terrorism or through additional military actions made necessary because critical steps were not taken in time to defuse threats against our nation. (The irony here is that some Kerry voters that I know are mothers concerned that their sons may be drafted and sent to war, a scenario that I predict would be *more* likely rather than less likely because of a Kerry presidency, since Kerry’s tendency to indecisiveness and flip-flopping could easily mean that difficult choices about our country’s defense are not taken until our very survival hangs in the balance. Under that scenario, a draft that is *not necessary* now could become *the only option* to save the U.S.A. once dangers have reached a critical mass.)

Four years ago, Candidate Bush presented himself as a uniter rather than a divider. Democrats may argue that as president, Bush has not united, even while they have carefully stoked the fires of hatred against him and refused to be unified. But in this election, it seems almost absurd to ask if John Kerry will be a uniter, given that his entire campaign is based on division. Perhaps this cannot be otherwise if he is going to convince enough voters by any means necessary to elect him to replace the incumbent,

but a candidate needs to not only win an election but govern all the people afterwards. As it stands now, Kerry's attitude is much like the old Vietnam catch-phrase that **"We had to destroy the village in order to save it."** If sowing hatred, negativity, and fear are John Kerry's weapons of choice for campaigning, causing America to be weakened internally at a time of great national peril, that would be a sadder commentary on this candidate than any ads run by swift boat veterans or Republicans. And it would be not only sad but disastrous for the country as a whole if voters rewarded such tactics with victory for such a deeply unprincipled candidate as Kerry this November.

(August 15, 2004)

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- [4] William Beaman, "Back into Battle: War hero and war protester, John Kerry has to prove he's the right man for the nation's toughest job", *Reader's Digest*, August 2004, p. 85. (Non-grammatical first sentence as in source [one would expect something like "introducing" for "introduce"].)
- [5] "Leaders: Kerry's dream ticket?", *The Economist*, 7/10/04, p. 9.
- [6] We are even told that **Kerry himself "would use the initials 'J.F.K.' to identify himself—stressing a less-than-subtle commonality with John Fitzgerald Kennedy. He dropped the practice when press attention made the comparison something of an embarrassment"** (--Albert Mohler, "Who Is Senator John Kerry? It's Time to Take a Closer Look," downloaded from www.ksky.com on 7/30/04 [original article dated 1/20/04]). It appears that some readers of *Newsweek* have no such sense of embarrassment in evoking JFK, judging from the "Letters" in a couple of recent issues of that magazine ("I believe beyond a doubt that Sen. John F. Kerry has those same defining qualities and character as the earlier JFK" [8/16/04]; "I see in John Edwards [!!] another John F. Kennedy" [8/2/04]). Perhaps the phrase "*popular delusions and the madness of crowds*" is the best available explanation of why such ridiculous comparisons continue to be made.
- [7] See, for example, Stephen Dinan, "Kerry's war experience evoked," *Washington Times*, 7/28/04.
- [8] "Vietnam Veterans Against the War, United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations," 4/22/71, as given in *Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2004*.
- [9] Scott Swett, "Doonesbury and the Winter Soldier," *Townhall.com*, 2/24/04.
- [10] Swett's opinion piece, referenced above, cites one *Doonesbury* strip where Kerry's 1971 quote against Vietnam, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?", is applied to the current Iraq war. Lorrie Lynch in *USA Weekend*, responding

to a reader's question noting that Trudeau is "relentlessly critical" of the President, notes that "Having symbolized Dan Quayle as a feather and Bill Clinton as a waffle, [Trudeau] draws a centurion's helmet to represent George W." ("Who's News," *USA Weekend*, 8/13-8/15/04, p. 2). As a matter of fact, as the observant reader will have noticed, it is actually a centurion's helmet over an *asterisk*, doubtless in reference to the "537" votes by which in the official count Bush won Florida in the hotly-contested 2000 election (a figure that was given with an asterisk in some newsmagazines such as *Newsweek*).

[11] These strips can be viewed at [doonesbury.com](http://www.doonesbury.com); at this writing, they are at the URL http://www.doonesbury.com/strip/kerry_faq.html.

[12] One early review is Tony Blankley, "Unfit for command?", *Washington Times*, 8/11/04. Here, Mr. Blankley sums up his impressions by saying that **"An impartial reader . . . would have to conclude that either the book is a pack of lies or John Kerry is in fact a reckless, lying man who misrepresented the facts in order to receive medals he didn't deserve, and is indeed unfit to command even a tug boat, let alone the United States military as president."** I think that reporters who want to get to the bottom of this story *should* investigate the veracity of the book and then let the chips fall where they may. What I think *will* happen, however, is that the mainstream press—lazy and afraid of poking around too much in case hard reporting on this matter does more damage to Kerry—will settle for a few cheap shots spoon-fed to them by the Kerry campaign against the Swift Boat Veterans before losing interest in the story altogether. The detailed reporting being done by non-mainstream news organizations (such as in Melissa Charbonneau, "A Swift Current of Controversy," parts 1 and 2, *CBN.com*, 8/11/04) will in the meantime almost certainly be ignored by the established media.

[13] Byron York, "Vietnam Veterans Against Kerry," *National Review*, 5/31/04, p. 34.

[14] See the editorial "Kerry's Cambodia confusion," *Washington Times*, 8/13/04, for a summary.

[15] Beaman, "Back into Battle," p. 83. Emphasis mine.

[16] Jeff Jacoby, "Buzzwords and cheap shots," *Boston Globe*, 7/30/04.

[17] As quoted in Ron Fournier, "Kerry Raps Bush on Initial 9/11 Inaction," *Associated Press*, 8/5/04. See also Bill Sammon, "Kerry charges desperation in Bush's ad," *Washington Times*, 8/12/04.

[18] NBC's "Meet the Press," transcript for 4/18/04 with Guest Sen. John Kerry, D-MA, presidential candidate, downloaded from MSNBC.com (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4772030/>).

[19] Sammon, "Kerry charges desperation...".

[20] As on the cover of the July 19, 2004 issue of *Newsweek*, headlined "The Sunshine Boys? Kerry's Bet on Edwards And the Politics of Optimism" and featuring a photo of Kerry and Edwards grinning from ear to ear. At least one *Newsweek* reader that we know of, **Robert E. Grady** of San Francisco, California, quite properly took the magazine to task for this in a subsequent "Letters" column: **"It is absurd to assert on your cover that Kerry is betting on 'the politics of optimism.' Kerry's campaign is based on rooting for two things: a slowdown in the U.S. economy and our failure in Iraq. It is hard to recall a noteworthy major policy initiative Kerry has offered. Instead he has been remarkably adept at inventing ways to attack and insult President Bush without offering any important policy initiatives"** ["Letters," *Newsweek*, 8/2/04].

Amidst the other letters this magazine chose to publish in the same issue, most of which are little more than banal parroting of Kerry campaign propaganda (e.g., “The Kerry-Edwards ticket is a breath of fresh air for us war-weary Americans”; “Kerry and Edwards are the sunshine for which our country and the world are in desperate need”; “Reading about John and Elizabeth Edwards was like experiencing a spiritual awakening”), it is good to see a gentleman like Mr. Grady making the effort to present some home truths that are relatively rare in the pages of that publication.

[21] “Letter II, April 10, 1776, To Cato,” in Eric Foner, ed., *Thomas Paine: Collected Writings* (NY: Library of America, 1995), p. 66.

[22] See the unsatisfactory explanation of this given by Kerry in the “Meet the Press” 4/18/04 transcript cited above, much of which attempts to deflect the issue by complaining about the “craven, misleading, distorting [Republican] ads, spending millions of dollars trying to suggest I’m not strong on defense.”

[23] Karen Tumulty, “What Kerry Means to Say,” *Time.com*, 5/2/04.

[24] Brendan Miniter, “Kerry’s Mandate,” *OpinionJournal.com*, 8/10/04.

[25] Kathryn Jean Lopez, “A Caste System for Marriage,” *NationalReview.com*, 8/11/04, citing Sen. John F. Kerry, “Beyond the marriage debate,” *The Advocate*, 9/3/96.

[26] See Chris Bull, “Kerry’s conundrum,” *The Advocate* (“An expanded version of an article from *The Advocate*, September 16, 2003”). For example, to the interviewer’s comment that “Some are concerned that if courts get too far ahead of the people, it could create a political backlash,” Kerry’s response is **“That’s all politics. I can’t deal with that. You take what comes when it comes along. What I can do is push forward, as I have throughout my political career. . . .”** The interviewer follows up with “But if you oppose same-sex marriage, why wouldn’t you oppose a court ruling that legalizes it?” Kerry’s answer: **“I’m not sure that’s relevant at the moment. Let’s see what the court does.”** Even the *Advocate*’s header for the article (under the article title) takes note of this strange ambiguity: **“Pro-gay in just about every other way, Democratic presidential hopeful John Kerry says he just won’t support same-sex marriage.”** I would go further and call this both-sides-at-once posturing *disingenuous in the extreme*.

[27] Both Kerry quotes as cited in Suzanne Fields, “Flip-flopping for the Jews,” *Washington Times*, 8/5/04.

[28] Soon after writing these words, I read that *Slate* magazine expressed a similar idea more bluntly, headlining an article with “John Kerry’s Waffles--If you don’t like the Democratic nominee’s views, just wait a week” (as quoted in Beaman, “Back into Battle,” p. 84).

[29] For some interesting analyses on the phenomenon of Bush hatred, see Mark Goldblatt, “Bush-Bashing B.S.,” *NationalReview.com*, 8/5/04; Larry Elder, “A new national pastime,” *Washington Times*, 5/29/04; Bret Stephens, “Just Like Stalingrad: If Bush is another Hitler, what words are left to describe Hitler?,” *OpinionJournal.com*, 6/23/04; and Victor David Hanson, “On Loathing Bush,” *NationalReview.com*, 8/13/04.

[30] For some reviews of the track record of Moore, see Scott Galupo, “Meet the Flint Stone: Shots fired at Bush from gassy troll,” *Washington Times*, 6/25/04; and the book length treatment by David T. Hardy and Jason Clarke, *Michael Moore is a Big Fat Stupid White Man* (NY: ReganBooks, 2004). The definitive demolition of Moore’s latest movie can be found in Christopher Hitchens’ piece “Unfairness 9/11: The lies of Michael Moore,” *Slate*, 6/21/04 (found at <http://slate.msn.com/id/2102723/>). Mr. Hitchens is a

man of the Left but is distinguished by his determination to follow the truth wherever it leads (much like George Orwell, about whom Hitchens has written with passion and skill in his recent book *Why Orwell Matters*). This sets him apart from others among the Left who are too intelligent not to see the humbuggery of Michael Moore but who find Moore's cheap and dishonest tactics useful politically and so rationalize them. For an example from this latter class of leftists, see Paul Krugman's piece "Moore's Public Service," *New York Times*, 7/2/04. Mr. Krugman writes, for example, that **"Viewers may come away from Mr. Moore's movie believing some things that probably aren't true . . . but it tells essential truths about leaders who exploited a national tragedy for political gain, and the ordinary Americans who paid the price."** This is Orwellian in a different sense: is the term "essential truths" a Newspeak coinage meaning "things that aren't quite factual but should pass as true because they are politically useful"? If there is a clearer example than Krugman's piece of the kind of writing that made Paine exclaim, *"It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself"* (*Rights of Man, Part I*, in *Thomas Paine: Collected Works*, p. 448), I'd like to see it.

[31] See Jeff Leeds, "Rock Stars Announce a Swing-State Tour," *New York Times*, 8/5/04; and Larry McShane, "Bands Gather to Stump Against Bush," *Associated Press*, 8/4/04.

[32] "Dixie Chicks singer apologizes for Bush comment," *CNN.com*, 3/14/03.

[33] Quoted in McShane, "Bands..."

[34] John Kerry as quoted in Stephen Spruiell, "Nixon and the New JFK," *NationalReview.com*, 8/5/04.

[35] On this comment see Jonah Goldberg, "All Allies, All the Time," *NationalReview.com*, 8/6/04, where Goldberg perceptively remarks that **"Sensitive isn't one of the adjectives most people want describing America's war on terrorism. It's like promising weapons systems 'softer than a baby's bottom.'" Kerry's words also fell under criticism from Vice President Dick Cheney, who said that "Those who threaten us and kill innocents around the world do not need to be treated more sensitively. They need to be destroyed."** This drew the predictable screams of outrage from Kerry's campaign minions, who claimed that Kerry's words were being taken out of context (Judy Keen, "VP disparages Kerry's 'sensitive war' remark," *USA Today*, 8/13/04, p. 4A). At the same time, of course, the Democratic candidate was industriously distorting an innocuous response by President Bush to an audience question about a national sales tax, unleashing salvos of typical Kerry demagoguery against it: "This tax will hurt small business, it will hurt jobs and it will hit the pocketbooks of those who need tax relief the most" (Martin Kasindorf, "Kerry slams president over national sales tax," *USA Today*, 8/13/04, p. 4A).

[36] "The Democratic ticket: Gee up!," *The Economist*, 7/10/04, p. 23.

[37] As quoted in Jeff Jacoby, "Edwards's glaring weakness," *Boston Globe*, 7/8/04.

[38] Judy Keen, "Squeezin' like it's Charmin," *USA Today*, 8/13/04, p. 5A.

[39] "Senator Sizzle," *OpinionJournal.com*, 7/7/04.

[40] "Remarks by President [Bill Clinton] at Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner 9-25-94," downloaded from White House portal via AOL in Fall 1994.

[41] Minter, "Kerry's Mandate." Italics in source.

[42] See the extensive coverage of this in the African-American-owned *Broward Times*, especially Utrice C. Leid, “Kerry Goes Hollywood; Snubs Blacks in Broward” (issue of 3/12/04, pp. 1 & 3), and two subsequent pieces by the same writer: “Meek’s Anything But Mild About Kerry, But Analysts Say Black Agenda’s on Hold” (issue of 6/4 - 6/10/04, pp. 1 & 7), and “‘Throwdown’ in Beantown—Kerry, Dems Warned That Lackluster Appeal to Blacks Can Cost Them Election” (issue of 7/30 - 8/5/04, pp. 1 & 4). The second of these three articles cites, among others, David Bositis, senior research associate at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, “a think tank on black issues” in Washington, D.C.: **“By strategic necessity, Bositis said, the Kerry campaign ‘will move to capitalize on the fact that he’s a regular Democrat and that African Americans should care more about that than whether he’s addressing their issues....His campaign is in full, general-election mode, and that means he’s going to concentrate on swing voters. African Americans aren’t in that equation,’ Bositis said.”** Which would seem to me to be simply part and parcel of the basic Kerry strategy to tell everyone *just enough of what they want to hear* to get him through the election.
