

HETERO DOXY

ARTICLES AND ANIMADVERSIONS ON POLITICAL CORRECTNESS AND OTHER FOLLIES



FREE MATT DRUDGE

Like generations of hopeful young people before them, twenty-somethings still arrive in Southern California in droves every day, not sure what they want to do but suspecting there might be something for them out here on the Cutting Edge. Most fail in the quest for the new self Los Angeles is historically presumed to provide, but others find a niche. One who found a niche within a niche was Matt Drudge.

Eight years ago Drudge, then a 22-year-old, headed west from Takoma Park, Maryland. He hadn't been a good student: he hated school and logged a D average. On the plus side, he did have a nose for the news. While his friends were thinking about grunge rock, Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, Drudge looked to Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan and *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd. He wanted to write but hadn't gone to journalism school and without the credentials valued by news gathering organizations these days, saw little prospect of making a career through conventional channels.

"Who would hire me?" he says today as he looks back at what is already a career. "I don't fit into groupthought." This, unlike much of what Drudge writes, is an understatement.

While toiling in the gift shop at CBS he bought a computer and discovered the world of the Internet. Unlike the closed community of the newsroom, where connections and credentials and affirmative action determined who got hired, cyberspace was a world without clearly defined rules and without a bureaucracy to enforce them. It was how the world of journalism used to be—open-ended, arranged to reward the entrepreneurial and the clever. It was an environment in which Drudge felt at home.



"It's a populist movement changing the access to news, the ability to report," Drudge says. "It came along just at the right time." With no college education, no formal training, no high-profile connections, and no relationship with big-time media outlets, Drudge set out to make himself into a journalist.

His apprenticeship was as eccentric. He eventually became manager of the gift shop at CBS, where he fished items out of the trash and posted them on the Internet news groups. He never had an idea where he was headed until a reader asked to be "signed up." It was at this moment that the Drudge Report was born. Operating out of a one-bedroom Hollywood apartment, he began to report, but not in a way that would win him fans on the editorial board of the *New York Times*. It was unabashedly gos-

sipy and lively—the sort of reporting sometimes dismissed as "tabloid," which has nonetheless remade the pages of those who mock it.

Drudge understood the cardinal rule in the game whose rules he was helping to write: if you snooze, you lose. The upstart info-man scoured Web pages for items and posted them in the Drudge Report with lightning speed, often scooping the newsrooms. The technology magazine *Wired* offered to pick up his dispatches on line. He agreed, on the condition that they could neither tell him what to write nor edit his copy. America On Line noticed his material, offered to carry his work and Drudge made the jump and proceeded to make a name for himself by breaking stories such as CBS' firing of Connie Chung and Bob Dole's selection of Jack Kemp as his running mate.

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WHO'S FOR ABORTION AND AGAINST THE BIBLE? THE PRESIDENT'S PASTOR

By Mark Tooley

Abraham Lincoln once attended Foundry Methodist Church in Washington and, after sitting through a sermon of interminable length, and pledged \$100 of his own money if the preacher would stop talking. Nearly a century later, Harry Truman walked into a service at Foundry and was so irritated by the obsequious attention the pastor lavished on him from the pulpit that he never returned. Bill and Hillary Clinton, however, seem to be content parishioners. They listen to the sermons at Foundry and relish the attention.

The President's church has a history that dates back to the War of 1812, when a grateful merchant funded construction of a new church after his foundry was spared from flames set by invading British troops. In the subsequent 180 years, Foundry Methodist has relocated

and rebuilt several times. Its current stone and brick, turn-of-the-century structure sits a half mile due north of the White House, in a racially mixed neighborhood of Victorian rowhouses and ethnic restaurants.

On a typical Sunday, parishioners parade single-file through metal detectors as Secret Service officers surround the church. The Clintons are seated in a front pew below the pulpit and congregants note their presence with surprisingly little head-turning or whispering. Excepting a request from the pastor that worshippers remain seated at the service's conclusion until the Clintons have departed, the presidential couple's presence does little to disrupt the service.

One of the reasons, perhaps the primary one, the Clintons are members of Foundry Methodist is the pastor, Philip Wogaman, who appears before them on Sunday mornings adorned in a white robe cinched in by a rope belt, monk-style. He presides over the service elegantly, without notes, with a smooth, professorial voice

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COMMUNIQUÉS

SECOND CLASS CITIZENS

As a Black faculty member now in my mid-forties, I recall an incident that helped immeasurably to set me on the path toward two advanced degrees, despite the fact that I was as well prepared for college as others.

In the late 1960s I enrolled in a small Catholic college in upstate New York. Like any college freshman I was extremely intimidated by this new academic environment. My math professor, an old Jesuit with a gruff and surly demeanor, was perhaps the most frightening teacher I had ever known. At least once a week he would unabashedly announce to the class, “Gentlemen, I will flunk you with a smile.” Sure enough, by the middle of the semester, despite what I thought to be my best effort, I and several others were flunking his course in grand fashion.

One afternoon I went to his office to get extra help to prepare for the midterm, and to my surprise he was very gracious and glad to see that I was concerned about my education. However, he was even more emphatic in his insistence that I study harder than I was to pass his course and made it clear that he didn’t pander to any student’s racial identity. In retrospect, he in effect was committing an unforgivable sin in the eyes of the liberal “Difference Theory” advocates: treating and challenging every student equally. (“I will, Mr. Hall, flunk you with a smile,” he reiterated.) But yet this professor went out of his way to mentor the few Black students on campus. He was simply saying, in effect, that people like me had to learn despite the bad cards society and some whites had dealt our race. We worked and we learned.

I cite this anecdote because over the past twenty-five years this lesson has been lost on many of our institutions of higher learning. Pressure from the well-advertised cultural diversity and “politics of difference” crowd has too often dominated the discussion on how best to affect Black students’ success on our campuses. Despite a myriad of special programs now in place at most major universities meant to enhance

retention, along with an array of so-called culturally sensitive pedagogies, many minorities and African Americans in particular are unable to keep up.

In the last decade, “Afrocentric” teaching methods have become the latest way of addressing the issue of Black academic achievement. Based on the premise that there are distinct African values varying in degree and kind from so-called European values, and that these values are a source of discordance in the educational process, a new educational quackery has emerged with a promise of upgrading the academic performance of Blacks.

ability of our schools, teachers, and most importantly from our students. But in regards to Black students, we can no longer continue to flirt with the latest trendy pedagogy because we are afraid to demand standardized skills, objectives, and basic competencies from everyone regardless of their socio-economic background. Black students more than ever before need to be challenged, not pandered to. Despite the indignities we as people have suffered, our second-class citizenship will be assured if we don’t upgrade our abilities to compete in an increasingly global job market.

We need more educators like the old Jesuit who kicked me in my butt over twenty-five years ago and challenged me to achieve. He was hard and very direct, but I now know he probably cared more for me as a human being than all the liberal educators have done with their paternalistic pandering to Black students in recent decades.

Patrick Hall
South Bend, IN

DISMAYED AND REPULSED

I’m dismayed and repulsed by the article on S&M and wonder if your editorial taste has evaporated into the LA smog. What purpose other than to disgust or offend, does this ‘expose’ serve? Are you so bereft of topics? May I suggest a few?

- movie reviews —there’s a hot battlefield in the cultural wars; what’s the prognosis?
- interviews with conservatives in Southern California-Republican or celebrity-types
- general pre-election analysis of the California political scene
- a survey/analysis of Los Angeles today —is it still a fascinating melting-pot, or a bizarre collection of barrios and self-satisfied enclaves?
- anything relating to Diane Feinstein that would help knock this formidable politico off of her goody-goody perch.

Jim Sharp
Lafayette, CA

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WRITE TO US

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Several years ago, in an issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, a feature story appeared dealing with a branch campus within the Washington state system. The article dealt with the implementation of Afrocentric pedagogy at this campus and how it had obtained a 90% graduation rate. I actually taught research instruction at this campus for two years, and I know that what went on there academically hardly affirmed Black academic achievement. Students who had major writing and reading difficulties were being granted degrees There also existed a solidarity movement inside the liberal administration that made any criticism of the program anathema.

Now this is not to say that the problems of this campus were unique. Indeed, our nation as a whole is at risk because of our failure to demand competence and account-

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REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM

WHITE HOUSE RACE: The Rev. Imagene Stewart came to the capital for the famous 1963 March on Washington and stayed on to run homes for battered women. The Clinton White House recently tapped the well-known black clergywoman to work with the White House Conference Against Hate Crimes. Trouble was, the Rev. Stewart’s approach to hate crimes didn’t fit the liberal mindset. “During the meeting I stated that there are a lot of blacks who promote hate and I feel that black racists should be included in the agenda,” she says. “At that point, I was immediately denounced by two or three persons of the NAACP. They were aghast. Their mouths dropped open. One member of the NAACP came up to me later and said I was not helping our cause as a race. I don’t believe until we admit there are problems on both sides we will ever solve the problem. There are black racists out there. The conference, she said, is turning out to be a White House conference against white people.” But the black clergywoman senses that her politically incorrect stand has consequences. “I don’t know if I’ll ever be invited back.”

IMPLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY: The Michigan Mandate was a phrase originally coined by University of Michigan President James Duderstadt to describe the school’s hard-charging diversity plan, but if a pair of white students have their way it will take on a different meaning. Represented by the Center for Individual Rights, students Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher, both of whom were denied admission at Ann Arbor despite strong academic credentials, are suing on grounds that the school’s admission policies discriminate against whites. This discrimination has been the dirty little secret of the University of Michigan for years, hidden away in the academic fog of implausible deniability until Philosophy Professor Carl Cohen obtained admissions policy guidelines under the Freedom of Information Act. These guidelines showed a policy that was separate and unequal, in which a white student with a 3.8 average and 1000 SAT score would be rejected and a black or Hispanic applicant with the same scores would be admitted. The University’s line of defense against the suit was based on the 1978 *Baake* case in which the Supreme Court said that race could be a “factor.” The line of attack for the Center of Individual Rights is the *Hopwood* decision in which the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals told the University of Texas that it could not discriminate in the interests of “diversity.”

THREE STRIKES AND YOU’RE IN: While a few thousand Cubans were attending the reburial of Che Guevara, bloodthirsty relic of the days when the revolution seemed to mean something, hundreds of thousands of Cubans were involved in an act of freedom—huddled at home listing to the opening game of the World Series over the Voice of America’s Radio Marti. Their hero, Florida Marlins’ 22 year old rookie pitcher Livan Hernandez, was mowing down the Cleveland Indians. Despite the fact that Fidel has attempted to make him a non-person for having defected to the U.S. where he can practice his art among the best, Hernandez has become a symbol to his countrymen of the high quality of Cuban baseball, and of the financial (over \$1 million a year) and philosophical rewards of freedom. The object lesson about the island’s deteriorating tyranny was made clear by the situation inside the Hernandez family. While

Livan shines, his 28 year old brother Orlando, perhaps an even better athlete, is in internal exile as a player. Unable to escape to the U.S., he is also banned from playing baseball (he has been the star of the Cuban national team for years) merely for having been accused of meeting with a sports agent from the U.S. It is a story that gives a different twist to Che’s creepy slogan, *Hasta la victoria siempre*.

DO NO HARM: The editors of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* apparently didn’t read—or heed—the last issue of this magazine.

admissions process by “life experiences” such as service in the Peace Corps. And in point of fact, according to attorney Gail Heriot, who helped chair the campaign to pass Proposition 209, this special admissions group did not do as well as the regular admits, being three times more likely to flunk out and three times less likely to qualify for medical honors society and eight times more likely not to pass the National Board of Medical Examiners test. Naturally none of these facts were reported by the *New York Times*, which trumpeted the *JAMA* story on its front page.

OLD GIRL NETWORK: Around the world, victims are still trying to dig out from the rubble of socialism but in a recent page-one story in the *Los Angeles Times*, writer Robin Wright pines for the old days. “Open societies, it turns out, haven’t been as generous as socialism and communism to women who want to serve in public office,” she laments. More specifically, “From Albania to Yemen, the number of women in power plummeted after the transition from socialist governments, which sought to develop female as well as male proletariats. As those governments died, so went the socialist ideals of equality and the subsidies of social programs that aided women. In many countries, traditional patriarchal cultures resurfaced,” including “the strongly patriarchal practices of Confucianism” in Vietnam. But the biggest setbacks have been in the former Soviet states. When they were elected in greater numbers, the communist women promoted the policies of two Dead White European Males, Marx and Lenin, that led to famines and labor camps where millions of women died, but Robin Wright doesn’t get into that.

STAND AND DELIVER: An initiative called “English for the Children,” which is likely to be the next big ballot measure in California, has won the support of famed math teacher Jaime Escalante whose work in teaching calculus to minority students was the subject of the film *Stand and Deliver*. The anti-bilingualism measure would mandate instruction in English unless the parents of

Hispanic children explicitly requested “native” language instruction. It is aimed specifically at the warehousing of Hispanic students in bilingual classes without the knowledge or approval of their parents. In agreeing to become Honorary Chairman of the campaign, Escalante said, “My views on this important educational issue are based on personal experience. As an immigrant from Latin America who arrived to the U.S. at 32 not knowing English, I struggled for several years in menial jobs until I could learn enough English to begin a professional career. . . It seems a real tragedy that in many cases our public schools are not teaching English to five or six year old immigrant children, who are at an age when they could so easily learn the language. . . At Garfield H.S. in East L.A., where I began my successful Calculus Advanced Placement program, I also worked hard to eliminate most of the school’s bilingual education classes, which I felt were holding students back in their academic studies. I feel that my efforts against these misguided programs were an important contribution to the success of my Garfield students.” An early L.A. poll shows that three quarters of Hispanics support the measure.



Heterodoxy reported on the depressing odyssey of Patrick Chavis, an affirmative action admit at the University of California Davis in the mid-'70s who became a poster boy for affirmative action enthusiasts as a result of allegedly serving the black community with good black medicine. In fact, although Chavis was cited rapturously by figures such as Ted Kennedy and Tom Hayden trying to make the case for affirmative racism, he was actually the target of malpractice suits by his black patients and had gotten his license yanked following a botched liposuction procedure on one of his patients. Now *JAMA* has printed an article by U.C. Davis Med. School profs Robert Davidson and Ernest Lewis which claims that a study of 20 years of racial preferences at their school suggests that those students admitted under racial preferences do as well as those admitted on academic merit alone. The problem with the study is that the profs, in their desire to say something good about affirmative action, played fast and loose with the facts. Instead of really considering the beneficiaries of racial preferences, they simply dumped them into a larger category of “special admissions” students which typically makes up 20% of the entering class at the medical school. And of this category, fewer than half are racially preferred students, the rest being students who had been boosted in the



How I Wrote About Puerto Rico and Lost My Job

PC Firing at the *Post*

By Scott McConnell

Some people are astonished to hear that a *New York Post* editor could get sacked over an editorial urging the U.S. Congress to exercise caution before admitting Puerto Rico to the Union as the 51st state. For starters, few non-Puerto Ricans have given much thought to the “status question” (commonwealth, statehood, or independence) which has impassioned the island’s political and cultural leaders most of this century. As the dismissed editorial page editor, I am a bit astounded myself at the turn of events.

But increasingly, I think the collision between me and my bosses (*Post* publisher Martin Singerman and editor Ken Chandler and—at a great distance—Rupert Murdoch) was due to deeper shifts within American society. If the traditional duty of the press is to inform and to provoke, the unspoken but ever more enforced imperative of multiculturalism, even for a “conservative” paper like the *Post*, is Do Not Give Offense. These aims clash, and as I found out, people like myself who commit an unwitting sin against “diversity” have to pay the price.

On July 14, the *Post* published “The Puerto Rico Question,” a 1,000-word editorial criticizing the GOP majority for its lack of “hesitation and caution” before signing on to the bill introduced by Alaska Republican Don Young—a bipartisan measure setting up a series of referendums that will lead, almost certainly, to Puerto Rican statehood. While the editorial did not say explicitly say no to statehood, its skepticism was manifest: Puerto Rico is poor (half its residents receive food stamps), and American taxpayers would need to spend a great deal to raise its living standards to the level of Mississippi, the poorest mainland state. Moreover, most Puerto Ricans speak only Spanish—so its entry into the union would give a political boost to bilingualism and essentially render the United States an officially bilingual country. Finally, the editorial took note of Puerto Rico’s small but deeply rooted national independence movement; the *independistas* had engaged in terrorism before and might grow if the island lost its autonomy through statehood.

The editorial also noted that the integration of Puerto Ricans into the American cultural mainstream hadn’t particularly benefited them. Puerto Ricans who had emigrated to the U.S. mainland had developed a high rate of illegitimate births (59.4 percent), a figure roughly twice that of Puerto Ricans still living in the more socially conservative commonwealth. A reader could have concluded (though the editorial didn’t say so) that the expansion of the federal welfare system to Puerto Rico could harm family stability on the island in much the same way it had wreaked havoc on some poor communities on the mainland.

There were, the editorial noted, other arguments on both sides of the question, but we were stressing the reasons to take a position of “hesitation.” As editorial page editor I was steering the paper to a position not for or against statehood, but merely trying to suggest that a broader debate should take place before precipitous action.

I knew it would be a controversial piece, if for no other reason than that almost no one without blood ties to the island ever discussed the status question, and here was an Anglo newspaper wading right in with a strong argument. But I also

felt that an editorial page should take controversial stands—and indeed if we put out (as my staff did) about fifteen editorials a week without saying anything bold or unexpected, we would hardly be earning our salaries.

Post editor Ken Chandler read the editorial after I put it to bed on Friday evening and excised a sentence saying that Puerto Rican statehood—because it fostered bilingualism—wouldn’t strengthen national unity and might well dilute it. The next thing I heard about the matter was on Monday afternoon, when *Post* publisher Marty Singerman came to my office, as he regularly did; I told him I expected some fallout from the editorial, published that morning, but thus far hadn’t heard a word. He then read the piece with care,



SCOTT MCCONNELL

told me it was very well argued, adding that his only concern was that someone might misconstrue the initial sentence: “Few mainland Americans think very much about Puerto Rico” to mean “Few American think very much of Puerto Rico.”

Save from some supportive comments from non-Puerto Ricans, we heard very little for a day or two. One highly regarded *Post* columnist of moderate views called to tell me that the edit was, if anything, too even-handed; a Manhattan Institute staffer told me the editorial was an important revelation; a New York lawyer with close links to the state Democratic Party later told me that he had sent out thirty copies of the editorial to friends around the country. These were all good signs, but by comparison with the instantaneous reaction an editorial can generate, the response was subdued.

On Tuesday things heated up. A columnist for *El Diario* (a Spanish language New York daily) railed against the editorial, asserting that it “insulted” all Puerto Ricans residing in the United States. He rehashed some of the stats and quotes from the piece, concluding that the editorial failed to note that most Puerto Rico’s social problems were the “result of the invasion of 1898.” Then members of Congress Jose Serrano, Nydia Velasquez, and Luis Gutierrez faxed in letters to the editor—Serrano saying Puerto Rico was a “colony” deprived of basic civil rights, and Velasquez and Gutierrez charging that the editorial had “stereotyped” the people of Puerto Rico. Spanish-language TV sent a camera crew to interview me. We made plans for a series of op-ed

pieces, from different perspectives: one from a statehood advocate, one from someone who believed in Puerto Rican independence, one from a commonwealth supporter, and began seeking leading specialists who could analyze the issue from intra-American and intra-Caribbean perspectives. What better way to fill the summer news doldrums than opening a debate on a consequential subject that no other newspaper was covering?

Carlos Romero-Barcelo, Puerto Rico’s non-voting representative to the U.S. Congress and a prominent statehood supporter came in for an editorial board meeting. We had cited his book *Statehood Is for the Poor* in the editorial and now there was a spirited session of give and take. A white-haired graduate of Exeter and Yale, Romero-Barcelo argued that Puerto Ricans were being denied their fundamental civil rights by not being residents of a state. Though unpersuaded, most of my staff thought his argument would be effective in a political environment where an appeal to “rights” usually wins.

My first indication that something other than an intense political debate was at hand came a few days later, when Romero-Barcelo wrote a letter to me stating, “You certainly gave us a clear idea of the existing prejudice against Puerto Ricans.” This statement which was an egregious mischaracterization of what seemed to me and my staff (I had been at the *Post* editorial page for more than eight years, though at its helm for only six months) had been the polite and fairly typical discussion with the editorial board. Meanwhile, through another channel, Romero-Barcelo informed Marty Singerman about our alleged “prejudice” and his public relations flack wrote a similar letter, with a copy to Singerman.

But within weeks, the uproar, limited as it was to the Puerto Rican political activists in the city, seemed to have subsided. (The only comment I heard about—from a non-political Puerto Rican—was from a waitress who had seen me on Spanish TV; she told me to write more about Puerto Ricans’ scandalous abuse of the welfare system.) Then came the lunch.

As publisher, Martin Singerman periodically arranged lunches with the *Post* editors and various black and Latino leaders, designed in part to diffuse the charge that the *Post*’s generally conservative stands are anti-minority. These lunches are sometimes fun, often informative, but occasionally simply business. But the one on August 15 was something else altogether. Singerman apparently gave Fernando Ferrer, Bronx Borough president and a failed mayoral aspirant, a free hand to put together the guest list. Ferrer then set about organizing a lunch that was not a discussion of city affairs or of general “Hispanic” issues, but a kind of trial of the *Post*’s Puerto Rico editorial.

Initially about a dozen people—all prominent—were scheduled to come. Upon seeing the guest list, I initially hoped for a nuanced discussion touching on whether Puerto Ricans had a distinct national consciousness. The day before the meeting, the list was revised: another half a dozen people were coming, and more were still being added! Came the appointed time, and some three dozen Puerto Ricans descended on the *Post*’s executive offices, with their own camera crew in tow, no less.

The scene—a crowd milling about the hallways, visibly nervous secretaries, and some talk about whether we needed to call building security—was more like the prelude to a sit-in than an editorial lunch. Singerman did in fact call security, then told them they weren’t needed after

the camera crew withdrew voluntarily. One *Post* editor informed us that his wife—a prominent TV correspondent—had been told by Ferrer days earlier, “We’re going to crucify the *New York Post*.” Plainly, a searching and honest exchange of ideas was not in the cards.

In the end, about thirty Puerto Ricans squeezed into the *Post*’s largest lunchroom with Singerman, Chandler, myself, and two other *Post* editors. The guests included most of city’s Puerto Rican elected officials—state senators, city councilmen, state assembly members—an impressive show of strength by Ferrer—as well as several men prominent in the city university system and private foundations. All the politicians, of course, had to talk, and none could afford to be less vehement in denouncing the editorial than his predecessor. So they went around the table—lambasting the editorial as a throwback to “stereotypes” of the past, and as an incitement to racism.

When they had finished, I said, as calmly as I could, that I took full responsibility for the editorial, that its purpose was to expand the debate about Puerto Rican statehood which I felt consequential for the country as a whole, and that it was certainly not written to insult Puerto Ricans. I rejected the charge of fomenting a stereotype, which I described as a process of exaggerating a trait to give a maliciously false impression. Accurate statistics from the U.S. Census were not and could not lead to stereotyping. I said—provocatively perhaps—that perhaps some of the anger was due not so much to what was written in the editorial as in the fact that the edit broke the monopoly held by Puerto Ricans on discussion of the status of the island’s future.

What I did not do—and this was probably my big mistake—was apologize for the editorial, or say that it was ill-conceived or unfortunate. When Luis Miranda, a former Giuliani commissioner, said that there were other statistics about Puerto Rico as well as the ones cited in the editorial, pointing to the island’s recent economic growth, I readily concurred and said that subsequent editorial would discuss the island’s economic advances.

Ferrer was annoyed by my response, asking, “Is that all?” Singerman said something more conciliatory. It was at that moment that I realized that our society had developed an expected script of white Anglo contrition and apology (President Clinton’s apology for slavery was exemplary) and that I had failed to follow it.

The lunch then took a bizarre turn. One guest started discussing how I looked, thin lips, somewhat disheveled hair—but all in all not totally ugly despite those traits. Olga Mendez, a state senator and one of the few women present, said all in all I wasn’t bad-looking. At this point, I began to feel more detached than either flattered or insulted, as if watching a surrealist movie with myself in the lead role. But the comments on my physiognomy seemed to ease the tension. As we broke up, Richard Fernandez (a city college president) gave me a folder of essays about Puerto Rico, commenting on several of them. Sen. Mendez sauntered over to ask me about my ethnic background. Half Irish, I told her, and she launched into a disquisition, in the faintly flirtatious way that good politicians have when talking to members of the opposite sex, on Celtic obstinacy. In short, I thought things ended on a relatively upbeat note of insults about my whiteness, and I was happy to have stood my ground.

An hour later Singerman called me to his office. I told him that while the whole thing indicated the difficulties in addressing seriously controversial issues in a multi-ethnic environment, that in my opinion it had gone okay. He replied that was, in essence, a crock and was openly rancorous for the first time in the four years I had known him. He told me that I had no right to speak for the paper on the Puerto Rican statehood issue; and that the *Post* was “pro-immigration.” This, of course, was a non sequitur, immigration having nothing to do with the issue at hand, but he was well aware (and irritated) that I favored reduced immigration and had published several op-ed pieces and an occasional editorial reflecting my view. Chandler sat by

enigmatically, saying nothing. It was not pleasant arguing with Singerman—but I felt compelled to remind him that he had not objected to the editorial when he first read it, and that these sorts of questions were the issues of our time. The days when a conservative paper could simply bash the Russians or push a standard Congressional GOP agenda about shrinking the federal government and mean anything to readers were finished. Shaken by Singerman’s obvious anger, I offered to resign: he and Chandler were quiet for long moment. Then, as I was scheduled to leave the next day for two weeks vacation, Chandler suggested I just take my vacation and think things over.

Later that evening, I asked Chandler if he could get in touch with Rupert Murdoch about the issues of contention—I said I didn’t want to continue if Singerman had no confidence in me, but thought Rupert might well back me up. He told me that Rupert was on a boat somewhere and not reachable, and that if asked, he would just tell Singerman and himself to work things out with me. He suggested I use the next two weeks to think about whether I could operate in a more “corporate” mode.

As it happened, the matter was decided for me, probably during my vacation. Midway through it, I came back to the paper to chair two editorial board meetings for Democratic mayoral hopefuls, and I sensed a distinct chilliness from the generally affable Chandler. When I returned after Labor Day the paper was in the midst of its Princess Di frenzy, but as soon as it subsided, I was summoned to Chandler’s office and dismissed.

There are gaps in this account. I know nothing of the communications between Singerman and Ferrer and Romero-Barcelo—only that they took place. It was clear from press accounts of the event that Ferrer’s office was informed quickly of my dismissal. I have no idea

whether Rupert Murdoch knows that *Post* management dealt with the uproar caused by a controversial editorial by arranging a kind of mass meeting for the denunciation of the piece in question. To me this seems an unusual and unnecessary thing for a paper to do, particularly a conservative one. There are many who tacitly accommodate the rule followed by the liberal press and adhered to in most universities: never say or write anything that might conceivably be deemed “offensive” by any minority group, especially blacks and Latinos. But some of these same people are disturbed that this sensibility would take root in the conservative press as well.

This hypersensitivity is a response to market pressures real and imagined: while the *Post* has few Puerto Rican readers, it would of course like to have more, and if the price is not writing anything controversial about Puerto Rico, or getting rid of someone who has, that’s not too steep to pay. But there is more to it than that—a fear, even at an institution often critical of “progressives,” of not seeming progressive on diversity issues. In any case, the moral is clear. Something important is lost when serious issues cannot be discussed in the popular press, or can only be addressed equivocally, with kid gloves. Perhaps a diverse society doesn’t really need an energetic or candid airing of all political questions by mass circulation newspapers. Between the narrowly targeted political journals and a mass media filled with happy talk about multiculturalism, America might muddle through alright. Still, many signs point to the troubling conclusion that greater diversity will actually mean less freedom. The generally conservative *New York Post*’s reluctance to mix it up in a modest way on the question of Puerto Rican statehood is, I think, one of them.

Scott McConnell is currently writing a book on immigration.

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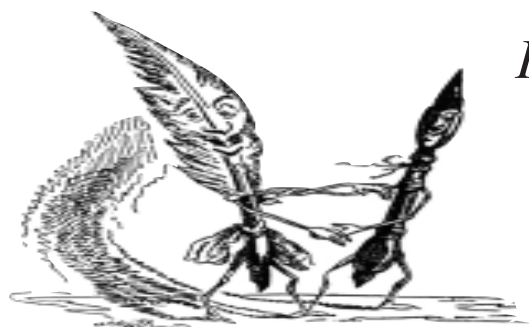
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Post Modernism & Its Discontents

Smart People

By Thomas F. Bertonneau



I meet my friends Pete Koper and Bill Brevda every Friday in a smoky Mt. Pleasant bar called “The Bird.” We drink Killian’s Red and eat the free peanuts by something like the bushelful. Shoptalk takes up much of the conversation. Koper and Brevda work as full-time, tenured professors in the Department of English Language and Literature Department at nearby Central Michigan University. I teach occasionally in CMU’s off-campus degree program, serve as a policy analyst in education at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland, Michigan, and work on literary projects at the Russell Kirk Library in Mecosta, also in Michigan. None of us puts much stock in the contemporary academy, dominated as it is by the universal game of Simon Says which is called postmodernism. All of us feel alarm over the intellectual and moral collapse that the game portends. We try to joke about it, but know it isn’t funny.

On one recent Friday in particular, after draining his jar, Koper remarked with more than the usual horror about the scores of job-letters he had been reading as part of his assignment on the personnel committee. The department had a number of positions to fill and was taking applications. The transcripts of the applicants, Koper said, revealed coursework, presumably voluntary, in the increasingly narrow and often perverse disciplines that have replaced literature in the humanities curricula. (Queer theory, Feminist and ethnic criticism, all the hackneyed polysyllabic derivatives of deconstruction and semiotics.) Koper announced that he had developed a “technical interest” in how presumably smart people could occupy themselves in such stultifying and repetitious subject matter.

I, too, find it hard to fathom why anyone would put professional time and effort into the hundreds of theoretical monographs and books published each year by the university presses. That people do make themselves readerly thralls of this ideological juggernaut is a fact borne out, however, by the inevitable mass of up-to-date references in articles appearing in critical journals like *Publications of the Modern Language Association*. So I wondered out loud whether Koper had not misphrased the question or asked it in uncritical or prejudicial terms. After all, when we ask how smart people can take an obsessive interest in inane topics, we might well be taking the term “smart” too much for granted.

The rigorous form of my friend’s question is not how could smart people spend years reading deconstructive discourse? but what kind of people devote themselves to the artificial and narrow topics of present-day academic curricula?

The postmodern mind habitually forgets, or knowingly dissimulates, that the cognition of civilized people springs from their literacy and that the higher levels of cognition spring uniquely from the higher levels of literacy. As Harold Bloom argues in *The Western Canon*, the Great Books are cognition, and those who do not encounter them do not acquire cognition. Bloom stresses the power of Plato and Shakespeare, for example, to shape the individual intellectually: “The Canon, once we view it as the relation of an individual reader and writer to that which has been preserved out of what has been written, and forget the Canon as a list of books for required study, will be seen as identical with the literary art of memory.” And a few pages later: “Cognition cannot proceed without memory, and the Canon is the true art of memory, the authentic foundation for cultural thinking.” The archeologist Piotr Michalowski, who studies ancient literacy, puts it this way: The decisive thing for widespread intelligence is not the fact that a people reads; the decisive thing is

what they read.

But what do the aficionados of theory—the people, I mean, who have read very little in the way of primary texts and instead have devoted themselves to Lacan, De Man, Derrida, Foucault, and so forth—acquire other than a pedantic vocabulary and hundreds of secondary references? They glean, I am firmly convinced, a form of rhetorical protection against a reality which they are obsessively fleeing, a reality designated by the Great Books, and thereby brought forcefully to the attention of all who read them. Under postmodernism, the whole notion of scholarship, of humane letters, suffers a subversion.

Confining the survey to contributors from the state universities of Michigan, I offer a nevertheless representative sampling of papers from the 1996 meeting of the Modern Language Association. These presentations accurately define the current preoccupations of the “culture studies” elite. A Dearborn professor, presiding over a panel on “Constructing Sexual Identities,” had selected the following papers: “Revisioning Images of Women with a Medical Lens,” “Purging the Female, Constructing the Male (Theorizing Monstrous Femininity in the Early Modern),” and “The Shadow of the Tribades and the Construction of Lesbianism in the Seventeenth Century.” In a panel on “Urnings, Inverts, and Beastly Acts of Female Indecency,” an Ann Arbor professor delivered a paper called, “Portrait of an Invert? (Vita Sackville-West, Freud, and the Sexologists).” Other Ann Arbor professors were to speak on “Historicizing Queerness,” “Victorian Sexual Dissidence,” and “Interanimating Voices (Theorizing the Turn toward Reflective Writing in the Academy).” The last of these apparently concerned the new proclivity of academics to write about themselves.

Aside from their fetishistic character, the awkwardness and rambling, parenthetic structures of these titles express a type of thinking which lurches forward in an ungainly gait, remains confined to a narrow horizon, and indulges itself in the strictly adolescent pleasure of blurting out normally private topics in public—with pedantic allusions so as to disarm adult oversight. When the deed is done, the perpetrators mutually affirm their intellectual audacity and write off criticism as so much stodgy incomprehension, Yet the incomprehension is assuredly theirs.

To talk about “urnings” (whatever in God’s name those might be) is not to talk about Anna Commena, Jane Austen, George Eliot, or Edith Wharton. It is to wall oneself off enviously from high achievement and necessary complexity.

Now this concept—of a rhetorical bulwark against reality—is not necessarily easy to grasp. But a pair of observations by that redoubtable student of ideology Eric Voegelin might answer both the rephrased form of my friend Pete Koper’s question and a related inquiry, that of theory and its place in the contemporary intellectual realm. The two passages require a bit of prologue.

As literature has receded from the reading-lists, a type of prose called “theory” has indeed horned its way in to fill up the empty spaces. Central to all of postmodern discourse, hence to theory, is the claim that all previous discourse is a distortion, that what we consider reality is actually a “construction” that serves the ulterior purposes of the dominant class. Thus “reality” is actually a disguised conspiracy of oppression, according to postmodernism, that is designed to maintain the “haves” in triumphant power and the “have nots” in their misery.

In *Israel and Revelation*, Voegelin notes that modernity develops within the Western tradition, but that it hardly can be said to complete that tradition. It can indeed be said to deform it. In Voegelin’s view, Hebrew morality and Greek philosophy (that decisive dual “leap in Being” of humanity) together remain the twin foundations of the West, so that modernity, or perhaps more accurately, modernism (the attack against established values beginning with Rousseau and Marx), is best understood as a pure

contretemps. Voegelin’s analysis applies fully to postmodernism.

In *The New Science of Politics*, Voegelin takes up the all-important question of theory. Modernism characteristically prefers theory to reality, and postmodernism even more so. Reality, of course, remains stubbornly unaffected by theory and always returns to take its revenge on the theoretician-falsifiers. Theory functions as a way of refusing to take cognizance of practical dangers and of seeking refuge from them in the dream world of a language divorced from all practicality. When practical dangers cannot be ignored, argues Voegelin:

They will be met by magic operations in the dream world, such as disapproval, moral condemnation, declarations of intention, resolutions, appeals to the opinion of mankind, branding of enemies as aggressors, outlawing of war, propaganda for world peace and world government, and so forth. The intellectual and moral corruption which expresses itself in the aggregate of such magic operations may pervade a society with the weird, ghostly atmosphere of a lunatic asylum, as we experience it in our time in the Western crisis.

The sign of someone who seeks asylum in the “dream world” is that, when one confronts him with Voegelin’s position, he smugly asks “what’s reality?” or “who decides what’s real?” or explains that the word “lunatic” is “prejudicial” and “marginalizing,” an attempt “to construct an arbitrary group on the basis of whose exclusion from the social order the idea of the normative is maintained.”

All of the dreary letters from academic job-seekers that my friend Koper was complaining about over his beer correspond to Voegelin’s diagnosis of an escape from reality into “magic operations in a dream world.” Of course, further questions arise, like the one about whether certain persons are predisposed to enter this intellectual coma while others are immune. Luck probably plays some part in the issue. In my own graduate education, at UCLA in the 1980s, I enjoyed the good fortune of stumbling into the cool-headed mentorship of a teacher named Eric Gans, who steadied me in my way and diverted me from the arguments of insidious intent of various grim-faced deconstructors. But Gans could speak to me because by the time I got to him and stood at the crossroads, as it were, I had already read a huge chunk of the traditional canon, as well as mountains of peripheral stuff, which was, however, literary and more or less sensible even if it was not first-rate. I knew what was what, which is not always the case with graduate students earnestly seeking approval and a handhold on the cutting edge.

Derridean syntax and Foucauldian vocabulary are quite easily mimicked and can be churned out endlessly in respect of anything. In an institutional setting, with all of one’s colleagues raptly discharging in the same mimetic spasm, a type of “linguistic disease” easily takes hold. Isolated from contact with the external world—in which words still represent things and have immediate and long-term consequences—the subject of postmodern “discourse” more and more deals with a magic substitute for reality.

It is easy to see the dialectic at work in the contemporary English department. Since the postmodernist professor’s students have been in contact with reality more recently than he has, and since they still, in their incoherent way, recognize and appeal to this reality, he must swiftly coerce them to deny that reality and to embrace his verbalism. Colleagues who have not abandoned reality threaten him all the more, and they generate in him Voegelin’s “disapproval [and] moral condemnation.” Thus, anyone opposed to adding more theory courses to the curriculum is, ipso facto, sexist, racist, classist, and so forth. All the mechanisms of conformity come into play to reinforce the trance-like solidarity of the “progressives.”

It is worth noting that Harold Bloom subti-

tled his study of the Western Canon *The Books and School of the Ages*. The real school resides in the books and when the institution dedicates itself to keeping reality at bay then, of course, the books must go. The behavior of contemporary academics resembles what Voegelin calls “Gnostic denial.” Such a denial is at work, for example, in the writing programs of America’s colleges and universities. The prevailing method of “teaching literacy” in freshman courses now makes stigmata out of grammatical correctness and the possession of a rich vocabulary and favors instead mushy self-expression spiced up with political slogans. It is no surprise, therefore, that Barton and Lapointe’s recent survey of the literacy of four-year college graduates showed that only four percent could operate at the highest level of literacy in a five-level hierarchy.

Since the people who have imposed these disastrous methods do exhibit the traits of language competence, one can hardly avoid the inference that they deny the same competence to their students by design. But under what motive? It can only be the desire, on the part of members of a resentful (because mediocre) bureaucracy, to prevent others from surpassing them intellectually. As Bloom claims, real thinking stems from the very Great Books that the “culture studies” professors have expelled from the curriculum. The pattern of change in higher education since the 1960s thus follows a predictable inner logic: Resentful, inflated egos must suppress standards to survive.

Back to the question of how smart people can take satisfaction in such petty, intellectually non-nourishing stuff as obsessively preoccupies the minds of contemporary academics. I think this is partly a question of generations. The first generation of anti-authoritative intellectuals in the late 1960s and early 1970s engaged in conscious duplicity. They fully grasped the value of the traditional curriculum and they rejected it precisely because of its intrinsic merit. (Because it offered no arena in which to preen their radical individualism, it made them feel paltry.) Their attempt to bury the canon was really an attempt to aggrandize themselves into a power of arbitration and to impose a shrunken judgment on others so as not to be recognized for what they are.

The individuals who constitute the later generations are not necessarily duplicitous in this sense; they are often quite sincere. It is not their IQ that is in question, but rather their type of consciousness. Founded on something other than the examination of reality in the Great Books, this will be a deficient consciousness.

Knowing greatness and knowing one’s proper relation to it are not natural functions; they have to be learned, often painfully from the ego’s perspective. Gaining insights about reality—and especially about human reality—does not come naturally either: this too must be acquired, also at the expense of personal delusion. When the young never learn such knowledge, the knowledge will cease to exist, and intellectual desertism will be the result. But snobbery and selfishness will, of course, remain. They will hover over the wasteland like the “two corbies,” eyeing carrion from their roost.

The devotees of postmodern discourse, who have taken eight courses in queer theory, and eight more in feminist, post-colonialist, and multiculturalist criticism, buttressed by none at all in the Great Books, probably sincerely believe that Michel Foucault and Luce Irigaray are interesting than Flaubert and Tolstoy. But the judgment stems entirely from a lack of comparative—that is to say, real—standards. The postmodern professors are high-IQ provincials; they are political moralists of the Left and they are the evangelists of a new puritanical resentment. Their fervor and sloganeering should never be mistaken, however, for profound understanding of human issues.

An advanced society is in many ways its own worst enemy. Perhaps the situation that existed in American society in the decades between 1945 and 1965, when wartime discipline combined with rising production to make society both ethical and affluent, can only exist for a short period. The spiritual effort required to sustain such an ethical-affluent society succumbs quickly to the very provision of ease that a

high order of prior ingenuity has wrested out of its own historical disadvantage. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, Callicles can denounce the law only because he is currently protected by it, whether he thinks so or not. But when Calliclesian rebellion reaches critical mass and at last abolishes the law, anarchy results. Socrates must drink the hemlock.

In his vaunted theory, the modern alienated intellectual rebels against the law. Not only the law of society, incorporating the human experience of generations, but the law of nature, perennial and immutable. Theory-as-rebellion also thrives on rancor along with resentment. It lashes out against anyone who would contradict it. In a late essay, called “Resistance to Theory,” for example, the subsequently notorious Paul De Man claimed that “the resistance to theory is a resistance to the use of language about language.” Despite their “pretense” of objectivity, those who object to subjugating the Great Books to the prejudices of theoretical analysis are, De Man argued, in dire fear of the fact that such subjugation constitutes “a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations.” Literature, in this argument, is ideology, and critical analysis is the unmasking of hidden agendas.

Sometimes, the itch to be “transgressive” can be sinister, as in the case of Derrida defending De Man’s posthumously revealed Nazi pedigree. More commonly, it is merely silly or vulgarly offensive. As evidence of this, I offer the example of a certain Women’s Studies presentation given last February at the annual meeting of the Michigan Academy, the in-state counterpart of the MLA. (I write of Michigan because it’s where I live.) With the title “Licking Each Other: Theorizing Ethnographic Writing Through Lesbian Language and Desire,” the author provided this abstract:

Lesbian literature illustrates a definite connection between language, food, and sexuality. Beginning with a look at writings by authors such as Jeanette Winterson, Rita Mae Brown, and Gertrude Stein, and moving to such authors as Mary Fallon and Monique Wittig, this paper presents the “membraneous moment” as the characteristic of lesbian literature which provides a written, sensual evocation of lesbian culture. This paper concludes by suggesting that the connection between language and desire can be used to theorize an ethnographic writing which seeks to evoke a sense of culture, regardless of the particulars of the culture in question, rather than describe and explain meaning within a culture. The goal is to illustrate that we may write well about cultures and the Other, yet still maintain sensitivity to the subject position.

The usual response to this, when people read it who do not have an immediate connection with the academy, is that I must be making it up as a joke. But it typifies what passes for scholarship today. Its whole point is to shock, first by conjuring its central, pornographic image, and second by invoking the full lexicon of contemporary Eurobabble (“membraneous moment,” “to theorize,” “ethnographic,” “subject position,” and “Other,” which as always is capitalized).

“Licking Each Other,” with its author’s plural references to other academic non-entities, is about the group-consciousness of the homosexual movement, one of the more prominent entries in the academic list of groups-to-be-worshipped. The specter of the Dead White Male, of course, haunts every syllable of the abstract. It is the Dead White Male, still posthumously in control of society, who is supposed to be shocked into capitulation by the witchcraft of “transgressive” categories, just as it is the Dead White Male who is supposed to have thwarted, up until the liberating present, the “theorizing [of] ethnographic writing through lesbian language and desire.” (Never mind that “Licking Each Other” could also be the running caption for a layout in *Penthouse*. That is an irony just too rich.)

In this sense, theory consecrates itself around a scapegoat-adversary whose expulsion or immolation solidifies the threatened, because tenuously established, group-consciousness. Another name for this sort of group-consciousness is mob

mentality. Everyone in the academy now pretends to be “doing theory,” as the phrase goes. The writer of “Licking Each Other” is “doing theory” and therefore participating in the mandatory consensus, the rhetorical and attitudinal conformism. Theory exhibits this characteristic in every one of its manifestations from Marxist doctrine in the Soviet Union, China, and Cambodia, to the dredging-up of “repressed memories” in contemporary child-psychology, to multicultural policies in the contemporary university. All postmodern theory takes its *raison d’être* from the intolerable existence of alleged enemies who must be expelled or liquidated before the yearned-for, and more often than not erotic, utopia can drop from the heavens to justify the anointed.

Contemporary theory is not what it claims to be, namely the elucidation of reality; it is rather, the dissimulation of a power-grab. And postmodernist academics are not truth seekers but what Voegelin calls pimps for power. The *deformation professionnelle* of academicians is not therefore, merely intellectually objectionable, aesthetically ugly, and irreparably vulgar, it is immoral and parasitic. It can only exist as long as a sufficiently supportive vestige of what it denounces remains to shield it from the reality that it despises. Until they have eroded it beyond its ability to function, the Calliclesian rebels still enjoy the protection of the law that they denounce. As long as science and technology retain their institutional effectiveness, the claimants of feminist science and the new followers of Ned Ludd can rant away.

Once literature departments are dominated by the postmodern types currently bombarding personnel committees with letters, then higher education will have perished. Yearning minds will no longer be reared on the canonical classics and will not acquire the capacity for thought that comes from them. There will simply be a bureaucracy of theoreticians teaching “critical thinking” (that is, what to think) and the interchangeable novels of Toni Morrison/Alice Walker. The uselessness in social terms of these bureaucrats will be obvious and the recognition will lead to the shutting-down, at that point perfectly justifiable, of the humanities.

To return to the starting point. What kind of people spend years reading deconstructive discourse? We must speak of a powerfully reactive and not very imaginative personality which resents achievement. The higher the achievement, the greater the resentment. This personality also reacts against the recalcitrance of reality, which is full of ineradicable limits and inequalities which render, among other things, some books better than others and people more talented and perceptive than others.

Since envy always perceives difference as caused rather than as a given, its usual preliminary impulse is to bulldoze all differences into flat uniformity. The postmodern personality follows suit. This preliminary impulse has a secondary goal beyond itself, however, and that goal is to establish a new difference in which the invidious subject rises (in her own estimation) above all others, is more “privileged” because of her unique insight into the structure of “oppression.” In a postmodern age, envy suddenly blazes forth as the inner guarantee of authenticity and license. Paradoxically, groups of such ego-maniacs can collaborate with each other quite effectively, if not happily, mutually to reinforce their individual self-inflation. Postmodern discourse can be succinctly described as the endless claim, penetrating to the tiniest details, that what is great is in fact paltry or even evil. In order to sustain the illusion that the secondary discourse which attacks greatness is true, that greatness is not great, that truth is falsehood, and finally that ignorance is strength, a tertiary discourse will appear praising the secondary discourse, and so on. . . Such discourse to the nth power will bear the name of theory, a term which has occurred about twenty times in this essay. All of this will function to deny reality, a term that has now occurred around thirty times.



Tom Bertonneau is author of *Defining Standards* at Michigan’s Public Universities.

Free Matt Drudge, Continued from page 1

"I started reading it and I didn't know what he was, if he was a building or a team of guys," says Andrew Breitbart of *E! On Line*. "When I met with him I was flabbergasted. He's an anachronism, he doesn't fit into his generation's archetype and he's not even a reaction to it. He's using the Internet the way it should be used and getting the information out there. He broke the Diana story five minutes before the networks."

Drudge soon found himself being referred to as the "Walter Winchell of the Web," with his site getting 40,000 hits a day. Often he changed the news posted several times. His knack for beating the prestige press to the punch got him profiled in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *USA Today* and the *Washington Post*. His vaguely conservative views caused rumblings in liberal circles, but Drudge's star was rising as the preeminent Internet reporter. He turned down six-figure offers in order to maintain his independence. Drudge was setting the curve in a new medium. Book offers were coming in. Then trouble hit.

In an August 10 item, "GOP: The Blumenthal Option?" Drudge wrote about a recent story in *Mother Jones* on Republican consultant Don Sipple, who had been abusing his wife. Sipple would be an obvious target for Democrats but some Republicans had a comeback. An unnamed source told Drudge that "There are court records of [Clinton aide] Sidney Blumenthal's violence against his wife. If they begin to use Sipple and his problems against us, against the Republican Party...to show hypocrisy, Blumenthal would become fair game." Drudge said that Blumenthal "has a spousal abuse past that has been effectively covered up" but also tried to balance his item by citing an unnamed White House source that the story was "pure fiction." The item got Blumenthal's attention; it also got the attention of his wife Jacqueline, who also works for the White House.

Blumenthal called his lawyer, William McDaniel, who demanded to know Drudge's sources for the "outrageous falsehoods." When Drudge said he would not give up his source, Blumenthal, egged on by White House brass with a grudge against Drudge, decided to sue. The case is being billed as a landmark battle over expression on the Internet, but Blumenthal made it an affair of state.

"Sidney Blumenthal, as Assistant to the President, occupies one of the highest positions in the White House, and has responsibilities for policy issues and political matters," said the massive, 136-page complaint. "In publishing false information about plaintiff Sidney Blumenthal and plaintiff Jacqueline Jordan Blumenthal, defendant Drudge intended that, or acted with reckless disregard whether, such publication would harm President William J. Clinton and impede the operation of the Clinton Administration."

Drudge quickly retracted the piece and apologized. "This is a case of using me to broadcast dirty laundry," he told reporters. "I think I've been had." But Blumenthal proceeded with the suit, seeking \$10 million in compensatory damages and \$20 million in punitive damages. It struck some observers of legal affairs as interesting that the same grand total, \$30 million, had been awarded to relatives of murder in the O.J. Simpson civil trial.

In a C-SPAN appearance former *New Republic* editor Michael Kinsley, now with the online *Slate* magazine, said Blumenthal should not have sued. James Glassman, who served as publisher at the *New Republic* during Blumenthal's tenure, sees no evidence of marital trouble with his former colleague but agrees with Kinsley: "Whether he had reason to file or not, he shouldn't have sued. He's a big boy now. He's at the White House." Glassman says, "Sid is more after the source than Drudge." Maybe Blumenthal's boss is too.

"I can also tell you that Mr. Blumenthal did talk to the President and the Vice President about

this, who told him they support him if he wanted to proceed along these lines," said White House spokesman Joe Lockhart. That executive backing led some observers to charge that the administration was using this lawsuit to quash critics on the Internet. The Clinton administration, after all, had struck back at these critics during the past three years by releasing labyrinthine graphs purporting to show how anti-Clinton stories such as the reporting on the Vince Foster death and the Whitewater affair had moved from the Internet to British tabloids to conservative think tanks and finally into the mainstream press. The Clinton-backed suit targets America On Line, the obvious deep pocket, as the publisher of Drudge's material. Media critics find the suit disturbing.

"I worry about the suit against AOL," says



THE BLUMENTHAL'S

James Glassman. "It's potentially very damaging to free speech on the Internet. A real chilling effect." *Village Voice* free-speech advocate Nat Hentoff says that since Drudge apologized and retracted the story, "The only rationale for it [the law suit] is either vengeance or a desire to chill a guy's speech." Drudge is being represented by the Individual Rights Foundation and his attorney, Manny Klausner, says, "What we see here is a grotesque abuse of power by the Clinton administration in trying to silence views that are considered unflattering to the White House. The motive is to bludgeon Drudge into submission. They want to disable Drudge and his sources and make life difficult for companies like AOL that provide a forum."

As for Blumenthal, he was taking the high road. The suit wasn't about money or quashing speech, he said, but an issue of chivalry. "First and foremost, I'm defending my family," he told the *New York Times*. "I also think that there's such a thing as integrity in journalism."

Those familiar with Sidney Blumenthal's pre-White House career as a savage hatchet-man for left-wing causes would be forgiven a smile upon hearing this last sentence.

Blumenthal hails from Chicago and graduated from Brandeis in 1969, during the heyday of student rebellion. He was a radical himself, but took no part in the uprising. "Our intellectual tradition included the most important radical thinkers of the century. So what was there to rebel against?" he recently told the *Brandeis Review*. One of his important radical thinkers is Herbert Marcuse, who spawned the idea of "repressive tolerance," the doctrine that America's democratic capitalist society was the most repressive setup ever known. Such insights guided the career of the Brandeis grad, who lived in an environment where the Best People all thought alike and to rise all he had to do

was keep thinking like them.

After college Blumenthal worked for *Boston After Dark* and wrote for various left-wing journals in that town. By the late 1970s he had found a temporary home at the socialist magazine *In These Times* when it was published by the Institute for Policy Studies, the American Left's intellectual Pentagon.

As one critic wrote later on, "*In These Times* was a collection of all the poisonous clichés of the post-Vietnam era." It described the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a "Revolution from Above," and on one cover screamed that "The U.S. Would Destroy Europe to Save Capitalism." The magazine offered study trips to Cuba, attacked Joan Baez for her criticism of North Vietnam's dictatorship, and was home to Soviet propagandist Wilfrid Burchett, Cuban propagandist Saul Landau, Marxist historian Eric Foner, and Blase Bonpane, apologist for Castro, the Sandinistas and the Salvadoran communists.

Blumenthal got with the magazine's vulgar Marxism right away. In a February 1979 piece he lamented "the attitude of capital," and saw "the making of a new city proletariat composed of women, illegal immigrants, youth, and minorities." He warned of global corporations who viewed New York like Sao Paulo and L.A. like Singapore. "Capital closes down factories in medium-sized industrial cities. . . . Capital keenly understands that the American dream is vaporizing, so it's returning to cities to take advantage. . . . Capital prefers a fluid situation, in which workers are more easily replaceable, like gears in a machine."

In 1981, in an article that now seems prophetic given his current job, Blumenthal wrote, "While the Left has plenty of ideas to contribute to the national debate, its political skills have become obsolete." He wanted to advance the ideas of the Left within the Democratic Party, lamenting that "there was not a single major newspaper story about the existence of a recognized socialist group for the first time at the Democratic Convention." But there was hope: "Facing the rebuilding of the Democratic Party and the rethinking of a progressive platform, the left is presented with an unprecedented opportunity."

Blumenthal began branching into other magazines, notably the *New Republic*, during the early 1980s. Then in 1984 he got a break when the *Washington Post* hired him to cover that year's election, but the editors eventually quarantined Blumenthal in the "Style" section because of the partisan nature of his views. Even from there, however, he performed the hatchet jobs that were becoming his trademark. Conservative journalist Greg Fossedal, he wrote, "wears yacht-sized boat shoes and argyle socks that don't match his too-short pants—which clash with a blue suit jacket worn as a sports coat. He is tall, lumbering and has clearly laid off the 'lean cuisine.'"

It may have seemed odd that someone like Blumenthal should show up in the pages of the nation's paper of record, but he was a sort of metaphor for the osmotic movement of personnel from the left ghetto press to the prestige press in the last quarter century. All such a move required was a change of style rather than ideas. Instead of nattering about capitalism, Blumenthal now spoke portentously (and, by some lights, pretentiously) about subjects like "history."

"America is always a prophecy," he declared in 1988. "America is not a resting place. We are never redeemed from history. We make history. America never comes back. America is change."

As the title of his 1988 book *Our Long National Daydream*, suggests, the only way Blumenthal could explain the phenomenon of a Ronald Reagan is by assuming that he hypnotized the American people. "Because it was inherently backward-looking, Reaganism had no redemptive power and was ultimately disabling," he wrote. For Blumenthal, the threat was not the Soviet Union

but the one who called it an evil empire. “For the first time during the Cold War, the extreme right was in power.”

Blumenthal favors dismissive quotes, a kind of ideological scowling. He referred to “what was purported to be the liberals’ habit of equating the United States and the Soviet Union; hence, ‘moral equivalence.’” And he said of writer Michael Ledeen that he “believed that a ‘terror network,’ run by the Soviets, was the fount of international terrorism. . . the ‘terror network’ became an ideological device for promoting a certain version of anti-communism.” A certain version: as if Blumenthal might find another version of anti-communism legitimate.

In Blumenthal’s internal politburo, the Reagan administration was even to blame for what he regarded as bad books. “Neither the ham-handed [Tom] Clancy nor the breathless [Judith] Krantz,” he huffed, “were the equals of such serious proletarian novelists of the 1930s as Jack Conroy or Edward Dahlberg—or even the Communist Party literary gatekeeper, Mike Gold.”

The comparison is instructive. Gold was a Stalinist enforcer who led the inquisition of Hollywood Ten veteran Albert Maltz when he argued against the Communist Party’s “artists in uniform” doctrine requiring that all novels be social propaganda.

Some who have worked with him note that Blumenthal combines leftist politics and an adversarial anti-establishment pose with bourgeois elitism and snobbery. In his world it is important that one attend the very best schools and wear the nicest clothes. Word around the *New Republic* is that the dapper Blumenthal liked to go first class on his own assignments, which sometimes led to quarrels with those watching the bottom line. He wanted to guide those in power and could not bear to see his political enemies in similar positions. In a kind of literary version of Freudian projection, he used the language of the left to put them down.

Neo-conservatives such as Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter, therefore, he saw as being “at the forefront of a concerted effort to reduce intellectual life to vulgar ideological combat.” Decter’s work was “an unintentional parody of the Stalinist mode” and “just as the Stalinists of the 1930s believed there were only two sides—either you are for or against the Soviet Union—so does Podhoretz.” Podhoretz, Blumenthal says, resembles the Communist enforcer Mike Gold, whom he praised in another context.

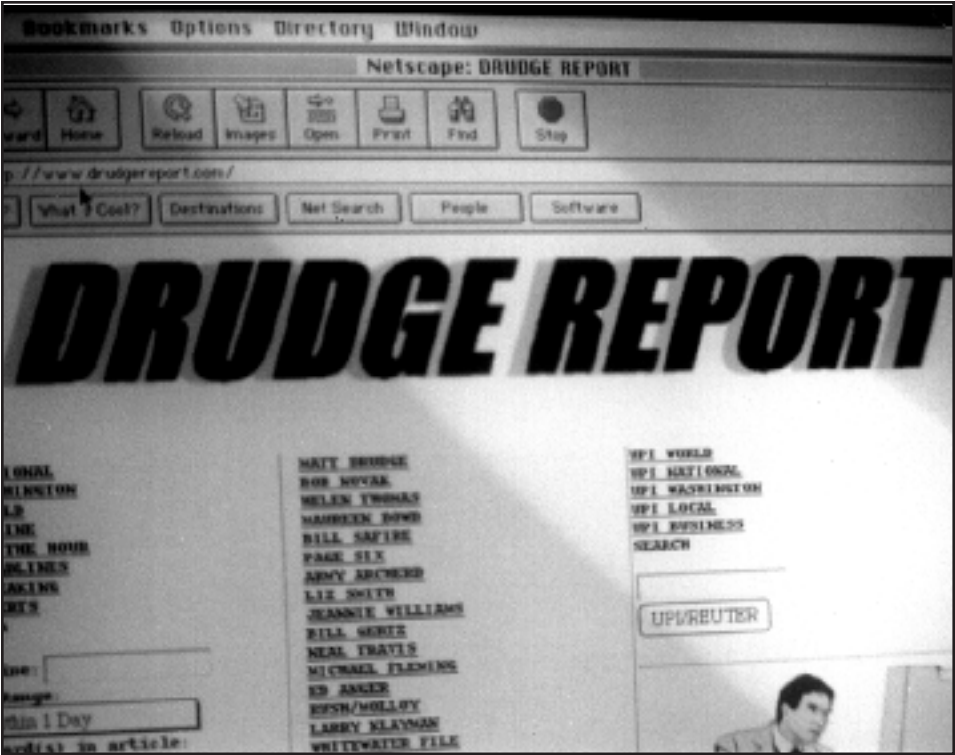
As for Irving Kristol, he “resembles no figure so much as Willi Munzenberg . . . the great organizational genius of the German Communist Party.” Blumenthal complained that Kristol, one of the preeminent intellectuals of the age, “was not genuinely intellectual.”

Elliott Abrams, another favorite target, explains that for Blumenthal, “to be a Jewish intellectual and not to be on the left is a form of treason for which you should be punished and he sees that as his role.” That would explain his admiration for the intellectual thug Mike Gold.

While attacking Michael Ledeen for paying tribute to Podhoretz and other neo-conservatives, Blumenthal punctiliously acknowledges his debt to fellow leftists Christopher Hitchens, Derek Shearer, and others. In the acknowledgments section of his own 1990 *Pledging Allegiance: The Last Campaign of the Cold War*, he praises the Institute of Canada and the U.S.A., a Soviet propaganda organ. “I am grateful for the hospitality and openness of the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada studies whose resources were put at my disposal while I was in Moscow,” Blumenthal gushes, later adding: “The experts at the U.S.A. Institute are members of the Moscow intelligentsia, the community that is a main support for perestroika and glasnost These Soviets, who formerly thought of themselves only as experts or Communists, have taken on the

mentality of citizens.” One Russian writer Blumenthal apparently did not read was Victor Suvarov who noted that the Soviets had a term for Westerners eager to accept their hospitality and handouts: *govnoed*, literally “shit eaters.”

Blumenthal blasted neo-conservatives for what he saw as their ad hominem attacks but his own approach often proved distinctly anatomical. Arms negotiator Richard Perle, for example, was a “familiar short spherical figure, often topped by a Greek Fisherman’s cap.” He was a “self-indulgent prisoner of luxe, a man for all desserts,” whose “hard line took precedence over his waistline.” Blumenthal also wrote in the *Washington Post* that on the night before his wedding, Greg Fossedal had gone to meet with his book agent, an interesting charge given his own recent conversion to family values.



“It wasn’t true,” Fossedal says. “I don’t know where he got it, but he never asked me or Lisa and never talked to my book agent. I found him to be a sloppy journalist.” Others share Fossedal’s take on Blumenthal’s skills.

“Mr. Blumenthal had certain eccentricities,” writes veteran journalist Robert Sam Anson, lately of *Vanity Fair*. “He thought little, for starters, of traditional fact-gathering, disparaging colleagues who engaged in such pursuits as ‘positivists.’” Blumenthal confessed to Anson: “I’m not a reporter, although I am more reportorial than most analysts and commentators.”

By the ’90s Blumenthal had made a name for himself as perhaps the nation’s best left-wing ideologue masquerading as a serious writer. His admirers in high places included Hillary and Bill Clinton, whom he had met in 1987 at a “Renaissance Weekend.” With the advent of the Clinton-Gore ticket Blumenthal now had something he could at last be positive about. Rather than savage attacks, he turned to ad copy. “The Anointed,” a January 1992 *New Republic* piece, set the tone for his new, literary Sammy Glickism.

“The essential principle of Clinton’s agenda—leaner, activist government—is the result of a rethinking of the future of liberalism,” and the President “has mastered the whole domestic policy curriculum that has evolved.” Bill Clinton “has successive layers of polish. . . . Clinton’s ideological deftness has been among his chief political assets. . . . Clinton is about the renaissance of policy.”

Samples of his public-relations work in other 1992 *New Republic* pieces: Gennifer Flowers was “The ‘scandal’ that nearly enveloped Bill Clinton” (note dismissive quotes). “For a couple of days Washington resembled the erstwhile Kremlin during a state crisis. . . Clinton was Geraldood. . . . Hillary Clinton’s statements had an authentic air to them.” Further, Clinton was “a candidate who perseveres, directly confronts his opponents, doesn’t hold himself aloof from the conflict.” The candidate “delivered a long, powerful speech. . . at Georgetown, he was known as a class politician.” And, Clinton “has diligently read and studied monographs in almost every area of social policy.”

Moreover, “the fusion of Clinton and Gore works visually” and as Blumenthal noted in a book, “Al Gore Jr.’s whole life seemed an education for a higher destiny.”

In an obvious defense of Clinton’s draft-dodging, Blumenthal attacked George Bush’s war record and, from the *New Republic* offices, sent demographic data to George Stephanopolis. Besides his own monsoon of praise, Blumenthal also tried to derail his peers from writing anything that could jeopardize Mr. Clinton’s chances. When *Vogue*’s Julia Reed asked if it wasn’t necessary to explore the candidate’s defects, Blumenthal replied in the negative: “It doesn’t matter,” Mr. Blumenthal replied. “This is too important.”

Once Clinton got elected, the pattern continued at the *New Yorker*, where editor Tina Brown hired Blumenthal to write the “Letter from Washington” column. Blumenthal said he made no secret of his friendship with the Clintons. Indeed, he telegraphed it with a flare gun, decrying criticism of Clinton absurdly as “Washington’s version of anti-Semitism.” His January 1994 “The Education of a President” amounts to a Clinton speech, air-brushed with glowing comments such as “Clinton’s notions of energy and power counter his predecessors . . . the apparent strengths of his presidency, his ability to surmount and learn from difficulties,” and this gem: “But, beginning in this slough of despond, his Presidential power has begun to flourish. Such power has not come from interest on his sparse capital but from internal reserves of his own.”

The piece proved so craven that *Washington Post* magazine columnist William Powers responded that “*New Yorker* readers deserve more than the profile-in-courage cream puffs Blumenthal is lobbying out of Washington.”

Even in a town where more than 80 percent of journalists are liberal Democrats who voted for Clinton, Blumenthal’s sycophancy had members of the White House press corps playing a guessing game about how he would spin Clinton’s increasing political and moral difficulties. *Frontline* and *New Yorker* correspondent Peter Boyer recalls hearing the Sidney jokes anytime he got near the White House press corps. Charlie Rose of PBS asked: “Sidney, are you the least bit uncomfortable defending the Administration the way you do?” Meanwhile, as Robert Sam Anson described it, embarrassed *New Yorker* staffers were in revolt.

“Every time we publish this guy, we are knowingly committing a dishonest act,” said one writer. Blumenthal was reportedly sitting in on Hillary’s staff meetings and writing her memos on health care at the same time he was writing about the administration. In editorial meetings Blumenthal would spout off that “Hillary doesn’t believe that” or “the President thinks this,” but when editor Tina Brown told him to write it, Blumenthal protested. “I can’t. They’ve told me in confidence.”

By early 1994 it began to dawn on Brown that Blumenthal was perhaps not the ideal Washington bureau chief and she asked Peter Boyer to take on the job. Boyer refutes the notion that only fringe players saw the Clintons as a target-rich environment. He served as *Frontline* correspondent for the October 7 “Once Upon a Time in Arkansas,” in which the Clintons come across in distinctly un-Blumenthalian terms as schemers, fast-buck artists, liars and obstructers of justice. At the time Boyer hadn’t paid a lot of attention to Blumenthal who tried, unsuccessfully, to talk him out of his “Bridges of Madison Guarantee” article in which he explored Whitewater. Then, Boyer says, Blumenthal “did something I found offensive, unprofessional and cowardly, three traits not anomalies with Sidney.”

Boyer was working on a piece about the

recently remarried Ted Kennedy, whom he thought might at long last be politically vulnerable, when he got a call from New York about an internal memo Blumenthal sent to Tina Brown attacking Boyer not just for this piece but for all of his stories. “It was really vicious,” Boyer says. “It wasn’t just ‘I disagree,’ it was a ‘Peter Boyer should die’ kind of thing. He put a lot of energy into it.”

Boyer was furious at this backstabbing and stormed into Blumenthal’s office. “I didn’t shove him against the wall but I got in his face,” he says, telling him that if they were to work together, Blumenthal would have to be up-front with him. Blumenthal took the face-job meekly but still favored the back-door play.

In the spring of 1995 Boyer was working on a story about Travelgate and, while wading through documents, noted on the calendar of “first pal” Harry Thomason that he had lunched with Sidney Blumenthal before he met with the President and First Lady. When Boyer asked Blumenthal about this he said he had “no recollection,” so Boyer pursued it further by talking to the Thomasons. “One of them told me that their friend Sidney had warned them about me,” Boyer says. Then the Thomasons’ lawyer Bob Bennett complained about the impending “hatchet job” and threatened to sue before Boyer’s story had even been published.

Blumenthal also made a preemptive strike in behalf of his friends, the First Couple, when he told *New Yorker* fact checkers not to trust James Stewart, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Blood Sport*.

Tina Brown eventually gave the “Letter from Washington” column to Michael Kelly, formerly of the *New York Times* and a critic of both Drudge, whom he says he finds “reprehensible,” and Blumenthal. (Kelly left to become editor of the *New Republic* and was recently fired for being too hard on Al Gore.) By this time, the *New Yorker* editorial hierarchy had insisted that Blumenthal not be allowed to write about the Clintons because, Kelly says, “The magazine had come to regard his writing on Clinton as too problematic. He was manifestly shilling for the White House in what is supposed to be a reported column.”

Kelly says that with writers such as Elizabeth Drew the Washington letter had traditionally possessed a sense of honest reporting that did not come through with Blumenthal. “I did not think he was intellectually honest,” Kelly says. “He was much too close to the Clintons, openly partisan.” Blumenthal was kept on as a contract writer and Kelly, who as Washington editor read all political copy, insisted that Blumenthal stay out of the Washington office.

When rumors began flying this spring that Blumenthal was hitting up Clinton for a speechwriting job, the applicant flew to New York to personally deny it in front of Tina Brown. But his job-hunting was so open that it had become a subject of amusement.

“Why should we hire Sidney?” said Clinton aide Dee Dee Myers, “He’s practically a member of the administration already.” When Blumenthal did start working out of the White House, the *New Republic* quipped that he should “get back pay.” The “longtime cheerleader for Bill Clinton,” said Lorne Manly in the *New York Observer*, “will now get paid by the White House for his boosterism.” He can also lunch with his wife Jacqueline, who directs the President’s Commission on the White House Fellows.

“Well, this is a new phase of the Clinton presidency,” Blumenthal told the *Brandeis Review*. “He doesn’t have to run for office. And we are actually on the eve of a new era, certainly a new millenium, not to overstate it. And to the surprise of many people, the policies that were enacted in the early Clinton years have worked, which gives enormous room, despite right-wing opposition, to move forward. So I’m very excited about the opportunity to contribute to that.”

“It’s a more appropriate role for him,” says James Glassman. “Bill Clinton and Sidney Blumenthal are made for each other.”

If Sidney Blumenthal’s job in the White House was to figure out ways to punish the Clintons’ conservative opponents, as many think it is, then Matt Drudge was the perfect first-case scenario. He was not in the power structure; he was part of an emerging journalistic technology; he had committed a blunder that allowed someone who had walked the low road all his journalistic life to stand suddenly on high ground and find others who would wring their hands over the vulgarization of the profession.

Blumenthal overnighted the suit to reporters, including Todd Purdum of the *New York Times*, who is married to former Clinton press secretary Dee Dee Myers. In his piece, Purdum described Drudge as a “geeky guy” who lacked integrity and included critical quotes from writers Drudge had scooped. The *Washington Post*’s Howard Kurtz slammed him as an “Internet gossip-monger” and Margaret Carlson of *Time* used Drudge as her “outrage of the week” on CNN’s *Capital Gang*. The *Columbia Journalism Review* said he wasn’t a real reporter, only someone gossiping over the electronic fence.

There was an immediate identification of the press with Blumenthal that resembled the gathering around Janet Malcolm when Jeffrey Masson sued her for libel after she became in his view too creative reconstructing quotes. Except that in that case, the media’s defense of Malcolm had appealed to free-speech issues, and none of that was in evidence with Drudge. Indeed, the rule seemed to be hostility to the reporter and leniency toward White House aide Blumenthal, more evidence that his brand of politics have also gone mainstream. Some of the mainstream journalists even seemed to try to help the White House aide with his case.

Newsweek’s Karen Breslau, for instance,

asked Barbara Ledeen, wife of one of Blumenthal’s favorite targets, if she considered Drudge a journalist, if he was a conservative, if she knew anything about the source for the story. Breslau’s piece describes Drudge as a “right-wing Clinton Crazy,” assumes that his article was a “false report,” and concludes that “Blumenthal’s libel claim stands a good chance of winning.” The accompanying photo shows the Blumenthals posing as the ideal and happy couple.

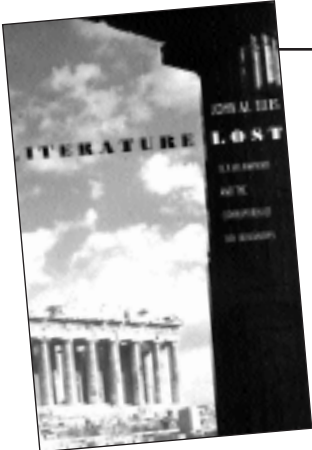
The accused sees an irony in the attitude of the glossies. “If I’m not a reporter, why are reporters on my list looking for news?” asks Drudge, who notes that on October 6 the *New York Times* picked up his story about CBS news offering a finder’s fee for stories. Drudge complains that the same media outlets going after him were issuing retractions of their own about accused Olympic bomber Richard Jewell. What bothers him even more is White House approval of Blumenthal’s suit.

“Now I have to defend myself against a lawsuit that has the support of the President and Vice President of the United States,” he says. “It’s the first time I’m aware of that a sitting president has endorsed a suit against a reporter. I’m a Clinton reporter and Clinton endorses a suit against me. What did they discuss? The dollar value? Putting me out of business?” Drudge recently met with his co-defendants at AOL. “Everyone is concerned about free speech,” Drudge says.

They should be concerned about what will now be a new vindictive tone against Clinton critics, particularly conservatives, now that Sidney Blumenthal is helping Bill and Hillary make policy. Interestingly, the Clinton IRS audit list includes Western Journalism Center; The National Center for Public Policy, the Heritage Foundation; the National Rifle Association, Citizens Against Government Waste, Fortress America, Freedom Alliance, *National Review*, *The American Spectator*, the live-in boyfriend of IRS whistleblower Shelley Davis; Kent Masterson Brown, the lawyer who sued to force Hillary Clinton to reveal the names of her secret health-care task force; Billy Dale, director of the White House Travel Office and a target of Hillary; Patricia Medoza, who yelled “you suck!” at Clinton during a rally, and Paula Jones, a woman Blumenthal has savaged in print.

Peter Boyer says it would not surprise him if the IRS paid him a visit. “This White House has shown a capacity to cast the dynamics of our democracy in terms that are pure evil and pure good, us versus them, all-out war,” Boyer says. “Sidney is perfectly and congenitally suited to such an environment. That is a scary thought.”

Matt Drudge makes a careless error, apologises for it, and gets hit with a \$30 million law suit. Sidney Blumenthal has a career marked by savage attacks, obsequious politics, and goes to the White House. Go figure.



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The President’s Pastor, Continued from page 1

he perfected while teaching social ethics in Washington’s Wesley Seminary for three decades. Wogaman punctuates his sermons with occasional smiles and wry humor.

Hillary Clinton’s Methodist roots are life-long, while her husband is a cradle Baptist. But they both have reason to feel comfortable in the church of Rev. Wogaman, who was a Democratic Party activist in California during the 1960s and is well-known throughout United Methodism as a major force for liberal social and economic causes. Indeed, Wogaman’s intelligence and eloquence, his leadership within old-line Protestantism’s largest denomination, and his role as pastor to the First Family, have given him national prominence. And it doesn’t hurt that he serves as vice president of and frequent spokesman for the Interfaith Alliance, the self-anointed Religious Left counterweight to the Christian Coalition. Wogaman and Foundry are further left, both socially and politically, than most of the 8.5 million national members of the United Methodist Church. In this, he exemplifies the new, postmodern clergyman—obsessed with political issues, theologically casual, and employing his church as a bully pulpit for politically correct social ideas.


Under Wogaman’s leadership, Foundry Church has become a “Reconciling Congregation”—one of 120 of United Methodism’s nearly 37,000 churches that rejects the denomination’s official disapproval of homosexual practices. Located in Washington’s bohemian Dupont Circle neighborhood, Foundry has, in fact, become the religious meeting place for the homosexual community of the nation’s capital. The aggressive pro-homosexuality stance was one reason why former parishioners Bob and Elizabeth Dole, when heading into the Republican primary season, decided to quit the church after nearly 15 years of attendance, thus disappointing Wogaman, who had liked to boast that his hosting the chieftains of both Democratic and Republican parties at the same worship services was “unprecedented in American history.”

Actually, I must declare an interest here in that I played a role in the Doles’ decision to shake the dust off their feet and search for a new church. Early in 1995 I attended a service at Foundry and found myself in a pew next to Elizabeth Dole. From the pulpit, Wogaman welcomed her back from recent surgery. In a later announcement, he asked the congregation to pick up church materials opposing the Republican Party’s Contract with America in the social hall after the service. The church bulletin urged the congregation “to take a close look at the Contract . . . some [of whose] provisions have potentially devastating effects on the weakest elements of our society.” Mrs. Dole declined to visit the display table, instead shaking Wogaman’s hand and quickly departing. A *Washington Times* article later in the week, quoting me, noted the irony of her attending a church whose pastor actively opposed Republican policies.

Neither she nor her husband ever returned to Foundry. Several months later Cal Thomas, in his syndicated column, described Wogaman’s left-leaning politics as giving “moral nurture” to President Clinton’s policies. Citing some research I had done as his source, Thomas outlined the Methodist minister’s long infatuation with liberal economic and social causes, and asked why Bob and Elizabeth Dole still attended Foundry Church. The following Sunday, with Hillary Clinton in the congregation, Wogaman charged that Cal Thomas and myself were not simply after him, but after the President as well. “I think much of this was a political attack aimed at getting at President Clinton through the practice of his religion,” he said, and then went on to blame the negative coverage on “the climate of the times in which we live.” In a subsequent newspaper op-ed, Wogaman linked negative articles about his ministry to the Oklahoma City bomb-

ing. “People in the media don’t plant bombs,” he wrote. “But if they plant hatred and division, doesn’t that affect the behavior of unstable hearers or readers?”

Three weeks later, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the Associated Press all carried stories from a “person close to the Doles” who said that the Republican couple were searching for a church that would “more accurately reflect their traditional Christian beliefs.” Wogaman declined to comment. Perhaps he concluded the Doles were among the “unstable hearers or readers,” although last year during the presidential campaign, he finally admitted that he had “grieved over their departure.”



THE CLINTONS LEAVING THE FOUNDRY

Although accustomed to staking out highly controversial positions in defense of statist economics, abortion rights, and lifestyle radicalism, Phil Wogaman has always couched his stances in the language of dialogue and accommodation and thus criticism is a fairly new and unwelcome experience for him. On the Sunday previous to Elizabeth Dole’s last Sunday at Foundry, former Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, author of the *Roe vs. Wade* abortion rights decision, had been scheduled to speak from the pulpit. Pro-life demonstrators outside the church persuaded him to cancel. (The Clintons also chose to worship elsewhere that morning.) Wogaman was displeased. In explaining Blackmun’s absence to the congregation, most of whom accepted the demonstrators good-naturedly, Foundry’s pastor issued a stern rebuke to the pro-lifers. It was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. Wogaman has authored a pro-abortion rights tract for what is now the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights, a church group that helps United Methodists and other mainline denominations to give religious justification to the abortion rights movement.

Nor was this an isolated instance. The Rev. Wogaman has been more outspoken in his politics and more committed in his ideology than most who are vilified as the Religious Right. In response to the Contract with America, Wogaman warned in 1995 that “it would be reprehensible for American society to abandon the poor.” Behind this denunciation was more than simple humane concern for the underclass. Wogaman has lauded “Christian socialism,” and although he has declined to adopt the label for himself, he told a 1992 conference that Soviet-style communism failed in part because it did not take socialism seriously enough. He also said that free marketeers in the U.S. “must not prevent us from using aspects of socialism.”

Often Wogaman sounds more like a pamphleteer than a preacher, someone who just got out of one of Washington’s increasingly irrelevant and intellectually vacuous liberal think tanks. He

has been enthusiastic about the persistently left-leaning and increasingly archaic National and World Councils of Churches. (“The depth and thoroughness of some of the ecumenical documents is not well known at the local church level,” he wrote in 1987, when the church councils were still busy apologizing for collapsing communist regimes. “The series of Assemblies of the WCC since 1948 has produced some of the best commentary on 20th century moral dilemmas available anywhere.”) In a 1991 article entitled, “Human Rights: Christians, Marxists and Others in Dialogue,” Wogaman wrote: “Whatever truth there is in [the] free enterprise model, it is best expressed, in modern conditions, with the mixed-economy of the welfare state.” In a column written a year earlier for *Christian Century* (it was headlined “Socialism’s Obituary Is Premature”) Wogaman warned that Marxism’s collapse in Eastern Europe was not a judgment on “Christian socialism.” He went on to charge that “unrestrained laissez-faire capitalism” has created “social breakdowns,” like “drug abuse, murder, unethical business practices, family breakups, and homelessness.” He concluded, “Christian socialism’s critique of the excesses and brutalities and idolatries of the free market still needs to be heard.”

In 1989 Wogaman wrote in *Theology & Public Policy*, “Certainly U.S. economic policy will not become socialist in the foreseeable future. But it clearly needs to reverse the decline toward greater inequality.” His prescription was an increase in tax rates for the higher brackets, a progressive social security tax, “more generous” welfare programs to reverse Ronald Reagan’s “abandonment of public assistance to the poor,” and the addition of health care to education as a “public responsibility.” Wogaman had already criticized Ronald Reagan in a 1986 book (*Economics and Ethics*) for his “over-reliance on the free market.” In this work he also noted that while socialism may have failed in Mozambique and Cambodia, it “can claim modest but real economic success” in China and Cuba.

Wogaman has written of his childhood in Depression-era Ohio small towns, where his father also served as a Methodist pastor. A move later in his childhood to southern Arizona exposed him to the severe poverty of a local Indian tribe. While at college in California, Wogaman worked at industrial plants and conversed with union activists. “Those experiences formed a deep, though not uncritical, commitment to organized labor as a necessary protection for workers and their families,” he has said.

“I was never greatly tempted by communism,” Wogaman wrote after his exposure to “manipulation” by the U.S. branch of the party and his visits to the Eastern Bloc. But moral equivalence was appealing, and he concluded that both Marxist socialism and laissez-faire capitalism were “seriously flawed.” Nor did tyranny behind the Iron Curtain seem much of a problem to him. “The USSR is characteristic of the more tolerant Communist arrangements for religion,” he wrote in his 1967 work, *Protestant Faith and Religious Liberty*. “In Russia there are specific constitutional guarantees of freedom of worship, and some provision has even been made for the upkeep of churches and theological seminaries.” He wondered if “Christians in Russia or China are treated any worse than Marxists are treated in the United States.”

Like his economic, defense and foreign policy views, Wogaman’s positions on social issues are left of center. In a booklet that he wrote during the 1970s for what was then the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, he commended the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion as “a landmark of humane spirit and practical wisdom” and its practice “may be faithful obedience to the God of life and love.” More recently, he has defended the partial-birth abortion procedure. After signing a public statement with 29 pro-abortion rights religious leaders last year, he told the

Religious Fright Over Promise Keepers

Earlier this month, hundreds of thousands of explicitly Christian men descended on Washington for a day of prayer and hymn singing which sent left wing religious groups and their feminist allies into a paroxysm of rage and anxiety.

"The Promise Keepers speak about 'taking back America' for Christ, when they really mean men taking charge," warns NOW's Patricia Ireland. "Their targets are women, lesbians, and gay men, and anyone who supports abortion rights or opposes an authoritarian, religiously-based government." She and her coalition of feminist, homosexual, and old-line religious groups announced a "No Surrender" campaign to "take the mask off" the "hidden" political agenda of the men's movement.

Ireland and her allies were the only ones who saw the hidden features of proto-fascism. In fact, Promise Keepers is ostentatiously apolitical. Its main themes are spiritual and not hidden at all, but openly avowed: discipline and marital fidelity. It never endorses legislation. The Washington assembly was originally scheduled for 1996 but was postponed so as to avoid any connection with an election year. A few words of welcome at an Indianapolis rally last year by Indiana Senator Dan Coats aroused so much concern inside the organization that all politicians have since been prohibited from the podiums of Promise Keeper events. None were recognized at the meeting in Washington.

But Ireland declares that feminists will "not be fooled by the many recent public disclaimers about this feel-good form of male supremacy with its dangerous political potential." Ireland says that Promise Keepers, with an annual to be a credible "self-help group," a strange position for someone to take who lives in a nation where "self-help," is a multi-billion dollar industry.

Ireland and NOW staged two press conferences to denounce Promise Keepers for its supposedly toxic masculinity. Both conferences were convened in the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill, which functions as the headquarters for Religious Left activism in Washington. Joining NOW at the press conferences were other feminist groups, homosexual organizations, and the representatives of declining "mainline" church denominations whose leaders are more renowned for their political stridency than for their evangelistic fervor.

One of the groups, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, condemned Promise Keepers' disapproval of homosexual practices as evidence of "bigotry." But nearly every major Christian denomination in this country, including the United Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians who work in the Methodist Building, has official teachings (even if often ignored by church officials) that agree with Promise Keepers on this point.

At the second press conference Ireland showed a video "exposé" of Promise Keepers called "The Third Wave of the Religious Right" (The first two waves were ostensibly the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition.) Here evidence for the movement's "hidden political agenda" is adduced from the endorsement its founder, Bill McCartney, gave personally to a Colorado state referendum withholding recognition of homosexuals as an entitled minority group, even though the Promise Keeper organization itself took no position on the measure.

McCartney is also "exposed" in the video as having pro-life views. And since Jerry Falwell, who has reportedly endorsed Promise Keepers, once paid \$10,000 toward Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry's fine for an aggressive protest outside a "women's health clinic," Ireland concludes that McCartney's friends uphold the "right to kill abortionists." She surmised, "We know, from our firsthand experience at firebombed clinics, the political Molotov cocktail that the radical Right can concoct out of fanaticism and intolerance."

Lacking any substance, the video resorts to amateurish technical tricks. Promise Keepers rallies in football stadiums are

shown, but applauding men are slowmotioned so that their clapping appears eerie and mechanical. The hymn singing is slowed almost imperceptibly so that it sounds more like militant Germanic odes. Indeed, these gatherings of prayer and hymn singing are portrayed as Nuremburg-style rallies and seedbeds for a Christian Reich. Prayer circles become "cell groups." U.S. military chaplains are seen to be leaders of a new religious auxiliary to the militia cause.

The video is produced by the New York-based Center for Democracy Studies, a project of the left-wing *Nation* magazine, which is hardly an apolitical well-wisher for religion in America. The Center is headed by former Planned Parenthood researcher

Alfred Ross, who charges in the video that "our constitutional rights will be challenged on Saturday, October 4." According to Ross, that dangerous day, the day of the Promise Keepers' arrival in Washington, will represent a "dry run for a more ambitious holy war, and further national-scale assaults on the positions of women, gays, and lesbians, the future of government action for social programs, and the legal separation of church and state."

The Center and NOW contrast "fundamentalist" support for Promise Keepers with "mainstream denominations" whose leaders have formed an "Equal Partners in Faith" to help battle the men's movement. But the religious "partners" are the usual fixtures from the religio-political Left: the Interfaith Alliance, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Catholic Call to Action, and Catholic Charities.

A National Council of Churches official has also predictably dismissed Promise Keepers as representing the "bankruptcy of male identity." But a viewing of the Center for Democracy Studies' video at the May 1997 NCC board meeting ignited controversy. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, a and professed pro-feminist and long-time advocate of liberal causes, told his fellow NCC board members that his own initial hostility was dispelled when men from his denomination were energized by a Promise Keepers event. "My own church is now only 35 percent male. I think we need to ask why Promise Keepers is effective in reaching men when our mainline denominations are not."

In fact, Promise Keepers has proven surprisingly popular among men in liberal-controlled mainline churches, where theology is often emasculated and the deity frequently is neutered or feminized. Some leaders in the 8.6 million member United Methodist Church have criticized Promise Keepers. Its lobby office in Washington provided space for NOW press conferences. But the largest Methodist church in the Washington area, a 3,000 member Virginia congregation, hosted over 300 visiting Promise Keepers.

It will not be the last schism between church leaders whose interests are mainly political and church members who still assume the church's purposes are primarily spiritual. Pat Ireland and liberal church elites are no doubt genuinely befuddled by a vigorous affirmation of orthodox Christian belief in the late twentieth century that has widespread appeal across boundaries of race and class. No wonder they propose paranoid allegations of a secret agenda.

Here is the crux of the dispute. Promise Keepers believes in a transcendent moral authority. The Religious Left and its NOW allies thinks ethics are fluid and adaptable. Promise Keepers believes in submission by both men and women to a personal God and to each other. The NOW crowd advocates a radical autonomy centered on self-empowerment. Promise Keepers looks to eternity. NOW and the Religious Left cares only about today, except, of course, when they are nursing the grievances of yesterday.

—Mark Tooley



PROMISE KEEPERS RALLY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



Washington Post that a ban on the late-term abortion method would be “unfeeling.” Said Wogaman, “These are matters where the law needs to proceed with sensitivity and compassion.”

Outspokenly pro-homosexual, Wogaman told the *Washington Blade*, a gay newspaper, in 1995, “I want to emphasize that I honor the number of people in our congregation who are gay who are in deeply committed relationships. I have found many examples of love which I find deeply moving.” A year later he repeated this message to the church’s General Conference in 1996. Just hours before he addressed the meeting, Wogaman had shared the podium with Hillary Clinton, who asked United Methodists, during her speech, to “throw open the doors of our churches.” The Reverend was undoubtedly proud of his star parishioner and pleased by her support. Despite more than 2 years at active campaigning by Wogaman for joining the “Reconciling” pro-homosexuality movement, Foundry’s Church administrative board had approved the idea by only a 52-46 margin in 1995.

Wogaman found another kindred spirit in the eccentric Episcopal bishop John Shelby Spong of Newark, who predictably speculated in a speech at Foundry that St. Paul was homosexual and then charged that “our primary understanding of God’s grace came from a self-hating gay man.” After these typically weird comments, Wogaman then said, “Bishop Spong’s remarks this morning were so stimulating.” Asked about the possibility of Jesus Christ being depicted as a “drag queen,” he responded, “I don’t condemn. I just don’t know. I’ll have to think about it some more.”

Theologically, as well as politically, Wogaman is considerably more liberal than most of his fellow United Methodists, 69 percent of whom have told a church pollster that they are “conservative.” In a recent article, he reported that pastors do not tell their parishioners the “truth,” based upon the latest Biblical “scholarship,” for fear of upsetting their faith. He approvingly quoted a layperson who said, “It took me almost 50 years to free myself up from what I was taught in Sunday school by honest, good people who were Bible teachers but not Bible students.” Wogaman expressed concern about people who have been “injured” by “literalistic interpretations of scriptural passages.” Women and blacks have been particularly harmed by such readings of the Bible, he wrote. The Scriptures are a “human document,” he believes, that reflect the limitations of the life and culture of the writers.”

“Human limitations” in the Bible have kept good people out of the church, Wogaman believes. He described a “morally sensitive political leader from another country,” who left the church because he could not accept the Virgin Birth. “What a tragedy,” Wogaman declared. “We create stumbling blocks for people who are thoughtful enough to see moral and factual errors in those Scriptures for themselves.”

To judge from two recent sermons, Wogaman is trying to remove such “stumbling blocks.” He told his congregation one Sunday: “There are inconsistencies in the Bible. . . . There are parts of the Bible no longer consistent with deep convictions of faith and moral life that we now share.” Frequently drawing laughter, he cited Scriptural passages that called for rebellious children to be stoned, slaves to obey masters, women to wear veils, and which condemned homosexuality. “This is the type of thing that has hurt people,” said Wogaman. He asked that the Bible be seen as containing truth, like the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, but, like those newspapers, having errors.

In another sermon, he rejected the Virgin Birth as a required belief for Christians, saying, “The Gospel contains many stories that probably are true. But we should be concerned about the overall picture.”

At the 11 a.m. services (which the Clintons attend), Wogaman preaches to a full house. In a 1994 interview with *Newsweek*, he trumpeted Foundry Church’s diversity. In a typical service, he said, young singles and married people sit up front, gays prefer the far right, African-Americans congregate in the center, while older

whites are in the back. Yet a glance at the church audience over numerous Sundays shows a less rosy picture. There are male homosexuals seated together, but very few non-whites are in evidence, although Foundry’s neighborhood is racially mixed. Many blacks and Hispanics are seen in the street outside on Sunday morning, but only a handful stop at Foundry.

A glance at Foundry’s directory shows most members living in upscale Northwest Washington neighborhoods or in the suburbs. Judging by appearances is often unfair, but Foundry’s members give the impression of affluence and education. They do not represent a cross section of the city’s population, more than 70 percent of whom are black and one-eighth of whom receive public welfare. It makes sense: people who are not upper middle class or highly educated are not a likely following for theological leftism. Working-class people with more traditionalist religious views—and needs—may be more inclined to want the “crutch” of Bible against which Wogaman has preached.

Philip Wogaman claims that he represents the mainstream of the United Methodist clerical leadership. Perhaps so. But with a 1,000 member loss every week of every year for the last 30 years, United Methodism is among the fastest declining churches in America, as parishioners vote with

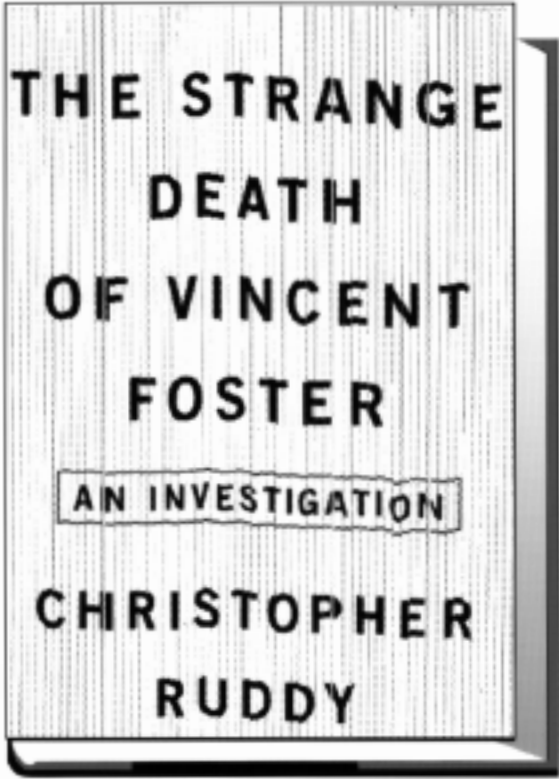
their feet—and their hearts—for varieties of other religious experience. Despite Foundry’s strenuous efforts at “inclusion” and “diversity,” and despite the draw of the President and First Lady every Sunday, the church has followed the national Methodist trend of decline. Membership and attendance have fallen more than ten percent since Wogaman became pastor and the Clintons became regular congregants. Old members uncomfortable with Foundry’s new regime have left. Most of Foundry’s liberal neighbors are more inclined to attend the Broadway shows regularly produced in the church’s fellowship hall than attend the Sunday services, where the sermons offer a message so smoothly tolerant as to be inconsequential.

None of this is likely to cause a crisis of conscience in the President’s preacher, who is almost as smooth as the President himself. But while Foundry may appeal to Bill Clinton, one must wonder what Abraham Lincoln and Harry Truman would think if they were to attend Foundry today. They would probably be even more disgusted than before that Foundry Church has slipped from over-confidence, to obsequiousness, and now, under Philip Wogaman, to political correctness and growing irrelevancy.

Mark Tooley works at the Institute on Religion and Democracy in Washinton, D.C.

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REVIEWS

Counting By Race

Ethnomathematics: Challenging Eurocentrism in Mathematics Education

Edited by Arthur B. Powell and Marilyn Frankenstein

REVIEWED BY ANTHONY J. TROMBA

Several years ago a complaint was lodged with the office of the Dean of Natural Sciences at the University of California at Santa Cruz concerning my “racist” conduct as an instructor in a course on vector calculus. In part, the complaint alleged that my course was biased, since in the discussions of its historical roots I mentioned only the white male mathematicians Isaac Newton, Leonhard Euler, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, thus omitting minority or black scientists who may have contributed to the foundation of the subject.

The charge caught me quite by surprise, since the issue of the skin color of these great scientists never arose. The complainer, a young black woman, further added that if, in fact, there had been no black founders, I was obligated to state this explicitly and to devote lecture time explaining their absence as a consequence of the ravaging effects of European colonialism of the African continent and the subsequent suppression of African scientific and cultural development.

Having never encountered such a complaint before in my thirty-year teaching career, I passed it off as an aberration that one would probably never encounter again. I never imagined that there could be an established and growing discipline whose “research” promoted and encouraged such attitudes, but *Ethnomathematics: Challenging Eurocentrism in Mathematics Education* is in fact a collection of essays by some leading figures in that field.

In these essays the authors critique “the imperialism of academic mathematics” and challenge the Eurocentric view of the accepted history of mathematics, a history which according to one author has been “disgustingly manipulated.” The “distorted” historical approach to the contemporary teaching of mathematics is attacked as a process of “indoctrinating an elite with the metaphysical myth of eternal Eurocentric domination of the world,” a pedagogical approach which “reinforces the institutionalization of Eurocentrism, class, elitism, and sexism.” The goal of one author is to “shatter the myth that mathematics was or is a white man’s thing.” Academic mathematics is attacked as an “effective education filter” and as a “barrier to social access” and as a “re-enforcement of the power structure which prevails in the societies (of the third world).”

But these writers are for the most part neither research-level mathematicians nor mathematical historians, but educators. Unfortunately, in the United States, mathematics educators and research mathematicians have been separated (somewhat like oil and water) for a good part of this century; research mathematicians only experience the effects of the work of educators in the quality of the students sent on to universities. With “ethnomathematics” the schism between these two groups grows wider. The first difficulty arises with the use of the term “mathematics” to refer to basic counting, measurement, elementary geometrical notions, and logical reasoning. This abuse of the term “mathematics,” to cover both what the academic mathematician means by the term and our everyday dealings with numbers and

geometrical figures is a source of constant confusion throughout. But this abuse follows from the premises of the book, as this summary from the introduction makes clear:

Asante (1987) argues that an underlying theoretical tenet of an Afrocentric perspective is that “oppositional dichotomies in real, everyday experience do not exist” (p. 14). For Freire (1970, 1982) this means breaking down the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, between action and reflection, between teaching and learning, and between knowledge and its applications . . . For D’Ambrosio (1987) this means that the notion that “there is only one underlying logic governing all thought” is too static. For Diop (1991) this means that the distinctions between “Western,” “Eastern,” and “African” knowledge distort the human process of creating knowledge which results from interactions among humans and with the world.



Throughout this book, we emphasize that underlying all these false dichotomies is the split between practical, everyday knowledge and abstract, theoretical knowledge.

Besides these claims of both the authors and editors, the academic mathematician will find plenty of others that are difficult to digest. A small sampling: “The choice of axioms, the types of theorems, the style of proofs (in mathematics) . . . can be shaped by factors such as views about the nature of social reality.” Or “mathematicians have institutionalized a set of beliefs about the ways to proceed with the symbols they work with. These institutionalized beliefs are rather like rules in a game: they must be adhered to . . . Mathematics deals not with physical reality but with social conventions and creations.” Ethnomathematicians, it is said, “also examine the ways in which mathematical reasoning is socially ‘negotiated.’” (By contrast, in the recently released film *Contact*, astronomers agree that the only language through which intelligent life could indicate its existence would be mathematics, because certain parts of mathematics are indeed “universal,” as for example the prime numbers, the numbers $\pi=3.141$. . . (the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter), and the logarithmic constant known as $e=2.718$.

Ethnomathematicians seem to question not only the universality of basic mathematical knowledge but the very logical principles upon which it (and all scientific knowledge) is based. To

quote the editors again: “D’Ambrosio . . . , the founder and most significant theoretician on the ethnomathematics program, points out that the belief in the universality of mathematics can limit one from considering and recognizing that different modes of thought or culture may lead to different forms of mathematics.” D’Ambrosio goes on to conclude: “Thus we are led to disclaim the assertion that there is only one underlying logic governing all thought.”

Many logics, socially negotiated logics, many different mathematics?? As our civilization advances in all scientific fields, our young people will be required to learn and master ever more complex mathematical ideas. Paul Dirac, one of the Nobel-prize-winning founders of quantum mechanics, put the matter as follows:

It seems to be one of the fundamental features of nature that fundamental physical laws are described in terms of mathematical theory of great beauty and power, needing quite a high standard of mathematics for one to understand it.

You may wonder: Why is nature constructed along these lines? One can only answer that our present knowledge seems to show that nature is so constructed. We simply have to accept it. One could perhaps describe the situation by saying that God is a mathematician of a very high order, and He used very advanced mathematics in constructing the universe. Our feeble attempts at mathematics enable us to understand a bit of the universe, and as we proceed to develop higher and higher mathematics we can hope to understand the universe better.

It would be a disservice and a tragedy for students to be misled into thinking that mathematics is simply a manipulation of symbols based on a socially negotiated and culturally determined logic, and not the foundation of modern and future science that it truly is.

To be sure, when they discuss these issues the authors are sometimes not really speaking about mathematics at all, but only elementary counting, measuring, and weighing as they developed in early cultures. In this vein “ethnomathematics” could be a legitimate aspect of cultural anthropology. It is when ethnomathematicians leave

the field of cultural anthropology and start to talk about the development of mathematics proper that they depart from careful scholarly analysis and leap into polemics and into what Mary Lefkowitz (in her carefully argued book *Not Out of Africa*) calls the “myth of Afrocentrism.” They attack the Eurocentric bias of academic mathematicians and contrast it with “progressive educators” who “do not try to fix or prop up the capitalistic system of education.” One contributor sees the “Erudition, abstraction and compartmentalization” (of modern mathematics) as “the products of capitalism’s need to further subdivide the world, its people, and their activities.”

What is this Eurocentric bias that is so abhorrent to ethnomathematicians? It is generally accepted (among academic scholars) that mathematics originated in ancient Greece, and that Europe, in the middle ages, borrowed from the Greeks, developing and improving upon their ideas to go on to become the creative center of science, mathematics, technology and culture. But ethnomathematicians think that much of Greek science and mathematics was in fact largely African in origin, making Africa and other pre-Greek civilizations the true birthplace of mathematics; that “slavery depopulated Africa and drastically interrupted African progress;” that suppression of this knowledge has been part of a general conspiracy or “cover up” among members of the Academy and that academicians are thus guilty of a systematic “misrepresentation of the history and cultures of societies outside the

European tradition.”

So the question is: What did the Greeks know and when did they know it? Who, if anyone, gave birth to mathematics? We do know that many fundamental ideas in science and mathematics were conceived in antiquity; however, our knowledge about the science of this time is by no means well founded. Many primary sources do not exist, and events were recorded only long after they had actually occurred. Even the scientists of antiquity had no sure knowledge of the first mathematicians. The traditional stories about the two towering figures of early mathematics, Thales of Miletus (about 624-548 B.C.) and Pythagoras of Samos (about 580-500 B.C.) are probably more or less legendary. It now appears certain that the level of mathematical knowledge commonly ascribed to the very early Greek philosophers was, just as the ethnomathematicians say, known to the Egyptians and the Babylonians many centuries before the rise of Greek civilization. One of the main sources of our information on Egyptian mathematics is the famous Papyrus Rhind (seventeenth century B.C.), now at the British Museum in London, a kind of mathematical handbook. From this and other papyri we have learned that the ancient Egyptians had a kind of decimal system and could calculate with fractions. They were also able to solve first- and second-order equations in one variable; they could compute areas of certain geometric figures, such as squares, rectangles, triangles, and trapezia; and they had a reasonably good approximative formula for the area of a circular disk using the value 3.16 for the number π . They knew how to compute certain volumes, like those of cubes, rectangular solids, solid cones, cylinders, and pyramids. The ancient Egyptians were acquainted with the Pythagorean theorem, at least in certain cases, and used it to construct right angles by Pythagorean triples such as 3, 4, 5 ($3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$) by means of knotty ropes.

Sumerian-Babylonian mathematics had reached the highest level among all the cultures preceding the ancient Greeks. It even reached to India and, as some researchers believe, to China. Our knowledge comes from numerous cuneiform scripts on baked clay tiles that have been excavated in Mesopotamia, the region between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. In the third millennium B.C., the Sumerians already had a number system using the base 60, and that system was developed further during the third dynasty of Ur (2400-2000 B.C.). Mesopotamian mathematics reached its zenith in the later Babylonian time (about 2000-1600 B.C.). From then on Babylonians had an excellent knowledge of arithmetic; they could take roots, they had exponential tables, and even the beginnings of logarithmic computation can be seen. The older Babylonian mathematics was basically of an algebraic nature. Linear equations in one, two, and three variables were mastered, in addition to quadratic and biquadratic equations, as well as certain cases of third- and higher-order equations. A great number of geometric problems could be solved, including the area of triangles, regular polygons,

and trapezoids; approximative formulas for the area and the perimeter of a circular disk; and the volume of cones and pyramids. The theorem of Pythagoras was also known and applied in practice, but was never formulated in a general way; Pythagorean number triples were instead collected in lists. But after 1600 B.C. the development of Babylonian mathematics stagnated. Almost no cuneiform texts on mathematics from the next thousand years have been passed on to us. Only in the second half of the first millennium B.C. do mathematical texts appear once again.

The Greeks played an important role in preserving and spreading the mathematical knowledge of the Egyptians and Babylonians. It is likely that the first major advance the Greeks made was to consider mathematical concepts (such as numbers and geometric figures) to be abstractions. It also seems quite certain that the Greek philosophers were the first to realize that a mathematical statement must be proved by logical deduction from certain basic facts or axioms. Before the Greeks, mathematical results had been verified by induction—that is, by sufficient experience. It was a tremendous advance, whose importance must not be underestimated, to realize that a mathematical proposition cannot be proved by a thousand or even a million cases for which it is true if, in principle, infinitely many cases may occur.

The Greeks also invented geometry as an abstract mathematical theory supported by rigorous deductive proofs. Its creation, despite attempts by ethnomathematicians to downplay its significance, was one of the major turning points of scientific thinking. It led to the creation of mathematical models for physical phenomena, models which lie at the very core of a great deal of modern science. The beautiful and profound idea that the universe could be described by mathematics (as Dirac so eloquently stated) was present among the early Greeks, and in particular among the Pythagoreans. The Pythagoreans used geometrical ideas about circles and spheres to create a mathematical model for the motion of the planets and the stars in the heavens. Pythagoras assumed the stars to be attached to a crystal sphere that revolved daily about an axis through the Earth. Similarly, the seven other ancient planets—the Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn—were each supposedly attached to a moving sphere of their own.

The Pythagoreans believed that all relations in nature could be expressed by integers and, accordingly, believed that the ratios of distances between celestial bodies would correspond to the ratios of lengths of harmonious chords. Then the heavenly spheres, as they revolved, produced harmonious sounds that only initiates could hear. This was the music of the spheres so often mentioned in literature. The Pythagorean concept of heavenly harmony was perhaps the first abstract model that attempted to explain complex phenomena in nature by means of a simple and coherent mathematical theory. Somewhat later Plato, in his *Timaeus*,

foreshadowing modern cosmology and the Big Bang, linked the creation of time with that of the heavens and the planets. The Pythagorean concept of the planets and their heavens, later developed by Eudoxus, Apollonius, Ptolemy and others into a theory of motion of all heavenly bodies, formed the foundation of astronomy until the sixteenth century.

To sum up the Greek achievement, then: The early Greeks were the first to see mathematics as an abstract science, to base the acquisition of mathematical knowledge on deductive proof rather than on inference, and to see mathematics as a powerful new language which through mathematical modeling could help us reach an ever deeper understanding of the universe around us. The early geometric mathematical models based on the spheres of Pythagoras and Eudoxus led ultimately to the Copernican revolution in the sixteenth century, to the *Philosophia Naturalis Principia Mathematica* of Isaac Newton (unarguably the foundation of modern science) in the seventeenth century, and finally to quantum mechanics and general relativity in the twentieth. This process continues today. Before Newton, Galileo Galilei put it this way:

Philosophy (nature) is written in that great book which is ever before our eyes—I mean the universe—but we can never understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols in which it is written. The book is written in mathematical language and the symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it; without which one wanders hopelessly through a dark labyrinth.

Even those ethnomathematicians who recognize the importance of the contributions of great scientists like Euclid, Ptolemy, and the Greek mathematician Diophantus still insist that they were likely Egyptian and therefore of dark skin. Such questions as skin color are to my mind unanswerable as well as meaningless. These men wrote in Greek and were part of Greek civilization. As Mary Lefkowitz says, discussing the claim that Socrates was black:

In assessing the nature of past achievement, it is much more important to know what people thought and did than what they looked like. If Socrates’ skin had been darker than that of his Athenian neighbors, if his ancestors’ origins were African or Phoenician or Indian, he would still be a great ancient Greek philosopher.

The birth of Greek science and mathematics remains, despite vigorous attempts to displace it, a singular and monumental event in history, an event that laid the foundation of modern science and mathematics.

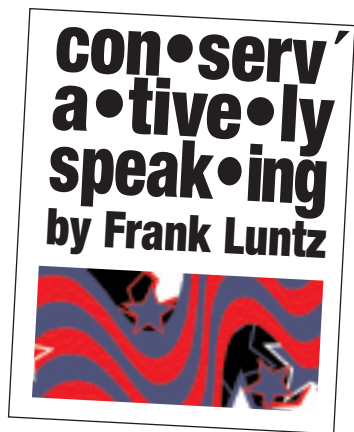
Anthony J. Tromba is a Professor of Mathematics at University of California at Santa Cruz.

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Court to Rule on New York Ebonics Vote

By Judith Schumann Weizner

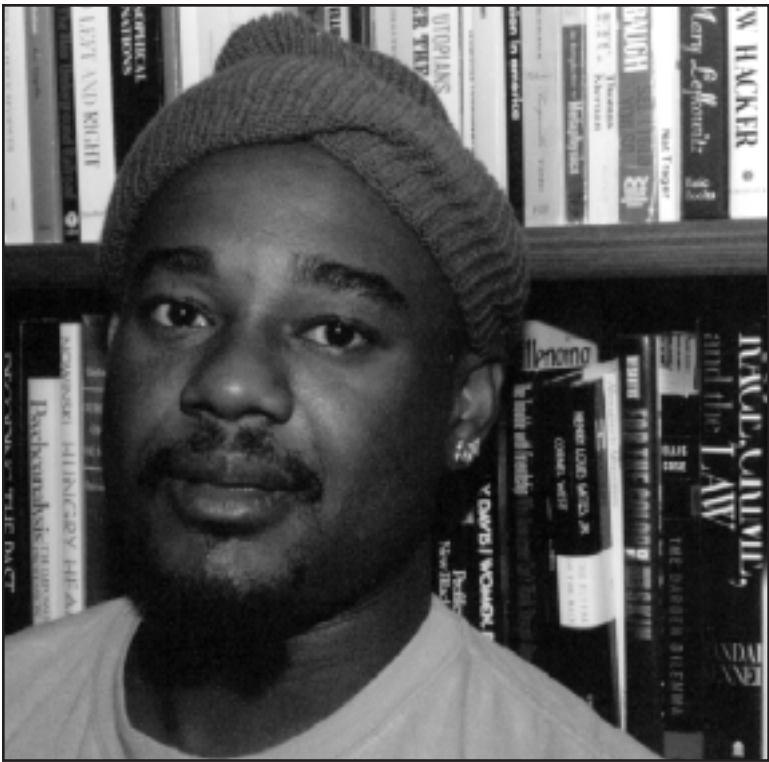
Just when the issue of Ebonics appeared to be disappearing as a social hot-button topic, it was announced today that a three-judge panel in New York's Second District Court will hear arguments in a case which will ultimately determine whether Ebonics will become an official language in New York State.

Ebonics, which caused a national furor last year when the Oakland School Board briefly decided to grant it equal status with "proper" English, has had an equally spectacular, if until now less newsworthy, impact on New York politics. Bestowing official status on Ebonics has been proposed in the legislature during each of the past three sessions, although until now the proposal has never before come to a vote.

Under the Federal Voting Responsibility Act of 1997, however, the legislature was forced to vote on the proposition in order to prevent the state from losing tens of millions of dollars in highway funding. It passed by one vote, less than the three-fifths majority necessary to keep the Justice Department from instituting charges of institutional racism against the legislature. This opened the way for a suit under Paragraph 19.R of the Voting Responsibility Act, which provides that in the event of a less-than-three-fifths vote on matters covered by the Act, a state legislature shall repeat its vote until the required majority is met. The New York legislature has refused to repeat the vote, and will be using the case to challenge the constitutionality of Paragraph 19.R. No matter which way the court rules, both sides have promised to appeal.

This case holds special meaning for Nfume Nkume, the young attorney who will represent the federal government. Formerly a city clerk in the Bronx, now an attorney specializing in civil rights cases for the Justice Department, Nkume quietly began to lobby for the legitimization of Ebonics, then called Black English, nine years ago after being reprimanded by the Bronx Chief Clerk for having conducted a wedding ceremony in Ebonics for an Ugandan couple. The couple complained that although they had rehearsed in standard English, Nkume insisted on doing the ceremony in Ebonics because it was closer to their African linguistic roots. Then, at the actual ceremony, they had been unable to ascertain when they should pronounce their vows, with the result that Mr. Nkume prompted them in Ebonics, causing them to lose face in front of their friends. They also charged that, having been unable to understand the proceedings their

friends and family refused to recognize their union. Mr. Nkume was ordered to repeat the ceremony for the couple in English, but in doing so, he had to postpone the wedding of two lesbians who were told they must return the following day. That evening, after one of them was crushed almost to death by a falling crane, she sued the city and Mr. Nkume, claiming that if the clerk had not performed the first of the Ugandans' ceremonies in an unofficial language, her own would have taken place as scheduled and she would have been on her partner's medical insurance at the time of her accident. Mr. Nkume was held responsible for the accident and ordered to pay her medical bills as well as a judgment for pain



NFUME NKUME

and suffering. His attorney got the verdict overturned on appeal when he argued that the state, by not having recognized Ebonics as an official language, had caused the scheduling change that had resulted in the lesbian's being thrown into the path of danger. Formerly president of the Third World Plaza Tenants' Association, Mr. Nkume founded the Bronx Education Committee for the Acceptance of African Cultural and Historical Teachings (BECAACHT) after noticing that the ATM machine at his bank, the Second Savings Bank of New York, gave prompts only in English and Spanish. He wrote to the bank's president, Thomas Dunkle, asking that the machines be reprogrammed to include Ebonics. In answer he received a note of apology suggesting that he send a

taped request or ask someone to help him with his correspondence, as Mr. Dunkle's secretary had found the letter unintelligible. Frustrated by the institution's unwillingness to accommodate him, Mr. Nkume summoned several hundred members of BECAACHT who descended on Second Savings' Park Avenue headquarters, chanting rhythmically in Ebonic rhyme, "Muh' Fuh' Dis Bank Suck." Acting quickly to avoid a public relations fiasco, Mr. Dunkle ordered employees to volunteer to serve the demonstrators a hot lunch in the employee cafeteria each noon. But after a week, with polls showing public opinion running 8-1 against the bank, Mr. Dunkle agreed to meet with Mr. Nkume.

As soon as Mr. Nkume had explained that the lack of Ebonics on the ATM machines had made it difficult for him to complete his transactions within the allotted time, Mr. Dunkle agreed to have the ATMs reformatted and told Mr. Nkume that the next time he needed to see him about bank policy the door to his office would be open.

With the commands reformatted, Mr. Nkume was able to understand perfectly when, as he attempted late one night to withdraw the hundred dollars he needed to hold him until morning, the words "No mo', sucka," appeared on the screen. Recalling Mr. Dunkle's promise, Mr. Nkume made the post-midnight trek to Second Savings headquarters to get more money, but found the building closed and the security guard unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of the standing invitation to visit Mr. Dunkle's office. As a consequence of this frustration, Mr. Nkume decided to "empower" himself by applying to the Bronx School of Law.

Talking about his life today, Nkume recalls the difficulty he faced in convincing the admissions committee of his ability to communicate in the courtroom. "It be no good if you be talkin' lak somebody el'. I be talkin' lak myse'f. You be talkin' lak youse'f. Who I be you kno'? A man got hi' pri'." At last, after leading a demonstration in which nearly 90 percent of the school's student body supported him, Mr. Nkume won admission, making Law Review in his second year and graduating first in his class. Bronx Law administrators are quick to praise him for leaving an indelible mark on the school's five student publications. Mr. Nkume explains that once Ebonics gains official recognition, everyone will be the better for it, and such incidents as the recent suspension of a white Brooklyn teacher who used the expression "the powers that be" in the classroom, will become a thing of the past.



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