June 29, 2015

Today is filled by two long-form pieces on H. Clinton by two of our favorites. **Andrew Ferguson** is first.

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*The paradox is a problem only for her admirers, and as it happens I read only books about the Clintons that are written by their admirers, on the general principle that you can learn more about someone from his friends than from his enemies. Besides, with a few notable exceptions—most recently, Peter Schweizer's Clinton Cash and Daniel Halper's Clinton, Inc.—books written by skeptics and detractors are almost psychotically hostile to Mrs. Clinton. I don't need any encouragement.*

*The Hillary Paradox consists of two perceptions that are irreconcilable. The first is that Hillary Clinton is a person of uncommon decency, compassionate and deeply committed to justice. The second is that many of her actions over many years are the work of a person who couldn't possibly be uncommonly decent. How could someone with a wonderful reputation so often behave disreputably? ...*

*... Bernstein approvingly quotes a Clinton aide: "She's happiest when she's fighting." Once, as another Bill Clinton womanizing story broke in the press during the 1992 campaign, Hillary turned mildly to the writer Gail Sheehy and told her she should follow up a rumor Hillary had heard about George H.W. Bush's "extramarital life." She even gave Sheehy a name to pursue. Sheehy declined the offer—she had interviewed the woman several years before. (Hillary soon found a willing buyer in a courtier journalist named Joe Conason, who wrote up the probably false story of Bush's "affair" for the cover of Spy magazine a few months before the fall election.)*

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*uncovering could threaten the idea that the couple has no motives beyond "uplifting the American people," in Bill's phrase.*

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*...The Hillary Paradox—that a woman of such excellent character should be capable of such tawdriness and worse—the paradox vanishes if you drop the first part of the proposition. Her reputation for good character, after all, rests largely on simple assertion, on what she says as a public figure, on her politics, rather than on what she's done. Leave aside the politics, and the shabby behavior is easily explainable: She does what she does because she is who she is.*

*But renouncing their admiration is precisely what supporters of Hillary Clinton can't bring themselves to do. Otherwise her enemies might win.*

*It is odd the things they will swallow, and odd the things they choke on. ...*

**Matthew Continetti** is next.

*... Her husband campaigned in the '90s as a tough-on-crime neoliberal who would lock up criminals, even put them to death, who challenged the racism of Sister Souljah, promised to "mend" affirmative action, worked hard to recover the Democratic position in white working class precincts. Hillary was his active partner. Nor did she denounce her husband's policies when she ran for Senate in 2000 and 2006 and for president in 2008, when the chances of her nomination rested on her ability to win "beer track" white and Hispanic Democrats.*

*It is only today, when the Democratic Party of Barack Obama has veered left, written off the white working class, and been seized by a practically religious enthusiasm for cultural reformation and purgation, that Clinton has called for an "end to the era of mass incarceration," said America has "to face hard truths about race and justice," and launched a campaign, in the words of the New York Times, "focused more on mobilizing supporters in the Great Lakes states and in parts of the West and South than on persuading undecided voters."*

*What we have, on issue after issue, is a presidential frontrunner uninterested in leadership, who holds an ambivalent attitude toward notions of political courage and intellectual independence, who is devoted exclusively and mechanically to the capture of high office. ...*

*... Clinton isn't the first politician who's inconsistent—far from it. What she and her husband have pioneered is a mode of inconsistency, an entire lifestyle of ideological flexibility the goal of which isn't public-minded but wholly self-interested. "The only way a man can remain consistent amid changing circumstances is to change with them while preserving the same dominating purpose," Churchill wrote in "Consistency in Politics" (1932). But the dominating purpose Churchill had in mind was a public one: the common good. And the pursuit of the common good often requires the statesman to disagree with public opinion—to challenge his base, or indeed the majority.*

*Earlier this year Bill Clinton identified the dominant purpose behind his family's inconsistency: "I gotta pay our bills." ...*

*...The maintenance of what Mickey Kaus calls the "Clinton mode of production" requires at least one member of the family to hold office, so that powerful and wealthy people might obtain a frisson of access and influence through financial gift-giving. What the Clintons understand is that the easiest way to hold office, and thereby keep up the mansions and private jets and villas and beach vacations, is to flatter and cater to the ever-changing morality and self-conception of the liberal ruling caste, to understand what troubles their guilty consciences, to put yourself forward as the representative of their fluctuating and malleable concerns.*

*Such an approach requires a canny operator able to obscure changes in policy behind a smooth veneer of likability and guile—and if we have learned anything so far in this campaign it is that Hillary Clinton is not such an operator. She is clumsy, stilted, tentative, suspicious, rehearsed, monotonous.*

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**The Weekly Standard**
**The Hillary Paradox**
***Pity the woman's admirers***
by Andrew Ferguson

When news broke this spring about Bill and Hillary Clinton's appetite for other people's money and their indifference to other people's rules, I was rereading my way through a shelf of old Hillary biographies. My memory thus was doubly stimulated. In the fresh revelations, as in the books, the traits of the Clintons were spread out for a new generation to marvel at: the furtiveness, the shifting accounts of hazy events, the parsing of language, the bald and

unnecessary denial of often trivial facts (did she have two phones or one?). Her admirers, old and young, veteran and novice alike, were faced with the Hillary Paradox.

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The Hillary Paradox consists of two perceptions that are irreconcilable. The first is that Hillary Clinton is a person of uncommon decency, compassionate and deeply committed to justice. The second is that many of her actions over many years are the work of a person who couldn't possibly be uncommonly decent. How could someone with a wonderful reputation so often behave disreputably?

Of all the biographers whose books are on my shelf, none wrestles with the paradox more painfully than Carl Bernstein, the Watergate reporter and author of *A Woman in Charge*. Bernstein likes Mrs. Clinton a lot, and her husband too. He considers them emblems of their generation, which Bernstein also lavishly admires. (It might be boomer envy: He was born two years too early to be a baby boomer himself.) How much does he like the Clintons? Enough to write this, when Hillary and Bill go sightseeing in Europe:

> They were still idealistic young thinkers and doers who wanted to influence their own time for the better. But there was something different (though not necessarily unique) about them: . . . a powerful connection to the threads of the history of the century and their country, a deep feel for what had gone before, intimate knowledge of the conflicting currents that had defined the generation of their parents and the places of their own past. Their uniqueness, however, was in the intertwining of their dreams . . .

As if you couldn't tell, Bernstein has a weakness for the Big Picture. He takes as his biography's theme a grandiose line from *Living History*, Mrs. Clinton's 2003 autobiography: "While Bill talked about social change, I embodied it." And it is important to understand how firmly Hillary's fans believe this. It's what they mean when they call her "iconic." And as Bernstein traces her life story you begin to see the point: She really is large, she really does contain multitudes.

Politically she rang all the changes of her generation. She was a Goldwater girl at 17, following her father's Republicanism. At Wellesley in the mid-1960s she evolved from a can-do leader of student government her freshman year—her signal accomplishment was a new system for returning books to the campus library—into a counterculture tribune by graduation day, when she gave a commencement address attacking "our acquisitive and competitive corporate life" and received a seven-minute standing ovation. She moved further left in law school, editing a radical law review at Yale and working summers at a Bay Area law firm whose clients included the Black Panthers. A few years later she followed her husband to Arkansas and became a southern moderate, a proponent of back-to-basics education, and a partner in a law firm whose clients included Walmart, Tyson's Foods, and the largest brokerage firm west of Wall Street.

After a lightning strike as a health care reformer in her husband's first two years as president, she settled back into the role of a traditional first lady, content with uncontroversial appearances on the public stage and bloody, Nancy Reagan-like maneuvering behind the scenes. Since the turn of the century, as senator and secretary of state, she has managed to be a warhawk, a

populist, a champion of finance capitalism, a regretful dove, and most recently, for as long as it lasts, a “fighter” for redistributionist economics.

Bernstein reminds us that in 1969 *Life* magazine, thrilled by her Wellesley speech, called her “an emblem of her generation and its values”—especially as the values changed. Zelig-like, she spans the 20th century into the 21st. The postwar Chicago suburb of her childhood was lily white and buttoned down in the manner of Donna Reed. When Clinton entered college, the social atmosphere was essentially unchanged from the 19th century: Weeknight curfew was 10 o’clock. Jeans on women, even for trips to town, were forbidden. Men couldn’t visit the women’s dorms except for three hours on Sunday afternoon. (And they weren’t allowed upstairs.) By her senior year all parietal rules were gone, never to return.

When she fell in love and was married she declined to change her name, as a feminist gesture. When her husband wooed Arkansas voters, she agreed to change it to his. As a corporate attorney doing business in her husband’s state, she adopted the hybrid “Rodham Clinton” to convey her double status: career woman and governor’s wife. Striking out on her own she settled at last on simply Hillary, a first-name-only celebrity like Oprah. *Life* magazine called it right at the start: She is not just a baby boomer. She is the baby boom, and admiring Hillary Clinton is a way of admiring an entire generation.

Or so it’s easy to believe, if you think, as Bernstein does, that the boom was culturally a movement of the left. His boom is the boom of the mainstream press, the boom of Hillary and Bill and not the boom of the kids who supported the Vietnam war and still vote Republican. He writes like the first type of boomer, an enthusiast, always ready to complicate the simple when describing an object of his affections. Hillary is not merely clever and quick. She has a “finely tuned sense of her own evolution, the ability to learn from her mistakes, to replay in her mind the macro and micro factors that moved a project from conception to realization or collapse and then rearrange them to get a more satisfactory result.”

He uses the same gift for grandiosity to tiptoe around the paradox. Like Clinton herself, like all her friendly biographers, he is careful to keep the enemy in view: “the armies of right-wing and religious-inspired Clinton haters,” who would undo all the advances the boomers had made. Bernstein approvingly quotes a Clinton aide: “She’s happiest when she’s fighting.” Once, as another Bill Clinton womanizing story broke in the press during the 1992 campaign, Hillary turned mildly to the writer Gail Sheehy and told her she should follow up a rumor Hillary had heard about George H.W. Bush’s “extramarital life.” She even gave Sheehy a name to pursue. Sheehy declined the offer—she had interviewed the woman several years before. (Hillary soon found a willing buyer in a courtier journalist named Joe Conason, who wrote up the probably false story of Bush’s “affair” for the cover of *Spy* magazine a few months before the fall election.)

Sheehy perceived in the episode another trait of Hillary the fighter. No matter what fight you were in, the other side started it. All offense is payback. She explained to Sheehy, with a sincere but dubious grasp of political history: “In 1980, Republicans started negative advertising. In 1992, [they] have paid political assassination. What Bill doesn’t understand is, you *gotta* do the same thing.” The crucial word here is *Republican*. Belligerence is not a quality normally admired by the kind of people who admire Hillary. But they’ll make the exception, considering the enemy and the stakes.

Even so, like most of her friendly biographers, Bernstein in the end gives space to the many scandals, skimping here and there on some of the shabbier details. More in sorrow than in puzzlement, he phrases the Hillary Paradox delicately and sometimes confusingly. In her public life, he writes, “she has misrepresented not just facts but often her essential self.” This might be

a Freudian slip. It suggests that those unseemly facts Clinton feels compelled to lie about are somehow in keeping with the person she truly is. Bernstein, having bet so heavily on Bill and Hillary, doesn't want to go so far. "Almost always," he writes on his last page, trying again, "Hillary has stood for good things. Yet there is often a disconnect between her conviction and words, and her actions."

About those actions: For an admirer, the hardest truth about Hillary's scandals is that they're made from the same base elements that inspire the scandals of ordinary mortals: power, money, and sex.

The typical Clinton scandal follows a pattern, as the biographies show. Husband or wife commits a shabby indiscretion. Bill will snap the garters of an employee, for instance, or Hillary will befriend unsavory characters in a scheme to make easy money. Except for Bill's admitted perjury before a federal judge in the Lewinsky scandal, the Clintons are rarely shown to have violated a law. So, whatever the indiscretion, it is probably legal. But it is mean. And its uncovering could threaten the idea that the couple has no motives beyond "uplifting the American people," in Bill's phrase.

The indiscretion lies there, out of sight, for weeks or months or years. Then someone finds out about it. Panic ensues. Staff is enlisted to ensure that outsiders believe the indiscretion either didn't occur or was the work of functionaries. The indiscretion inflates into a scandal when this effort fails. The functionaries, and usually the Clintons themselves, resort to misdirection, bogus legalism, and shifting narratives so complicated that most observers grow bored, then exhausted, then distracted by something else.

The scandal called "Travelgate" was the first controversy to emerge from the White House bearing this Clinton trademark. Travelgate is the idiotic name the press gave to the abrupt firing of employees in the White House travel office, allegedly on grounds of sloppy bookkeeping. The office handled travel arrangements for staff and press on the president's out-of-town trips. After the firings its work was meant to be handed over to a 25-year-old friend of the Clintons from Arkansas and a wealthy Clinton benefactor who owned a fledgling aviation company. It was a plum: The travel account could generate as much as $40,000 a day in business. The White House credential alone would be an invaluable boost to the benefactor's company.

The travel office had been run, loosely, by a well-meaning but hapless bureaucrat named Billy Dale, a 30-year White House employee. The finances were indeed a mess—travel expenses were sometimes paid from a cigar box. Many White House reporters liked Dale, however, and when they inquired about the reasons for his firing, the trademark panic ensued. Soon Dale and his colleagues were being slandered by anonymous officials in newspaper stories. The relationship between the Clintons and the new travel office team was first denied, then discounted, then misstated, and finally admitted. All motives for the firings were purely disinterested, according to White House accounts—merely a blow for good-government efficiency. And whatever else the public might learn about the firing of Dale and his colleagues, one central fact stood above all others: Hillary Clinton was not responsible. She said so herself.

But of course she was. Several years later the White House clarified the matter. In response to an old subpoena, it released contemporaneous notes written by a staffer shortly after an encounter with the first lady. She had told him, the staffer wrote, there would be "hell to pay" if Dale and his staff weren't immediately dismissed and her friends installed to replace them. Dale was fired within the week.

A cynic might look at the Travelgate story and think: Well, hell—what's the point of having power if you can't kick a little business to an old friend? The triviality of Hillary's bit of cold-blooded cronyism would be amusing, except for the feverish efforts to deny it—and deny even the possibility that she could be susceptible to so crude an impulse. And the consequences weren't trivial for Dale. His life was turned upside down. Federal prosecutors brought charges against him for his slapdash handling of funds, which they tried to paint as cover for embezzlement. After two years in legal limbo and several hundred thousand dollars in legal fees, Dale was released by a trial jury after less than two hours of deliberation—a free man but a Clinton casualty, broke and unemployed.

Even as Travelgate unfolded, the collection of indiscretions known as Whitewater continued to titillate reporters and keep lawyers busy, in and out of the White House. Whitewater involved not power but money: a failed get-rich-quick real estate deal managed partly by the Arkansas first lady, and the deal's eventual entanglement with a local savings-and-loan driven to bankruptcy by her shady business partner, an Arkansan rogue named Jim McDougal. He was, writes the biographer William Chafe, "a combination of hustler, reformed alcoholic, and manic depressive." And an old friend of Bill's.

The first article about the failure of this unusual enterprise, by the reporter Jeff Gerth, appeared in the *New York Times* during the 1992 campaign. Then and later, Clinton's supporters in the press relied heavily on ad hominem arguments to discredit Gerth's reporting. Gerth, they said, was either the tool of an anti-Clinton conspiracy at the *New York Times*—let me repeat that in case you didn't catch it the first time—either the tool of an anti-Clinton conspiracy at the *Times* or a right-wing toady. For what it's worth, Gerth got his start as a researcher for the George McGovern campaign in 1972 and now works for ProPublica, the left-leaning "public journalism" outlet.

In 2007, after leaving the *Times*, Gerth published a Clinton biography with his former *Times*mate Don Van Natta, *Her Way*. Their political sympathy for the Clintons is evident throughout the book. Yet nearly 15 years after his first report, Gerth still couldn't quite believe how the Whitewater story unspooled. As the pattern dictates, Hillary Clinton's initial transgressions were surely unflattering and maybe unethical, too—but petty.

She had eagerly joined in the real estate deal in hopes of making a quick killing, and she must have known that McDougal, given his regulatory dealings with the state, inevitably would place her in conflicts of interest—and he did. As a partner in Little Rock's largest law firm, the Rose Law Firm, she shouldn't have worked on matters relating to McDougal's other business—and she did. Later, she shouldn't have denied doing the legal work—and she did. When her old billing records appeared mysteriously in an upstairs library in the White House, nearly two years after they'd been subpoenaed, they showed that she had indeed billed McDougal's businesses for a significant amount of lawyering.

But Gerth and Van Natta discover the final, exquisitely Clintonian touch: Hillary probably didn't do the work she was billing for! In other words, she didn't do the work she wasn't supposed to do and got paid for despite having denied doing it. It's Borges in the Ozarks. (Overbilling was not unheard of at Rose. Her close friend at the firm, Webster Hubbell, went to jail for bilking clients.)

Gerth and Van Natta conclude on a judicious note. "Her likely indiscretions were altogether modest," they write, "but the scandal that would result from [her] attempts to cover up past sins would be enormous."

And all of her past sins in Whitewater involved money—in particular, her heedless desire for it. On the campaign trail, when she's describing this trait in other people, Clinton calls it "greed." Her own version of greed is a constant in her adult life. James B. Stewart, a former editor for the *Wall Street Journal* and a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, undertook a kind of forensic analysis of Hillary's relationship to money in *Blood Sport*. Sharing the standard-issue liberalism of economics reporters, Stewart takes the Hillary Paradox very hard. He is clearly admiring of "what she represents," especially in her young, radical phase, when her anticapitalism was near the surface. As a biographer he grows increasingly puzzled as she enters her corporate-lawyer phase, with her various schemes to make as much money as possible as quickly as possible.

"Hillary's ideological reservations about capitalism," Stewart wrote, "were co-existing with an increasingly pragmatic need to make money."

Darn that old pragmatism anyway! It has kidnapped more than a few budding anticapitalists. Hillary's "pragmatic need," Stewart shows, had to do with that head-in-the-clouds idealist husband of hers. Bill Clinton's otherworldly detachment from material things is a theme in all pro-Hillary literature. Numerous admirers are called in to attest to it. "He just doesn't care about money," runs a typical comment, from Sheehy's Hillary biography, *Hillary's Choice*. Bernstein quotes Bill Clinton's former aide Betsey Wright: "Bill Clinton could live under a bridge as long as it was OK with Chelsea. . . . He just doesn't care."

This is taken by Bill's fans as evidence of virtue—his love for the higher things crowding out any concern with the lower. Such an image rests oddly on a man who favors $2,000 suits and French cuffs and handmade ties and the bespoke shirts that are seldom found hanging in the closet of your everyday antimaterialist. It's possible Bill Clinton's indifference to money is more complicated than his friends know or admit. Other biographers have pointed to his habit, as a candidate and officeholder, of not carrying money, a practice followed by many public men. From his first campaign in 1974 through his presidency and up to the present, daily expenses have usually been handled by an aide, whether a state trooper in Arkansas or a Secret Service agent or a foundation functionary, who would in turn be reimbursed by another entity, a campaign treasury or a government account or, nowadays, a tax-exempt foundation. Bill Clinton would likely lose his famous indifference to money if the money were suddenly gone. There's always been plenty of money. It's just that money is something other people take care of.

For four decades one of those other people has been his wife. Early on she took responsibility for the couple's daily budgeting as well as their long-range financial condition. When her husband was elected attorney general of Arkansas, Stewart tells us, Hillary signed up with Little Rock's most successful investment adviser. With their savings she opened two investment accounts. One was a joint account with her husband, the other an account in her own name. "By now, it must also have been obvious that Hillary couldn't count much on financial contributions from her husband," Stewart writes.

Her husband's salary and her partnership at Rose placed them near the top of Arkansas's income distribution (not a dizzying height). But by the late 1970s, she grew impatient and wanted more. "It was clear she wanted to make money," Stewart writes, "and earn a return greater than what was available from simple savings accounts or Treasury bonds." At the time, 10-year Treasury bonds were yielding roughly 9 percent, considered a handsome return by everyday investors. (Today the rate is a little over 2 percent.)

And so she was led into one of her most famous indiscretions. One day in 1978, when Bill was running for governor, Hillary received a call from Jim Blair, a social friend and general counsel

for Tyson Foods, soon to be the state's largest employer. Blair offered to open an investment account for Hillary with a commodities broker specializing in cattle futures. Calculations differ, but Stewart estimates that three out of four investors in the commodities markets lose money, and lots of it, even if initial investments are small. Hillary's was $1,000.

Blair set up similar accounts for lots of friends, business associates, law partners, and even his children. On Hil-lary's behalf he dealt directly with the broker, a former Tyson employee named Red Bone. (We're in Arkansas.) With close contacts throughout the cattle industry, Bone had nearly infallible information on the movement of prices, and he shared it with Blair, who handled his many accounts accordingly. The great threat to any futures investor is the margin call, when the trader suddenly requires the client to cover money borrowed to make a losing trade.

Hillary never saw a margin call. Stewart calculates that at one point she was $117,000 in the hole and would have been wiped out in any brokerage firm other than Bone's. Instead, after less than a year—by then she and her husband were in the governor's mansion—she asked Blair to close her account. Her $1,000 investment had grown to $99,000.

Running for president 12 years later, Bill Clinton released a dozen years' worth of tax returns. He stopped just short of the year in which he and his wife had reported her spectacular gains. The couple and the campaign refused to explain why the release of tax returns didn't go back further. Nosing around, Jeff Gerth followed the trail to Red Bone, Jim Blair, and the windfall they had bestowed on Hillary. To explain the $98,000 profit, Clinton spokesmen said Hillary had handled the trades according to information she gleaned from her daily reading of the *Wall Street Journal*. Hillary herself spoke of how much she had learned as a little girl reading the financial pages of the *Chicago Tribune* with her father. And the spokesmen pointed out that no reporter or investigator had found a—here's the familiar phrase—quid pro quo among Tyson Foods, Jim Blair, the first lady, and the governor.

Stewart ends his account of these and similar affairs sounding dismayed. "Their handling of these matters," Stewart writes, "both during the campaign and in the White House, hardly shows the president and first lady in a flattering light." And the unflattering light is to be avoided whatever the cost.

The Clintons can always count on their admirers, even when the scandals move from power and money to sex. Clintonites long ago stopped denying Bill Clinton's goatishness. "It never happened" evolved into "It doesn't matter." But as always, the transgression is prelude.

As early as the 1980s, Hillary led campaigns to silence the women who claimed to have had, and often did have, sex with her husband. "There could be no question," writes Bernstein, "that Hillary was Bill's fiercest defender in preventing his other women from causing trouble."

The methods employed by her, and by others at her direction, look remarkably dated, especially in light of society's newfound sensitivity to the victims of sexual assault and harassment.

In the 1980s, long before Bill Clinton ran for president, a political opponent privately threatened to publish a list of the governor's supposed lovers. Hillary deputized her law partners Webb Hubbell and Vincent Foster to bring the women one by one into the Rose offices. The lawyers offered to represent each of them as legal counsel in case the list was made public. Hillary sat in on at least one of these sessions, according to Sheehy. You can easily imagine the impression Hubbell and Foster, two of the state's most powerful attorneys, made on the women, brought in from every corner of the state. The women never caused trouble.

A better-known example of Hillary's efforts involved Betsey Wright, Bill's gubernatorial chief of staff. Wright has earned her place in history for coining the deathless term "bimbo eruptions." (Hillary hasn't used the word "bimbo," so far as her biographers know. She referred instead to "Bill's rodeo queens.") In 1987, as Clinton prepared to run for president, Wright assembled a master list of women rumored to have slept with the future candidate. It was a long list, and it came in handy. Clinton was facing the New Hampshire primary when one former lover, Gennifer Flowers, sold her story to the *Star* tabloid.

"People have been making these attacks on my husband since he first ran for office," Hillary told reporters, which was true. (The Clintons use the word "attacks" where others use the word "accusations." Attacks are accusations about them.) Hillary insisted the campaign hire a private investigator to stop any further eruptions, Sheehy writes in *Hil-lary's Choice*. Hillary said she knew just the man.

Jack Palladino had worked for the Bay Area law firm where Hillary had briefly worked as a law student. Palladino's assignment was to contact the women on Wright's list. To keep him at least one remove from the presidential campaign, Hillary and Wright arranged to have his retainer of $100,000 paid to a law firm in Denver, which Palladino then billed for "legal services." (This relationship was first discovered by Michael Isikoff of the *Washington Post*.)

"I am somebody you call in when the house is on fire, not when there's smoke in the kitchen," Palladino told Sheehy. "You ask me to deal with that fire, to save you, to do whatever has to be done."

And what had to be done? Gerth and Van Natta found a private memo written by Palladino to the campaign in 1992. In it he explained his goal in dealing with Gennifer Flowers: "to impeach her character and veracity until she is destroyed beyond all recognition." That worked too. Flowers became a national joke. It was later reported that a former roommate who had confirmed Flowers's account to reporters received a visit from Palladino. "Do you think Gennifer is the sort of person who would commit suicide?" he asked her.

Palladino reported his progress to Betsey Wright, who passed the word to Hillary. And the other women on Wright's list kept quiet.

Some of the methods have been gentler, if no subtler. In 1994, an Arkansas state employee named Paula Corbin Jones insisted on pursuing her lawsuit against President Clinton, who she said had exposed himself to her in a hotel room when he was governor. Soon, nude photos of Jones taken by an estranged boyfriend mysteriously fell into the hands of the editors of *Penthouse* magazine, which rushed them into print. As anyone who saw the pictures knows, the intent was embarrassment, not prurience.

Another woman, Kathleen Willey, accused the president of making a similar "pass," this time in the Oval Office. "With Hillary's go-ahead," Gerth and Van Natta write, "the White House then released nine fawning letters that Willey had sent to Bill after the alleged incident." The letters disproved Willey's story, reporters concluded.

Mrs. Clinton's theory here, successful as it was, seems particularly old fashioned: If the survivor of a sexual assault speaks kind or forgiving words about her assailant, then either (1) the assault didn't occur or (2) the victim agreed to it. The phrase "had it coming" may be too old-fashioned even for Hillary's team.

We've known about all this for a long time—about Hillary Clinton's blistering campaign to discredit the women who wanted to tell the truth about her husband. But it is seldom mentioned, and when it is, it is old news. Apparently, old news, once we know it, tells us nothing worth knowing.

The Hillary Paradox—that a woman of such excellent character should be capable of such tawdriness and worse—the paradox vanishes if you drop the first part of the proposition. Her reputation for good character, after all, rests largely on simple assertion, on what she says as a public figure, on her politics, rather than on what she's done. Leave aside the politics, and the shabby behavior is easily explainable: She does what she does because she is who she is.

But renouncing their admiration is precisely what supporters of Hillary Clinton can't bring themselves to do. Otherwise her enemies might win.

It is odd the things they will swallow, and odd the things they choke on. During her last presidential campaign a group of left-wing women writers put together a book called *Thirty Ways of Looking at Hillary*. Not all the essays were admiring, but I violated my rule and read them anyway. The writers objected to Clinton's caution, her ideological compromises, her weird devotion to her husband—and, strangely enough, to the "listening tour" with which she opened her first Senate campaign in 1999.

Remember? The candidate was photographed visiting coffee shops, classrooms, and shop floors in every corner of New York state, nodding as her future constituents prattled on. The listening tour was indeed a silly gimmick, executed with effortless smarm—politics as usual.

But to Elizabeth Kolbert, a political writer for the *New Yorker*, it seemed to expose something especially worrisome.

"That Clinton would engage in such a charade doesn't make one admire her," Kolbert wrote. "Women should wish for a more principled candidate. They should wish for one who's more honest. . . .

"Yet one simply *has* to admire her."

Yes. One simply has to.

**Free Beacon**

## Karma Chameleon in Chief

***Hillary Clinton and the politics of expediency***

by Matthew Continetti

*I'm a man without conviction*

*I'm a man who doesn't know*

*How to sell a contradiction*

*You come and go, you come and go*

—Culture Club

Hillary Clinton is a woman without conviction, a woman who doesn't know. She was first lady of a southern state, she sat on the board of directors of Wal-Mart from 1986 to 1992—but is there any record of her voicing opposition to Wal-Mart's labor practices, of her opposing the sale of the Confederate battle flag? Until recently, has there been any moment in the decades following her appointment to that board, in the many years in which she has been egregiously prominent in public life, when she led on, was prominently identified with, the issue of the flag or racial matters in general?

They say Obama's audacious. What's truly remarkable, though, is his potential successor's blatant contempt for the politics of principle and conviction—her unique ability to adopt, quickly and seamlessly, the most expedient position at any moment, to flaunt her temporary stance with the righteousness and self-regard of a longtime committed activist.

Her husband campaigned in the '90s as a tough-on-crime neoliberal who would lock up criminals, even put them to death, who challenged the racism of Sister Souljah, promised to "mend" affirmative action, worked hard to recover the Democratic position in white working class precincts. Hillary was his active partner. Nor did she denounce her husband's policies when she ran for Senate in 2000 and 2006 and for president in 2008, when the chances of her nomination rested on her ability to win "beer track" white and Hispanic Democrats.

It is only today, when the Democratic Party of Barack Obama has veered left, written off the white working class, and been seized by a practically religious enthusiasm for cultural reformation and purgation, that Clinton has called for an "end to the era of mass incarceration," said America has "to face hard truths about race and justice," and launched a campaign, in the words of the *New York Times*, "focused more on mobilizing supporters in the Great Lakes states and in parts of the West and South than on persuading undecided voters."

What we have, on issue after issue, is a presidential frontrunner uninterested in leadership, who holds an ambivalent attitude toward notions of political courage and intellectual independence, who is devoted exclusively and mechanically to the capture of high office. She has latched on to the president's ad hoc and failing Iraq policies because her party's base supports them; gone from opposing same-sex marriage as recently as a few years ago to marching at the vanguard of America's latest Cultural Revolution and saying that "deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed"; pledged to "go further" than Barack Obama's constitutionally dubious executive amnesty despite being silent when her husband signed tough immigration bills in the '90s, and despite having voted for an amendment that helped kill a pro-immigration bill in 2007; waffled on a trade agreement that she backed while secretary of state; somehow avoided committing to an intelligible and consistent position on the Keystone Pipeline despite taking money from the anti-Keystone billionaire Tom Steyer. Is there any doubt that this supposed pro-Israel Democrat will back whatever nuclear agreement President Obama is able to reach with Iran, no matter how much he capitulates to the ayatollah's demands?

Hillary Clinton's approach to politics is cynical, uninspiring, robotic. She's a chef who follows the recipe without exception, who's too afraid of failure to challenge the authority of either her superiors or her customers. She'll be a president suitable for the age of intelligent machines. Like a Terminator she is fixated on her mission—though the Terminator has more personality, greater charm. There's an assumption behind all her latest moves, a programming code that determines the automaton's behavior: that the country's demographics and culture have changed to such an extent that a winning campaign needn't do more than identify and mobilize core supporters by assuming the various poses most likely to drive them to the polls. There's the chance the code could be garbage.


Clinton isn't the first politician who's inconsistent—far from it. What she and her husband have pioneered is a mode of inconsistency, an entire lifestyle of ideological flexibility the goal of which isn't public-minded but wholly self-interested. "The only way a man can remain consistent amid changing circumstances is to change with them while preserving the same dominating purpose," Churchill wrote in "Consistency in Politics" (1932). But the dominating purpose Churchill had in mind was a public one: the common good. And the pursuit of the common good often requires the statesman to disagree with public opinion—to challenge his base, or indeed the majority.

Earlier this year Bill Clinton identified the dominant purpose behind his family's inconsistency: "I gotta pay our bills." Blessed with loquacity, smarts, and personal charisma, the man from Hope, Ark., used political office as a means to acquire fame and fortune. Unable to go into business, or perhaps uninterested, convinced that his good and the public good are synonymous, he derived

riches from his political talent: lucrative friendships, generous supporters, speaking audiences ready to pay.

The maintenance of what Mickey Kaus calls the "Clinton mode of production" requires at least one member of the family to hold office, so that powerful and wealthy people might obtain a frisson of access and influence through financial gift-giving. What the Clintons understand is that the easiest way to hold office, and thereby keep up the mansions and private jets and villas and beach vacations, is to flatter and cater to the ever-changing morality and self-conception of the liberal ruling caste, to understand what troubles their guilty consciences, to put yourself forward as the representative of their fluctuating and malleable concerns.

Such an approach requires a canny operator able to obscure changes in policy behind a smooth veneer of likability and guile—and if we have learned anything so far in this campaign it is that Hillary Clinton is not such an operator. She is clumsy, stilted, tentative, suspicious, rehearsed, monotonous. She might satisfy, but does she inspire? Do any of the voters nodding their heads at her latest declaration of the conventional wisdom consider themselves "Hillary Clinton Democrats"? What does she stand for besides her own ambition?

It would take someone like Bill Clinton to overcome another obstacle: The differences between the primary electorate and the general one. The social issues on which the left is proclaiming victory may become insignificant next year when voters compare them to a moribund economy and a collapsing international order. The combination of an uninspiring and untrustworthy candidate and a political environment hostile to the incumbent party might overwhelm Hillary Clinton's meager skills. Like Boy George, Hillary doesn't quite know how to finesse the contradiction between her past and her present, between what she's selling and what the general electorate might want. Voters are fickle, after all. They come and go.


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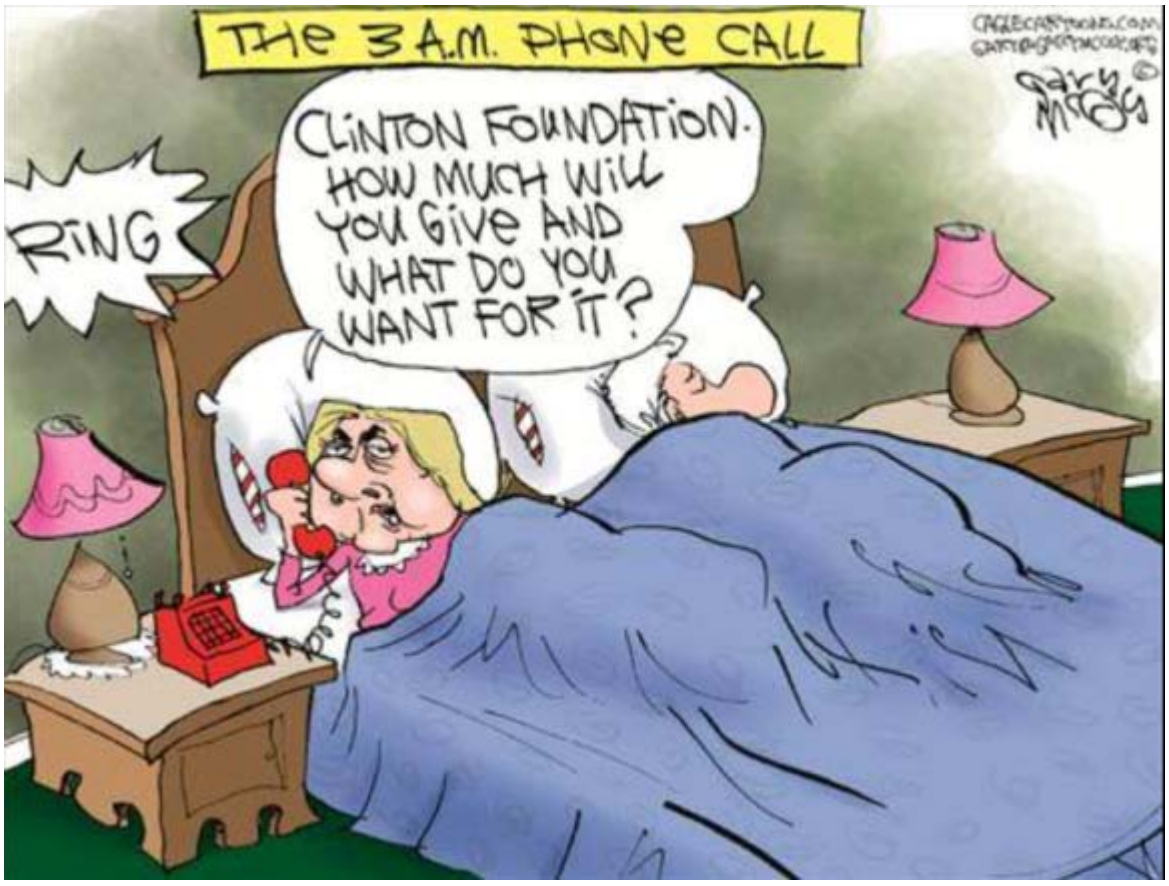
ANOTHER UNBELIEVABLE TRANSFORMATION


This is Marco Rubio's 'luxury speedboat'
This is Marco Rubio's 'luxury speedboat'
Drawn to scale in Hillarys swimming pool
Google


THE 3 A.M. PHONE CALL
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I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE, MRS. CLINTON.
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PATRIOTS
THEY CHEATED
IS NOTHING SACRED ANYMORE?!
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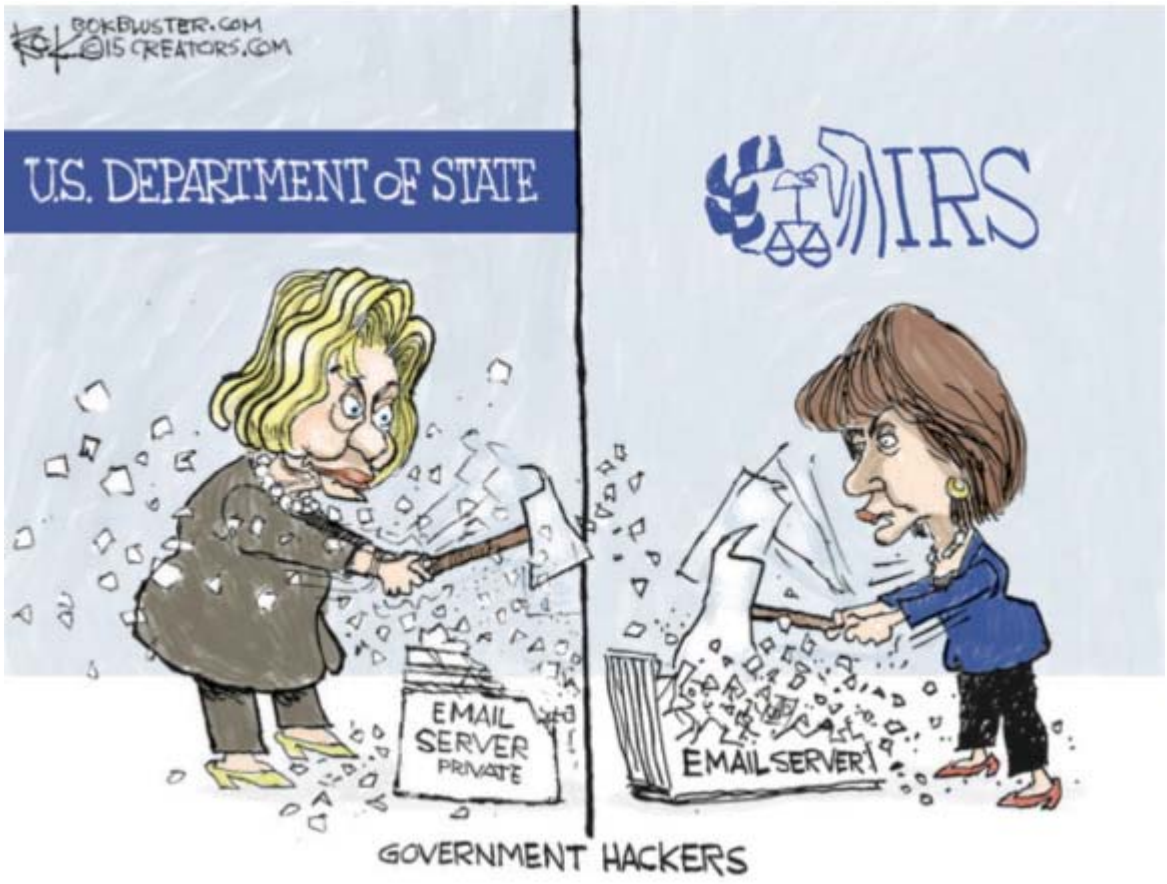
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