

Toobin's *Vast Con* Wins Coogler!

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr

The Worst Book of the Year



It is my pleasant duty to confer the J. Gordon Coogler Award for the Worst Book of 1999 to young Jeffrey Toobin, author of *A Vast Conspiracy: The Real Story of the*

Sexual Scandal That Nearly Brought Down a President. Cultural historians might someday dispute the timing of this Coogler. As with so many other putative facts in his book, even Toobin's publishing date is gas. Was it published in 1999 or 2000? Who knows? *A Vast Con's* copyright page says "1999." On the other hand, Random House claims that the book was published in January 2000. Well, here is one of Toobin's erroneous statements that we may put to civilization's advantage. Why wait a year to have fun at his expense? By then he will have returned to oblivion. His thesis that Bill Clinton was martyred by the Knights of Columbus will draw blank stares. And his hero, the ithyphallic forty-second president of the United States, will be in therapy, divorce court, or lecturing on sexual dysfunction on an Arizona fat farm. Then too, twelve months from now there will have accumulated so many additional bad books to honor.

A Vast Con's sub-thesis is that "the most astonishing fact in this story may be this one: in spite of his consistently reprehensible behavior, Clinton was, by comparison, the good guy in this struggle. The president's adversaries appeared literally consumed with hatred...." Possibly some were, but the only flesh-eating hatred that Toobin chronicles is borne by the Clintons, as when Hillary makes her paranoid appearance on the "Today" show, where she attributes her husband's problems to "a vast right-wing conspiracy," and after which she fumes to Arkansas pal Harry

Thomason, "I guess that will teach them to f--k with us." Or when Bill radiates his hatred for Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, or on the advice of Hillary, pursues the Jones suit and importunes his lawyers to humiliate Jones in cross examination. All were shows of anger that made impeachment almost inevitable. By comparison, Lucianne Goldberg and Linda Tripp seem merely impolite. They regret that the White House has been taken over by a rogue. They want to write a book. Much the same could be said of Gibbon.

That Clinton is a rogue Toobin himself demonstrates, citing numerous examples of ethical violations by the president and identifying his dealings with women and with prosecutors as variously "shabby," "sleazy," and characterized by "sustained dishonesty." Nonetheless, Toobin, in the pretentious familiarity of a cultural insider, calls Clinton a "good guy." What could he mean? He does not say. This genial appellation is what one expects from Toobin and his fellow hacks up there in the *Kultursmog*, pumping out clichés that define our era within the media, though without benefit of reality.

Remember the absurd cliché that one heard during the martyrdom of Boy Clinton about the ignobility of it all? You will find it in *A Vast Con* worded thus: "No other major political controversy in American history produced as few heroes as this one." Most of the *Kultursmog's* other clichés are here too. Toobin insists that the martyred president's impeachment was all about sex, nothing else; and sex is a private matter even when undertaken during office hours in the Oval Office. Reporters who accurately reported Clinton's abuse of power were "Clinton-haters," as were duly appointed prosecutors and almost anyone else who discomfited the Clintons, save Judge Susan Webber Wright, whom Toobin esteems Solomonic. As for the Clintons'

entanglements with shaky real estate deals, bankrupted savings and loans, sexual harassment, campaign finance violations, curious technology transfers, and an impeachment—the blame  1967 reposes not with the Clintons but with a devious band of "extremists." Finally, the fact that all Democrats opposed Clinton's impeachment and most Republicans favored it constitutes evidence of extreme partisanship, which is to say extreme partisanship by the Republicans.

Toobin's tired rationalization for Clinton is that, though ethically nonchalant, the president did nothing "illegal." This Toobin establishes by eliding over or deleting the White House's repeated lies to Congress and to prosecutors, plus the administration's refusals to comply with subpoenas. Toobin ignores the administration's destruction of evidence and its illegal use of government agencies, such as the IRS, against private citizens. And not until the book's very end does he report Judge Wright's citation of the Boy President for contempt of court. He accords this presidential first just one paragraph! Yes, the Boy President's behavior was lamentable, but Toobin forgives it by reverting to another of the *Kultursmog's* clichés: "political animus and greed were the salient motivators for everyone involved" in pursuing the Clintons. What motivated the Clintons' defenders he does not say.

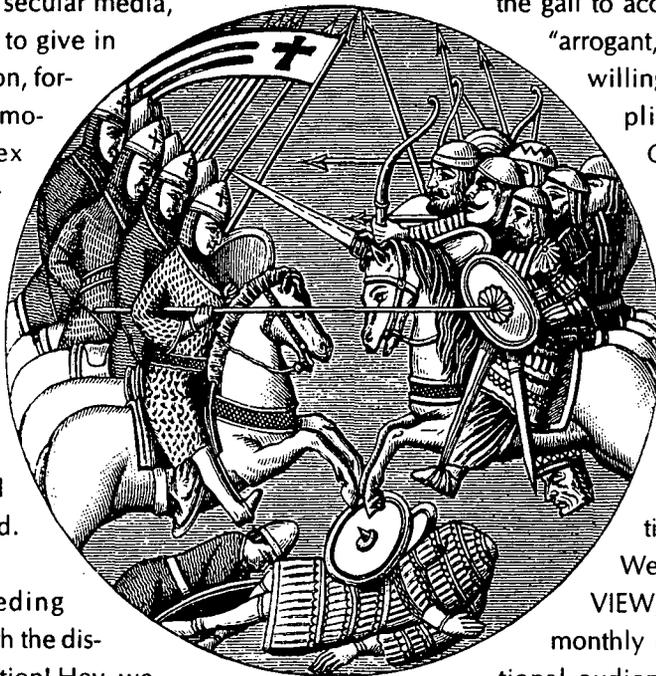
In time historians and superior journalists will expose this administration's excesses, excesses that Senator Orrin Hatch recently pronounced as being without historic parallel. If the historians' revisions of the Kennedy record by the 1990's had become a blizzard, the historical revisionism of the Clinton administration will be seen as an ice age and the snow fall will commence the day the ex-president leaves Washington for Reno. My guess is

We're Battling Heresy & Dissent on the Front Lines

There's a civil war going on in the Catholic Church today. On the one side are Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium, and Papacy. On the other side are those dissenters and heretics who, with the amplification of the powerful secular media, are pressuring the Church to give in to radical feminism, abortion, fornication, shacking-up, homosexual activity, same-sex "marriage," assisted suicide, raunchy sex ed, New Age spins on spirituality, etc.

Actually, we've got two different religions co-existing unpeacefully in one Church. This can't go on forever. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Something's gotta give.

Meanwhile, bleeding hearts call for "dialogue with the dissenters." Ha! What a deception! Hey, we, the orthodox laity, have been there, done that. With Vatican II documents under our arm, many of us have engaged a blatantly heretical pastor in dialogue, only to be put down for not understanding "the spirit" of Vatican II. We've calmly discussed a New Agey textbook with a Director of Religious Ed, only to be informed that we're unqualified to have an opinion because we don't have a master's degree in "Religious Studies" from the local diploma mill. We've



politely approached a Sex Ed teacher in a Catholic school who's peddling "gay-is-good," only to be scolded for being out of step with the times.

And then these dissenters, who brush us off, have the gall to accuse the Holy See of being "arrogant," "authoritarian," and "unwilling to listen" when it disciplines flagrant subversives.

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that even here at *The American Spectator* we have only provided a whiff of the corruption. Yet historians, being the sober scholars that they are, will probably fail to elaborate on the most unusual aspect of the Clinton Era. Its corruption notwithstanding, it is a comic masterpiece. Its amusing pratfalls, ridiculous personae, and unprecedented verbal preposterousities make the Harding administration appear positively Victorian.

Toobin has earned his Coogler on the usual grounds. Errors abound. For instance, he claims that *The American Spectator's* first Troopergate piece came out Friday, December 18 with the *Los Angeles Times's* trooper story coming out the following Tuesday, "December 21." Well, he has the date of our piece right, but the following Tuesday would have to be December 22, and for some reason he completely misses the role CNN's interviews with the troopers played on the intervening Sunday. When he gets to Filegate he depreciates an ominous police action as "the unauthorized receipt of about three hundred [actually over 900—RET] confidential FBI files by low-level officials in the Clinton White House [actually the head of White House personnel security had the files—RET]." Toobin's allergy towards facts is incurable.

As with so many other Coogler Laureates, Toobin also offers implausible theses, pedestrian writing, and the prejudices of a country-crossroads lout. But the transgression that scooted him beyond all contenders for the 1999 Coogler—including Gail Sheehy and a vanity press memoir about celebrity refrigerators—is Toobin's utter humorlessness. Faced with such a cast of Dogberries and Falstoffs as Monica Lewinsky, William Ginsburg, the Arkansas cronies, Sidney Blumenthal, Hillary, and the "Big Creep" himself, Toobin can only render gloomy sermons about "greed" and the "desire to write books about the president's sex life."

Through the entire saga, from Paula's incunabular squeaks ("He assed me to kiss ea-yit") to the president's final self-pitying blubber, Toobin never laughs. He sneers at times but misses all the comic splendor. Admittedly the Puritan Toobin expurgates much of the saga's

funniest stuff, but even the stuff he reports should have agitated his funny bone. There was Monica, the Beverly Hills ditz in the size 12 dress, bestriding the White House, monopolizing some of the president's closest advisers, in meetings with his U.N. ambassador, throwing temper tantrums before members of the Secret Service, and collapsing in puddles of tears for all to see. Even the FBI could not control her. Remember the time she approached "the Big Creep" on a rope line and goosed him? As the FBI report notes, she reached "to squeeze the President's penis." And what was her reaction after the president used her body as a cigar humidifier? Toobin quotes from her autobiography, "she realized she had fallen in love." Oh, Dr. Laura?

Monica Lewinsky might well be remembered as the valedictorian of this nation's sex education program. She was ever available for presidential "phone sex." Her bosom and genitalia always at hand. She fellated the fully-clothed president while he discussed war in Bosnia with a member of Congress and other matters with his political advisers. (It was not until her third sexual encounter with the president that he was off the telephone.) As the perfect student of every sex education class she ever took, she told prosecutors: "There was always a lot of joking going on between us.... I mean it was fun.... We were very compatible sexually...he was sort of my sexual soul mate... I just felt very connected to him when it came to those kinds of things."

The president was almost as comic. At one point he moaned to her, "Why do they have to take you away from me? I trust you so much...." Working with his wife and Sidney Blumenthal, the three composed a sophisticate's version of the Three Stooges. On January 21, 1998, as "Monicagate" reverberates through the land, Hillary takes the gullible Blumie aside. Our President was merely "ministering" to a "troubled" girl, she explained. "He ministers to troubled people all the time.... He's done it dozens if not hundreds of times. He does it out of religious conviction...." Blumie's response? As the din outside the White House intensifies, he consoles his crestfallen leader, "You're president, and these troubled people can

just get you in incredible messes, and you just...you have to cut yourself off from them." "It's very difficult for me to do that," the boss replies, "given how I am. I want to help people." Given Clinton's libidinous reputation spanning decades, is Blumie not the perfect fool?

Toobin even reports the antics of the sublime William Ginsburg with nary a laugh. Out in Los Angeles Ginsburg is told by Bernie Lewinsky, another buffoon, that Monica is in "some kind of trouble." Ginsburg fears she is suspected of espionage (for whom, Victoria's Secret?). He has a few drinks. He calls the prosecutors at the Northern Virginia hotel where they are holding the sobbing Monica. Asked by a prosecutor how they can be sure that Ginsburg is Monica's lawyer, the Falstaff of this drama responds, "Because, you miserable c--ksucking motherf--ker, I tell you I'm her lawyer." Reminiscent of Monica's reign of terror in the White House Ginsburg dominates all Washington for months. He runs up admirable bills at plush restaurants. He appears on all five Sunday gab shows in one day—a first! And he accosts prosecutor Jackie Bennett with "You motherf--king, c--ksucking, c--t.... I will kill you...." Looking back on his days of rage, this singular figure of L.A. highjinks declaimed "Mike Wallace is like a father to me. Barbara Wolf, and Cokie kept me sane."

Imagine the hilarity if he had beer nuts. There is one final comic moment that illuminates most of the scandals that the Clintons got themselves into in Washington. While standing in a reception line after the Boy President's 1995 State of the Union speech, the two Clintons are "baffled by the hostility they engendered." The aged Senator Strom Thurmond had just shaken their hands and said, "Two turds. You're two turds." Hours later, after their impetuous anger subsided, the Clintons concluded that the Southern gentleman had actually said "Two-thirds. They'll never get two-thirds." Strom's FBI file need not be brought out.

It has often been the Clintons' arrogant rush to anger that caused their scandals. Yet first and foremost has been their turpitude. Toobin missed it all. ❀

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The Golan Heights

To Whom Do They Belong? Can Israel Survive Without Them?

Syria's president, Hafez Assad, has apparently "consented to discuss peace" with Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Barak, provided that Mr. Barak agrees to start negotiations where (allegedly) the late Prime Minister Rabin left off four years ago. Astonishingly and regrettably, Mr Barak seems to have agreed to this presumptuous imposition.

What are the facts?

Historical Background—The Golan was always part of the Jewish homeland. The Syrian claim to the Golan is tenuous. Syria, as a political entity, did not exist at all until after the first World War. Until then it was just another province in the Ottoman empire, with ill-defined borders. In 1923, in an Anglo/French great-power play, the border between Syria and what was then called Palestine was established. The Golan Heights were ceded to Syria.

Even before the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Syrians, having heavily fortified the area, subjected the villages in northern Israel to almost daily shellings, making normal life impossible. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Syria attacked Israel and was defeated. Israel occupied the Golan Heights and in 1981, for all practical purposes annexed them.

Syria and its President—Syria is the most destabilizing influence in the Middle East. It is classified by the U.S. State Department as a narcotics-dealing and terrorist state. Its main fury is directed against Israel, which is perceived as a bulwark of Western influence and civilization, both of which Syria totally rejects.

Syria's President, Hafez Assad, is a tyrant, every bit as ruthless and cunning as his Iraqi counterpart, Saddam Hussein. Under Assad, Syria is a world center for terrorism. It still harbors Nazi bigwigs, who found welcome there after the World War. Few doubt that he was the mastermind and final authority in the suicide attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut in which 241 Americans died, and in the explosion of Pan Am flight #103 in which 270 people lost their lives. He oversees one of the largest narcotics operations in the world.

In its keen desire to bring peace to its people, after more than fifty years of war and bloodshed, Israel has been prepared to make far-reaching concessions to Syria on the Golan, in exchange for real peace. But it is hoped that even Ehud Barak, Israel's recently-elected prime minister, will not be prepared to give up all of the Golan high ground and to return to the "death trap" borders of 1967, or anything close to them. In order to survive within such borders, Israel would have to rely on the goodwill of the Arab states, most of which—with the recent exception of Jordan and of the cold peace with Egypt—are still in a declared or undeclared state of war with Israel. An aggressor will attack only if confident of victory. With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction.

Military Security—The Golan is the size of the New York borough of Queens, about 10 miles wide, with a plateau on either side of a ridge. If it were part of Syria it would be less than 1% of its territory. But it is of a supreme strategic importance to Israel. Its high ground provides early-warning capability, without which Israel—just as in 1948, in 1967, and in 1973—would be subject to surprise attack by the Syrians. Its loss would obligate Israel to stay on constant alert and to maintain a state

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of readiness and mobilization that would be economically and socially untenable. The Golan, which ranges up to a height of 2300 ft., dominates the Jordan Valley, the lowest point on earth about 700 ft.

below sea level. On the Golan itself, there are only two natural terrain bottlenecks through which tanks can advance. Those choke points are defensible and made possible the repulse of 1400 Syrian tanks that attacked Israel in the 1973 war. But with the Golan in Syrian hands, and without the radar installations that would give Israel warning of any military movements, thousands of tanks—backed up by missiles and airplanes—could overrun Israel in a matter of hours. It would be a strategically impossible situation, especially for a country as small as Israel—smaller than Lake Michigan, smaller by half than San Bernardino County in California. The Golan does not make for perfect defense, but it gives Israel a small breathing space for mobilization.

The Golan is the source of over one-third of Israel's fresh water. In 1964, with the Golan in Syrian hands, Syria attempted to divert these headwaters and to cripple Israel's water supply. It is more than likely that, given another opportunity, Syria would once again attempt to destroy Israel's water supply.

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The Frenzy of Politics

McCain wins Strange New Respect Award of Century.

The Bradley-Gore rivalry has unintentionally drawn attention to the sorry mess that is contemporary liberalism—a melange of coercion, expropriation, racial spoils and slander, and privileges for victim groups. There was no such revelation in 1996, when Bill Clinton lacked primary opposition and faced the inept Bob Dole in November. And I don't recall it in 1992, either, when Ross Perot was yapping at us non-stop and George Bush the Elder was showing that he didn't believe in much of anything.

So we owe a debt of gratitude to Bill Bradley. As he and Al Gore have tried to outdo one another in appealing to the left, a sizable segment of the population has been exposed to the Democrats' ungodly vision of government. Younger voters especially may not have noticed. Now they know. Democrats represent trade union leaders, Black Caucus and NAACP ring-leaders, teachers' unions, victim groups, and trial lawyers. Throw in the dotty old liberals who still believe that if only government is big enough, justice and peace will be ours in full measure, and you have the recipe for much of modern politics.

It is the world that we live in. The frenzy of modern politics, with legislatures in session around the clock, is not going away any time soon. At bottom, it is driven by an unquenched revolutionary desire to reform human nature. In the U.S., it is perforce yoked to democracy. (The non-democratic method was tried in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, but came to naught. Fidel

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Castro is its last gasp.) But the will to remake man still burns in reformers' breasts. Witness the codification of impure thoughts as hate crimes. Gender differences are assaulted by legislation and propaganda. For Democrats, it is an uncontroversial truth that the military is a taxpayer-supported opportunity to re-engineer gender roles and sexual-preference attitudes. Occasionally, to be sure, it may still be needed for peacekeeping operations. Did someone mention a litmus test for gay-approving Joint Chiefs? Al Gore didn't hesitate to snap off his salute.

Still, as the boomers age and the thirties generation passes away, the old ideological fervor is waning. More and more, we are left with interest-group politics, pure and simple, and in Washington, trillions to redistribute. It's the goal of Democrats to sustain in their constituency groups an enlarged sense of grievance, to arouse their sense of envy, and to depict their lives as more miserable than they are. The black leadership is shameless in this regard. That is why race relations in this country never seem to improve. It is not in the interest of the NAACP high command to allow that any such improvement has occurred.

The problem lies in the topsy-turvy incentives of the redistributive state. Normally, the leaders of groups have the same incentives as the rank and file. CEOs and company employees both do well when a business flourishes. The same is true of football coaches and football players. Winning in war benefits both generals and privates. Liberalism inverts these incentives. To the losers go the spoils. There's some trickle-down from the top dogs to the underdogs, but that's not the issue. It would be bet-

ter if there were none. The main problem is that the underdogs are expected to stay that way in order to preserve the group's victim status. That way, it keeps the benefits that empower the leadership.

It's a measure of the corruption of the black leadership that coalition politics drives them to put their own power and privileges ahead of the welfare of their rank and file. Coalition building in Washington ensures that the leaders will resist a change in policy if that change threatens a prevailing majority. You might think that the black leadership would spearhead a move toward school vouchers and choice, for example, because government schooling puts inner city children at particular risk. But such a change would threaten the coalition that sustains the huge federal spending on education. The National Education Association and the Black Caucus would be at odds. Stick with us, say the teacher-union bosses, and we'll stick with you on racial preferences, or whatever your hearts desire. (Not that the Black Caucus needs to be told.) In his book *Hating Whitey*, David Horowitz showed how important preserving the existing system has become to those in power. He reported that the White House's chief adviser on race denounced as a "crime against humanity" an academic book showing that blacks' educational opportunities had increased more rapidly before affirmative action than after.

Abortion, too, is hardly in the interest of blacks in general, who are two to three times as likely as whites to get abortions. Nonetheless, the Black Caucus mechanically supports the procedure. Shouldn't they oppose it? (Jesse Jackson and the Black Panthers did so in the mid-70's, before the present political coalitions developed muscle.) In this instance, mutual back-scratching with women's groups would be threatened by any black change of heart. Stick