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SALON

Imagination unleashed in all its perverse glory

The Web: Let the Puritans figure out how to jam their mealy corks into the dike!

By **Camille Paglia**

April 05, 2000 | Media over-promotion of [Sen. John McCain](#) goes on and on. Where, oh, where will the alleged McCain voting bloc go, cries the bleeding-heart chorus, if [Gov. George W. Bush](#), who actually won the Republican nomination, does not fall on his knees to kiss McCain's signet ring?

No attention has been paid to an equally important question: Where will all the disaffected [Bill Bradley](#) Democrats (like me) go this fall if they decide they've had it up to the chops with the deceit and incompetence of the Clinton-Gore years?

Bush will never get my vote, since not only is he embarrassingly unprepared for the presidency but his party, with its weird congressional collection of milquetoasts, dodos and dunderheads, seems stuck in 1958. Nor can I imagine voting for [Ralph Nader](#), the consumer-rights crusader turned flake who could no more govern than my hero Andy Warhol -- another brooding, boyish, ethnic monastic.

But if the rotten-to-the-core superstructure of the Democratic Party assumes it's got a lock on us Bradley supporters, think again. As someone who voted for Jesse Jackson in the 1988 Democratic primary (yes, I know he's morphed into a pampered Vernon Jordan-style socialite and stagey race-baiter), I'll use my vote where I think it's most meaningful -- and at this point, the ethical contortionist [Al Gore](#) hasn't won it.

As a capitalist libertarian, I'll be looking very seriously at Green Party candidates this fall to see if they've grown up. One whiff of creaky Marxism, however, and I'll be gone. There's a huge opening for smart, socially conscious, technology-savvy candidates on the left. But where are they?

Vis--vis McCain, Salon reader Richard D. Henkus indicts "the liberal cult of suffering":

Have you considered the possibility that John McCain succeeded by playing the suffering card? Liberals have for very long been running the Suffering Sweepstakes, paying off to those willing to grovel and whine about how much they suffered, as if suffering were a certification of moral nobility. I suggest John McCain played the suffering card to catch the maudlin liberal imagination.

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Sharp point, Mr. Henkus. The cloistered media personalities who fell head over heels for that choleric hawk McCain are a palpably p.c. lot who have no track record whatever for recognizing or respecting genuinely masculine men. There are a half dozen prominent political commentators who have totally lost my respect because of their dishonest or hysterical (take your pick) canonization of McCain, a manipulative waffler with a mediocre legislative record.

The behavior of those journalists at times crossed the line into real professional misconduct that future historians, in my view, will judge harshly. Waco didn't go away, and neither will this. National security is at risk when reporters play kingmaker.

Another shot in the McCain wars: Paul Courtine writes from Bristol, England, to protest McCain's easy treatment last month on NBC's "Meet the Press":

McCain said he would "stop all the smut and pornography on the Internet." The presenter [host Tim Russert] did not say a single word about this incredible attack on the First Amendment. I could not believe he would let this outrageous comment pass by unchallenged. Still, when a Democratic president signs the unconstitutional Communications Decency Act into law, is it any wonder?

Yes, it's disturbing if the reasonably non-partisan Russert let so flagrant a free-speech point pass. The Web is human imagination unleashed in all its perverse glory. Let the Puritans figure out how to jam their mealy corks (software filters) into the dike, but they'll never dam that raging river.

As I file this, the appalling spectacle over 6-year-old [Elin Gonzalez](#) continues, thanks to the endless blunders of the foot-dragging Clinton administration, which turned a family matter into an international confrontation. As this column maintained from the start, Elin, who had just lost his mother, should have immediately been returned to familiar surroundings and the custody of his father in Cuba. Allowing the traumatized boy to become attached to a "surrogate mother" in Miami, as predictably happened, was emotionally destructive and ethically coercive.

Kurt Schultz, writing from New Orleans, concurs:

Doesn't anybody see the anti-dad, anti-male bias in this freak show? The mom *abducted* this kid without permission from the father and set out for the USA on a fucking inflatable tube! She is portrayed by the media as a freedom-loving hero who risked all to reach our shores.

In my opinion, she was a spiteful nutcase who nabbed her kid just to piss off her estranged husband. This was not a carefully planned expedition on a seaworthy boat but a foolhardy expedition that endangered her son. This was a 90-mile trip on inflatable water wings. She should have been brought up for child abuse!

If the situation were reversed -- i.e., dad dead and mom left in Cuba -- does anybody doubt that the child would be sent back already? We all know that mothers are more important than fathers, right?

I agree with you, Mr. Schultz. Congressman Charles B. Rangel rightly describes the double standard favoring Cuban-Americans because of their economic and electoral power: a Haitian or Jamaican refugee child would have been sent packing quick as a whistle on the overnight express.

How nice that the Washington Post, in its scathing March 28 article on Madeleine Albright

("Albright's Influence Waning in Washington"), has finally caught on to the fact that her performance as secretary of state has been poor and at times (the [Kosovo](#) incursion) disastrous. This column, which applauded Albright's appointment on feminist grounds, went into heavy protest mode when, at a public meeting at Ohio State University in Feb. 1998, she arrogantly treated American citizens like peons for daring to question the administration's threatened bombing of Iraq.

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