

The background of the top half of the cover is an abstract, textured composition of red and blue brushstrokes. The strokes are thick and layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors are vibrant, with the reds ranging from deep maroon to bright scarlet, and the blues being a rich, slightly muted teal. The overall effect is reminiscent of a rough, hand-painted surface.

ColdType

**STUDIES IN
HYPOCRISY**

**FROM THE F-WORD TO
THE NEW YORK TIMES
AND MRS. JELLYBY**

EDWARD S. HERMAN



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he hypocrisy that runs deep in this culture is amusingly illustrated by the fact that while the F-word has become standard operating language, especially under conditions of emotion or stress, and for the political right as well as others, for the rightwing base and many Republican cadres and allies it is the ultimate in immoral and “indecent” language, and its use in the media is fought with great energy. On the one hand we have Vice-President Dick Cheney using the word on the floor of the Senate telling Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy, “Fuck yourself”; and George Bush himself saying to Wall Street Journal journalist Al Hunt “You no-good fucking son of a bitch. I will never fucking forget what you wrote!” Karl Rove told Ron Suskind his thoughts about one political enemy: “We will fuck him. Do you hear me? We will fuck him. Like no one else has ever fucked him.” And rightwing judge Laurence Silberman, exulting over an attack on Senator Paul Simon who had harshly ques-

EDWARD S. HERMAN / STUDIES IN HYPOCRISY

tioned the credentials of Clarence Thomas for Supreme Court justice, said: “You nailed him! You fucked him!”

It is also the word of choice among our boys fighting for freedom in Iraq: “We’re here to give you your fuckin freedom, so back off,” as one GI put it to Iraqi protesters. And on-site reports of GI sweeps and violent entry into Iraqi homes regularly report “fuck” as the word of choice by the invaders as they beat and push the terrified householders around.

Why the deep concern of the righteous? An important reason is that the word is about SEX, which is bad and best treated by abstinence and (in later years) darkness. The F-word’s use might cause children to ask for an explanation, which would force the righteous into evasions and talks about stork-delivery, when they don’t want to lie.

FCC boss Michael Powell has responded to the push of the righteous, with the FCC ruling in March 2004 “that the use of the ‘F-word’ during last year’s broadcast of the Golden Globes violates the federal statute...the gratuitous use of such vulgar language on broadcast television will not be tolerated.”

This hypocrisy works out well for the rightwing as they dominate both the media and the work of an agency like the FCC. Thus the contradiction and hypocrisy are not given much attention, and rules against indecency can be used as a selective club to keep the media in line.

Sex in the Media

A closely related profusion of hypocrisy flows from the fact that sex sells, so that the commercial media, under competitive pressure, use it aggressively in both ads and programming. Women are displayed in ever more provocative clothing (or lack of it), poses and actions. The competitive ads for cures for erectile dysfunction and frigidity show couples looking ever more satisfied from just-completed sexual encounters, and sex-saturated programs like “Married by America” and “Desperate Housewives” have proliferated, heavily represented on the Fox network. Frank Rich notes that “Fox remains the go-to network for Paris Hilton (‘The Simple Life’) and wife-swapping (‘Trading Spouses: Meet Your New Mommy’),” and that “The Murdoch cultural stable includes recent books like Jenna Jameson’s ‘How to Make Love Like a Porn Star’ and the Vivid Girls’ ‘How to Have a XXX Sex Life,’ which have been synergistically, even joyously, promoted on Fox News by willing hosts like Rita

Crosby and, needless to say, Mr. O'Reilly.”

Rich also notes that “None of this has prompted an uprising from the red-state Fox News loyalists supposedly so preoccupied with ‘moral values.’” Of course none of these programs offer a positive view of pro-choice and gay-lesbian rights, but still the willingness to tolerate adultery, open and public sex, and de facto pornography is impressive. Of course these programs are offered by a network that supports aggression, torture, official lies on a grand scale (historically “off-the-charts,” as Mark Crispin Miller points out), a destruction of the welfare state, racism, and subversion of the U.S. constitution, with implied moral and political values that apparently appeals to the loyalists. The programs themselves watched by children should help integrate them into a culture of aggression, domination, hierarchy and militarism.

The Pro-Death Constituency

There is a substantial overlap between the folks who oppose abortion and those who support capital punishment and perpetual war. Thus the self-designation of these people as “pro-life” is a serious misrepresentation—they favor preserving the life of fetuses, but are in favor of a variety of policies that injure or terminate life once it emerges from the womb. They could with rather more justice be called the “pro-death” constituency as their preference is for protecting undeveloped life still devoid of personality, while they are less concerned with protecting the lives of humans who are fully sensate and members of the human community. In fact, many of them are positively eager to see mass death imposed on people who stand in the way of their country’s projection of power.

Many of them are extremely fond of Sharon’s Israel, recently in an intensified phase of ethnic cleansing, busy rendering life miserable and killing large numbers of another set of non-Caucasians. Political commentator Bill Berkowitz also calls attention to a current Christian fundamentalist compassion deficit: “Organizations which are amazingly quick to organize to fight against same-sex marriage, a woman’s right to choose, and embryonic stem cell research are missing in action when it comes to responding to the disaster in southern Asia.

None of their web sites are actively soliciting aid for the victims of the earthquake/tsunami. <http://www.workingforchange.com/printitem.cfm?itemid=18309>

Thirty years ago I co-authored an article on “Moral Consistency and the Abortion Issue” (with Robert Edelstein and Mary Herman, *Commonweal*, March 22, 1974), in

EDWARD S. HERMAN / STUDIES IN HYPOCRISY

which we carried out statistical significance tests on the relation between voting on an extremely restrictive anti-abortion bill in the Pennsylvania legislature and voting on a series of bills that would have (1) reinstated capital punishment, (2) expressed opposition to the Vietnam war, (3) continued payments to welfare recipients, and (4) eased up on parole requirements for prisoners. The first two votes provide measures of legislators' reactions to the direct termination of post-fetal life. The other two are crude indicators of concern with human welfare. Our statistical analysis of the votes of Pennsylvania legislators showed a strongly significant correlation between votes for the anti-abortion bill and votes for reinstating capital punishment and support for the Vietnam War (and against easing parole requirements; there was no significant relationship between anti-abortion and pro-welfare votes).

This article aroused strong emotions among some readers of *Commonweal*, but the statistical findings were never challenged, and they point to a linkage that is fairly obvious. It follows that there is no way the anti-abortion crusaders can justifiably call themselves "pro-life," and when they and the mainstream media use such terminology it should be assailed and corrected.

The New York Times and the Mrs. Jellyby Syndrome

The New York Times has long suffered from the Mrs. Jellyby Syndrome, a disorder described by example in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, where Mrs. Jellyby spends all of her time organizing efforts on behalf of the distant natives of Booriaboola-gha, while paying no attention to the poor state of her own family. Among many other illustrations, the Times displayed this ailment at the time of the big Pittston strike back in 1989, when the paper had no interest in this major home-grown struggle but paid devoted attention to the simultaneous strike of miners in the Soviet Union. (Of course, the political basis of this differential attention was obvious: the Times is anti-union, but has always been pleased to support union activism in distant places where this is causing problems for target/enemy states. In the same time frame as the Times was giving indignant support to the mistreatment of Solidarity in Communist Poland, it was completely silent on the even more brutal crackdown on unions in Turkey, a U.S. client state.)

Recently, the Times has devoted massive attention to protests in the Ukraine and the deficiencies of the voting process in that far-off land, including the contradicto-

EDWARD S. HERMAN / STUDIES IN HYPOCRISY

ry findings of exit polls and official tabulations. In fact, from November 1 through December 31, 2004, the paper had 118 articles on the Ukraine and its election, with 17 running on the first page. Meanwhile, protests in their own country and election abuses here were of far less interest and concern to the editors. There was a protest of an estimated 20,000 people at Fort Benning, Georgia, on November 19-21, against the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, long (and still widely) known as the School of the Americas, and also widely known in non-establishment sources and Latin America as the “School for the Assassins” given the great importance of the school’s trainees in the rise of the National Security State, death squads, torture, and military dictatorships in Latin America. (Two-thirds of the people named as high level killers by the UN-sponsored El Salvador Truth Commission had been trained in the School of the Americas, and School trainees were leaders in the overthrow of democratic governments and instituting reigns of terror throughout Latin America.) The New York Times did not even mention this protest.

There have also been innumerable protests and studies claiming that the recent U.S. presidential election was stolen. In Ohio, for example, there have been rallies at the state house, hearings, numerous law suits filed, and a great many affidavits and testimonials to electoral abuses that in the aggregate could easily have determined the election outcome. Ohio election officials are resisting subpoenas and there is even evidence of corruption in ongoing recounts (Democracy Week, “Ohio Recount Steeped in Fraud” http://www.truthout.org/docs_05/010205I.shtml). Congressman John Conyers has held hearings on the abuses and has appealed to members of the Senate to help postpone the Electoral College vote till matters are cleared up.

One participant in the protests, Gary Polvinale, writes that “Ohio is screaming the truth at the top of its lungs, literally, and no one hears us because of all the noise of the media silence.” He has a point. The Times has never mentioned that “State officials have outsourced and privatized America’s voting system,” and that with 99.4 percent of votes under machine control “It’s an open invitation to vote fraud with minimal chance of discovery” (Lynn Landes). The Times has not mentioned the Conyers hearings in any news article, and in its 36 articles that refer to the question of possible electoral fraud in Ohio published between October 1 and December 31, none pull together the wide array of evidence and no editorial or opinion piece calls for a full recount in Ohio and elsewhere and a postponement of the Electoral College vote pending such inquiries, let alone a new election (their one extensive article on

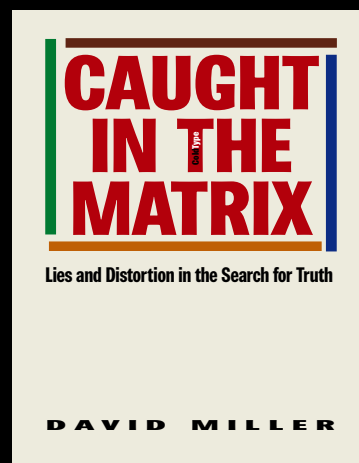
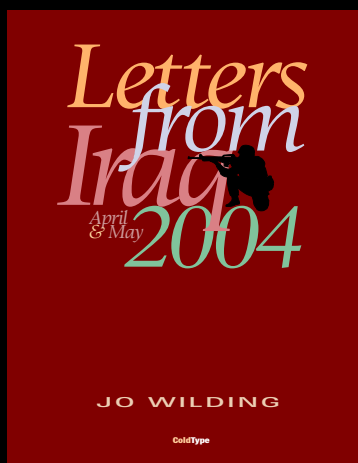
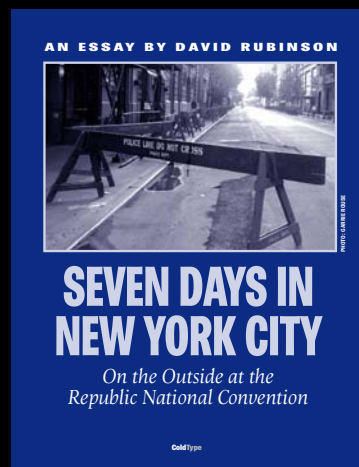
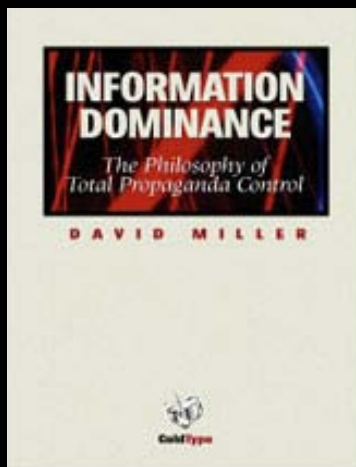
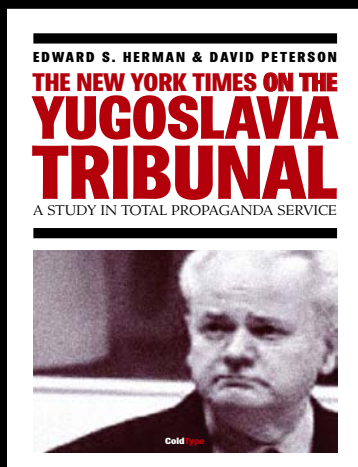
EDWARD S. HERMAN / STUDIES IN HYPOCRISY

the abuses, devoted strictly to deflating the claims, fails even to mention electronic manipulation and Republican control of the machines and software: Tom Zeller, “Vote Fraud Theories, Spread by Blogs, Are Quickly Grounded,” NYT, Nov. 12, 2004).

As in the case of the 2000 election theft, the Times is not about to challenge an election result that pleases the business community and where a challenge would cause rightwing frenzy. The Times has pointed out that in the Ukraine the Supreme Court declared the voting abuses so severe as to nullify the election, but the paper doesn't point out the irony that in this country the Supreme Court has only thrown its weight into confirming electoral abuses to permit their candidate to win (in 2000). In his Concurring Opinion to the decision halting a vote recount in Florida, Justice Scalia stressed that a failure to “stay” the recount might cause “irreparable harm”—to Bush! Imagine the U.S. media's reaction if the Ukraine court had validated the first vote there on grounds that otherwise there might have been “irreparable harm” to Victor Yanukovich! Abuses in an election in the Ukraine are one thing—the establishment as a whole is happy to condemn that election and demand a rerun—but for this country, when the dominant party of property is on top, no thanks.

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