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**SHADOWBOXING WITH
STEREOTYPES:
THE PRESS, THE PUBLIC,
AND THE CANDIDATES' WIVES**

by

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SHADOWBOXING WITH STEREOTYPES: The Press, the Public, and the Candidates' Wives

The election year 1992 was widely touted as the "Year of the Woman." Certainly it was a year in which the attitudes of and toward women played an important role, and a year in which candidates' spouses were both the objects of attacks and potent political forces in their own right. A wholly traditional political wife, Barbara Pierce Bush, reached new heights of popularity, whereas Hillary Rodham Clinton, a highly esteemed corporate trial lawyer with a substantial record of public service work in education and as an advocate of children, was viewed with suspicion if not outright hostility by a significant segment of the electorate. These reactions are reminders that if feminism is not dead—and its demise has been announced regularly since the early 1970s—women's advances are slow and difficult and often an outgrowth of external events. Just as woman suffrage came in part because of a climate created by the progressive movement and by Woodrow Wilson's World War I speeches declaring that this was a war to make the world safe for democracy, so changed attitudes toward presidential spouses may occur as much as a function of the economic climate and the changed social and economic circumstances of women and families as from increasing support for issues and attitudes previously associated with contemporary feminism.

There may be differing views of all the influences at work in the 1992 election year; clearly, however, these influences included (1) the history of presidential wives; (2) current beliefs about their proper roles; (3) the impact of the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings; and (4) the separate, but clearly related issue of feminism as a social movement.

First, a distinction. The wives of candidates challenge the public and press differently than do women candidates for public office. Women candidates ask voters to revise the relationship between women and public power. By contrast, the candidates' wives raise the more problematic issue of the relationship between women, *sexuality*, and power. That is, spouses exert their power by virtue of their sexual and marital relationship to the candidates; their influence is indirect and intimate, a subtle intrusion of the private into the public, political sphere. Accord-

ingly, in each election, the press and the public consider and reconsider the relationship between presidential spouses in order to infer the extent and character of a form of influence exerted largely outside public scrutiny.

Interest in spouses is heightened because of the nature of the U.S. presidency. The president's family has a symbolic significance related to the president's role as symbolic head of state. The couple becomes Mr. and Mrs. America, an ideal "First Family" expected to represent cherished U.S. values. In effect, "politics is our national theater. It's the forum in which we decide who we are."¹ Moreover, presidential wives have played significant ceremonial roles by hosting White House receptions for visiting heads of state, acting as presidential surrogates at events here and abroad, and responding to national tragedies, such as comforting the bereaved after the *Challenger* disaster and after the attack on U.S. Marines in Beirut.

Past Presidential Wives

As recent presidential wives demonstrate, spouses inevitably affect policy decisions. Nancy Davis Reagan affected scheduling, personnel, and policy decisions;² Rosalynn Smith Carter was the president's emissary in South America, discussed issues with him at regular weekly lunches, and attended cabinet meetings in order to stay abreast of current policy decisions. Even Bess Wallace Truman, who assiduously avoided the White House limelight, is now known to have had a role in virtually every decision made by her husband. Earlier, Eleanor Roosevelt expanded the traditional "first ladyship" by acting as the president's eyes and ears, writing and lecturing, and taking stands on controversial issues. Moreover, prior to her husband's election as president, she was a partner in Val-Kill, a furniture factory, and in Todhunter School, where she taught. She served on the Platform Committee at the New York State 1926 Democratic convention, and she was active in the Women's Trade Union League and other women's political groups. Subsequently, during FDR's presidency, she continued to write and speak, earning such large sums of money that the ensuing congressional investigation ended only when it was revealed that all her earnings had gone to charity.

In other words, Eleanor Roosevelt had a partially separate, high-paying career, and she took controversial stands on issues, most notably on civil rights. The problems confronting presidential wives who enlarge their functions are highlighted by her experiences. Because of criticisms and distortions of her activities, she both attempted to tailor her role to traditional conceptions of women as helpmates to their husbands and repeatedly issued disclaimers. At one press conference she declared, "I never tried to influence the President on anything he ever did,"³ and she wrote:

There is such a concerted effort being made to make it appear that I dictate to FDR that I don't want people who should know the truth to have any misunderstanding about it. I wouldn't dream of doing more than passing along requests or suggestions that come to me.⁴

Candidate wives who have had independent careers have also experienced problems, dramatically illustrated by Elizabeth Hanford Dole, a Federal Trade Commissioner (FTC) under presidents Nixon and Ford, head of the White House Office of Public Liaison, head of the White House Coordinating Council on Women, and Secretary of Transportation under President Reagan, and later Secretary of Labor under President Bush. She took a leave of absence from the FTC to campaign for her husband, the Republican vice-presidential nominee in 1976, but still was criticized sharply by John Moss, D-CA, chair of the House subcommittee that oversees regulatory agencies, who alleged "a possible conflict of interest because she was in the position of directly or indirectly asking for votes and financial support from persons and corporations over whom she would later sit in judgment."⁵ She resigned from the FTC in 1979 when her husband announced his candidacy for the presidency. In 1987, she resigned as Secretary of Transportation to campaign for her husband in the Republican primaries.⁶ Ann Grimes comments:

You could hardly find a more telling image of America's befuddlement over sex and work and marriage in the eighties—a candidate's wife spending perhaps a third of a precious personal campaign stop [in Concord, N.H.] arguing that she had a right to be there at all. . . . [S]he had to defend herself for quitting that high-echelon office and taking on the role of full-time spouse of a candidate. Ironically, once she stepped down from Cabinet member to supporting role, some

found her less credible than her counterparts on the spouse circuit, whose put-aside careers were less prominent.⁷

In addition, her childlessness was a "mild, but discernible undercurrent at some events."⁸ Finally, Dole supporter Lee Daniels, minority leader in the Illinois House, introduced her with words that proved especially damaging. He said:

We have an opportunity to elect a *team* president of the United States. We have an opportunity to select a *person* that [sic] is going to be as much a part of this government, a *strong* part, a *strong participant*, a *strong person* behind the president, who *believes* in her husband.⁹

Grimes writes that the

specter of a team presidency clung to Liddy Dole like pesky lint. . . . Wouldn't the first-lady role be too confining for a woman with Elizabeth's résumé and ambition? Would she want to give up "her position, influence, prestige and salary knowing if her husband wins she will be pushed permanently into second place?" one reporter asked.¹⁰

Such comments also reveal how constrained is the conception of the roles and functions of a presidential wife.

Current Attitudes

Attitudes toward presidential and vice-presidential wives in 1992 were reflected in the Republicans' appeal to cultural beliefs rooted in general attitudes toward women, attitudes that inform public assessments and shape press coverage of the candidates' wives. Writing in the *New York Times* about the 1988 campaign, Jane Reilly commented: "The politicians have an ideal woman in mind, and the symbol they are using for that idea is 'family.' The earthly manifestation of the idea are the wives."¹¹ Also in 1988, journalist Susan Riley wrote in the *Ottawa Citizen*:

Why does society insist on an archetypal wife, an Everywife, a figurehead with no political power but potent symbolic importance? What is the political wife saying about women, about marriage, about the way power is distributed in our society? It sounds as if she is saying that women are status symbols, possessions, mirrors for the men they live with. But aren't those days gone?¹²

Such traditional attitudes may explain the popularity of Barbara Pierce Bush as well as the uneasiness about Hillary Rodham Clinton, a disparity that emerged in approval ratings. They also illuminate reactions to Marilyn Tucker Quayle, Mary Elizabeth "Tipper" Aitcheson Gore, Margot Birmingham Perot, and Sybil Bailey Stockdale.

In 1992, George Bush was seeking re-election with very low approval ratings in national polls and under economic conditions that aroused great voter resentment against him and his policies. A political operative might well have concluded that Bush could not win on the issues, and if not issues, then what? Character, of course. This alternative was particularly attractive given the extraordinary popularity of Bush's wife, the accusations faced by the Democratic nominee Bill Clinton during the primaries, and the dynamics of the campaign as it unfolded.

During the Bush presidency, his matronly wife had endeared herself to many by making fun of her age, size, and white hair. She commented, "My mail tells me that a lot of fat, white-haired, wrinkled ladies are tickled pink."¹³ She also responded well to controversy when she was invited to speak at the 1990 Wellesley commencement. There she represented traditional wives while taking a tolerant, inclusive view of women's life choices, which she echoed late in the 1992 campaign when she said: "I've always felt that there was no mold for the wife of the president or the husband of the president, that each person did his or her own thing."¹⁴ She came to be seen by the public as motherly or grandmotherly (that is, as non-sexual), gracious, compassionate, and non-controversial. According to *New York Times*/CBS News polls in August 1992, her favorable rating was 74 percent; in October, in the heat of the campaign, it had slipped only slightly to 68 percent.¹⁵

Ellen Warren of Knight-Ridder Newspapers, who covered Barbara Pierce Bush during the 1992 campaign, says that she was more outspoken and feisty in this campaign, that her highly honed political instincts led her to believe that talking about what she truly believed, for example, her view that abortion was not a political issue, would be good for her husband.¹⁶ She strongly defended her husband's record, but even as she took more risks, she continued to play a traditional role. Warren also contrasted the 1988 campaign, in which she was seen as a liability because her white hair and wrinkles tended to remind voters of her husband's age, to 1992, when "it was clear to all Bush's handlers that

they had a gigantic treasure, and they decided early to maximize their use of her."¹⁷ Her strategic value is apparent in the comments of Charles Black, a senior Bush campaign aide, who noted that wives "help define the candidacies and the personal styles of their husbands. They are good character witnesses for their husbands."¹⁸

Focusing on character also fit the generally declining importance of parties and issues. In the words of University of Toronto political scientist Heather MacIvor, "Party lines and policies are so trivialized and so unclear that voters are left with a collection of personalities to judge. With all the hype and clutter, spouses can be one solid clue to a candidate's character."¹⁹ Later in the campaign, however, particularly with the re-entry of Ross Perot, issues became central.

The conservative politics of Patrick Buchanan, Pat Robertson, and others can be understood as an example of what historian Richard Hofstadter called "status politics," political choices motivated by a desire to reaffirm the values and status of one's ethnic, religious, socio-economic group.²⁰ In general, status politics are a conservative reaction to social change. Sociologist Joseph Gusfield argues that in the late nineteenth century these were the dominant motives at work in the temperance movement, which was a white Protestant reaction against increasing numbers of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, immigrants whose religious beliefs and social values challenged the dominance of the Puritans who had arrived in an earlier period.²¹ Patrick Buchanan's assertion that the Republican party was fighting a religious and cultural war lends itself to such an analysis. Those represented by Buchanan, Robertson, William Bennett, and Marilyn Tucker Quayle are threatened by issues related to women and by advocates of non-traditional life styles—feminists, gays and lesbians, and abortion rights advocates—groups generally identified with liberals and Democrats. Insofar as those who speak for Republicans resent and fear these groups, rhetorical expressions of status politics can be expected, and narrowly defined family values and attacks on someone like Hillary Rodham Clinton are consistent with such feelings. Moreover, they are likely to appeal to the Republican base, especially more conservative Southerners.

Finally, in some ways, each presidential election campaign is an attempt to repeat what had been successful or to avoid the mistakes of the preceding campaign. From this vantage point, the 1992 Bush campaign recycled strategies

that succeeded in 1988, whereas the Clinton campaign attempted to correct what were seen as the most telling errors made by Dukakis.²² The 1988 Bush campaign emphasized family values as a means to appeal to its core constituency and succeeded by attacking the character of Michael Dukakis. In 1992, the Bush campaign returned to the emphasis on family values with the addition of attacks on Hillary Rodham Clinton, which were seen as consistent with the overall strategy of attacking Clinton's character.

The character problems Bill Clinton faced in the primaries made this Republican strategy even more attractive. During the New Hampshire primary, after being paid handsomely by a tabloid (allegedly between \$100,000 and \$150,000),²³ Gennifer Flowers charged Clinton with carrying on an affair with her for twelve years.²⁴ In addition to the charge of being unfaithful to his wife, Clinton, like a great many of his peers, had avoided the draft during the Vietnam War, a story that unfolded slowly and with many inconsistencies, and he was on record as opposing that war and as participating in anti-war demonstrations while on a Rhodes scholarship at Oxford University in England. Late in the campaign an attempt was made to suggest something sinister about his travel to Moscow and other European cities while at Oxford.

During the primaries Bill Clinton's wife became an attractive target for Republican attack for a variety of reasons. Initially, she took on particular importance when the Flowers charges surfaced during the New Hampshire primary. It was widely believed that only his wife could rescue Clinton's sagging fortunes, and their joint appearance on CBS's highly-rated "60 Minutes" on Superbowl Sunday was a turning point in that campaign, probably salvaging a second-place finish for Clinton behind Paul Tsongas (because he survived, with 25 percent of the vote, he was widely perceived as winning in New Hampshire because Paul Tsongas, from neighboring Massachusetts, was favored to win). Although that appearance rescued Clinton's candidacy, Clinton's wife made a comment during the interview that aroused controversy. Asked about the alleged affair and the status of their marriage, she answered:

You know, I'm not sitting here—some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette. I'm sitting here because I love him, and I respect him, and I honor what he's been through and what we've been through together. And you know, if that's not enough for people, then heck, don't vote for him.²⁵

That statement was protested by Tammy Wynette (herself divorced) and by country music fans who saw it as an attack on the traditional value of wifely loyalty celebrated in "Stand By Your Man," Wynette's 1969 smash hit recording. That such wifely loyalty also could be controversial had been demonstrated in the case of Lee Hart, who was criticized for standing by her man during the Donna Rice scandal that temporarily forced Gary Hart out of the race for the 1980 Democratic nomination. Reporters wrote that Clinton's wife "speaking out forcefully in defense of her husband makes a stark contrast to Gary Hart's wife Lee, who came across in public as a helpless victim, further inflaming public sentiment against her husband."²⁶

Hillary Rodham Clinton's attractiveness as a target for Republican attack escalated when, later in the primaries, Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., charged that her firm benefited unfairly from her marriage to the Arkansas governor.²⁷ She responded with a widely quoted remark: "I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas." What she added, however, was not reported by most news outlets. She continued: "I chose to fulfill my profession, which I had before my husband was in public life."²⁸ She added: "The work that I have done as a professional, a public advocate, has been aimed . . . to assure that women can make the choices . . . whether it's full-time career, full-time motherhood or some combination."²⁹ The widely publicized line, divorced from its context, aroused hostility among traditional women who saw it as a condemnation of their life choices.

Statements made by both Clintons during the primaries also made Clinton's wife an inviting Republican target. In early campaigning, they emphasized their partnership. "In January, Bill Clinton told a CNN interviewer that he might appoint her to a Cabinet post. 'I wouldn't rule it out,' he said. 'She'd be the best I could find.' At fund raisers, he used to quip, 'Buy one, get one free!'"³⁰ She said, "If you elect Bill, you get me," and bluntly asserted that she did not plan to "check her brain at the White House door."³¹ When asked to define the role of First Lady, she responded: "A partner. A partner who represents for all of us a view of who her husband is, as well as a symbol of women's concerns and interests at a particular time."³² These statements, highlighted by Gail Sheehy,³³ fed into fears that the Clintons might establish a kind of co-presidency. Patricia O'Brien comments that "she moved onto the national scene assuming her credentials were an asset. 'If you vote for him,' she proudly

said of her husband, 'you get me.' That produced a tremor of national nervousness."³⁴

In 1987, David Broder stated the questions raised this way:

When marriages are partnerships of independent, able and co-equal people and one of them seeks the presidency, new issues are created for voters, for reporters and for both spouses. . . . [T]he Constitution did not envisage the presidency as a dual office, and it is not clear what standards or methods are appropriate for ensuring accountability in the unelected half of these modern marriages.³⁵

Public fears were reflected in polling data. In a *New York Times*/CBS poll in March, 1992, 31 percent rated Clinton's wife favorably, 17 percent unfavorably, with 50 percent undecided or not knowing enough to comment. In mid-April in a *U.S. News & World Report* poll, 38 percent said she helped, while 30 percent said she hurt her husband's chances for election.³⁶ A *Newsweek* poll in July found 55 percent favorable.³⁷ A news story said simply that "too many voters are uncomfortable with her forcefulness, her intelligence, and her quick tongue";³⁸ in August, her favorable ratings were 33 percent; in October, they stood at 32 percent.³⁹

Given the controversy about her and its impact on the polls, Hillary Rodham Clinton silently played a traditional wifely role at the Democratic National Convention in July.⁴⁰ She was widely believed to have made a conscious effort to change her image from that point in the campaign, but the more significant changes had occurred earlier. In 1978, at the start of Clinton's first term as Arkansas governor, his wife reportedly "rejected makeup, glared through thick glasses, drowned herself in big shapeless fisherman's sweaters, and adamantly stuck to her maiden name."⁴¹ When Clinton lost his reelection campaign in 1980, Sheehy wrote,

Hillary determined to do whatever it took to put her husband back in power. So, without a word from Bill, she shed her name for his. She also dyed her hair, traded her thick glasses for contacts, and feigned an interest in fashion. The Clintons campaigned nonstop those next two years—on top of their jobs at respective law firms.⁴²

Hence, although she stopped wearing headbands and restyled her hair in 1992, the transformation into a more conventional political wife had begun more than a decade earlier.

It was hoped, moreover, that just as Tennessee Senator Albert Gore, Jr., Vietnam veteran and environmentalist, strengthened the Clinton presidential candidacy, so Mary Elizabeth "Tipper" Aitcheson Gore would be a counterweight to the more controversial presidential candidate's wife.

Tipper Aitcheson and Al Gore met at his high school prom. When he went to Harvard, she followed him to Boston and was graduated from Boston University in 1970 with a degree in psychology. They were married a month later. In 1976, when Gore was elected to Congress, his wife gave up her job as a newspaper photographer at *The Tennessean* in Nashville.

In Washington, she did free-lance photography and volunteer work for the homeless, activities that went unnoticed by the press, whereas her efforts to persuade the music industry to put warning labels on albums with sexually explicit and/or violent lyrics made her famous. She and Susan Baker, wife of then Secretary of the Treasury James A. Baker III, founded Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) and went on talk shows and wrote articles to publicize their cause. In 1985, Senator John Danforth, R-MO, chair of the Senate Commerce committee, on which Al Gore served, scheduled informational hearings.⁴³ The wives of six House members and ten Senators also wrote to the Recording Industry Association of America proposing a rating system that would tell consumers if records, tapes, or videos contained violent or sexually explicit lyrics; within weeks, the association agreed. Subsequently, Tipper Gore wrote *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society*, a serious attempt to argue for labeling based on research about the development of children's cognitive and emotional capacities and on the impact of sexually explicit and violent material on children. It also gave parents specific advice about how to protect their children from such material and how to organize to effect labeling and other warnings. She abruptly ended a book promotion tour in 1987 when her husband decided to seek the Democratic presidential nomination.

Tipper Aitcheson Gore's activities on behalf of warning labels, as one journalist wrote, "were extraordinary for the wife of a Southern politician. She had violated the rules of invisibility and seamliness. She was at the heart of a controversy that many musicians took as an assault on rock-and-roll and freedom of expression."⁴⁴ When her husband ran for the presidency in 1987, columnists criticized her efforts, efforts that also alienated some potential contributors.

In the words of Marjorie Williams, she had "unwittingly stirred powerful stereotypes of the bored housewife, with nothing better to do than stifle sexuality."⁴⁵ In 1992, Al Gore again faced questions about her activities from an MTV audience.⁴⁶

In 1992, however, Gore's wife was seen as an asset. "'She has been a big help to this ticket,' said Geoffrey Garin, a Democratic poll taker. 'She gives the Democratic Party real credentials on family value issues.'"⁴⁷ Shortly after the Democratic convention, a *New York Times* article reported efforts by Gore's wife and her friends "to undo the cartoonish image of her as the prissy, humorless Carry Nation of rock-and-roll."⁴⁸ Campaign strategists were pleased, however, about the contrast between her and Clinton's wife.

With a master's degree in psychology from George Peabody College in Nashville, Gore's wife chose while campaigning to speak on mental health issues, illustrated by an address to the American Nurses Association in Chicago in which she argued that health insurance should cover medications needed to treat psychological problems.⁴⁹ "Out on the campaign trail," wrote one journalist, "Mrs. Gore is an outspoken feminist who resents being cast as a decorative wife," and the Gores described their relationship "as a partnership of equals" and agreed that "she is one of her husband's closest political advisers."⁵⁰

Near the end of the campaign in an interview on "Good Morning America," October 22, 1992, she emphasized her educational credentials, her skills as a photographer, and her work on mental health and for the homeless and children as well as her work for warning labels. She also pointed out that although she stayed home and baked cookies, they were usually Pillsbury slice-and-bake!

In other words, Tipper Aitcheson Gore's positive image appears to rest on two things—that she gave up her career and stayed home and that her work for labelings on sexually explicit albums and lyrics was seen as an affirmation of family values and acceptable for a traditional mother and wife. In any event, neither Hillary Rodham Clinton's silence nor Tipper Aitcheson Gore's family values credentials deflected Republican attacks on Clinton's wife, which became part of the overall campaign strategy at the Republican national convention in Houston in August. In effect, "[t]he suggestion in the Republican strategy was that she represents the views Mr. Clinton secretly holds, too, but will not admit."⁵¹

The essentials of the attack were outlined by Daniel Wattenberg in the August *American Spectator*, in an essay entitled "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock."⁵² Using unidentified sources ("a Clinton insider," "a Clinton advisor," "a campaign source"), Wattenberg accused her of being a woman of "consuming ambition" and "inflexibility of purpose," guilty of "domination of a pliable husband," who has "an unsettling lack of tender human feeling, along with the affluent feminist's contempt for traditional female roles."⁵³ He compared her unfavorably to Eva Peron—Evita at least "was worshipped by the 'shirtless ones,'"—and to Winnie Mandela as well as to Lady Macbeth. He set about to show that a nice conservative girl (a 1964 Goldwater supporter) from the suburbs of Chicago underwent a "faculty mind-sweep" at Wellesley, quoting close college friend Eleanor Acheson, the granddaughter of Dean Acheson, as evidence. Moreover, he used the "anti-corporate, anti-acquisitive rhetoric" of her 1969 commencement speech as a graduating Wellesley senior to condemn her as a hypocrite because she later served on corporate boards and "made out like a bandit" from the fees, according to an unidentified tax expert.

That Hillary Rodham spoke first in the courtship with Bill Clinton was evidence of Hillary Rodham Clinton's domination of her husband, a domination reinforced by Wattenberg's claim that she screened Arkansas judicial appointees, which was referenced to comments in a *New York Times* story. That she was a protégée at Yale Law School of Burke Marshall, "the first person Ted Kennedy called after driving Mary Jo Kopechne off Chappaquiddick Bridge," created liberal guilt by association. Her left-wing extremism was emphasized with quotations from articles in the *Yale Review of Law and Social Action*, on whose editorial board she served, and from a special issue on the New Haven Black Panther trials for which she was the associate editor. Anti-"pig" art work in that issue was used to link her to the controversial rap artists NWA and Ice-T.

She represented, not women or children, according to Wattenberg, but a "feminist elite of working mothers." Sexual deviance was implied as her feminist extremism was emphasized by a report that she and her husband took separate vacations, that she often took mother-daughter vacations with Arkansas native Mary Steenburgen, and that San Francisco was a favorite destination. Moreover, her birth name Hillary Rodham appears on page one of her 1991 tax return!

Finally, Wattenberg attacked her service as chair of the board of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), to which she was appointed in 1978 by President Carter, and her work as director and chair of the board of the New World Foundation. What sympathizers would describe as her efforts to fend off attacks on the LSC are here described as illegal use of funds for political purposes and attempts to "nullify Reagan's mandate" by filing suit against the Reagan appointees named to dismantle the LSC. And he used New World Foundation grants to the Committee in Support of the People of El Salvador (CISPES), an allegedly communist group, to Fairness and Accuracy in Media (FAIR), described as "dedicated to exposing conservative bias in the media, especially the television networks," and to the Christic Institute to demonstrate her support of "crackpots" and her commitment to radical, far left causes.

Obviously, Wattenberg's article was written to provide conservatives with ammunition. According to Robin Toner, however, "[a]t least 20 articles in major publications this year involved some comparison between Mrs. Clinton and a grim role model for political wives: Lady Macbeth."⁵⁴ Reportedly, she was also compared to the Glenn Close role in the movie "Fatal Attraction," she was said to be "searching for a heart," and she was called a "feminazi," the "wicked witch of the East" (cf. "The Wizard of Oz") and a dragon lady (an epithet applied to Madame Chiang Kai-Shek).⁵⁵

Hillary Rodham Clinton has the dubious distinction of being the first presidential candidate's wife to be the focus of a major opposition strategy.⁵⁶ As described in *U.S. News & World Report*, "The Republican plan [wa]s to make 'Hillary' into a first-name-only bugaboo—lampooning her for having immoderate political views like other long-time liberal targets such as Teddy (Kennedy) and Jesse (Jackson)."⁵⁷

In addition to being Clinton's wife of seventeen years (as of October 13, 1992) and mother of a twelve-year-old daughter, Chelsea, she is a highly regarded and highly paid corporate trial lawyer whose career is separate from that of her husband and in the non-traditional field of private corporate litigation. In other words, she is the first presidential candidate's wife to have an independent career.

Because of her career, Hillary Rodham Clinton has a public record, which became a target of attack. An early analysis of her writings was made by liberal analyst Garry Wills for the *New York Review of Books*, who pronounced her legal

theory and her reasoning sound.⁵⁸ Her views were strongly criticized by conservatives, peaking in attacks at the Republican National Convention, but her writings later were defended as moderate and the Republican attacks were labeled distortions by legal scholars, primarily in elite media outlets.⁵⁹ Her proposal to reverse the traditional presumption in order to give children legal standing in court was attacked as inadequate to solve the problems of contemporary U.S. families by Christopher Lasch, a well-known and highly respected scholar.⁶⁰ That somewhat negative assessment diminished in importance for the public, owing to the rather clearcut and highly publicized case of Gregory Kingsley, a 12-year-old boy who successfully sued to be "divorced" from his biological parents in order to be adopted by his foster parents.⁶¹ A subsequent Garry Wills essay also attempted to refute most of the legal and other charges made by Wattenberg in the *American Spectator*.⁶²

At the Republican National Convention, attacks on Hillary Rodham Clinton were one facet of a larger effort to portray Republicans—epitomized by the presidential and vice-presidential families—as having "family values" whereas the Clintons lacked them. (References to the happily married Albert Gores and their four children or to Tipper Gore in particular were scrupulously avoided.) Richard N. Bond, Republican National Committee chair, initiated the attack just before the convention. Speaking in Houston, he "criticized Clinton for taking advice from his wife who would 'liken marriage and the family to slavery.'"⁶³ Vice President Dan Quayle also criticized her during the pre-convention period. Alluding to a speech she had given to the American Bar Association convention a few days earlier, Quayle said "she was evidence that 'the Clinton Presidential campaign is clearly in the pocket of the American Bar Association leadership.'"⁶⁴

At the convention and in prime time, losing presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan declared that Republicans were engaged in a religious and cultural war, denounced Hillary Rodham Clinton as a champion of "radical feminism," and claimed that "Clinton & Clinton" would "impose a far-left agenda on the nation."⁶⁵ Outside prime time, 1988 presidential candidate Pat Robertson asserted that the Clintons "are talking about a radical plan to destroy the traditional family and transfer its functions to the Federal Government."⁶⁶ As part of the strategy of identifying the Republican ticket with family values and painting Clinton's wife as a radical feminist and liberal, the wives of the

Republican presidential and vice presidential candidates were given prominent roles speaking to the convention in prime time on Wednesday evening.

In the midst of the attacks on Hillary Rodham Clinton, her similarities to the vice president's wife seemed to escape press and public notice. After all, Marilyn Tucker Quayle, a 43-year-old law school graduate, had said in a 1988 campaign interview, "I'm not just a little housewife that's been sitting at home."⁶⁷ Reportedly, she "told the *Washington Post* through clenched teeth that politicians in the past never acknowledged that 'your little wifey . . . helps you.'"⁶⁸ As quoted by Sidney Blumenthal, "'You shake hands,' she had told her husband in his first campaign for Congress. 'I'll do the rest.'"⁶⁹ When her husband was elected vice president, his wife said, "I thought, man, it's going to be tea and crumpets and I would just go nuts."⁷⁰ During Quayle's vice presidency, she worked out of a six-office suite in the Old Executive Office Building, and she described herself as "his chief political adviser. . . . Hers is, she emphasized, a 'professional' role on the vice president's staff."⁷¹

At the Republican convention Quayle's wife contributed to the overall Republican strategy with a speech in which she said of her generation, "Not everyone believed that the family was so oppressive that women could only thrive apart from it." She added what were the most frequently quoted statements from it: "They're [liberals] disappointed because most women do not wish to be liberated from their essential natures as women. Most of us love being mothers and wives."⁷² Subsequently, she claimed that her statements were willfully distorted by the press to suggest that she was saying that women should be kept "tied to the home."⁷³ That her words were understood that way was clear from op-eds by liberal writers,⁷⁴ as well as from reactions in focus groups, in which women recalled those words and resented them.⁷⁵

Following the convention, she campaigned actively, spending forty days on the campaign trail and appearing at more than 140 events. Despite criticism of her convention speech, she continued to emphasize its themes: "'Women are different than men: women are women,' she said [in an interview]. 'I find it outrageous that anyone would find that controversial.'"⁷⁶

The Republican attacks both achieved their goals and provoked a backlash. Reportedly, even Democratic focus groups "tended to perceive Hillary Clinton as a conniving, manipulative

spouse," and Mary Matalin, the Bush campaign's deputy director, reported that in their research, focus groups "have a sharper and more clear reaction to the spouses. Barbara is cookies and grandchildren. Hillary is too brassy and coldly ambitious. This leads to too much influence."⁷⁷

At the same time, the general tenor of the Republican convention as well as the specific attacks on Clinton's wife provoked a backlash.⁷⁸ Some of it was a reassertion of priorities: the economy and related issues were more important to voters; Republicans were not going to be allowed to shift the focus of the campaign from the economy to Bill Clinton's character. Some of the backlash was a rejection of the narrow definition of family values and morality that emerged during the convention.⁷⁹ Some came from women voters, especially single mothers and women employed outside the home, who felt that their life choices were under attack and their economic dilemmas were not understood.

The backlash among women was particularly significant because, in the presidential elections of 1980, 1984, and 1988, seven million more women than men voted.⁸⁰ These were also the elections in which the so-called "gender gap" first appeared, a difference reflected in support for George Bush.⁸¹ A poll in the *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 1992, reported that Bush and Clinton were each supported by 46 percent of men, but only 36 percent of women supported Bush whereas 54 percent supported Clinton; moreover, working women preferred Clinton to Bush by 58 to 34 percent. The pluses and minuses of Republican strategy were apparent in the election results. In the final vote, women preferred Clinton to Bush 46 to 37 percent, whereas "homemakers" preferred Bush to Clinton by 45 to 36 percent (there was no category for women employed outside the home); men preferred Clinton to Bush 41 to 38 percent. Men made up 46 percent of the total vote, women 54 percent.⁸²

The strategy also did not take account of the changes in the social and economic conditions of a majority of women. Women now make up an increasing percentage of the employed population over age 16, some 47 percent of workers in 1991, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.⁸³ The percentage of women over age 20 seeking jobs is now approaching 60 percent, and substantial numbers of mothers work, including 75 percent of those whose youngest child is under 18 and 55 percent of those with children under age 3, according to a recent analysis by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.⁸⁴ Such women are

concerned about economic issues and affected directly by adverse economic conditions. A women's research group was cited on ABC's "World News Tonight with Peter Jennings," September 24, 1992, as finding that the top priorities of women voters were equal pay, flextime, and affordable health care. In addition, a cover story published late in the campaign in *U.S. News & World Report* detailed the adverse impact of the recession on families.⁸⁵

Similarly, fewer families are made up of a mother, father, and minor children. Based on data from the Census Bureau, just 25.9 percent of households fit that traditional image in 1991, down from 30.9 percent in 1980 and 40.3 percent in 1970. Moreover, half of all marriages end in divorce, one-quarter of all births are to single mothers, and one in four Americans over age 18 have never married.⁸⁶ In other words, the traditional women to whom the strategy appealed had become a smaller proportion of the electorate.

The Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Hearings

No account of current attitudes toward women would be complete without material on the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings of October 1991, an event that focused attention on the problems of women in the workplace. The Hill-Thomas hearings energized feminists, both male and female, because the treatment of Anita Hill by the fourteen white male members of the Senate Judiciary Committee during the hearings came to symbolize traditional white male response to non-traditional women and their insensitivity to issues of concern to women in the workplace. The hearings motivated feminists to join organizations formed to support women candidates, such as Emily's List, the National Woman's Political Caucus, and the Fund for the Feminist Majority, to give money to such organizations and to women candidates directly, and to run for elective office in unparalleled numbers.

Commentary on the hearings has been widespread, and at least three book-length studies of the hearings have been published.⁸⁷ Here I want to make only a few comments pertinent to the argument of this essay.

Hill became a feminist symbol, although she disclaimed that label, and she did so despite her ethnicity, her color, and her socio-economic background. As Nancy Fraser noted, she "became, in effect, functionally white."⁸⁸ African-American historian Nell Irvin Painter wrote "Neither prostitute nor welfare mother, Hill, an

educated black woman, is hard to fit into the clichés of race."⁸⁹ Hill fit the feminist stereotype, however, as an unmarried, childless, ambitious, well-educated, middle-class professional bringing charges of sexual harassment, a legal concept developed by such contemporary feminists as Catharine MacKinnon.⁹⁰ Briefly, sex trumped race.

Not only was Hill "bleached" and cast as a feminist, but she also was forced into the stereotypes against which non-traditional women have struggled. Republican senators and witnesses supporting Thomas suggested that she was a woman scorned (a bitter old maid, a manhater, even, perhaps, a lesbian), an erotomaniac (a category unknown to psychology), a pawn of extremists, a woman out of touch with reality and given to sexual fantasies, and a cold, selfish, arrogant, self-centered, ambitious" person—an unwomanly woman.

Finally, the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee made no effort to make the hearing an education about the reality of sexual harassment. No expert witnesses were called. Little attention was paid to Hill's characterization of Thomas's action as an exercise of power, in her words, "to put me at a disadvantage so I would have to concede to his wishes. . . . I would be under his control. He was using his power and authority over me." Indeed, Republican Senator Orrin Hatch rejected such an interpretation out of hand, treating the Hill-Thomas relationship exclusively in romantic terms, asserting that no male with sexual interest in a woman would say the things that Hill alleged that Thomas had said. Finally, late in the hearings both Alan Simpson (R-WY) and Hank Brown (R-CO) callously revealed their attitudes toward the entire issue. Simpson jokingly commented that he used to read *Playboy* for the editorials; Brown elaborated by reporting that a student at the University of Colorado law school had inserted a *Playboy* centerfold into his torts examination and received one of the highest grades.

These moves made it easy for career and professional women and for feminists generally to identify with Anita Hill and mobilized them to support women officeholders who would behave differently in the face of such issues and events. There is no way, however, to assess the impact of the Hill-Thomas hearings on the treatment of Hillary Rodham Clinton. That there was some carryover of the resentment aroused by the attacks on Anita Hill to resentment over the attacks on Clinton's wife seems likely.

Indeed, the Hill-Thomas hearings may have increased in importance as time passed. When the hearings were held, a majority of women and men believed Thomas rather than Hill and supported his confirmation; however, many saw the hearings as evidence that a woman who spoke up to protest against discrimination would be attacked and silenced. Accordingly, by the time of the election, attacks on Hillary Rodham Clinton had the potential to be seen as another attempt to silence an "uppity" woman and to heighten the mobilization of women angered by the treatment of Hill. And polls showed that by election time, more people believed Anita Hill than believed Clarence Thomas.⁹¹

Feminism

Finally, along with the history of presidential wives, current attitudes toward presidential and vice-presidential spouses, and the Hill-Thomas hearings, some knowledge of feminism as a social movement is needed to understand this election year. It is noteworthy that the changes wrought by feminism had not significantly altered the status or treatment of spouses up through the 1988 campaign.⁹² The reason, as data about parenting and housework attest, is that marital and family relationships are areas of behavior highly resistant to change,⁹³ because of their public symbolic significance, attitudes toward the first and second families are perhaps even more resistant to modification.

This resistance is fueled by widely held cultural values about families and women's role in them expressed most succinctly in the mythic, universal dictum that "woman's place is in the home."⁹⁴ From the time that "feminism" acquired its contemporary meaning, that is, activity designed to improve the status and opportunities of women,⁹⁵ it has been a term with predominantly negative connotations. Suffragists such as the Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, for example, a premier persuader in the early movement and president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association from 1904 to 1915, resolutely denied that they were feminists;⁹⁶ only members of the more radical National Woman's Party, first sponsors of the ERA, were willing to appropriate that label. In recent decades, many feature stories have included anecdotes about women who say, "I'm not a feminist, but . . ." followed by espousal of equal pay, family leave, choice, or some other issue of special import for women. In other

words, labeling someone a feminist is unlikely to make her an attractive figure to most Americans, and Hillary Rodham Clinton's career made her a natural for such labeling. Moreover, the conservative counter-revolution of the Reagan-Bush era had nullified many feminist advances, ranging from the defeat of the ERA to limitations on the availability of abortions and a Bush veto of a family-leave bill. Finally, a decline in the traditional family and the rise of single-parent families headed by women were widely blamed for many of the ills of the society. Accordingly, an appeal to family values appeared to be a sound Republican strategy.

These values are rooted in the distant past. Nietzsche, a classical scholar as well as a philosopher, expressed views consistent with those of the ancient Greeks: "Woman is indescribably more evil than man; also cleverer: good nature is in woman a form of degeneration. . . . The fight for equal rights is actually a symptom of a disease. . . . Has my answer been heard to the question of how one *cures* a woman—'redeems' her? One gives her a child."⁹⁷

These values also derive from U.S. history. In nineteenth-century United States, woman's place came to be seen as strictly private and domestic, and she was defined as pure, pious, and submissive.⁹⁸ In effect, woman's potential to do evil (mythologized in the story of Pandora and of Eve's role in the fall in Genesis) could be contained if she remained in the home where her desirable qualities were nurtured, but if she left the domestic realm—to seek employment or to agitate against such moral evils as slavery, prostitution, or the abuse of alcohol—she became tainted, her purity vanished, and her evil potential, greater than that of man, would be realized. Moreover, even in the home, woman represented the temptations of the body, the seduction of sexuality, the sins of the flesh. Accordingly, her influence in any area, including the domestic, remained suspect.

Such beliefs have influenced political theory. For instance, despite contemporary commitments to individualism, there is a long tradition that brings the family and woman's traditional role in it into conflict with individual rights. Susan Okin writes:

[B]ehind the individualist rhetoric, it is clear that the family, not the adult human individual, is the basic political unit of liberal as well as non-liberal philosophers. In spite of the supposedly individualist premises of the liberal tradition, John Stuart Mill was the first of its members to

assert that the interests of women were by no means automatically upheld by the male heads of the families to which they belonged, and that therefore women, as individuals, should have independent political and legal rights.⁹⁹

These views and issues have their current counterpart in statements blaming the underclass on an African-American "matriarchy," and citing the single-parent, working mother as the cause of juvenile delinquency and rising rates of alcohol and drug abuse among minors.

In other words, our country has a long tradition of sexism and oppression of women. In the year of the woman, was that tradition altered, and, if so, to what extent? One kind of evidence is found in the divided votes of women—"home-makers" preferred Bush and employed women preferred Clinton. Clinton retained the support of a majority of women because the conditions of a majority of women have changed—most no longer stay at home. In other words, economic issues were important to most women, and they voted on the basis of those interests. In that sense, change occurred.

Have attitudes toward presidential wives changed? Think of the wives of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates (and all their predecessors) as resembling Rorschach tests, those ink blots into which psychologists invite us to read our hopes and fears and by so doing reveal ourselves to them. As such, our reactions to these women reveal more about us than about them. Consider the varied polling results in these terms. According to a Yankelovich poll conducted March 27-29, 1992 for *Vanity Fair*, 84 percent of those surveyed said they would not object to a first lady with separate career,¹⁰⁰ a finding that is not consistent with the approval ratings of the wives of the two major presidential candidates. A *USA Today/CNN/Gallup* poll of November 10-11, 1992 reported that 40% said Clinton's wife represents their values and lifestyles more than past first ladies, and 40% said she doesn't; the rest had no opinion. Overall ratings were 49% favorable, 30% unfavorable. Of men, 44% were favorable, 31% unfavorable; of women 52% were favorable, 30% unfavorable; 25% of respondents were concerned that she might have too large a role in the new administration, 4% thought her role might not be large enough, 67% chose neither alternative, 3% had no opinion.¹⁰¹ Obviously, Americans have mixed, even contradictory feelings about these symbolic women; at best, they reflect ambivalence, but

ambivalence is an attitude vulnerable to change.

What factors might facilitate or hinder such changes? At least four emerge out of my research. First, change is hindered by definitions of what it is to be a political wife. In *Now You Know*, Katharine "Kitty" Dickson Dukakis writes: "There is absolutely no way to lead a normal life during a presidential race. You have to make up your mind you're going to give yourself totally to the project. Your course is set and you must follow it. Everything else falls by the wayside."¹⁰² That was not the case, however, for John Zaccaro in the 1980 Mondale-Ferraro campaign (even before his business dealings became a campaign issue), and expecting a total commitment to campaigning appears to apply only to the wives but not the husbands of candidates. Could a marriage survive, could a male politician win the presidency if his wife did not campaign with him or campaigned very little? In a paper entitled "Psychiatric Danger of Running for Office," psychiatrist and assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School William S. Appleton writes:

The pressure on a politician's wife to serve her husband selflessly comes from him, from his political family [or staff], and from the public Thus a political wife is expected to conduct herself as a Victorian woman, to submerge her own personality and devote herself to the career of her man. The modern spouse may not want to do so—with resulting marital discord—or may try to cooperate against her real wishes while feeling depressed and angry.¹⁰³

To my knowledge, only Jesse Jackson's wife successfully resisted most of these pressures. The press, the public, and their spouses appear to demand of political wives what they do not expect of political husbands.¹⁰⁴

A second factor affecting changes in attitudes is the career choices made by spouses. As in the cases of the Clintons and Quayles, law is a likely career choice of many women and men interested in politics and who, like these couples, meet and decide to marry while in law school. Conflicts of interest, however, are such that a legal career becomes extremely difficult if one's spouse is elected to office on the national level. By contrast, had she chosen to do so, Tipper Aitcheson Gore probably could have continued to be a child psychologist during her husband's career in Congress and his campaigns to become the Democratic presidential nominee and to be elected to the vice presidency. Marjorie Williams

argues that "the right test case of the 'new' political spouse" will not be Clinton's wife; instead, she writes: "That role will someday fall to a president's wife who continues to pursue a career *entirely unrelated to that of her husband*" such as "a successful doctor, engineer or architect."¹⁰⁵ That, of course, ignores most of the elements involved in factor one.

The press is a third factor affecting change. Cultural norms and values influence news coverage because they define what is newsworthy, that is, what is deviant, dramatic, and controversial. In other words, news norms heighten curiosity about any comment or activity by a presidential wife that might be construed as controversial or as a departure from traditional norms and values. Consider the criticism aroused by reports that Rosalynn Smith Carter sat in on cabinet meetings and that Barbara Pierce Bush disagreed with her husband about prohibiting ownership of assault rifles.¹⁰⁶ News norms will make it far more difficult for a presidential wife to modify her role precisely because reporters seek juicy stories that attract attention by arousing controversy. News norms insure the accuracy of Patricia O'Brien's prediction that Hillary Rodham Clinton will generate controversy as the president's wife.¹⁰⁷

News norms also affect the kind of coverage that occurs. The most damaging statement by Hillary Rodham Clinton—"I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas"—was excerpted, taken out of context, in most news coverage. Patricia O'Brien comments that "the rest of the quote negated what was provocative, and when the whole quotation makes the sound bite less interesting, it gets dropped."¹⁰⁸ The search for the juicy story tends to create controversy where none exists.

Finally, there is the changing reality of the women themselves, the women who will be prospective first or second ladies. The differences in the lives of the six leading presidential and vice-presidential candidate wives are instructive. In my view, they fall into two groups. Barbara Pierce Bush, Margot Birmingham Perot, and Sybil Bailey Stockdale represent an older generation, and of that group, Barbara Pierce Bush is the most traditional. She dropped out of Smith College to marry, and she has been a stay-home mother and homemaker all her life.¹⁰⁹

Margot Birmingham Perot and Sybil Bailey Stockdale represent the beginnings of change. Perot's wife earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Goucher and taught fourth grade in a private school until the birth of the Perots' first

child. Perot's company, Electronic Data Systems, was started with \$1,000 from his wife's savings, and she, along with his sister and mother, was on its original board of directors. At first, when asked what project she might pursue if her husband were elected, she had no answer; according to Garry Wills, "she asked the reporter to suggest one to her."¹¹⁰ Later, when interviewed on "Good Morning, America," October 21, 1992, she said, "things are different now," explaining that a president's wife cannot go to Washington and live a private life. She indicated an interest in health issues unique to women, and, as a former teacher, a desire to work on issues concerning children.

Sybil Bailey Stockdale earned a B.A. in religion from Mount Holyoke and an M.A. in education from Stanford and worked as a teacher before and after her marriage. When her husband was shot down and held prisoner by the North Vietnamese for over seven years, she became the single mother of four sons. She became a public figure as she organized the wives of POWs and MIAs into the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia to lobby the government to protest North Vietnam's violations of the Geneva Convention; she met with President Nixon and with the North Vietnamese delegation at the Paris peace talks.¹¹¹ In an interview she was asked about what project she might pursue as wife of the vice president:

"I was a single mother for eight years," she said, "I know what a gut-wrenching job that is. I'd like to do something to help." Another interest is AIDS. The son of a close friend died of it. "I'd like to do something to advance the research to get ahead of that terrible disease."¹¹²

Those projects reflect her personal experiences as well as changed conditions in the United States.

Tipper Aitcheson Gore is a bridge linking the two groups. Like Sybil Bailey Stockdale, she has a B.A. and an M.A. and four children. She forsook outside employment as a photographer or child psychologist once her husband embarked on a political career. In making that choice, she resembles Barbara Pierce Bush. On the other hand, her efforts for voluntary labeling of music albums and videos, including her book, were an attempt to create an identity for herself separate from that of her husband; in her words, "I think it is very important to have your own identity; otherwise you are simply in the shadow of the man."¹¹³

Marilyn Tucker Quayle and Hillary Rodham Clinton are much alike. Both are intelligent and ambitious; both are lawyers with strong interests in public policy. Both have played major roles in their husbands' careers. Both have had to pay a steep price for their husbands' political ambitions. Like Gore's wife, Quayle's wife gave up her legal career when her husband decided to run for Congress and has channeled her ambitions and intelligence into promoting his career, but many reports indicate that she deeply resents those who belittle her role and importance. She wants to be recognized as his partner and advisor. At the same time, however, as her rhetoric at the convention and during the campaign attests, she wants to claim that she has been true to her nature as a woman—asserting the primacy of being a wife and mother. She seems to embody, in the most painful way, the ambivalence able, intelligent women feel. In my view, she has been unable to resolve the conflict.

By contrast, Hillary Rodham Clinton seems to have made peace with combinations and compromises. She moved to Arkansas in service of the political ambitions of the man she loved. When he was defeated for re-election in 1980, she remade her image to fit the expectations of Arkansas voters. With her husband as the poorly paid governor of a small state, she became a corporate litigator for a private law firm and served on the boards of directors of corporations, earning the money needed to finance their future. She has been an attentive, caring mother while she also worked to enable her husband to achieve his goals. All agree that she played a crucial role in gaining acceptance for and implementing his educational reforms in Arkansas.

In other words, in her own way, Hillary Rodham Clinton, like Barbara Pierce Bush, has poured her life into that of her husband; she has made her life serve his ambitions. Perhaps she is less a symbol of the opportunity to expand the first ladyship and more an illustration of the shrinking options of the wife of any man with high political ambitions.

Bill Clinton's election to the presidency offers his wife an opportunity to redefine the functions and roles of presidential spouse. Whatever redefinition she effects will not be the result of a feminist revolution or of a fundamental reevaluation of marital relationships; it will be a consequence of fortuitous circumstances that have combined to bring an extraordinarily able woman into the White House and to bring a man to the presidency who is exceptional precisely because he is comfortable with a more egalitar-

ian marital partnership and willing to acknowledge that partnership publicly.

On Monday, November 9, 1992, Warren Christopher, co-chair of Clinton's transition team, announced on CNN that Clinton's wife would have no formal position in the new administration and would play a "traditional" role as the first lady. The legal barriers of a 1967 anti-nepotism law (5 U.S.C. §3110 1980), conflicts of interest, and political resistance may preclude a formal role for her in the government. She is one of the few people involved in the key policy and personnel decisions of the Clinton administration, a role that was acknowledged and affirmed by the president-elect, and she is now in charge of a central domestic policy area as head of the President's Task Force on National Health Reform.

Following the election, press aides to former presidential wives talked about the challenges Clinton's wife faces.¹¹⁴ Letitia Baldrige, press aide to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, said "She can't be perceived by . . . the public or the press as interfering. . . . You don't do it openly. . . . You do it behind the scenes." Merrie Spaeth, a special assistant to Ronald Reagan, said: "It isn't an up-front role." They expressed reservations about a formal government position: "Bobby Kennedy didn't sleep with the President," Mrs. (Sheila) Tate, Nancy Davis Reagan's press secretary, said. "That special relationship resonates differently with the American people." Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld, White House press secretary for Betty Bloomer Ford, said, "[T]he White House is a very chauvinist place. There's no understanding of what to do with the First Lady. The people in the West Wing know there is pillow talk, and they resent it." She added: "When Rosalynn Carter sat in at a Cabinet meeting, there was a lot of criticism, and rightly so. It was the wrong symbolism. It made people wonder, 'Where's the heart? Where's the compassion?'" Sheila Tate commented, "They [the American people] want her to carve out her own niche without becoming power hungry" and described the conflicting expectations as "Brutal." If they are right, Hillary Rodham Clinton will indeed have to be smart, clever, and lucky in the months and years ahead.

Changes have occurred, yes. More women are working outside the home; more are opting for careers. More women are running for political office, and more of them are being elected. More women are protesting against such abuses of power as sexual harassment. Arguably, 1992 was the year of the woman; I do not think it was the year of the wife.

Endnotes

1. Abraham Zaleznik, a psychoanalyst, in commentary on the 1992 presidential campaign on PBS's "Listening to America," October 20, 1992.
2. Kitty Kelley, *Nancy Reagan: The Unauthorized Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991) offers extensive evidence of the key role that Reagan's wife played in all these areas, including her impact on the INF Treaty with the Soviet Union and her importance in the drafting of presidential addresses (e.g., pp. 341, 451, 488). That is also demonstrated by other books by members of Reagan's staff and cabinet, e.g. Donald T. Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988).
3. *The White House Press Conferences of Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. and intro. Maurine Beasley (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), p. 128, quoted in Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 192.
4. Joseph Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York, 1971), p. 471, quoted in Caroli, p. 192.
5. Stanley G. Hilton, *Bob Dole: American Political Phoenix* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1988), p. 127.
6. Bob and Elizabeth Dole with Richard Norton Smith, *The Doles: Unlimited Partners* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), pp. ix-xii.
7. Ann Grimes, *Running Mates: The Making of a First Lady* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), pp. 73-74.
8. Grimes, p. 89.
9. Quoted in Grimes, p. 91; italics in original.
10. Grimes, p. 92.
11. "Hers," September 11, 1987; quoted in Grimes, p. 110.
12. Quoted in Grimes, p. 318. See also Susan Riley, *Political Wives: The Lives of the Saints* (Toronto: Deneau, 1987), pp. 3-4.
13. Marjorie Williams, "Barbara's Backlash," *Vanity Fair* (August 1992):180.
14. *Washington Post*, October 11, 1992:B2.
15. *New York Times*, October 8, 1992:A31.
16. The precedent for this was Elizabeth "Betty" Bloomer Ford whose candid comments on such controversial issues as premarital sex, abortion, the ERA, and pot smoking produced strong approval ratings. See Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld, *First Lady's Lady: With the Fords at the White House* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), pp. 201, 216.
17. Personal interview, November 11, 1992.
18. Newhouse News Service, [Minneapolis] *Star Tribune*, 27 August 1992:7A.
19. Quoted in Deirdre McMurdy, "The Political Wife: Hillary Clinton Redefines Her Role," *Maclean's*, July 1992:34.
20. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1955); for distinctions between class and status, see Richard Hofstadter, "The Pseudo-Conservative Right," pp. 33-55, and Seymour Lipset, "The Sources of the Radical Right," pp. 166-234, *The New American Right* ed. Daniel Bell (New York: Criterion Books, 1955).
21. Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963).
22. Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant, *All by Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign*. Chester, Conn: Globe Pequot Press, 1989.
23. For details, see Sidney Blumenthal, "The Secret War for the White House," *Vanity Fair* (June 1992):58-70.
24. "My Twelve-Year Affair with Bill Clinton," *Star*, January 28, 1992; on January 23, when the *Star* leaked its story via fax to dozens of leading journalists, NBC was the only major network to carry an item on its newscast, but ABC devoted that night's episode of *Nightline* to debating how such a story should be handled (William A. Henry III, "Handling the Clinton Affair," *Time*, February 10, 1992, pp. 28, 29). Three days later, on Superbowl Sunday, January 26, the

Clintons appeared on "60 Minutes." One day later, January 27, CNN carried Flowers's news conference live; all three network newscasts led with the Flowers press conference. "A Current Affair," February 6, 1992, on Fox, included an interview with Flowers and on which she sang "Stand By Your Man," (for which she also was paid) attracted an estimated 21 million viewers according to the *New York Times*, April 30, 1992:A11. For information on Flowers's credibility, see Blumenthal, "The Secret War for the White House," and *Newsweek*, February 3, 1992, p. 20. Two weeks before the election, the December 1992 *Penthouse* appeared, in which, for an undisclosed sum, Flowers posed seductively and charged that Clinton had impregnated her, offering medical evidence that she had had an abortion.

25. Quoted in *USA Today*, October 9, 1992:8A.

26. Steven V. Roberts with Gloria Borger, Michael Barone, Matthew Cooper and Ted Slafsky, "Defusing the Bombshell," *U.S. News & World Report*, February 3, 1992, p. 31.

27. Two days before the Illinois primary, the *Washington Post* published a story noting that Hillary Rodham Clinton's law firm did significant work for the Arkansas state government, though she did not share profits from the firm's state business. In a debate among the Democratic candidates in Chicago, Jerry Brown made the charge and Clinton exploded angrily saying Brown wasn't fit to "be on the same platform with my wife." See Special Election Issue, *Newsweek*, November/December 1992:39.

28. This line was quoted on "Dateline" with Jane Pauley.

29. Quoted in Margaret Carlson, "All Eyes on Hillary" [cover story], *Time*, September 14, 1992:30.

30. Marjorie Williams, "First Ladies," *Washington Post Magazine*, November 1, 1992: 11-13, 24-25; cited material on p. 24.

31. Quoted in Deirdre McMurdy, "The Political Wife: Hillary Clinton Redefines Her Role," *Maclean's*, July 1992:34.

32. Patricia O'Brien, "The First Lady With A Career?" *Working Woman* (August 1992):72.

33. Gail Sheehy, "What Hillary Wants," *Vanity Fair* (May 1992): 142-47, 212-17.

34. O'Brien, p. 47.

35. "Women in the Race," *Washington Post*, April 1987; quoted in Ann Grimes, *Running Mates: The Making of a First Lady*. New York: William Morrow, 1990, p. 40.

36. Quoted in Jeffrey Schmalz, "A Spouse Who Grabs the Stage," *New York Times*, April 28, 1992:A9.

37. Doug Grow, "Hillary Clinton seen as Radical and Inspirational," [Minneapolis] *Star Tribune*, July 28, 1992:3B.

38. Carol Byrne and Robert Whereatt, "Stopping In and Speaking Out," [Minneapolis] *Star Tribune*, July 29, 1992:A1.

39. *New York Times*, October 8, 1992:A31.

40. Reporter Ellen Warren, Knight-Ridder Newspapers, reports that at the Democratic convention, she was dressed in an apron and was passing out her chocolate chip cookies. She also ended every speech during this period, "P.S., try my cookies." (Personal interview, November 11, 1992).

41. Sheehy, p. 215.

42. Sheehy, p. 216. Robert Unger, a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, covered the Clintons for ten years starting in the spring of 1981. He describes the changes as occurring far more gradually and involving Hillary's struggle to accommodate herself to campaigning and to become more gregarious and confident and less shy in appealing to and approaching voters (personal interview, December 2, 1992). See also Judith Warner, *Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story* (New York: Signet, 1993).

43. Tipper Gore, *Raising PG Kids In An X-Rated Society* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), p. 32.

44. Dugger, p. A15.

45. Marjorie Williams, *Washington Post Magazine*, November 1, 1992:24.

46. AP Story, *Boston Globe*, October 22, 1992:A20.

47. Dirk Johnson, "A Political Spouse Who Doesn't Duck the Issues," *New York Times*, October 20, 1992.

48. Celia W. Dugger, "The Prime of Tipper Gore: She Knows How to Play the Game," *New York Times*, July 19, 1992: A15.
49. Dirk Johnson, "A Political Spouse . . ."
50. Alex S. Jones, "Al Gore's Double Life," *New York Times Magazine* (October 25, 1992):40-44, 76-79; cited material on 44.
51. Michael Kelly, "Contest of Two Generations Has Risks for Both Nominees," *New York Times*, August 30, 1992:A15.
52. Vol. 25, no. 8 (August 1992):25-32.
53. Wattenberg, p. 26.
54. Robin Toner, "Backlash for Hillary Clinton Puts Negative Image to Rout," *New York Times*, September 24, 1992:A1; see, for example, Elizabeth Kolbert, "Test Marketing a President," *New York Times Magazine*, August 30, 1992:24.
55. Ellen Goodman, (*Boston Globe*) [Minneapolis] *Star Tribune*, August 23, 1992:A30; Catherine Manegold, "Women Get into Political Football—as the Ball," *New York Times*, August 23, 1992:E1.
56. In 1944, Republicans had buttons that said "We Don't Want Eleanor Either!" In 1988, Senator Steven Symms, a conservative Republican, claimed that Kitty Dukakis had burned an American flag during an antiwar demonstration in the 1960s and that pictures existed of her doing so. She emphatically denied the charge; during that time she was living the quiet life of a suburban matron and caring for her babies. No photographs ever came to light. See Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant, *All By Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign* (Chester, Conn.: The Globe Pequot Press, 1989), p. 191.
57. "The Race," *U.S. News & World Report*, August 31/September 7, 1992:40.
58. Garry Wills, "H.R. Clinton's Case," *New York Review of Books* (March 5, 1992):3-5.
59. Douglas Laycock, "What Hillary Clinton Really Said," *Wall Street Journal* (September 16, 1992):A17; Tamar Lewin, "Legal Scholars See Distortion in Attacks on Hillary Clinton," *New York Times*, August 24, 1992:A1, A16; Eleanor Clift with Pat Wingert, "Hillary Clinton's Not-So-Hidden Agenda," *Newsweek*, September 21, 1992:90.
60. Christopher Lasch, "Hillary Clinton, Childsaver: What She Values Will Not Help the Family," *Harper's Magazine*, October 1992:74-82.
61. He was interviewed by Barbara Walters on *20/20*, September 24, 1992; see also Pat Wingert and Eloise Salholz, "Irreconcilable Differences" [cover story], *Newsweek*, September 21, 1992:84-90; a news segment on the trial appeared on "ABC Nightly News with Peter Jennings," September 24, 1992. Subsequently, his story has been made into two highly sympathetic made-for-television movies that have been broadcast in prime time on ABC and CBS.
62. Garry Wills, "A Doll's House?" *New York Review of Books* (October 22, 1992):6-10.
63. Gwen Ifill, "G.O.P. Makes Hillary Clinton Issue of the Day," *New York Times*, August 13, 1992:A11.
64. Ifill, p. A11.
65. *New York Times*, August 20, 1992:A6.
66. *New York Times*, August 20, 1992:A20.
67. Quoted by Marjorie Williams, "First Ladies," *Washington Post Magazine* (November 3, 1992):11-13, 24-26, cited material on p. 13.
68. Sheehy, p. 142.
69. Sidney Blumenthal, "Dan's Big Plan," *Vanity Fair* (September 1992):288.
70. Quoted in Ellen Goodman, "Call off GOP Attack-Hillary Dogs," (*Boston Globe*) in [Minneapolis] *Star Tribune*, August 23, 1992:30A.
71. Williams, p. 24.
72. Quoted in Ellen Goodman, "Call Off GOP Attack-Hillary Dogs," (*Boston Globe*) [Minneapolis] *Star Tribune*, August 23, 1992:A30.
73. Marilyn Quayle, "Workers, Wives and Mothers," *New York Times*, September 11, 1992.

74. Mary M. Cheh, "Marilyn Quayle's False Choices," *New York Times*, September 5, 1992:13Y; Anna Quindlen, "One View Fits All," *New York Times*, September 6, 1992:E11.

75. Robin Toner, "Backlash for Hillary Clinton Puts Negative Image to Rout," *New York Times*, September 24, 1992:A23.

76. Larry Rohter, "Unrepentant, Marilyn Quayle Stresses Family and Values," *New York Times*, October 28, 1992:A10.

77. Elizabeth Kolbert, "Test Marketing a President," *New York Times Magazine* (August 30, 1992):68.

78. One measure of the backlash is that on CNN's Newsmaker Sunday, October 11, 1992, Charles Black, senior Bush campaign aide, said: "I won't concede that we made Hillary Clinton an issue in the campaign. The issue was family values."

79. A survey analysis by three Republican pollsters, Neil Newhouse, W.D. McInturff, and Glen Bolger of Public Opinion Strategies, revealed "that voters' negative images of the Republican Party have increased. Newhouse said that in focus groups and surveys when voters are asked how they would describe the GOP, such words and phrases as intolerant and closed-minded are coming up with increasing frequency" (Thomas B. Edsall, "Pollsters Depict a Complex Electorate," *Washington Post*, December 3, 1992:A9).

80. Catherine S. Manegold, "Women Get Into Political Football—As The Ball," *New York Times*, August 23, 1992:E1.

81. John Aloysius Farrell and Michael Kranish, "GOP Sees Its Stress on Values Backfire," *Boston Globe*, August 28, 1992.

82. "Portrait of the Electorate," *New York Times*, November 5, 1992:B9. These 1992 data were collected by Voter Research and Surveys based on questionnaires completed by 15,490 voters leaving 300 polling places around the nation on election day. Reportedly, other exit polls indicated a 51 to 31 percent preference for Clinton over Bush (Perot 18%) by women employed outside the home, identified as "career women" (*U.S. News & World Report*, November 16, 1992:41). In late 1992, three Republican pollsters also found an "overwhelming 45-25 percent Democratic allegiance of working women" whereas "women who describe themselves as homemakers are split evenly between the two parties" (Edsall, p. A9).

83. Felicity Barringer, "In Family-Leave Debate, A Profound Ambivalence," *New York Times*, October 7, 1992:A1, A22. For more details, see *The American Woman, 1992-93: A Status Report* ed. Paula Ries and Anne J. Stone for the Women's Research and Education Institute, Betty Dooley, Executive Director (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), tables 6-3, 6-7, 6-8, 6-9.

84. Quoted in Lynda Richardson, "Cookie Cutter Roles for Mothers Are Gone," *New York Times*, September 2, 1992:A18. In that story, Richardson cited a survey published three years earlier in *Child Magazine* reflecting women's ambivalence about employment versus staying in the home in which nearly half (49 percent) of stay-home mothers said employed mothers did not spend enough time with their children, and one-fourth said employed mothers put their own needs before their children's. Among employed mothers, half said they worked primarily for financial reasons, but half also said they would keep their jobs even if they could get their salary without working. Conflicting feelings about their choices may explain why resentment might be aroused by condemnations of non-traditional families or attacks on the life styles of both stay-home mothers and those employed outside the home. In 1980, historian Carl Degler wrote that despite increased participation in the work force, "there was very little change in the place or the position of women in the family," noting that employed women continued to take primary responsibility for housework and child-rearing (*At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980], p. 430.)

85. "Love & Money," *U.S. News and World Report*, October 19, 1992:54-60.

86. "Married with Children: The Waning Icon," *New York Times*, August 23, 1992:E2.

87. Timothy M. Phelps and Helen Winternitz, *Capitol Games: Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill, and the Story of a Supreme Court Nomination* (New York: Hyperion, 1992); *Court of Appeal: The Black Community Speaks Out on the Racial and Sexual Politics of Thomas v. Hill* ed. Robert Chrisman and Robert L. Allen (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992); *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon, 1992).

88. "Sex, Lies, and the Public Sphere: Some Reflections on the Confirmation of Clarence Thomas," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Spring 1992):595-612; cited material on p. 604.

89. "Who Was Lynched," *Nation* (November 11, 1991):577.
90. *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979).
91. According to a *Wall Street Journal/NBC News* poll, 44% of registered voters now say Hill was telling the truth, up from 24% a year ago, while support for Thomas's version has dropped from 40% to 34%. Quoted in Jill Smolowe, "Anita Hill's Legacy," *Time*, October 19, 1992:56.
92. *Boston Globe* correspondent Tom Oliphant, a veteran of six presidential campaigns, suggests that Kitty Dickson Dukakis may have altered norms for campaigning. He wrote: "Mrs. Dukakis makes clear a hundred times a day that she is not running for president herself, but her campaigning is almost never 'wifey'—it is overtly, unabashedly political. It is also essentially without precedent in modern presidential politics. . . . Without much notice, Kitty Dukakis is shattering these conventions [of not addressing issues or offering opinions] daily as she tours the country." (Quoted in Grimes, p. 224).
93. According to Jessie Bernard, "A considerable body of research . . . [shows that] the sharing of the provider role by wives has not always meant the sharing of household or child-care roles by husbands" and what is resented by wives is the "lack of support from their husbands in these responsibilities. The shared-role marriage is still more talked about than practiced" (*The Future of Marriage* rev. ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 299-300).
94. Elizabeth Janeway, *Man's World, Woman's Place: A Study in Social Mythology* (New York: William Morrow, 1971).
95. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
96. Wilmer A. Linkugel, "The Speeches of Anna Howard Shaw, Collected and Edited with Introduction and Notes." 2 vols. Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1960.
97. *Ecce Homo*. trans. Walter Kauffman, p. 26 quoted in Ellen Kennedy, "Nietzsche: Women as Untermensch," in *Women in Western Political Philosophy: Kant to Nietzsche* ed. Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 187.
98. Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966), p. 21.
99. Susan Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 282.
100. Cited by Sheehy, p. 143. In that poll, 41% of respondents had generally favorable impressions of Hillary Rodham Clinton while 24% were unfavorable; 55% thought she was an asset to the campaign; 24% thought she was a liability. Respondents used the following descriptions: intelligent (75%); tough-minded (65%); a good role model for women (48%); a feminist in the best possible sense (44%). The negatives: power-hungry (44%); too intense (36%); a wife who dominates her husband (28%); and 55% thought their relationship is more a "professional arrangement" and 22% a "real marriage."
101. Mimi Hall, "No Last Word on the New First Lady," *USA Today*, November 13, 1992. Favorable-unfavorable ratings among those age 18-29 were 43 to 42%, age 30-49 were 51 to 30%, age 50-64 were 43 to 30% and age 65 and over were 56 to 17%. Those "most likely to identify with her: Easterners, college graduates, urbanites. Least likely: Midwesterners, suburbanites, high school dropouts and baby boomers."
102. Kitty Dukakis with Jane Scovell, *Now You Know* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 210.
103. Published in *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*; quoted in Grimes, p. 237.
104. Two books suggest that the demands are nearly universal. Myra MacPherson, *The Power Lovers: An Intimate Look at Politics and Marriage* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975) indicates that among U.S. politicians' wives, there are almost no exceptions to the views expressed by Kitty Dickson Dukakis. Susan Riley's *Political Wives* looks at the wives of Canadian Prime Ministers and arrives at similar conclusions.
105. "First Ladies," p. 25.
106. Donnie Radcliffe, *Simply Barbara Bush: A Portrait of America's Candid First Lady* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), p. 44. After she made the remark, press secretary Marlin Fitzwater told the press corps that there was "no dispute" between the President and Mrs. Bush on banning AK-47s. Later a spokeswoman for the First Lady delivered the word: "Barbara Bush would henceforth have no comment on controversial political issues."

107. Personal interview, November 11, 1992.

108. Personal interview, November 11, 1992.

109. In response to a query "on why she chose to be a homemaker rather than pursue a career," she said: "Do you think you'd say that to Arthur Miller, who wrote two plays? Would you say, 'You chose to be a homemaker' to him? I've written two books. I've done a lot more than raise a wonderful family" (*USA Today*, October 9, 1992:9A).

110. Wills, "A Doll's House," p. 10. When Perot first entered the race, he and his wife appeared on *20/20* (July 1992) and were interviewed by Barbara Walters. When asked about their relationship, Margot said, "Ross encourages me to be independent."

111. Jim and Sybil Stockdale, *In Love and War: The Story of a Family's Ordeal and Sacrifice During the Vietnam Years*. Rev. Ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990). See also her testimony on December 3, 1992, before the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, aired on C-SPAN.

112. Jane Meredith Adams, "No Shrinking Violet, She," *Boston Globe*, November 2, 1992:10, and Jane Meredith Adams, "'In Love and War'—and Now in Politics," *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1992, Sec.5:1.

113. Quoted in Grimes, p. 98. At a 1976 seminar for political spouses following her husband's election to Congress, Gore's wife asked, "Isn't there more than going to teas here?" Cited in Dirk Johnson, "A Political Spouse Who Doesn't Duck the Issues," *New York Times*, October 20, 1992.

114. Felicity Barringer, "Hillary Clinton's New Role: A Spouse or a Policy Leader?" *New York Times* (November 16, 1992:A1, A14; material cited below is on A14.