

# ARTS & CULTURE



## CRITICUS

# No Contest

G. B. TENNYSON

Criticus has long since despaired of being able to induce any meaningful portion of the American public to take up the sport of literary competitions. These are the delightful pursuits featured in various *transaquapontine* journals and newspapers (and more rarely in *cisaquapontine* ones) inviting readers to contribute brief and usually comic pieces — poems, fictions, essays, or other written excursions — on a set theme or following a set format. One might be invited, for example, to write a poem about some aspect of current affairs in the style, rhyme, and metre of “The Charge of the Light Brigade” (“Into the Valley of Death rode last year’s Liberals”). Or one might be asked to write about a contemporary topic in the manner of a noted author, say, Dr. Johnson (“Sir, to answer your question about the proper deportment of a president, I tell you that if he would be respected, he must keep not only his wits about him but his

trousers up”) or Jane Austen (“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a First Lady who does not bake cookies must be in want of a warm oven”). Or to write advertising copy for some product (“Try the Joycelyn Elders Rubber Glove! Ideal for Tyro Teenagers. Later, Doubles as a Multiple Condom!”). Or — well, you get the idea. You can also imagine the look of pitying scorn that a feeble proposal to institute such a competition in these pages evoked from the jaded editor.

As it happens, my own taste leans rather more towards inadvertent humor. Not a joke about Joycelyn Elders but an appearance by the former Surgeon General herself, in full Admiralty regalia and full Baptist preacher delivery of her own lines (“we need saaaay-fer guns ayand saaaay-fer bullets”). Thereanent, there has long been a kind of unofficial competition for the tabloid newspaper headline that most completely captures the obsessions of the popular press. In Britain this must involve sex,

---

*G.B. Tennyson is professor of English at U.C.L.A. and co-editor of Nineteenth Century Literature.*

religion, illness, and the royal family. A classic of the type is: "Pregnant Nun in Mercy Dash to Palace." In America I think such a headline must involve sex, money, race, and a film or sports celebrity. My offering would be: "Liz and O.J. Blackmailed with Photos of Torrid Prison Passion."

**B**ut, as Dr. Elders is our witness, life is such that we need not always make up our amusements. I have before me an advertisement for an actual book titled *Seasons of the Spirit*, which is innocuous enough, but it is subtitled *Meditations of a Jogging Nun*. Here is how the ad describes Sister Helena Marie's book: "The changing seasons, captured in beautiful color photographs, become the substance of spiritual reflection as the author records her thoughts during her daily jog through a New York City park." No, constant readers, I am not making this up. No mercy dash to palace equals the mental picture that flashed into my head upon reading this: a nun in full traditional habit, wimple awamble, dodging the in-line skaters and drug pushers in Central Park and meditating the while for fame and profit. I rather fear, however, that, if too successful, the jogging nun could end up like the singing one — remember "Dominique-a-nique-a-nique-a-nique" etc? — who dropped out of the convent, entered a lesbian marriage, failed to regain public favor with a new album, and committed suicide. But it wouldn't do to get one's hopes up.

**N**or ought we when we have directly to hand, rather than by advertisement, a copy of *A Feminist Dictionary*, which wins the Criticus Prize for Morbidly Creative



Neologism. This curiosity, compiled by two midwestern lady academicians, is self-described as a "unique source book that will serve as a valuable work of reference for many years to come."

**I**t is indeed unique. All of its words and definitions are tendentiously politicized according to the lights of gender feminism and are often nothing more than quotes from the writings of foam-at-the-mouth feminists. Therefore it displays that obsession with sex and sexual organs that has become the red badge of courage for radical feminists, though it is all too cheaply won. For example, the editors contemplated calling this work by what they fancied would be the vulgar female equivalent of dictionary (or at least of the way dictionary is pronounced) but rested content merely to list the nonce word in the collection. Among the terms that can be printed here, a fair sampling is provided by this unbroken sequence: phallic identity, phallic morality, phallism, phallocentrism, phallocracy, phallogocentrism, phallogocentrism, phallopanacea, and phallus. Needless to say, none of these is positive, but the reader will be reassured to learn that phallogocentrism is being womanly (what else?) opposed by anti-phallogocentrists, also known as vulvalogocentrists. These would presumably be the women who give ovarimony, the feminist version of testimony, a word made necessary because of the abhorrent masculine etymology of the latter.

Well, Criticus finds this all pretty good fun and acknowledges as well that the author-compilers display now and again a sense of humor that is rare among the stern-faced sisterhood they are addressing. For example: "Adam.

Mate of Eve, alleged father of two; an easily led male. History's first nonfunctioning head of household .... Ate the apple and attempted to pass on the blame." Of course, no such intentional levity is displayed in the definition offered for Eve, though it too is likely to raise a bit of a snicker in some readers: "The brave one in the biblical story .... the strong, courageous, innovative, curious, self-contained confident mate of Adam .... History's first dominant spouse .... powerful part of a couple of which the man is timid, anxious, passive" etc. This of the creature that Milton's fallen Adam called a "fair defect of Nature."

**B**ut humorous sallies aside, there is throughout this compilation an abiding sense of resentment merging into hatred. The definition offered for the term "white men," for example, throbs with malice: "It is true that not all white men are capitalists or possess extreme class privilege, but it is safe to assume that 99.44 percent of them are racists and sexists ..., Rapists, murderers, lynchers, and ordinary bigots ... exercise very real and violent power because of their white-male privilege." Would it be ungentlemanly to voice the suspicion that

radical feminism has grown hysterical (a word much hated by feminists for reasons like unto their hatred of the word testimony, i.e. its wicked etymology) and will not rest until it has wholly reshaped culture? Given the growing dominance at all levels of education of women indoctrinated in feminist cant, this is not an unthinkable goal.



**A**s we wait for the feminist millennium we can beguile the time with further literary competitions. There is always the one for the most boring book title. That usually goes to works with titles like *An Index of Disused Rabbit Warrens in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, 1930-1941*. And the contest for the most absurd book title, a recent and real entry for which was *What to Say When You Talk to Yourself*. Rising at once to this bait, Jaspistos, the competition setter for the *Spectator*, invited readers to submit an extract from such a work. Criticus's recommendation is that when you talk to yourself you refrain from quoting from *A Feminist Dictionary*, lest it unman you. Or for that matter, unwoman you. Either way, you lose.

**CPR**

## Contest Rules

In the interest of rescuing the faith of an otherwise despairing Criticus by demonstrating that, indeed, neither is the American public incapable of taking up delightful pursuits of the mind nor is CPR's editor quite so jaded as he suspects, California Political Review here announces:

### The Willie Brown Question: A Literary Competition

Entries, covering no more than one standard 8.5 x 11-inch page, type-written, shall address the question: Willie Brown — The Phoenix-like Genius, as portrayed by the pillars of objectivity in the political press, or just another egocentric has-been who doesn't know when to quit?

Entries will be considered in three categories, with winners selected from each. First — Poetry: address the W.B. Question in the style, rhyme, and metre of Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night."

Second — Short essay: plumb the quandary's depths in the manner either of William F. Buckley, Jr., preparing a column or, for those up for a real challenge, in the nonpareil

mealy-mouthed, sleep-inducing, West-side liberal feel-good prose of a Los Angeles Times editorial!

Third — Political Campaign Ad Copy: sell either (a) the people on the W.B.-as-genius line or (b) the former speaker on the delights of leisurely retirement, anywhere but in Sacramento.

All entries must be received by April Fool's Day, 1995. Accent humor. Sole judge of all submissions will be Criticus, so address them to him as follows:

California Political Review's Willie Brown Question  
Attention: G. B. Tennyson  
P.O. Box 56671  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-1671

If Professor Tennyson concludes the world is ready, winning entries will be printed in CPR's Summer issue. Now, to work! Rescue his faith! Show the world California's creative soul!

— John Kurzweil

# Ending the Liberal Monopoly in California Journalism

Should liberals continue to straitjacket California's political debate? No matter its failures, the left's creaking, derelict statism still shapes every discussion — *for* big government “solutions,” *for* continuous tax increases, *for* more bureaucratic control, *belittling* individual freedom, *maligning* individual responsibility. Liberalism's monopoly in California journalism is the cause. *California Political Review* is the cure. Add *your* name to the growing list of California conservative leaders reading *California Political Review*. Subscribe today!

*I can't tell you how impressed I am with California Political Review.*  
— William A. Rusher

*California Political Review's pages reflect the common sense conservative principles that guided the administrations of Ronald Reagan in which I was privileged to serve — a refreshing voice on California's political scene.*

— Hon. Edwin Meese III

*California Political Review is filling a critical need in the Golden State.*  
— Bruce Herschensohn

*California Political Review promises to sweep clean the dusty corridors of political thought and analysis in the Golden State.*

— Hon. Christopher Cox

*California Political Review will help ensure that all viewpoints are placed before the public.*

— Hon. George Deukmejian



## SUBSCRIPTION APPLICATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Print**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**| Yes. I want a full year (FOUR quarterly issues) of *California Political Review***  
**| (including FOUR issues of *CPR Update*, *CPR's* new, between issues newsletter)**  
**| for just \$24.95 — more than 15% off the cover price! ☐ I have enclosed my check**  
**| (payable to the California Public Policy Foundation) OR ☐ Bill me after my first**  
**| issue. If I am not satisfied, I may write "cancel" on my bill and return it within 15**  
**| days, owing nothing. (Please send this form to the address below. Thank you.)**

## California Political Review

### **Must reading for informed Conservatives**

Post Office Box 56671, Sherman Oaks, California 91413-1671

# California Political Review



Giant 831 pages ★  
Title & author index

**HUNDREDS of classic moral stories to  
help shape your child's character — AND taste  
for good reading**

Rush Limbaugh explains why he gives this extraordinary anthology by Reagan Cabinet member William Bennett his unqualified endorsement:

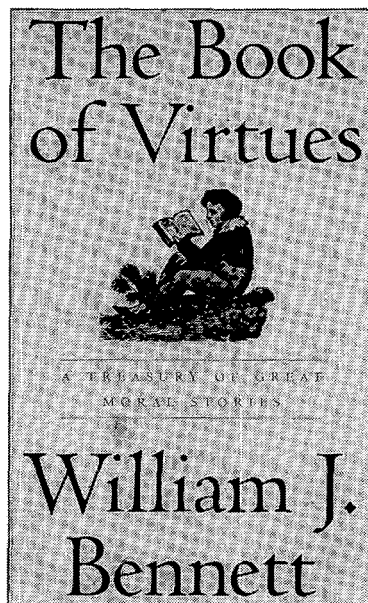
"*The Book of Virtues* is built on an old philosophical principle nearly forgotten in the public discussion (and in certain recent presidential campaigns), but it is an idea I have long championed: Character matters. What a concept! But beware — some of the lessons in this book are rooted in religion, which means the anthology will be ruled unconstitutional if carried into an American school.

It belongs, however, in every home. *The Book of Virtues* is a superb collection, certain to fortify you and yours for a lifetime of morality, goodness, and right thinking."

Mr. Bennett groups the selections according to the ten virtues or good habits they aim to instill:

- Self-Discipline ★ Compassion
- ★ Responsibility ★ Friendship
- ★ Work ★ Courage ★ Perseverance
- ★ Honesty ★ Loyalty ★ Faith

Each section carries its own introductory essay, and the selections have explanatory notes where necessary. You get an amazing 384 selections. Most are stories, of course, but



you also get generous helpings of inspiring verse.

The selections range from half a page to several pages — all short enough to be read aloud at bedtime, during a class or home-school session, or by young readers on their own. Adults will be delighted to meet many old favorites again, and to discover neglected gems that enriched the moral life of previous generations.

**\$27.50**  
in stores  
— yours  
**FREE**

"America has long been in need of a C. S. Lewis ... William J. Bennett, the former Secretary of Education and drug czar, may be as close in intellectual likeness to Lewis as America has had at the national level." — CAL THOMAS

"Mr. Bennett has created a treasury no conservative parent would want to be without. For conservative parents know the role such stories can play in moral education. The early building of character depends heavily on examples, both in this world and in literature ... What Mr. Bennett has provided, then, is not just a source of enjoyment and literary education, but a contribution to moral literacy and a path back to social order for future generations."

— National Review

**How to get this \$27.50 treasury FREE**

#### How the Club Works

Every 4 weeks (13 times a year) you get a free copy of the Club Bulletin, which offers you the Featured Selection plus a good choice of Alternates. Books on current issues, religion, education, homeschooling, politics, children's books, etc. — all of interest to conservatives. ★ If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing. It will come automatically. ★ If you don't want the Featured Selection, or you do want an Alternate, indicate your wishes on the handy card enclosed with your Bulletin and return it by the deadline date. ★ The majority of Club books are offered at 20-50% discounts, plus a charge for shipping and handling. ★ As soon as you buy and pay for 3 books at regular Club prices, your membership may be ended at any time, either by you or by the Club. ★ If you ever receive a Featured Selection without having had 10 days to decide if you want it, you may return it at Club expense for full credit. ★ The Club will offer regular Superbargains, mostly at 70-95% discounts plus shipping and handling. Superbargains do not count toward fulfilling your Club obligation, but do enable you to buy fine books at giveaway prices. ★ Only one membership per household.

#### CONSERVATIVE BOOK CLUB

33 OAKLAND AVENUE • HARRISON, N.Y. 10528

Please accept my membership in the Club and send me FREE the 831-page, \$27.50 *Book of Virtues* by William J. Bennett. I agree to buy 3 additional books at regular Club prices over the next 18 months. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon.

CPR-12

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_