

they also admit a wisp of pain, of loss: a richness. For example, this “charming” line could stand as a coda to the poems in this collection: “Don’t love//dress funny/ sometimes?/ And shouldn’t/ it be sin// to wear so/ carelessly/ such finery?/ It fills me// up with/sympathy!”

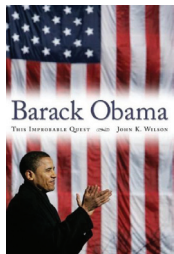
The poems are careful with love and equally careful with language. There is a graceful discipline here, a quiet voice that knows what’s at stake in the few words, the often two-stress lines. Rhyme happens within and at the end of lines, its music, and that of carefully chosen repetition, doing its work almost invisibly, for example in “My Joy Doubled”:

to drive my daughter
through the jeweled
morning light
this morning:
joy to sigh,
“What a lovely morning!”
and see the glimmer
in her eye
in the rear-view mirror
as our light went green

One is tempted to use also the word “refreshing” to describe Todd Boss’s book. Nothing is wasted in the lines, nothing is strained, yet the poems smolder. They make us aware of our lives.

Todd Boss received his MFA from the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and lives with his wife and two children in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Until recently he was director of external affairs at the Playwright’s Center in Minneapolis, where he is now a consultant on special projects. (November 2008) *Fleda Brown*

POLITICAL SCIENCE



Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics

Paul Street
Paradigm Publishers,
Softcover \$23.95 (268pp)
978-1-59451-631-3

For two years now, Republicans have been labeling Barack Obama a liberal, and often a “far left” liberal. Paul Street’s critique of the Democratic presidential frontrunner comes not from the right but from the progressive left. Once vice president of research and planning at the Chicago Urban League, Street worked for John Edwards’ presidential campaign. His articles have appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Z Magazine*, the *Journal of Social History*, and other periodicals. His book is required reading for progressives, but citizens from all corners, whether or not they agree, will find that Street’s thesis is carefully researched and documented, and well argued.

Under particular scrutiny here are Obama’s writings and speeches and much of the commentary and reporting about him from his 2004

Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention up to June 8 of 2008, just after he sealed the nomination. Street maintains that the senator is by no means a progressive and, contrary to popular opinion, not a liberal. Street looks closely at several vital issues that confront the electorate today—foreign policy and the Iraq war, health care reform, the economy, and race relations—and rates Obama as an “ideologically neutral” candidate in the typical “Coke vs. Pepsi” style of US elections. Like all Democratic presidents since FDR, Street submits that “an Obama White House could be expected to tilt toward elite economic interests” at the expense of the interests of the working class and the working poor. Street adds that Obama would perpetuate the “arrogance and criminality” that has typified the “militarism and imperialism” of US foreign policy over the past hundred years. Thus, for Street, the call for “change” and other populist rhetoric coming from the Obama camp rings hollow.

One of Street’s most compelling and forcefully argued points is that presidential candidates—Obama included—are preselected in what Lawrence H. Shoup has called a “hidden primary” conducted by corporate and military power bases. Street discredits Obama’s claim that his campaign has been financed by “an army of small donors.” On the contrary, Obama’s publicized financial ties to international corporations, the banking and securities industries, and defense contractors are documented here. But Street’s book is not a political rant, and Barack Obama is not the target. The ultimate enemy is the “corporate-dominated and militaristic U.S. election system and political culture.” He acknowledges that Obama, or any president unshackled from the Democratic Party, might be able to enact real change under heavy pressure from a grass-roots movement by a progressive citizenry. (October) *Joe Taylor*



To Serve the President: Continuity and Innovation in the White House Staff

Bradley H. Patterson
Brookings Institution Press,
Hardcover \$34.95 (424pp)
978-0-8157-6954-5

“How do you intend to get advice from people you surround yourself—how do you intend to set up your Oval Office so that people will come in and give you their advice,” posits President George Bush. The author provides the convincing answer: through a well-organized White House staff, an administrative feat that is much easier described than done. This exhaustive encyclopedic account describes the functions and responsibilities of the Bush White House staff, a massive bureaucracy of 135 offices, 6,586 employees, and a 2008 budget of \$1.6 billion.

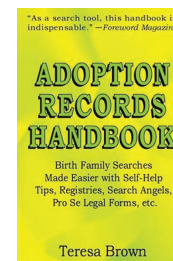
Few, if any, public administration specialists write with more authority than Patterson. The author has worked for sixty-three years in Washington, D.C., and has spent fourteen of those years on the staffs of presidents Eisenhower, Nixon, and Ford. His two previous books, *Ring of Power* and *The White House Staff: Inside the West Wing and Beyond* investigate the structure and operation of the staffs of these presidents.

The author includes comments from his interviews with several key Bush staff officials, which illuminate and keep the book moving at a brisk pace. Bush is commended for his three staff initiatives: the Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, which channels funding for domestic programs through religious organizations; the USA Freedom Corps Office, an initiative that promotes volunteer work; and, most important, the Department of Homeland Security, which has the critical job of coordinating responses to terrorist threats and other emergencies.

In addition, the president is credited for modernizing the White House Situation Room, actually a thirteen-room complex, with state-of-the-art technology, so that the President could respond to all challenges. President Bush has also renovated the James S. Brady Press Room and the Eisenhower Office Building, important modifications that will benefit future presidents.

Arguably, the most important lesson from this book, one that Patterson stressed in his earlier books, is that the White House Staff and not the Cabinet is the center of political power. David Broder, the highly regarded *Washington Post* commentator, praised this book in his July 27 column and challenged all senators and presidential candidates to read it. Broder’s charge also applies to government specialists and informed readers who want to gain insight into the inner-workings of the executive branch. (October) *Karl Helicher*

REFERENCE



Adoption Records Handbook: Locate Your Birth Family Legally and Creatively!

Teresa Brown
Crary Publications, Softcover
\$14.95 (136pp)
978-0-9743438-6-0

It is estimated that one in ten Americans is adopted. At various points in their lives, these adoptees may decide to try to find information about their birth families, but the road to reunion is rough. Many adoption records are sealed, and it can be difficult to gain access to them. Even if records are obtained, birth families may have moved and birth mothers may have new married names. Deciding how to begin the search can be an overwhelming task in itself.

As a search tool, this handbook is indispensable. Brown has experience on all sides of the