

Deconstructing Obama - The Life, Loves, and Letters of America's First Postmodern President  
Jack Cashill

Lying is an essential art of statecraft and every President does it. Some of them, such as Johnson and Clinton, develop a great deal of practice lying in their private lives. I am sure that suppressing their amorous peccadilloes with a straight face prepared them for the sort of practical prevarication routinely demanded by diplomacy. However, never has there been the president before his entire life was constructed of lies. Mary McCarthy's great quip about Lillian Hellman, that "every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'" would seem to apply to Obama.

The author, Jack Cashill, goes into the kind of literary deconstruction that might have thrilled my High School English teacher, looking at the dangling participles, nautical images, malapropisms and the like which tie Obama's prose to that of 60s domestic terrorist William Ayres, who he claims wrote "Dreams Of My Father." By the way, he also has a quote from William Ayres claiming that he wrote the book.

Just as interesting, and much easier to substantiate, are the repeated, egregious anachronisms in both *Dreams of My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*. The Obama life story just simply does not fit together. If Cashill is wrong, I am sure that the blogosphere would be alive with Obama Kool-Aid partisans saying as much. When did his father come to the United States? Did he ever marry Obama's mother? When did he leave Obama's mother? When did he leave the United States? When did Obama's mother move back to Washington state? Cashill makes the point that they tried to spin together a narrative to sell a product, Obama, and they had to force fit several pieces. It did not help that the author of *Dreams*, while a good writer, was an ideologue with his own agenda. It also did not help that *Audacity* was a committee project. In the final analysis, the Cashill makes a pretty convincing case that they don't fit together.

So what? Kennedy didn't write *Profiles in Courage* either. He did manage to keep that fact suppressed until after he was elected, and once elected he had enough chutzpah to carry it off. While it may be that with Obama we bought a pig in a poke, a true unknown who was very skillfully marketed, we have to ask if that matters.

One thing that comes through very clearly is that Obama was a very focused man, willing to throw everybody who helped him, in turn, under the bus as he climbed to higher office. Bill Ayres himself went under that bus, and came out bitching. As did the Rev. Wright, recently, and many politicians who helped along the way. In politics you have to be a ruthless bastard to succeed. Part of Obama's success is apparently his ability to keep his dagger sheathed until the right moment for a sure stab in the back.

Another thing I enjoyed about the book is Cashill's account of his own difficulties overcoming the stumbling blocks thrown in his path by Obama's many protectors and supporters. It rings very true, and it makes you wonder where the vast right wing conspiracy is when it is needed. He fought a lonely battle trying to figure out what happened. The first-person aspect of the book adds greatly to its enjoy ability.

I got into very heated debates over the Swift boaters back in 2004. I read the book, I had served in Vietnam, and in all rang true to me. There is still a large contingent who believe that the Swift boat story is an invention of the vast right wing conspiracy, and have put "Swiftboating" into the leftist vocabulary just as surely as "Borking" belongs to the right. I have a premonition that this book is going to be important enough in the upcoming election to get its own verb (gerund – thanks Mr. Cashill). Whether or not you want to believe it, it will probably be important to have read it. Obama will not be able to sweep it under the rug.