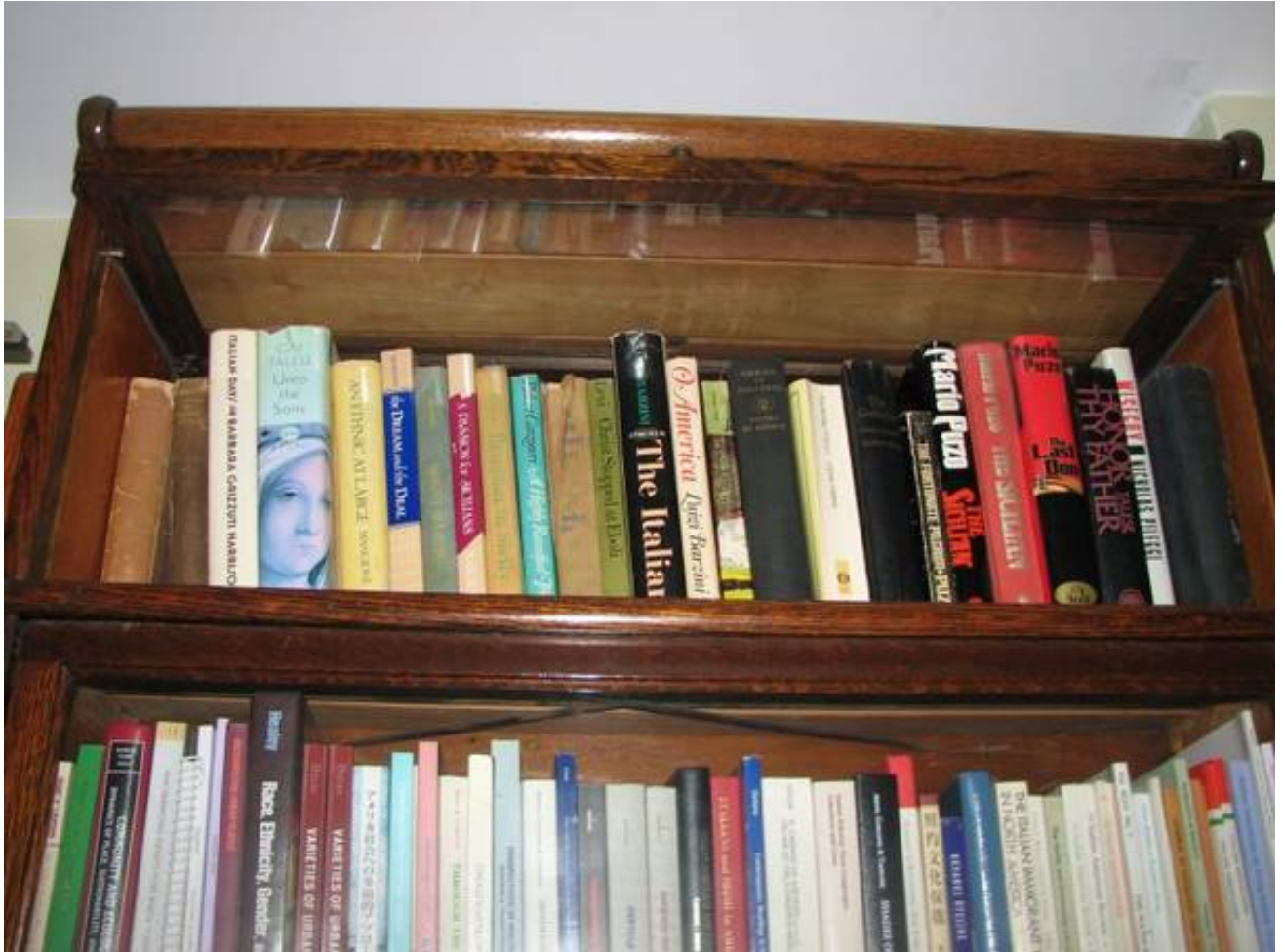




## **From Luigi Barzini to Karl Rove (Oh, Vergogna America!)**

Jerry Krase (December 29, 2008)



I was thinking about writing a blog about the work of Luigi Barzini and decided not to as I assumed there would be little of further value to say after the recent symposium about him held at the Casa Italiana of Columbia University then I made the mistake of reading another one of Karl Rove's contributions to the pages of The Wall Street Journal and decided that at least I ought to take his name in vain and continue my critique of what passes for journalism today.

Because I own two of Luigi Barzini's books, I had considered writing a short blog about my experience with Barzini but decided against it after reading the report on the Casa Italiana at Columbia University symposium [here on i-italy.org](http://iitaly.org). However when I read Karl Rove's pandering



presidential paeon in The Wall Street Journal I felt obliged to at least mention Barzini as part of my continuing critique of journalism in America today. Most journalists today have no problem writing about things of which they know very little as they confidently assume their readers, who get most of their information from them, know even less. At the Casa Italiana symposium, Barzini's son Andrea was quoted as saying, " He has always been an outsider, in Italy and in America,"..."From this condition of outsider comes the ambition of giving explanations about the Italian and the American national characters."

It is hard to find writers of any sort today who are "outsiders" and those who are, struggle to get inside or otherwise to find their niche. Writers write in anticipation of audiences and not because they have an idea, something to say, or just a way of saying something. In other words the writing is "for" something as opposed to "from" something. I did not know Barzini but well understood that one might take offense at his "truths" about "them" or "us." He seemed not to pander to his readers, but did soften his blows at their vanity and self-indulgences by phrases such as this when he visited an "old American" family "Their manners were, technically speaking, no manners at all, but a gentle and benevolent disposition of the spirit." I can't imagine what Barzini would have written about about Sarah Palin.

As anyone who has taken a look at some of my posts here or on [ww.brooklynsoc.org](http://ww.brooklynsoc.org) knows all too well, I believe that one of the keys to an effective democracy is a vigilant, intelligent, and multi-partisan free press. Until a few decades ago I think America had something approaching that ideal. Unfortunately, since then, we have lost many intelligent competing voices as newspapers folded or were consolidated with radio and television stations. Those that are left seem to have become almost pure vehicles for conveying advertising. Even the promise of the Internet as a great Electronic Highway for freedom of expression has been lost as the big guys and gals have moved in on the rest of us humble "bloggers." An especially big disappointment for me has been the newspaper scene in The Big Apple. It is not just those broad sheets on my Left which has lost so much luster but also those on the Right. Below is my response to the most recent of Karl Rove's political pablum being dished out in The Wall Street Journal. It doesn't instill confidence in the future of the American (and therefore the World's) economy when the sacred paper of investors has Karl as a "regular." Then again, they also couldn't tell the difference between a derivative and a Madoff.

If one wishes to understand how we in the US have been dumbed down, one need only take an occasional peek at the Wall Street Journal which at one time (B.M. as in "Before Murdoch") was at least a literate bastion of the allegedly Free (and mythical) Market System. It is a daily newspaper that I peruse among many others in order to fathom how the Other,"Other Half" thinks. Today on its most esteemed pages you can be treated by another hopelessly non-tongue in cheek "Ode" to the ungracefully exiting ex-non-elected President George W. Bush by none other than Karl Rove (the man who single-handedly gave agitprop a better name). One will also find smack in the middle of WSJ's editorial page "Review and Outlook" which has been regularly bashing anything and anybody left of Attila, a note about "The Journal Editorial Report on FOX News Channel." In comparison with FOX, CNN seems almost centrist.

From The Wall Street Journal, December 26, 2008 page A11

"Bush Is a Book Lover" A glimpse of what the president has been reading. By Karl Rove

With only five days left, my lead is insurmountable. The competition can't catch up. And for the third year in a row, I'll triumph. In second place will be the president of the United States. Our contest is



not about sports or politics. It's about books. It all started on New Year's Eve in 2005. President Bush asked what my New Year's resolutions were. I told him that as a regular reader who'd gotten out of the habit, my goal was to read a book a week in 2006. Three days later, we were in the Oval Office when he fixed me in his sights and said, "I'm on my second. Where are you?" Mr. Bush had turned my resolution into a contest.

To find the whole thing go to: <http://sec.online.wsj.com/article/SB123025595706634689.html> [2] where I posted this comment: K's piece should have been titled "Look! Look! Look at "W" Read." With all that reading going on, I guess he didn't have enough time to find the WMD's or notice the economic meltdown. Syntax has hardly been the forte of either the mouth or the piece thereof.

I also added this disclaimer below:

for ID purposes only: Jerome Krase, Ph.D.

Emeritus and Murray Koppelman Professor

Sociology

Brooklyn College

The City University of New York

**Related Links:** <http://www.brooklynsoc.org/blog/node/59> [3]  
<http://sec.online.wsj.com/article/SB123025595706634689.html> [2]

**Source URL:** <http://iitaly.org/magazine/focus/op-eds/article/luigi-barzini-karl-rove-oh-vergogna-america>

#### **Links**

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/5922img58951230329677.jpg>

[2] <http://sec.online.wsj.com/article/SB123025595706634689.html>

[3] <http://www.brooklynsoc.org/blog/node/59>