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Yahoo Watch: Sarah Palin

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 2, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Yesterday, driving home from Mass, I listened to the radio, specifically to Sarah Palin?s interview on Fox News Sunday [1]. Freed from the delight of watching the compelling way she caresses the camera (a skill in which her only rival is Bill Clinton), I listened to her voice and realized something about it, something which explains some of her popularity. She speaks the way a letter to the editor reads.

If you grew up in a small town, you know what I am talking about. Unlike the major newspapers which only publish a few erudite letters, small, local newspapers publish many letters from their readers. These letters share several characteristics. They tend to focus on one fact, devoid of context or nuance. They tend toward the manifesto style, filled with calls for what ?we must? do. They make sweeping claims, most enough about the U.S. Constitution. Often they are a little kookie, filled with simplistic ?solutions? like returning to the gold standard or ending the popular election of U.S. Senators. Most especially they are earnest, painfully earnest.

Those who write these letters are engaged citizens and they are the same people who are most vocal at a town meeting. I do not mean to be a snob, but they often do not know what they are talk about and wear their ignorance as a badge of honor. They denounce ?elites? with abandon and look condescendingly upon anyone who sees complexity where they see none. I suspect they are disproportionately over-represented in the midterm electorate and way over-represented in a GOP primary.

Palin?s popularity has many roots. I noted [2]her unique appeal to conservative women, women who have been the backbone of the conservative movement since the 1960s when ?Sweet Alice? Moore denounced the public school curriculum in Charleston, West Virginia and effectively shut down that city in her largely successful effort to remove certain textbooks. Her ability to connect with the letters to the editor crowd is yet another arrow in her quiver.

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Links:
[1] http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/fox-news-sunday/#/v/4299765/sarah-palin-on-fns/?playlist_id=86913
[2] http://ncronline.org/news/politics/conservative-religious-women-continue-shape-republican-politics