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ELIZA DOOLITTLE DEPT.

CORRECTING CAROLINE

by Ben McGrath

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In 2001, shortly after being sworn into the Senate, Hillary Clinton gave a press conference to address questions related to her husband's Presidential pardons. The *Times* observed that she used the word "disappointed" ten times, in reference to her brother, Hugh Rodham, who had accepted four hundred thousand dollars to lobby on behalf of a couple of criminals. (One was pardoned, and the other got out of jail early.) Robin Lakoff, a professor of linguistics at Berkeley, read a partial transcript of Clinton's remarks and was struck by the recurrence of something else: the phrase "you know," which in her line of work is recognized as a "discourse marker" or a "pragmatic particle." She recalled her old graduate student Jan-Ola Östman's 1980 master's thesis, "You Know: A Discourse-Functional Study," and was moved to write an essay, "Now You Know About Hillary Rodham Clinton," in which she speculated that even "very sophisticated and articulate public persons" might repeat the phrase excessively when feeling vulnerable. Lakoff wrote, "Senator Clinton keeps using *you know*, whether hopefully or desperately, as a plea: 'Please see it my way—because we share the same world-view.' "

Clinton's "you know" count came to nineteen. Her possible senatorial replacement, Caroline Kennedy, would seem, by this standard, to be overqualified. She met with a couple of *Times* reporters recently and said "you know" a hundred and thirty-eight times. Speaking to the *News*, and on NY1, she broke two hundred. The effect, however, was not to suggest a shared world view but to recall what some commentators refer to as the "Roger Mudd moment"—a reference to the CBS correspondent who flummoxed Caroline's uncle, Ted Kennedy, in 1979, with questions about his desire to run for President:

Ted: "Well, it's—on what—on, you know, you have to come to grips with the different issues that we're facing. I mean, we can—we'd have to deal with each of the various questions that we're talking about." Caroline, on Ted: "I mean, he loves the Senate. It's been, you know, the most, you know, rewarding life for him, you know. I'm sure he would love it to feel like somebody that he cared about had that same kind of opportunity."

Mudd, last week, reflected, "All Kennedys have always been hard interviews," and added, "At least she didn't use the word 'like,' did she?" (She did, but not nearly so noticeably.)

The Mudd parallel highlighted the strange tension in Kennedy's nascent candidacy. On the one hand, her lack of polish, or media training, suggests an Everywoman appeal—the mother of three with no Washington experience, like a Sarah Palin for Democrats—while at the same time undermining the Kennedy mystique and serving as a reminder of the Bush lesson that dynasties can devolve (and not just into mangled English).

Perhaps Mary Mayotte could help? Mayotte runs the Speech Fitness Institute and has experience in curbing the tics of fashion-industry types. ("I've seen people say 'fabulous' twenty-five times in a three-minute interview," she said.) She watched Caroline host the Kennedy Center Honors, and identified what she called "eye contact issues: when she looked up from her script, she didn't focus on the audience." One helpful technique, Mayotte suggests, "involves making a conscious effort to **CONNECT** on opening—in any form of **Comm-YOU-nication**."

Or maybe Kennedy could call Michael Levine, a publicist who specializes in celebrity overexposure. Levine met Kennedy at a book-signing, and remembers that she had "a warmth that would make a Frigidaire proud." He said his advice to Kennedy is much like his advice to Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan: "Here's what you do—exactly the opposite of what you normally do." For celebs, that means not playing to the paparazzi, and going "bling-less"; for Kennedy, he recommends not public speaking but a "listening



Caroline Kennedy

tour,” to capitalize on the strengths of her underexposure.

There is also the cosmetic approach to achieving public polish. Amy Strozzi, who was hired to serve as one of Sarah Palin’s stylists, just began writing a blog, the Beauty Manifesto. Her first post included this “Tip from the Trail”: “For a full day of wear, cover your (entire) lip with L’Oreal Automatic Lip Pencil in Nudes, soften with a brush or smudge it with your finger, and add a thin coat of Carmex. Top with a swipe of Chanel Glossimer in Giggle, and you are good to go.” ♦

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