Words that Draw Blood:
Recovering the Lost Vocabularies of Vicious Invective, Withering Contempt and Sardonic Dismissal

1. acephalous – having no head, or head reduced in size. Droll and multi-syllabic substitute for brain-dead, idiotic, etc.

2. addlepated – confused, mixed up.

3. adenoidal – having enlarged adenoids, resulting in a somewhat congested, less-than-mellifluous sound when one speaks. Since there are those who indeed suffer blamelessly from this affliction (the writer himself, while riding high in the salad days of youth, was deflatingly referred to as "Old Adenoid" by an office antagonist), the adjective should perhaps be reserved for those who combine the condition with tedious pronouncements of affected solemnity (think Sen. Joseph Lieberman).

4. administratrix – woman administrator. Useful for patronizing of officious, school-marm types, as it emphasizes (with the suggestion of "dominatrix") their sadistic, anti-social aspect.

5. afflatus – a divine bestowal of knowledge; inspiration. With a construction similar to flatulence (though the second a in afflatus is long), an especially good jibe at public officials who regard themselves and their policies as instruments of divine providence. "God told me to smite down Saddam" (G.W. Bush) is an example of afflatus from our recent history.

6. agitprop – political propaganda coming through the culture and media of mass communication. Not quite as transparent in "democratic" regimes. The next time the American mainstream media cheerlead the nation into war, which will be the next time the nation starts a war, call agitprop.

7. amen corner – a section of a church congregation that is conspicuously filled with fervent believers who audibly ratify every part of the sermon. Useful to describe mini-constituencies rounded up by politicians, especially American presidents, for photo opportunities relevant to controversial issues. As an example, as this is written President Obama intends in a couple of days to announce a substantial troop build-up in Afghanistan at West Point, where the policy can expect to meet with universal approbation (seeing as how he's the commander-in-chief of all assembled).

8. analysand – the subject of psychoanalysis. Perhaps a useful noun deployed against those who indulge in constant self-scrutiny. Perhaps "self-analysand" can be a subtle but stinging pejorative. Or analysand might be applied to suggest those who, like psychoanalysis patients, hand their thought processes over to supposed experts.

9. appoggiatura – an embellishing note in opera that is something like a pause. Can be applied to filler words used by American young people as they gather their "thoughts," such as "um," or (especially) "like." Emphasizes the mindlessness of the filler language by suggesting absurdly that it plays a role in an intricate composition of language. Admittedly, American young people – innocent tabulae rasae that they are – are not so worthy an object of ridicule as megalomaniacal politicians, courtier media and sadistic women, but doesn't everybody deserve a good verbal smackdown once in a while?

10. arriviste – one who is newly and precariously successful. Useful for puncturing those engaged in conspicuous displays of consumption, which often betoken an uncertain sense of status. There are many hundreds of thousands of arrivistes in the U.S. during economic bubble times.

11. avoirdupois – weightiness, esp. personal weight. Can be directed at ponderous solemnities, with double entendre value for those delivered by corpulent bores. "His avoirdupois rose solemnly and ominously from the firm base of 400 pounds planted securely in the chair."

12. beggar-thy-neighbor – policy that produces gains for one group at the expense of others. Useful for those wishing to take aim at the Republican platform, as well as all legislation crafted by special interest groups (which is close to 100 percent of the legislation Washington produces).

13. belletrist – composer of light, fluffy, entertaining, but largely substance-free writing.

14. bestiary – a collection of animals and/or grotesques, having obvious symbolic import. Think the cantina scene in *Star Wars.* Perhaps can be aimed at Wall Street or other centers of behavior ungoverned by human moral concerns, though Wall Street may not be the best example, as it is a quite homogeneous population, and bestiary implies a certain amount of diversity.

15. bibulous – consuming much alcohol. Nicely cadenced and subtle adjective to deploy against a drunk.

16. bilious – peevish and ill-natured. Sadly, the targets are few in these days of PR-speak. Tread gently on anyone you come across with the good sense to be bilious. A good (also lost) synonym suggesting that the biliousness is so great that the bile has finally eaten away the liver, would be "cirrhotic."

17. blatherskite – one who loudly displays his ignorance. Think radio talk show bloviators.

18. bluenose – advocate of a rigorous moral code. With suggestions of sterile priggishness, may help to devitalize the American religious right, which has carved out a niche in the public mind as earthy charismatics, enthusiasts and exemplars of sturdy principledness. On the other hand, can be deployed rather obviously against moral police on the left, such as campus enforcers of political correctness.

19. boodle – a large amount of money, usually ill-gotten. Applicable to most transfers of funds taking place in government or on Wall Street.

20. bootlicker – a fawning, subservient suck-up. Hold back for when the gloves are completely off.

21. bowdlerize – to cut out parts of a piece of writing that are considered vulgar. Transfer to the realm of public policy to refer to public documents released with the politically inconvenient parts bowdlerized.

22. box turtle – a type of turtle capable of withdrawing into its shell and closing it with hinged joints in the lower half. Can be aimed at individuals, particularly pols, who are not forthcoming with needed information. "When the time came to inform his constituents of his thinking in casting the vote, he went into box turtle mode again."

23. bromidic – trite, unoriginal, purporting to convey moral lessons or uplift. A substitute for candor, bromidic language can be found in virtually every public declaration made by an American public figure.

24. buncombe – foolish nonsense. Forgotten synonyms include "balderdash" and "horse manure." If you want to apply the most exquisite of Wodehousian euphemisms, use "applesauce."

25. burgher – reasonably prosperous and solid, aggressively middle-class citizen. Carrying implications of narrow-minded Babbitry, can be useful in belittling the NIMBY crowd and those who appeal mindlessly to "family values."

26. callipygian – having shapely buttocks. Useful for the right in dismissing as lightweights female celebrities who declaim on matters of policy. Example: R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr. once referred to Shirley MacLaine as "the callipygian sage."

27. casuistry – rationalization; a specious argument that under close examination doesn't make sense.

28. catatonia – lacking movement, activity, evidence of cognitive activity. Most apt as a descriptor of American "students" of the higher learning, but might serve as a general characterization of the public discourse.

29. caterwauling – a very disagreeable sound. Applicable to the verbal mud wrestling of the political talk show circuit and the perorations of well-compensated radio talk show hosts.

30. chucklehead – stupid but breezily insouciant person. Starting to show up here and there with American writers, but still in the lost category.

31. circumambient – on all sides. Aim at politicians who try to take all sides of an issue and displease no one. They do indeed take at least two sides of most issues. A staffer in my congressional office was fired for mistakenly sending the "pro" form letter on a particular issue to the list of constituents who were in the "con" camp. "Mental circumambulation" can suggest the process of wandering around on all sides of an issue.

32. circumlocution – speaking around a subject in order to be evasive.

33. cloying – excessively sweet or sentimental. In these days of gangsta chic, cloying seems to manifest, ironically, in connection with the martial virtues and powerful nation states. Americans aren't sentimental about much these days, but the image of Old Glory and the sons of liberty visiting hell upon some unacceptable land never fails to stir the nation's soul.

34. concerto grosso – orchestral composition featuring a small group of solo instruments contrasting with the full orchestra. Useful perhaps in describing various oligarchies, e.g., Wall Street, which pursue self-interest at the expense of the general good. Or an individual narcissist doing his thing oblivious to anyone else.

35. cornpone – down home, country humor. Can be helpful in dismantling the pretense of folksy politicians that they reflect some sort of cracker barrel folk wisdom beyond the grasp of the elites.

36. coprophagous – feeding on dung. Noting the "coprophagous grin" of the smug or stupid can add a lightly humorous tone to some necessary business of verbal dismemberment.

37. courtier – an obsequious attendant at court society. Used to great effect by some writers to describe the American mainstream media, dutiful stenographers to power. Of course, Tocqueville thought America was a nation of courtiers, because social status was fluid, up-for-grabs, and everyone felt compelled to ingratiate himself with numerous others in positions where they might be of use to him.

38. cow pie – dropping of cow dung. Can add the light touch when noting egregious instances of bullshit.

39. coxcomb – a boastful, foolish person.

40. crapulous – marked by over-indulgence, especially in eating and drinking. Taking issue with a Catholic priest? Chances are "the crapulous cleric" will hit the mark. Well, those are the vices that they're allowed – you might over-indulge a bit too.

41. credulous – ready to believe far too quickly on too little evidence. Not lost, you say? I say it has been in the last 20 or so years. Certainly the concept of a lively and skeptical electorate has been banished from the public discourse by PR-speak, creating a credulous public.

42. death rattle – sound produced by air rattling through mucous in the lungs of a dying person. Nice metaphor to apply to various ideologies in the death throes, e.g., free market fundamentalism currently (2009).

43. decollation – a beheading. Pleasingly cadenced word to refer to polemical victories of various sorts.

44. dejecta – feces. For when you wish the metaphor to have that classy, understated tone.

45. detumescent – becoming less swollen. Effective in belittling preachers of various persuasions and other moral exemplars who

present a less than robust physical appearance. Successfully deployed by Tyrrell against Jimmy Carter around the time of Carter's "malaise speech," when regular jogging made him appear a bit wan, and the demands of the office a bit undersized.

46. didact – someone who's always trying to give instruction to others. Close to a synonym for pedant, though pedant implies a boring manner of presentation and a showy display of learning.

47. dither – a nervous, excited and agitated state. "The media are in a dither about……" Fill in with the latest insignificant trifle that distracts public attention from anything of consequence.

48. dolorous – expressing grief or misery, mournful. Can be alliteratively paired when appropriate with detumescent to deflate preachers of an especially scolding, fire-and-brimstone nature. Synonym for lugubrious, which could probably also use a revival.

49. dotage – senility, loss of mental agility. "Far gone into his dotage, A expounded nonsensically his views on ……" might be said of any older person with whom you disagree.

50. dotty – mentally unbalanced; nuts, but in an eccentric, rather amiable way. Can be used to patronize without appearing too vicious.

51. dreck – rubbish, trash, nonsense. If memory serves, this Yiddish word had some purchase in the public discourse 20 or 30 years ago, but seems to have dropped out in recent years.

52. dudgeon – a fit; an agitated state of indignation. Customarily used in the phrases "high dudgeon" or "high moral dudgeon." Suggests that the indignation is not merited by the caliber of thought being expressed, which is usually non-reflective and narrow-minded.

53. dullard – a person with little mental activity going on.

54. dyspeptic – irritable, of an ill humor.

55. edentulous – toothless. If you wish to be mildly amusing and send the reader to the dictionary when describing, for example, regulatory legislation that talks a good game but in effect does little to change anything.

56. elfin – resembling an elf, especially the tiny size. Many who declaim in public tend to be rather short of stature, and when the declamations become unacceptable "elfin" might be wheeled in to suggest a Napoleon complex, or thought rooted in personal insecurity.

57. embroidery – embellishments on a story that amount to puffery. Close enough to lying that it can be used as a euphemism with a cutting edge.

58. emetic – an agent that induces vomiting. Again, you will probably send the reader to the dictionary with this one, so it's less than perfect as a "lost word." But of obvious usefulness in referring to language or behavior that turns ones stomach.

59. encomiast – one who praises extravagantly. Usefully subtle if you want to suggest something along the lines of courtier, suck-up, lickspittle, sycophant, but wish to apply a lighter touch.

60. enfant terrible – usually a young person who delights in shocking iconoclasm. Always deployed ironically, it is used to undercut the self-absorbed young polemicist who goes out of his way to call attention to himself.

61. ephemera – something that passes rather quickly, with no lasting significance. Applicable to most of the content that passes through the major media of mass communication. Ephemeral is the more commonly used adjectival form.

62. epicene – without clear gender distinctions; having traits of both genders. Can be used to take a poke at an effeminate male flaming shamelessly, without clearly signaling a violation to the political correctness police.

63. epigone – an inferior imitator. "All of the new talk show bloviators are but epigones of the great Limbaugh."

64. Falstaffian – like the Shakespeare character John Falstaff. Brings in a light touch to describe a corpulent high liver who may be neglecting more pressing responsibilities. Falstaff is likable, but you probably wouldn't want to depend on him.

65. Faustian – selling one's soul for temporal advantage. No doubt much too weighty as applied to the bartering away of the public interest to the highest bidder by American pols. Faustian suggests the existence of a soul to begin with, and implies a higher price extracted than campaign contributions. But you never know when a figure of some gravitas will come along and merit its use. When Jefferson Smith comes to Washington and begins to sell public policy – as he will nowadays – perhaps the abandonment of ideals rises to the level of "Faustian."

66. febrile – fevered, heated. For those who retain their idealism and take it to the level of pathology. Also applied to persons fixated on sex, including many homosexuals, who always seem to be a couple of degrees overheated.

67. feckless – lazy, ineffective and incompetent; no ambition. Perhaps more usefully applied these days to public policy than to those who produce it, who are usually quite diligent and focused in pursuing the main chance. Often, too, an appropriate descriptor of one's offspring, and any given classroom full of American students.

68. feral – wild, undomesticated, existing in a Darwinian, survival-of-the-fittest state. Well applied to the American form of winner-take-all capitalism.

69. fetid – malodorous. For when the gloves come off, and expression of the highest disgust is called for.

70. flaccid – lacking in firmness, vigor and force. Commonly used to refer to sexual organs, it can be as apt in describing legislation or a broad consensus of opinion.

71. flibbertigibbet – a flighty, insubstantial person.

72. flummery – nonsense, foolish humbug. Another synonym for buncombe.

73. foppery – excessive concern with his clothes and appearance by a male. Frivolousness.

74. forelock – a length of hair that grows from the front part of the head. In feudal times a vassal demonstrated deference to his lord by tugging at his forelock and bowing deeply. Pulling the forelock can be an apt descriptor of displays of obsequiousness, such as the Washington press corps at a presidential press conference.

75. frippery – a display of frivolousness and vacuity. Similar to foppery.

76. frowzy – dirty, untidy, slovenly.

77. fusty – moldy, aging, out-of-date.

78. garbology – the study of discarded waste material. Can be applied to the study of various American institutions; e.g., politics.

79. gelded – castrated. The writer Wesley Pruden was fond of referring to the feminist era of the late 20th century as "the Gelded Age," a take-off on the Gilded Age. The expression never quite caught on, but maybe it will as we move into an era in which women comprise over 55 percent of the college population and have an advantage in seeking most jobs, being more desirable to employers in helping to fend off employment discrimination lawsuits.

80. genuflect – to bend down in worship. The Washington press corps, those "watchdogs" of our liberty, leap to mind again when these terms for subservience come up.

81. gesticulant – making many gestures. Provides a clinical tone when you want the effect of putting the antics of a demagogue under a microscope.

82. grandioso – grand, inspiring, commanding. Grand for irony. Never used better than in Lewis Lapham's send-up of Newt Gingrich and the heady days of the "contract with America." In Lapham's faux opera of the farce, the Gingrich character is named Orlando Grandioso.

83. hagiography – biography of a saint. Useful in describing naïve and uncritical valentines to public figures penned by the courtier class. E.g., *Maestro* by Bob Woodward, about Alan Greenspan, whose conducting of the economy is now more widely viewed as well short of masterful.

84. harridan – a disagreeable and foul-tempered woman. Lost synonyms include harpy and termagant.

85. hat-in-hand – in a petitionary mode, obsequious, deferential, seeking favor. A fashion-updated equivalent to tugging at the forelock.

86. high-sticking – carrying the blade of a hockey stick at an illegal height during a game. Kind of a pleasing adjective to describe a cheater, though many won't get the allusion.

87. idolatrous – worshiping a false god.

88. hoary – old and out-of-date.

89. howler monkey – creature that makes a howling, piercing noise. Think political talk show circuit – the pundits as howler monkeys in their cages.

90. hydra-headed – having many different heads not necessarily working in a coordinated manner. Applicable to bureaucracies of various sorts.

91. incantation – uttering in a chanting-like way words that are supposed to have magical powers. Deploy when noting clichéd, rigidly

ideological responses to public policy matters; e.g., "Government is not the solution, it's the problem."

92. infidel – one who does not accept a particular religion. For a subtle jibe at the exclusionary dogmatism of evangelical/fundamentalist Christians, describe mainline Christians as infidels in the view of fundamentalists.

93. jabberwocky – gibberish; meaningless words.

94. jackanapes – an impudent, presumptuous young person. "The classrooms are ruled these days by jackanapes."

95. jeremiad – a prolonged complaint or denunciation. A Biblically-derived term used to be dismissive of cultural criticism that is cast in fire-and-brimstone terms. Philippic is a useful (and also lost) synonym.

96. klavern – local branch of the Ku Klux Klan. If wishing to taint the right with racism, refer to their gatherings as klaverns. A bit strong, and probably should be reserved for the likes of the Glenn Beck fan club.

97. lachrymose – shedding tears easily or causing tears and sorrow. Cheap, tear-jerking sentimentality seems to be manipulative behavior that is not so common as it once was. But keep the dismissive adjective handy for when it does rear its ugly head.

98. legerdemain – sleight of hand; trickery, deception. Seems a bit too light-handed for the shenanigans of, say, the Wall Street criminal class and their world-class heists. Use for small-time con artists.

99. lemming – animals that follow each other habitually, over a cliff to their deaths if that's where the crowd is going. For describing mindless, herd-like behavior, use "lemming-like" or some other variant.

100. lickspittle – one of the stronger nouns to be deployed in the case of fawning, obsequious, sycophantic behavior.

101. lobotomized – having part of the brain removed surgically. Seems like it could be deployed with far more diversity and pop than it currently is. There may be some potential for the adjective "self-lobotomized," or "auto-lobotomy," referring to the aggressive ignorance people employ when attempting to preserve some vested interest, be it in personal property, ideas, jobs, etc.

102. logorrhea – verbal diarrhea.

103. lordling – a little, or insignificant lord. When deflating those with pretensions of grandeur.

104. loutish – rude, inconsiderate, ill-behaved, clumsy. A synonym for loutish that is getting lost also – boorish.

105. lubricious – arousing or expressing sexual desire in a goatish sort of way. For general harangues against a pop culture that has commodified, quantified and commercialized sex.

106. maladroit – awkward. Someone with low social intelligence might be described as socially maladroit. If you want a noun, go with social maladept.

107. malefactor – wrongdoer. Is it time, in the wake of 9/08, to revive President Theodore Roosevelt's concept of "the malefactors of great wealth?" Or is making a lot of money automatically self-justifying, an idea our culture seems to have thoroughly embraced.

108. malodorous – smelling bad. A multi-syllabic and somewhat melodious way to flag the stinkeroos.

109. mammonist – one who worships money. Mammon is used as a catch-all term to refer to the culture of high finance and profit-seeking unrelated to any reasonable concept of the public good. You will often see Mammon capitalized.

110. manqué – attached as a suffix to any word to mean "would be," but not yet successful. For example: "The pundit-manque launched his blog into cyber-space with great expectations."

111. mawkish – overly sentimental, maudlin.

112. mendacious – habitually lying.

113. mendicant – beggar or begging. A gentleman wouldn't want to wound those who actually are reduced to mendicancy in order to survive. Think, rather, along the lines of, say, congressional fundraisers, in which the ethically and intellectually challenged hold out their cups for donations from the wealthy and powerful.

114. meretricious – tawdry, appealing in a vulgar sort of way. Also, based on pretense or deception.

115. mewling – whimpering, crying out plaintively.

116. miasma – a vaporous atmosphere that causes disease. Describes Washington D.C., literally and metaphorically, during the dog days of summer when the swamp-like environment qualifies foreign diplomats for hardship duty pay. Metaphorically, the term applies year-round.

117. milksop – a very weak and ineffective person.

118. moribund – dying. Usefully applied to ideologies and political movements.

119. mountebank – a fraudulent pitch man up on a soap box; charlatan. Can be applied to a variety of preachers and other public figures who strike the same notes of morality mixed with salesmanship.

120. muddlehead – confused person.

121. mummery – a ridiculously hypocritical or pretentious performance or ceremony. For state-of-the-union addresses and similar political posturing in public.

122. nabob – a wealthy, influential or powerful person. If you use it, however, you risk association with Spiro Agnew, who famously referred to the press as "nattering nabobs of negativism."

123. narcotized – unaware, semi-conscious. In the pill-popping nation that the United States has become, this can be a good adjective to employ when discussing the general inattention to public matters and the common welfare.

124. navel-gazing – focused inward on matters involving strictly the self. Enjoyed a vogue a few years back when the "culture of narcissism" was under the microscope. Given that the "rampant narcissism" critique of the 1970s still holds up, the term perhaps merits a revival.

125. nebbish – a fool.

126. nescient – ignorant, lacking knowledge. Will send readers to the dictionary, but the experience will be pleasing as they compare the roots with omniscient.

127. nettlesome – annoying.

128. noisome – offensive, harmful. A relatively laid back adjective useful for curmudgeonly takes on assaultive music and other disagreeable aspects of popular culture.

129. nostrum – a purported remedy of dubious effectiveness. Can be employed when lambasting the culture of self-maximization, from deodorants to anti-depressants to deep tissue massage. This burgeoning array of products and services are over-hyped, most work only sporadically and probably then on the placebo principle.

130. nugatory – having little or no consequence; trifling; leads to nothing. Applicable to the deliberations of political Washington produced for public consumption, and media coverage of same.

131. obstreperous – unruly, resisting control. Can be applied to American students, who generally need to endure far more insults than they do. It's time to stop building their self-esteem, and impose the sort of rigor that gives them something actually to esteem themselves for. But first we'd need to subject their teachers to such salutary disciplines.

132. obtuse – not quick, sharp or perceptive. In our Manichean culture that wants to cast everything in black and white, I believe that the concept of moral obtuseness and the lost ability to make fine moral distinctions is especially relevant.

133. officious – over-inclination toward acting in a supervisory role.

134. oleaginous – oily, slimy, slippery, unctuous. Euphemistic, multi-syllabic adjective suitable for employing the light touch on a con artist or fawning suck-up.

135. opera bouffe – a comic, farcical opera. Obviously, the term was coined to apply to congressional deliberations.

136. orotund – pompous, bombastic. When the lighter touch is called for in torching the likes of Rush Limbaugh, though one struggles to think of instances where that would be the case.

137. ossified – turned into bone; i.e., has become rigid, inflexible and out of touch in ones thinking. Calcified would be a synonym.

138. otiose – idle, engaged in exercises in futility.

139. pabulum – intellectual baby food, not suitable for consumption by an adult mind. I.e., 99.9 percent of the American public discourse. It's nothing that requires any chewing (i.e., thinking).

140. panegyric – a soaring oration of extravagant praise. No shortage of examples in our self-congratulatory culture. All shall be honorary doctors of philosophy, and all must have prizes.

141. pedant – someone who fancies himself a teacher and holds forth in a tedious boring manner, making a great show of his learning. Using the word pedant carries the implication that the showy erudition reflects insecurity.

142. penny dreadful – cheap, sensationalized novel. We certainly aren't currently lacking for these kinds of books.

143. persiflage – light, bantering talk. In a culture that encourages the social utility of insouciant insincerity – e.g., for making a favorable impression on the opposite sex – the pile of conversational nothingness can be categorized and thus dismissed with a word such as persiflage. Badinage is something of a synonym, but implies a higher level of wit.

144. pestiferous – disease-ridden, troublesome, dangerous.

145. pestilential – causing a deadly pestilence. An adjective nicely applied to bad ideas that quickly acquire many adherents.

146. pettifogger – one who quibbles over trifling distinctions, generally for an unethical purpose. When you want to have at the lawyers, revive the time-honored charge of pettifoggery.

147. pharisaical – marked by hypocritical self-righteousness.

148. platitudinarian – a person who habitually utters platitudes.

149. poltroon – a coward.

150. popinjay – a strutting, supercilious person.

151. portentous – solemnly self-important and boring.

152. pottage – a thick soup of vegetables and meat, made cheaply. Used to refer to something having little value, and the customary expression was that one bartered away his integrity, values, the public interest, etc. for a mere "mess of pottage."

153. preverbal – having not yet acquired the faculty of communicating with language. A good all-purpose adjective for haranguing the cultural collapse of language and reversion to communication through imagery and other non-verbal modes. To be aimed at a society in which words can get lost by the thousands.

154. princeling – a petty or insignificant prince. Similar to lordling, can be used to deflate a youthful pretender to grandeur. Perhaps JFK Jr's launch of the Washington-meets-Hollywood magazine *George* qualifies as princeling-like behavior.

155. pustule – a small, elevated piece of skin containing pus; like a pimple but a bit fuller. A rather amusing jibe used by the Brits is to refer to a disagreeable participant in the public discourse as "a pustule on the rump of....." oh, fill in the blank with "the commonwealth," "the body politic," etc.

156. pusillanimous – cowardly. Would probably be redundant to use with poltroon, or pussy (for those inclined to sexist vulgarity), but if alliteration and a seven-syllable phrase serve your purposes then go with it.

157. querulous – habitually complaining, whining, fretful.

158. quiescent – marked by inactivity or repose. Can be used to refer to a politically apathetic generation or segment of the population; e.g., the "silent generation" of the '50s (though they were a band of Jacobins compared to college students today).

159. resupinate – on ones back again. For politicians and other "leaders" accustomed to taking the supine position. "The crucial vote found him resupinate as usual."

160. rodomontade – a blustering, boastful speech or rant. "Radio rodomontade" might be a handy and alliteratively dismissive term for the talk show circuit.

161. saprogenic – causing or resulting from putrefaction. Useful for analyzing the rot of our public life, its saprogenic causes and results.

162. satrap – a subordinate ruler, usually despotic. Handy for dismissing petty tyrants of all sorts.

163. satyriasis – excessive or abnormal sexual craving in the human male. Provides a light and amusingly clinical touch when dealing with public figures who can't keep it in their pants. If you need an adjective to describe these subjects, "priapic" can work.

164. sawbones – physician, surgeon. From a day when doctors enjoyed somewhat less than the reverential treatment they receive today.

165. scabrous – difficult, hardened, plenty of rough edges.

166. scandal sheet – an old term for the tabloid newspapers that deal almost entirely with gossip, scandal and intrusion into the personal lives of celebrities.

167. scaramouch – a stock character in Italian comedy that is usually a cowardly buffoon. The character appears regularly in the comedy of American political life.

168. sclerotic – hardened, the passageways narrowed. Deployed similarly to ossified and calcified, referring to someone who's set in mindless and usually corrupt patterns. "The sclerotic and reptilian old corporate whore secured yet another contract for Halliburton."

169. scrofulous – having a diseased, run-down appearance.

170. sententious – excessively moralizing; overuse of aphorisms. American coach-speak usually falls in the sententious category, and politicians, eager to affiliate themselves with the great sports-viewing public, are quick to borrow the same tone. As a nation, we've got to keep our eye on the ball, not look beyond the next game, and so forth.

171. sesquipedalian – given to using long words. Nicely alliterative with "sage," when wishing to dismiss a ponderous bore.

172. shambolic – obviously disorganized or confused. Everything is in a shambles.

173. slugabed – lazy person who idles away the hours in bed.

174. sluggard – habitually lazy, idle person.

175. sodden – dull, expressionless, sluggish.

176. soporific – causing sleep or lethargy. Can be used as an adjective or a noun. "A's recorded orations are reliable soporifics; they've not failed yet to put me to sleep." A less well-known synonym for the adjective is somniferous.

177. steatopygic – having an excessive amount of fat on the buttocks. Like "callipygian," can be used nicely with "sage," to belittle with lilting alliteration. (Say that three times fast.)

178. supercilious – literally, with eyebrows raised. Looking down in a haughty manner suggesting disbelief that one is being subjected to such nonsense.

179. supplicant – one who makes humble, fawning entreaty. Again, think of congressional fundraisers, and the postures of supplication assumed virtually every day by the solons who govern us.

180. tatterdemalion – a person in tattered clothing. Can be useful in making fun of celebrities and other trendies sporting fashionable holes in their jeans and otherwise dressed down. "Trendy tatterdemalion" might work for them.

181. toady – yet another word for fawning suck-up. If this concept alone is revived in public life, lost-vocabulary.com will have served a mighty purpose.

182. toff – a stylishly dressed person who wants to be considered part of the upper class.

183. treacle – verbiage that is overly sweet, sugary and sentimental. "The treacle quotient was unusually high at the commencement address."

184. trimmer – one who tailors his views to suit the prevailing winds of public opinion. Comes from the expression "trim the sails," to adjust to the winds at sea. More commonly in political Washington, views are trimmed to comply with the prerequisites of donor money, and then PR flacks are enlisted by the corporate/governmental coalition to discharge a lot of gas and blow the winds of public opinion in the necessary direction.

185. truckle – the verb you probably want to use for fawning, suck-up behavior. Usually followed by the preposition "to" and then the name of the suckee person or institution.

186. ukase – an edict handed down from on high without benefit of democratic deliberation. Judicial conservatives sometimes refer to Supreme Court decisions as ukases, or fiats.

187. uxorious – doting on or excessively deferential toward one's wife. The concept of the domineering wife, a staple for the humor of James Thurber, seems to have become politically incorrect in the U.S.

188. vainglory – excessive and empty boastfulness.

189. valentine – use to suggest cloyingly fawning behavior by calling it a valentine. "Since Jimmy Carter's unfortunate 'malaise speech' in 1979, no American politician has opened his mouth in public and neglected to send a valentine to the wise and wonderful American people."

190. vapid – empty-headed, dull.

191. velleity – an idle wish. Entertained by those without the backbone to make anything of it but a wish.

192. venal – greedy; focused entirely on money. A once very common word that has gotten a little bit lost in the last 35 years of money worship.

193. vertebral – having a spine. Vilify by offering it as a contrasting condition. "Rare among Washington politicians, he is distinctly vertebral."

194. weasel word – a word used to evade or retreat from a forthright statement of position. Derives from the weasel's habit of sucking the contents out of an egg while leaving the superficial shell intact. No shortage of weasel words out there in the public discourse if you're looking for them.

195. wowser – someone who is puritanical in a showy, obtrusive way. And it's perhaps appropriate to end with a word favored by the patron saint of this endeavor, H.L. Mencken. Mencken wasn't always on target. He vilified, and perhaps sent to an early grave, one of the great Americans, William Jennings Bryan, a man whose thinking – biblical exegesis aside – the times still haven't caught up to. Be careful where you aim your verbal fire. But Mencken's cynicism was generally well supported, and provided a healthy leavening to the customary cant and hypocrisy. The American public discourse would be far more honest, and ever so much more interesting, if an army of Menckens were unleashed upon the land. Which is the objective of lost-vocabulary.com.