

In Defense of Shame



I come here not to bury shame, but to praise it. Sort of.

There has been a surge in the media about the damaging impact of shame on our individual psyches. In general, these are pretty much outstanding discussions about how we internalize shame and allow it to debilitate our lives in ways subtle and not-so. In particular, I recommend this talk by Dr Brene Brown:

Dr Brown's talk, and her fine book *Daring Greatly*, have been very useful in my recent evolution into whatever it is that I am about to be becoming. I'm not a big fan of the self-help genre, but I am glad I read this one. She's funny and she has some humane advice for people who are susceptible to shame.<fn>Most of us, really. Just not the ones who should be. See below.</fn>

Right along these lines we've seen a recent TedTalk from Monica Lewinsky, and while it is not as essential as Brown's talk, it is a pretty gutsy appearance from a woman who was put into the stocks in the public square on a scale that is still hard to understand.<fn>That she was not crushed to dust by that horrific ordeal is really hard to believe. Respect!</fn> In *So You've Been Publicly Shamed*, writer Jon Ronson relates episode after episode of gang-shaming to illustrate the ways public shaming via social- and traditional-media has become a slithering beast that titillates and thrills the pitchforked mob as it consumes and spirits away everything in its path.



what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

And I am in pretty solid agreement with these folks. Shame and shaming are powerful weapons, especially when turned on the basically powerless – children and teens, especially, but human beings generally. And as Lewinsky notes, it has devolved into a sort of blood sport that treats its targets as disposable widgets that exist outside of a human frame. It is random, cruel, and serves no real purpose, unless one considers the development of smug superiority a purpose.

But I have to admit to longing for a time when *shame* was a useful check on more egregious human behaviors. Now surely, I do not accept that a young man exploring his sexuality in the privacy of his dorm room is a worthy target, any more than is the careless Tweeter who is so-to-say *exhibiting his/her ass* through imbecilic tweets deserving ruination for what amounts to minor stupidity. Nor does a child deserve to be humiliated to ensure a change in behavior, an all too prevalent mode of adulting, one that is probably just as damaging as being quick with the belt.<fn>My first day of school in a new town, we arrived 3 days after classes began. One teacher, when I handed her my forms, snarled, “Class started 3 days ago and

you're late. *Aren't you ashamed?*" I literally could not look at that beast for the entire school year. You bet I was ashamed, but I had no idea why. The shame should have belonged to her.</fn>

So true, a lot of the instances of shaming and humiliation amount to nothing better than blood sport, a distillation of the *paparazzi*-hounding that celebrities must endure. And it is a favorite tool of deflection among those who feel shame but wish it to belong to someone else.<fn>Let us consider the careers of the modern-day *Savonarolas* like Swaggart and Haggard and Westwood Baptist.</fn> Surely, we would be better off as a society if we could all just leave each other the fuck alone, or at least mind our own damned business. Most of what we are induced to pay attention to has absolutely nothing to do with us. Look away, fercryinoutloud.

But as rampant as this kind of shaming has become, we have lost shaming as a tool in the realm where it could really make a difference.

Some years back, a pal and I were philosophizing about the havoc St Ronaldus Maximus had wreaked upon our land. At one point, we came upon this damning formulation:

Reagan erased shame from our public vocabulary.

Rick Perlstein's book *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* presented this idea in a different form:

...all that turbulence in the 1960s and 70s had given the nation a chance to finally reflect critically on its power, to shed its arrogance, to become a more humble and better citizen of the world – to grow up – but Reagn's rise nipped that imperative in the bud...Then along came Ronald Reagan, encouraging citizens to think like children..."

This was amply demonstrated in the reaction to the movie *Wall Street*; when Gordon Gekko declares that "Greed is good!", too many viewers mistook his character as the hero of the morality play, with Bud Fox seen as the schmuck loser for having some shred of human decency.<fn>A similar mis-reading came with the more recent *Wolf of Wall Street*, wherein the lunatic behavior of the main characters was received as some kind of model for emulation.</fn> Up until the Reagan raj, greed and excessive consumption were generally agreed to be shameful, poor behavior. No more: *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* should have set the tumbrels rolling and the pitchforks aloft. Its impact was the opposite – the repugnant people wallowing in their tacky excess became heroes. Did they deserve shaming for being rich? Hell no. But their tasteless and thoughtless exhibitionism certainly earned them the kind of revulsion one might feel for public masturbators or pet-torturers. Instead, what we saw was the elimination of shame as a response to shame-worthy behavior. Even those rapacious bastards Rockefeller, Carnegie, &c. had the wit to recognize that they had to offer philanthropic gestures to counterbalance their shameful behavior.

Why, asks the frustrated reader, is this worthy of 1000+ words at this particular moment in time? What spurs this unhinged diatribe?

Two words: Judith Fucking Miller.<fn>One of those words is a bonus.</fn>

Of late, this war cheerleader and proven fabricator has been making the rounds to promote her book, and is being treated on the electric picture radio machine as a reputable person who deserves respect. Yet she offers no apology for her part in the fraudulent sale of a war that claimed over 100,000 lives.

She has no shame. She should. She should wear sack-cloth and crawl on her knees cleaning bedpans at Walter Reed until her last breath. Instead, she is collecting checks.

Is Bill Kristol (to name yet another keyboard kommando) ashamed of being absolutely wrong on every major question while cheerleading other people's children to war? This mendacious hack isn't even worthy to clean the bedpans.

Are any of the architects of war ashamed? Are the Masters of the Universe, those geniuses of financial innovation who drove the economy into a ditch, ashamed?

Does Henry Kissinger feel shame?

Rumsfeld? Cheney?

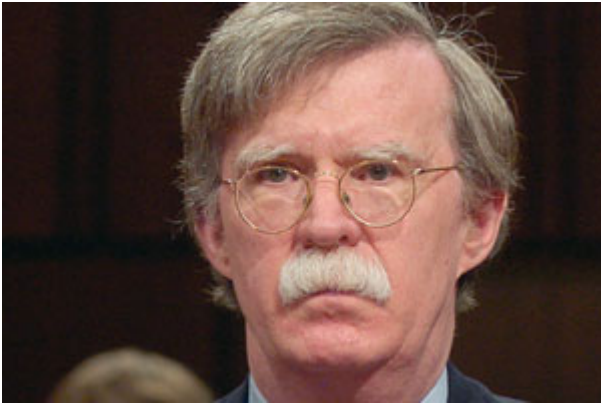
Not so much. No matter how wrong or damaging these people have been, they never seem to have to pay for their track record. I mean, Jesus H Christ bearing false witness, what does it take for someone like that to be shunned, to be told firmly to please shut up and go away? I'm not asking for ritual seppaku – though I would not be opposed – but some sense of decency and remorse would be a good start.

Is the inability to feel shame a perfect definition of sociopathy?

OK, wise guy pointy headed liberal writer – who decides whether something or someone is shame-worthy?

Ah, the judgement call. And aye, there's the rub. And it may be that any usefulness that shame once had is now gone, frittered away on our reflexive addiction to piling on whenever a Kardashian or a sportscaster or an athlete acts the public (or semi-private) fool. And our cultural tendency to focus on the trivial<fn>e.g., Jameis Winston's asinine public performance of "fuck her right in the pussy", which remains the only act that has earned him any disciplinary action</fn> renders shame that much less useful in cases where it is called for. Because if the tool we use to shame Kelly Clarkson for having the gall-durned nerve to appear in public before losing her baby weight is also the best we can do when a

monster like John Bolton<fn>Yeah, this miserable fuckwit.



</fn> can't shut his goddam piehole no matter how many times he's proved wrong, well, I'm not sure that opprobrium has any heft anymore.

I'll give this much to Nixon – I believe he knew that his misdeeds were shameful, and knew it so well that it drove him to even more misdeeds to hide the first ones. Reagan and his gang were just the opposite: they replied with a wink and a nod, letting us all know that *shame* was no longer a reasonable response. You take what you want, do what you want, and never, never apologize.

I mean, really...some people just have no shame.



A vicious monster alongside a noble beast that inspires awe, even in death.

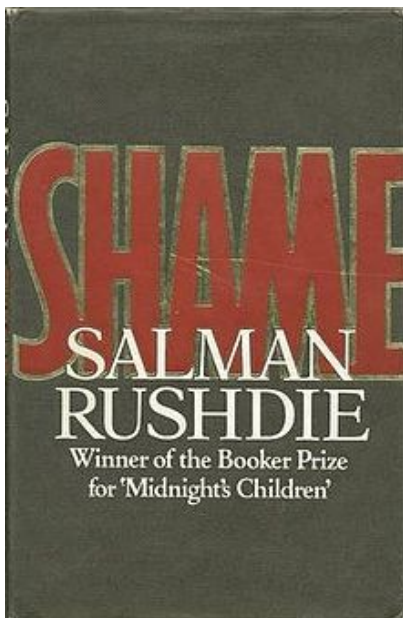
This wretched woman has been subject to a flood of online shaming. Does she deserve it? I say absolutely. Is it making any difference? Probably not. She'll be out gunning down more creatures soon, no doubt, and Ricky Gervais is racking up the hit counts.

Still, I defend the potential utility of shame. Properly recognized, it should serve us all as a guide in our personal decisions and behavior. I agree<fn>Hell, I know too well</fn> that shame can become a distorting force that can cripple a person. But still, the old adage of 'never do anything you

wouldn't want your Mother to see you do' certainly has shame at its core. But that's not necessarily so wrong.<fn>If you grew up under a Mommie Dearest scenario, my apologies. But there must be someone, living or dead, whose admiration you value. Let that person/entity be your invisible observer.</fn>

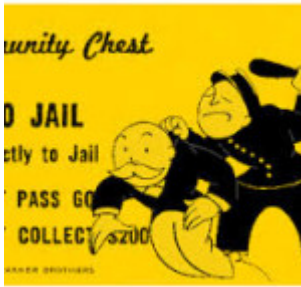
Maybe shame is just for the little people now? Or maybe it's just another form of entertainment, the precursor to and inevitable outgrowth of reality teevee. If that's it, we're all the lesser for it.

PS – This is a great book that explores the notion of shame far better than I do, but in a different cultural context.



Read this.

Breaking: Water is Still Wet



Late last year, the NY Police were very, very cross with their new Mayor, who had the gall to mention that he had instructed his son to be very careful and respectful if he had any encounters with the police. Here's a picture of the mayor and his son.



What possible reason could da mayor have had for saying such a thing?



(Excuse my insolence. I forgot we live in the post-racial America now.)

In response, the police union announced a virtual work stoppage during which they would not issue citations or make arrests "unless absolutely necessary". Arrests fell by 66%, parking citations by 94%, and traffic tickets by 94%,

according to the NY Post. My favorite stat:

“Summonses for low-level offenses like public drinking and urination also plunged 94 percent—from 4,831 to 300.

Of course, everyone remembers all the headlines about how NYC became a flame-engulfed hellscape in which drunken parking scofflaws urinated all over unsuspecting touristas. Snake Pliskin himself would have fled in horror, amirite?

Alas, no.

There was no surge in crime. The city went on as before. It turns out all that hyper-vigilant enforcement activity was not the only thing standing between Gotham and Somali-esque chaos. It turns out that most of the police work was not, to borrow from the union’s statement, “absolutely necessary”. Who knew?

The ‘broken windows’ policing philosophy that became (in)famous under NYPD in the 80s-90s became a tool for harrassment of minorities and other “suspicious” characters. In tandem with the lunatic war on drugs frenzy, this was really nothing more than a cudgel to keep Those People™ in line. Stop-and-frisk statistics clearly demonstrate the disproportionate burden imposed on minorities through its practice. Even after research demonstrated that the tactic had little real effect on wider crime rates, most police forces insisted that this was the only way to keep the streets safe for our law-abiding citizens.<fn>Who, it turns out, are bad for budget solvency!</fn> But America loves it some authoritarianism, and so long as the burden is borne by Those People™, Johnny Law had no reason to change.<fn>FWIW, I have little patience with the smart-ass ‘No cops? No crime!’ tautology of the gLibertarian crowd. Many – maybe even most – police officers are decent people trying to do a difficult, often dangerous. Though statistically speaking, the chance of death or injury on the job is greater for about two dozen

other careers, e.g. fishing, logging, or collecting trash.</fn>

Last week, our local fishwrap reported that the Leon County budget is facing a million dollar hole “because of a decline in the number of traffic tickets being written by the Tallahassee Police Department over the past 18 months.” Shortly after TPD settled an excessive force lawsuit <fn>Half a million bucks, taxpayers!</fn>, the chief of police “... went to the patrol division and instructed officers to continue writing traffic citations for serious offenses, but gave them the option and encouraged discretion in issuing warnings for stops for minor offenses.”

The article goes on to talk about TPD shifting it’s emphasis to a law-enforcement model that encourages engagement over confrontation. A TPD spokesman offered this:

“Our policing in Tallahassee has changed. In the past we may have been doing a traffic stop, and immediately the idea would be to write as many tickets as would warrant. Now the process is more of an education over enforcement at times.”

The result? TPD wrote fewer than half the number of tickets compared to the prior year. That number had been pretty steady for years. Perhaps some of that hard-core Barney Fifeing was not “absolutely necessary”? Maybe that instinct to “write as many tickets as would warrant” led to some, oh, let’s call it overly creative police work.

The news that the city government in Ferguson, MO, viewed its citizenry as little more than a dusky-hued ATM has spread far and wide.<fn>As long as far and wide does not include that place where certain friends and relations think everything would be fine of Those People™ would just simmer down a little and know their place.</fn> Ta-Nehisi Coates provides a rundown on the situation in The Atlantic, and there is really little I

can add to his excellent work.<fn>Why this guy does not have a twice-weekly slot on the NYT editorial page is an ongoing mystery.</fn> Notably, the federal DOJ reported that the department held contests to see who could write the most tickets for a single offense<fn>Merely a motivational tool to ensure greater public safety, no doubt.</fn> and that the city manager actively encouraged the police to step up citations when revenue began to lag. Suffice to say that there has been an ongoing and conscious effort to balance the city budget on the backs of the (mostly) Black citizens who can least afford it.<fn>That the collection agency is the predominately white police force is certainly just an unfortunate coincidence that makes this situation appear *racial* despite the fact that we have arrived at an utterly color-blind and post-racial period of harmony and unicorns. Pardon my insolence.</fn>

(By the way, I am not accusing Tallahassee police of this same racially-structured revenue enhancement, but I am curious to see the statistics one way or the other. However that turns out, I have not noticed our little burg devolving into any sort of Mad Max-ish dystopia in the absence of hyper-vigilant policing.)

I'm no public policy expert, but it seems pretty clear that if eliminating "unnecessary" citations and fines creates a hole in the budget, that money is going to have to come from some other source. <fn>But that leads us to the word that must never be spoken: taxes. Yet another legacy of St Ronald the Dim: we can have everything we want without paying taxes. It's magic!</fn> "Enhancing" revenues through law enforcement is just another creative means of making up the shortfall that was, at one time, borne by the community as a whole. It essentially makes criminal activity a necessary component of a healthy city budget.

What would happen if, miraculously, our entire population became perfectly docile, law abiding citizens, as in Singapore, where the idea of a stray gum wrapper or jaywalking

is unthinkable? If we are relying upon revenue from citations to balance the budget, we would have two choices: raise revenues some other way or *create* criminal activity where we can impose fines. (Are we headed to a day when people who do not commit infractions are labeled “takers” because they refuse to pay their fair share; at that point, the police will be viewed as “makers”.
<fn>I kid! Such Randroid stupidity could never happen here.</fn>) Couple this impulse with the distortion already created by militarizing the police and inculcating an occupation force mindset<fn>cf.



</fn> – alongside the budget-balancing incentive to confiscate property under drug laws run amok – and the inevitability of our descent into police statism is apparent.<fn>Has that ship sailed? Is it too late?</fn>

Back to our local budgetary shortfall and the role of (not-enough) traffic fines in funding the local government. I happen to really like my current hometown. The services the city and county provide are generally efficient and enlightened.<fn>After enduring the incompetence of ATL’s city governance for years, our local gummit is a marvel.</fn> I know this kind of service doesn’t come cheap. But if we are relying upon illegal activity (or at least the citation of same) to fund our community, we are doomed.

I grant our local PD, and our new Police Chief, this: they recognize the problem and are taking some steps to move away from this kind of zero-tolerance policing.

“Our officers are spending less and less time doing what we would call proactive policing. They are doing more of the answering calls for service.”

There's some radical thinking. Maybe a slogan to reflect this new emphasis. Hey, I got it. How about "To Protect and Serve"?

Nah, that will never catch on. Too hard to monetize.

What the Hell is Water?



Last week, a group of frat boys in Oklahoma were caught on video chanting a completely unhinged racist fraternity song. As any member of the privileged class would do, they lawyered up right quick and issued a *sincere apology* Written for them by a crisis manager, naturally. in which they declared themselves thoroughly embarrassed by their "mistake", but that they want everyone to realize that they know in their hearts they are "not racist". The University expelled the ringleaders and evicted the frat from campus. Of course, now the not-racists-in-their-hearts and the fraternity are suing the University, because they are certainly the real victims in all this.

The easy smart-ass remark begging to be thrown here is, "See, white man can't catch a break." This crack might be funny if the teller and audience were in on the joke that it's a preposterous statement on its face, an obvious flip-take on the reality of race/gender privilege. Alas, there are too many whites out there who grimly nod their assent and file it away

as another proof that, really, truly, it is they who are the real victims.<fn>It's a tricky form of satire/humor, going back to the days of Archie Bunker's transparently absurd character. Unfortunately, a majority of polled viewers did not view him as an absurd bigot; they saw him as a sympathetic victim of changing times. Just like the frat boys.</fn>

A couple of weeks ago I heard one of my favorite authors, Walter Mosley, speak at a Florida A&M. This was for a literary conference looking at futurist fiction by black authors called *Black to the Future*. As expected, Mosley was very smart and funny. Unexpected: he spoke to the 98% black audience as though there were no white people there. The talk was half over before I realized that, even though he talked *about* white people in his remarks, he never talked *to* white people.

I was unsure whether this was an amazingly clever tactic, or whether he just decided to be himself. Here was a man talking to and with his tribe, his people, and I and the 4 or 5 other whites in the auditorium, while not being excluded or threatened, simply did not matter to the form and content of his presentation. If one of us took offense, well...too damn bad. Probably the way the two black kids in my elementary school felt.

Yesterday we went to see the movie *Selma*. Once again, I had the sense that while white people were sometimes being talked *about*, the movie itself was talking specifically *to* black folks. Again, not that "we" were being demonized or anything – though we were certainly being characterized across a range of behaviors and types – it was just that our prevailing white frame of reference did not really pertain to the story the movie was telling.<fn>Skimming a few interviews, it's clear the director of *Selma* intended this framing. She's caught a lot of heat for it, too.</fn>

And that was fine, even a little bit invigorating. For a moment I felt I was experiencing first-hand an aspect of

living as a marginalized human in an other-dominated paradigm.<fn>Oh swell job, Mister Insight. Give yourself a cookie.</fn> But then I realized that I was viewing my insight through a lens defined by my generally overarching position of privilege, and that I could shift between the stances of *ignored listener* and *presumptive center of the universe* pretty much at will. My ability to recognize the distortion of marginalization was itself filtered by my fundamental *non-marginalization*, so that my epiphany of so-called *solidarity* was in fact yet another episode in my lifelong career of cluelessness about the effects of race and racial attitudes on anyone other than white males from the Deep South.<fn>As the fish in DFW's Kenyon commencement would say: "What the hell is water?"</fn>

Now it's beyond easy to point out the obviously racist behavior of the frat boys; or the Univision host who "joked" that Michelle Obama resembles an ape; or the systematic judicial apartheid of a Ferguson, Missouri. It's a little more troubling to recognize something as well-intentioned as my moment of solidarity as being, in itself, more than a little bit racist.

Fact is, the reason I registered Mosley's rhetorical stance of speaking directly to blacks as though "we" were not there is because it stood in such stark contrast to the stance that I have grown to expect as *normal*. It was the violation of this norm that registered. Why was he talking as though I were invisible? Because to him, at that time, I was. How dare he? My view of the event was tinged by my racism.

That's one hell of a word: racism. It's a fighting word, a conversation stopper. And its weight has come to be so restrictive that it allows too many of us who carry racist attitudes to pretend it does not apply to *me*, oh no, because I am a decent, well-intentioned person, and some of my best friends, &c.

But I think we need to reclaim the word for broader application, not limited to describing the likes of Bull Connor and Sheriff Jim Clark. Everyone can agree that they were racists; they were also cruel, sadistic, ignorant men whose behavior was at least socio-if-not-also psychopathic.<fn>They would have found a different outlet for their pathology in a different society. Either one would have made a fantastic Col Kurtz or FW de Klerk.</fn>

If the word is limited to the extreme examples – racism equals monstrosity, period – then the word loses its utility. It makes it impossible for someone like me to honestly assess myself and say, well yeah, I actually am a racist, I see events and people through a filter that imposes certain expectations of behavior and status and hierarchy. I hope I am evolved enough to not act as though those expectations are entitlements. But even if I am capable of behaving decently despite living within that structural view of the world, it doesn't change the fact: I am a racist.

It's critical that we who benefit from structural privilege be able to accept this word as descriptive of our attitudes – and of our behavior, if the shoe fits – if we ever hope to transcend racism as a societal given. Denying racism does nothing to rid ourselves of the framework that codifies behavior and expectation and that, ultimately, robs us of the opportunity to engage each other on an equal basis.<fn>Which hope may in itself be white-normative fantasy nonsense that has nothing to do with what others may want for themselves. I so do not know.</fn>

There has been a noisy debate about whether *Selma* depicted LBJ fairly. In one scene, LBJ uses the 'n'-word to try to persuade George Wallace. Old-time LBJ partisans were outraged. I'm pretty sure that LBJ saw himself as a 'friend to the Negro' and did not view himself as a racist. I don't know if he used the word or not, but given his age and his upbringing in the Deep South, I would not be surprised.<fn>Perhaps he would have

been more refined, the way my family elders were: they never would have said that vulgar, common word. They would have referred to the blacks as 'nigras'. It was considered more polite. Enlightened, even.</fn>

So sure, I like to consider myself an enlightened, fair-minded guy. But I'm drawing the line at "post-racial". This nonsense word has been run through the wringer of privilege and entitlement and asks solely that everyone please STFU about race because it makes *Us* feel a little bit uncomfortable. Can't we all just get along and pretend everything is okey doke? Come on, the water is just fine.

Robin DiAngelo's 2011 essay *White Fragility* describes a society "in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves." This stance – coupled with the extreme definition of racism – leaves us at a great divide. The in-group is outraged that they are criticized; the out-group can't believe the in-group refuses to recognize their role in the system's perpetuation, and everyone embraces the role of unfairly treated victim. It's a dead end of shouting past each other.

So no unfair victimhood here. I am a racist. I am also a sexist, and a bunch of other unpleasant isms. It's the water we've been raised in, and that sometimes seems pretty insurmountable.

But.

While the vast majority of the bleeding and dying during the Civil Rights struggle was done by black people standing up for themselves, more than a handful of whites put themselves on the line, too, and made a real difference.

And even though they grew up in less enlightened times than most of us, they managed to see the water for what it was. If they can do it...

My Favorite World #6



From fashion to futbol to absurdist political horror stories to fabulist fiction to the happiness to be found in an unspotted foot...it's My Favorite World.

Fashion Statement(?)

Guys, there's something about putting on a blazer. Amirite? You stand a little straighter, you carry a little more air. It's not that it's hard to slouch or slump with a blazer on, it's just that it's easier not to. I hold this truth to be self-evident: that all men being created equal, a blazer will elevate one over the other. It's one of article of clothing guaranteed to confer *gravitas*. Or so I thought.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered Michael Davies and Roger Bennett – otherwise known as Men in Blazers – while I was lying ill on the sofa. I was watching a Detroit- Boston NHL game<fn>Original 6 represent!</fn>, and when it was over the

remote was too far away to flip over to Wolf Blitzer's beard ejaculating speculation about another airline tragedy. So.

Here comes Michael and Rog, a couple of balding Brits in tragically ill fitting blazers, holding forth from what looks a janitorial supply closet and offering up, well, best let them tell:

We discuss football. And wear blazers. Usually at the same time. Men in Blazers is driven by the belief that Soccer is America's Sport of the Future. As it has been since 1972.

And just that fast, I was laughing so hard I nearly rolled off the couch.

On Chile's Alexis Sanchez, who likes to pull his jersey off after a goal:

His back is made out of Braille, and you know what it says if you run your fingers across it? It says....sexy!

And how does this 5'4 runt score leap over the 6"1 goalie to score?

"His Drakkar Noir is like a trail of chloroform."

Later, talking about – and showing hilarious examples of – the alarming decline of Mario Balotelli's once prodigious skills:

His transformation from being an elite footballer to an avant garde slapstick comedian..."

...which apparently was caused in some wise by too much time cavorting in hot tub advertisements with super models...

He's clearly suffering some shrinkage from that hot tub, Rog.

One of them later describe the owner of Man U (I think) as looking like a Muppet with too much starch.

I know next to nothing about British Premier League Football, <fn>FWIW, I like women's soccer better than the men's game – much less whining and flopping. Though I admit that saying that around “real soccer fans” makes me feel like I'm defending the layup/set shot laden WNBA.</fn>but if these guys are part of the broadcast squad, I'll be watching more than I had ever imagined. Even though my philosophy of the Supremacy of the Blazer has been shattered evermore. Here's a nice dose to give you an idea. Think Skip Carey and Pete van Wieren with posh British accents.

http://www.nbcsports.com/show/men-blazers?guid=nbc_bpl_mib_top10characters_141229

Also, too, they have a posh posh Latin motto:

viri recte vestiti

Men who are clothed. They qualify, but only just.

Posh. MFW.

The Never Ending Reading Challenge

I've finally finished Perlstein's *The Invisible Bridge*, a surrealist drama about the so-called rise of the ever comical penis in a suit, Ronald Reagan. Fortunately, the story has a happy ending, where Reagan is denied his shot at the 1976 Republican presidential nomination at the last minute. The last line is a quote from one of the Wise Men Pundits of Washington, who notes that at age 65, Reagan is far too old to consider another run for the Presidency.

What a relief that was! The whole book long I feared that nothing could stop the Sainted Ronaldus Maximus. Can you

imagine how catastrophic a Reagan presidency would have been for this country? We dodged a bullet there, for sure ya betcha.

Now after that chilling ride of absurdist horror, I turn my attention to something more down to earth and believable: *Don Quixote*. But not until I finish up the Italo Calvino collection of *CosmiComics*. Calvino introduces protagonists who have existed and evolved since the beginning of time, with generally unpronounceable names (Qfwfq is the main “guy”), and who are not human – in fact, what they are beyond pure existence or unicellular *being* is usually uncertain. Though Qfwfq’s romantic interest is called Priscilla, and it appears she evolves into a camel over the eons. – but who embody more humanity and insight into the human condition than most so-called flesh and blood co-called characters in 98.43% of so-called fiction. That a work of such playful, meta style evokes such heartbreak and yearning is testimony to a writing style that is learned, witty, tender, and above all, light. I cannot recommend this one more highly.

So many books. So little time.

Happy Feet

Main reason this is My Favorite World? This:



Petechial Rash – Very Nasty

That's my ankle/foot almost exactly six months ago. The rest of my pitiful corpus looked pretty much the same. Somehow I've made it to the end of 2014, and there were a couple of times I wasn't so confident I'd get here. So, yeah pretty much good that I didn't die.<fn>YMMV</fn>

My New Year's Resolution for 2015 is simple and concise: stay the fk out of the hospital. I wish the same for all of you. Thanks for sharing My. Favorite. World.