Who Will Rid Me of This Meddlesome Meddling?

A little over a year ago, Daughter was assigned Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* for her high-school literature class. I love this book.<fn>Heck, I pretty much dig all of Murukami's work.</fn> So I was excited about reading along with her and hearing about how the book was discussed in class and what she thought about it all. But about halfway through the book, one of the parents discovered that the book "offended" her, so she pressured the school administration to stop teaching the book. And just like that, the kids were told that it was no longer part of the class syllabus and the teacher was admonished to please not discuss it with the students.

Sure, I was annoyed at the bible banger who kicked up a fuss and short-circuited a group of intelligent kids from exploring a really great book. But to be honest, I was more irritated that the school caved so easily.

The bitter twist? The kids had just read a section that is truly upsetting, and this decision to halt the teaching of the book left the kids in limbo with no guidance to help them put the reading into context. Instead of "saving" these poor innocents<fn>Note: 17 year olds are not all that innocent. Just saying.</fn> from the trauma of so-called "inappropriate" material, the crusaders left them at its mercy.

Well dammit, according to the local fishwrap, it's happened again. One of the local high schools assigned *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* as the summer reading. Our intrepid education correspondent<fn>Who is doing some very good work. And hooray that we actually have someone on that beat.</fn> reports that "…the f-word is written 28 times, the

s-word 18 times, and the c-word makes one appearance – in Britain that word is less charged than it is in the U.S. A few characters also express atheistic beliefs, taking God's name in vain on nine occasions."<fn>I had no idea that *cunt* was less offensive in Britain, but it's in the paper, so it must be true! Personally, I love the blunt (rhymes with..) impact of the triple consonant / single vowel sound, much like that other favorite word of mine, but with the ultra-hard opening consonant that makes the word more of a punch than the relatively gentle *fuck*. But I accept that its misogynist freight makes it unsuitable in all but the most extreme instances, at least here in the colonies. Alas.</fn>

And thus it was that one eagle-eyed defender of purity decided that the book was inappropriate for her child's tender sensibilities.

> *"I am not interested in having books banned. But to have that language and to take the name of Christ in vain – I don't go for that. As a Christian, and as a female, I was offended. Kids don't have to be reading that type of thing and that's why I was asking for an alternative assignment.*
>
> *"I know it's not realistic to pretend bad words don't exist, but it is my responsibility as a parent to make sure that my daughter knows what is right or wrong.*

I understand, I do. I live in mortal terror of the day my kid wanders in and declares, "Hey, we have to read this thing called *Atlas Shrugged*. Ever heard of it?" But not because it is a terrible piece of so-called literature in every particular.<fn>Though it is.</fn> It's not that it is brimful with ideas and concepts that offend me to my very core.<fn>It does.</fn>

No. My terror is this: If one of my kids has to read it, then so do I. And then I have to be prepared to talk with her or him, to explain my thoughts. And I have to be prepared to

listen when one of them says, “Gosh, Dad, that Ayn Rand had some pretty great ideas!”

Here’s where Outraged Mom missed a huge opportunity. Given that her child will certainly hear/face this kind of language and thinking as she journeys out of her cocoon<fn>As if she has not already. Please.</fn>, this was Outraged Mom’s chance to engage her child’s critical thinking. She could have learned more about how her child thinks and who she is on the way to becoming. O.M. could have explained – even though she “is not interested in having books banned” – exactly why she effectively had this book banned. What was so important about this book, exactly? Why, exactly, was she “offended” as a “Christian, and as a female”? She might even have asked her daughter what she thought and felt about it all. And listened.

Instead, she prefers her child to remain ignorant about the book’s contents and to the basis of O.M.’s objections. And to remain ignorant herself about her daughter’s ability to reason and think in the face of new ideas.

Some of the comments on the article hailed this woman for getting involved in her daughter’s education, for monitoring her reading material. But let’s be real: if O.M. actually read *Curious Incident* start to finish, I’ll eat a copy. This is not engagement; it’s reactive hysteria.

When Daughter read Murakami, I read along with her and we talked about it. When Son was assigned *The Dubliners* this summer, I was thrilled to re-read it. But there have been some rough moments, too. They both read *The Alchemist*, a perfectly terrible little parable about placing your faith in magical thinking and an all-powerful god. I bought it in an airport and read it during a long day of travel. And I hated every word, comma, and period. Daughter and I talked about the book, and I asked her thoughts, and it turned out that she didn’t care for it, either. She’s read *Hamlet*, *Tartuffe*, *Americanah, Metamorphosis.* She’s read *Mrs. Dalloway* (she hated that

one), *The God of Small Things*. She's read tons of Emily Dickinson and some EM Forster and Kate Chopin and the boy has read *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Some of the themes and ideas they have dealt with through school assigned readings are what we euphemistically refer to as *mature*. Hell, *Scarlet Letter* is about adultery for crying out loud. They both read *The Great Gatsby*, and really, it is just one long debauch. With adultery! They've read *Romeo and Juliet*<fn>Sex between minors before marriage, murder, suicide, lying to their parents(!).</fn> and *The Hunger Games* <fn>Kids killing each other in horrific ways and revolution against the government. Plus, sex.</fn> and *Homer's Odyssey* <fn>Murder, rape, incest, kidnapping, adultery, cursing the gods. But no "dirty" words! Win!</fn> and *Macbeth* <fn>Murder and dabbling in the occult!</fn>. They've dealt with violence and profanity and duplicity and religious fervor and rank heresy. They've managed to compile one hell of a catalog of books read. And each one has offered an opportunity to learn something.

I dunno. I always took it for granted that that's what reading was all about.

> *"I know it's not realistic to pretend bad words don't exist, but it is my responsibility as a parent to make sure that my daughter knows what is right or wrong.*

Exactly! This book was a perfect opportunity for O.M. to teach her daughter what "right and wrong" actually means, and to learn from her daughter why she agrees or not. It was a chance to demonstrate how humans can apply critical thinking to analyze ideas and situations to make moral choices beyond simply trying to "pretend bad words don't exist", which in fact is exactly what her objection to the book amount to. One of the objections from the puritans towards this kind of reading in the school is that it should be up to the parents

to teach their children about “such things”. The school gave this woman and her gaggle a golden opportunity to do just that. They swatted it away.

The school board and principal wish to pretend that this is not really a banning, but is something not quite that bad.

> *But it wasn’t a part of the true curriculum. We use summer reading as a way to keep kids engaged over the summer. The book will remain on the media center shelves and is not being banned.”<fn>He went on to explain, “We have always been at war with Oceania!”</fn>*

Just as with the Murakami, the school folded like a cheap lawn chair when they saw the godbotherers prepping their torches and pitchforks. Even worse, they pretended that, since this was “just” summer reading, it was not *really* part of the curriculum, so no harm, no foul. Oh, well alrighty then.

OK, step into the principal’s shoes for a minute. School is two weeks away. There are a million details to attend, and the thought of wrangling with a bunch of Carrie Nations smells like living hell. So he throws them a bone and hopes they’ll go away. But feeding these jackals does nothing but make them hungry for more. They’ll be back, ready to dine on precedent.

We read on:

> *School Board member Alva Striplin is now recommending the removal of “Curious Incident” from the district’s approved reading list.*
>
> *“We are simply listening to parents’ concerns,” Striplin said. “We’ve got a million books to choose from and this one should not be on the district approval list.”*

And just why the shit-flinging monkey fuck not? As it turns out, two other schools in town – one private, the other part

of the public system – assigned this book for the summer and have had no problems, no complaints. But now, because one Outraged Mom has complained, our school leadership is ready to go even farther than O.M. asked for. Jesus H Christ burning a scroll, what the hell comes next? This quisling quiescence<fn>That's called alliteration. I learned that in high school lit class. Thanks Ms Coker.</fn> puts all those books I listed above on line for the chopping block.

(Fittingly, both of our kids also read *Fahrenheit 451* as part of their curriculum, so they are familiar with the kind of thinking that lies beneath the urge to stop people from reading "dangerous" ideas, even if the danger is something as simple as a dirty word. They may even be familiar with the fact that *451* has been the target of banning attempts for decades, due to its language and "un-Christian" ideas. This is how one learns about irony, I imagine.)

If all it takes to get a book yanked is a handful of bible banging meddlers, no book is safe. If this is the model, then teaching actual biology, actual climate science, actual history…all these subjects are up for bid to the loudest whiners. I don't hold the whiners responsible for this. It's up to the educators to say, "No, this bullshit stops right here." Those exact words would suit me just fine.

If a parent wants to pull his child from a class for certain subjects or assignments, so be it. If they find themselves doing this fairly regularly, they may wish to consider that they are in the wrong school, and might wish to investigate opportunities at the nearest madrassah or parish school.<fn>Pro tip: Avoid the Jesuits if real science offends you.</fn>

In the meantime, teachers and administrators need to belt up and tell these people, "Sorry, but the rest of us have no obligation to try to sooth your feelings just because you are 'offended'. At the risk of further offending…go pound sand."

Well, a boy can dream.

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 schmuko 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?

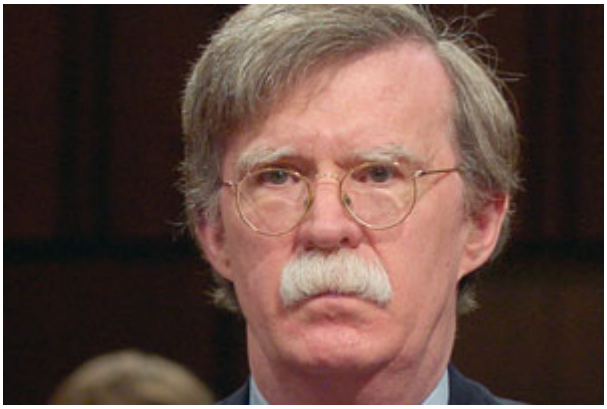
Not so much. No matter how wrong or damaging these people have been, they never seem to have to pay for their track record. I mean, Jesus H Christ bearing false witness, what does it take for someone like that to be shunned, to be told firmly to please shut up and go away? I'm not asking for ritual seppaku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

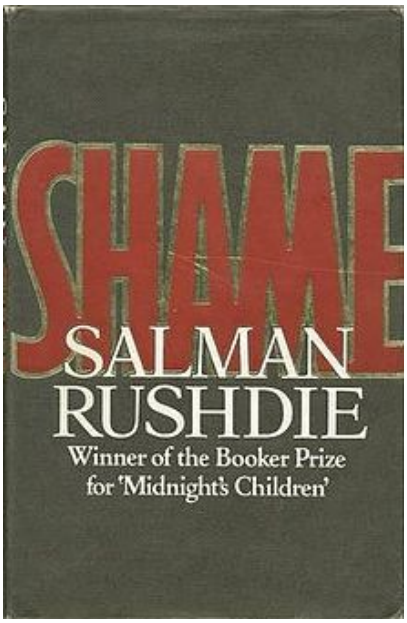
This wretched woman has been subject to a flood of online shaming. Does she deserve it? I say absolutely. Is it making any difference? Probably not. She'll be out gunning down more creatures soon, no doubt, and Ricky Gervais is racking up the hit counts.

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.

Material. Timing. Delivery. And the beauty of random

disregard.



Life is busy and such, mostly in ways good. But one must never disregard the wisdom of Miss ~~Latella~~ Rosannadana.

(Ed Note: Eagle-eyed reader Popopopopovich correctly points out that it was in fact Rosanna Rosanadanna who made famous the "It's always something" catchphrase. The management apologizes for any inconvenience and begs forbearance of the litigious demons of the Gilda Radner Estate.<fn>Worse than Disney, I hear.</fn> The Writer has been put on a strict diet of gruel made from the ground up bones of our recently departed fact-checker. We regret the error.)

It's always something.

In the past two weeks…two biopsies to try and figure out why my aching Studebaker of a body continues to drop parts despite the mechanics' best efforts. The first: mostly negative (yay!) but inconclusive as to another one of those melodramatic 'C' word diagnoses. Results of the latest test due Friday. I expect good news, as most of my symptoms have disappeared untreated. Go figger.<fn>And I still cannot grip a guitar, and fk that shit, Rupert.</fn>

In the meantime, Awesome Daughter is expecting news about whether her first choice college welcomes her with open arms. Decision day is Friday. Well.

Yesterday, as she was asking for a favor, she demurred at pushing too hard, because (her words) "you're dealing with that whole cancer thing." I laughed so hard I thought I'd

plotz. And of course, she won her request. Comedy is all about material, timing, and delivery. A-plus on all fronts.

This evening, we were all laughing about her remark.<fn>Graveyard whistling and disregard for solemnity being big around these parts.</fn> Son declared her horrible. I declared him my favorite, as one is always well-advised to encourage sycophancy from the underlings.

Then it struck me: a thought experiment!<fn>I've been reading the latest Daniel Dennett. My puzzlers are not nearly as profound, but I aver to the inspiration.</fn>

> A family awaits two pieces of news of critical importance. Only one response can be positive. Do you, daughter, wish me to be cancer-free, or do you wish to be accepted to your dream school?

Zero hesitation from my (truly) loving and wonderful child:

> College acceptance. Cancer is treatable.

A moment of WTF was that pause, and then we all fell down laughing.

Material was a tad off center, but the timing and delivery was pure Coltrane. Brava.

Also, too, in the realm of casual disregard….

The bloggy vineyard of i2b attracts a steady parade of eyeballs, but few of the humans bother to leave comments. This makes me very sad.<fn>Try to hear that phrase in the icy teutonic accent of Heidi Klum dismissing a Project Runway contestant for bad taste.</fn>

So, dear reader, your random disregard leads me to bask in the warming glow of nothing but spambot generated comments intended to entice me to purchase sports jerseys, weight loss supplements, and penis enhancers.<fn>Aside from the jerseys,

none of that stuff is for real. Believe me.</fn> But I've come to love some of these simplistic machine friends, as their comments serve to encourage continued blogularity.<fn>And to stimulate my tumescence for under the medically recommended four-hour maximum.</fn> To wit:

> *What i don't understood is in reality how you are not actually a lot more neatly-appreciated than you may be right now. You are so intelligent. You know therefore significantly in terms of this subject, made me in my view consider it from a lot of various angles. Its like men and women are not fascinated except it is something to accomplish with Girl gaga! Your individual stuffs excellent. At all times care for it up!*

Damn right, registered user Tanya3756dc from Uzbekistan. And thanks for the shout out.

There are two kinds of these auto-messages. One is dry, written in impeccably poor language, and offering nothing but commercial enticement. But such feeble witterings are not sufficient for my dear Tanya3765dc. These comments find art in the strangest places.

> *You know therefore significantly in terms of this subject, made me in my view consider it from a lot of various angles. Its like men and women are not fascinated except it is something to accomplish with Girl gaga!*

A shrewd judge of literary merit is my Tanya3765. Indeed, does not Girl Gaga make the world go 'round? Mais bien sur! Even Cole Porter knew that!

> *Your individual stuffs excellent. At all times care for it up!*

You bet your sweet Uzbekian bippy, Tanya. My individual stuffs

excellent, as legions far and wide will attest.

But more critically, my beloved Tanya3765, despite her automated disposition and limited linguistic facility, has arrived at the existential core of Immune to Boredom:

> *At all times care for it up.*

Amen, Sister Tanya3765. Amen.

And one last thing….

I watched *Casablanca* for around the 75th time last night. I was really just going to watch for a minute, but one thing led to Sam and Ilsa and *Les Marseilles* and "Shocked, shocked I say!" and I was done for. And while I always choke up at the big moments and miss subtleties because goddammit the problems of two people don't amount to a hill of beans in this world and we'll always have Paris, and therefore I'm a helpless heap incapable of critical scrutiny…what I realized in watching this time was: there is not one wasted word, frame, musical note in this movie. Every cut, every aside, every casual glance at the side of the scene contributes to a deeper story.

Try to think of more than a few works of art that achieve this superb economy.

You think the great works of Dickens or Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy might not have benefited from a little judicious pruning? How about *Lawrence of Arabia*, or even Billy the Bard's plays? Oh, how they do go on!

Even my favorite book of ever, the infinite *Infinite Jest*…even that epic could probably have lost a word or 5000 and suffered nothing from the loss.<fn>Though I would not be the one to cut even a punctuation mark from that one.</fn>

I bring this point to bear for two reasons.

One, *Casablanca* may just be a perfect piece of art. Consider it. The story is timeless. The material is poetry. The delivery and timing, utterly majestic.

Two: however perfect the movie may be as an example of aesthetic precision and efficiency, this blog post stakes out the opposite pole as an exemplar of free-floating random and discursive disregard.

Mea culpa. This shit don’t write itself.

Here’s looking at you, kid.



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 begining 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<fn>Though

Qfwfq’s romantic interest is called Priscilla, and it appears she evolves into a camel over the eons.</fn> — 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.