

CLAY REYNOLDS

NATIONOFCHANGE / OP-ED

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Addressing the Ladies of the Club.



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How the Texas 1% Live

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From time to time, I am asked to address one of the several hundred women’s clubs that dot the urban landscape near me. The point is to provide a program for their meetings that, otherwise, would consist mostly of drinking coffee and eating sweetmeats and gossiping. The other morning, I was invited to review two new biographies of Dwight Eisenhower for a particular chapter of a self-proclaimed patriotic

women’s group, founded in the certainty that each of them had descended from some individual who was in some way augustly connected to one of our nation’s several antique and noble wars. It was quite an experience.

The meeting was in a one of our city’s wealthier areas, a neighborhood that offers a half-decent imitation of West Hollywood, CA, only without the celebrities or even the ersatz-luxury restaurants. It was held in a vintage private home that probably cost more than my combined lifetime income. (George W. Bush resides in the same general neighborhood.) The street in front was a narrow but un-gated private drive, and I was directed by two flag-waving attendants into the parking lot. They had their own parking lot, fenced and guarded. Once inside, I found about a dozen cars, not counting the owners’ two boats, ATV, Jeep, and compact pickup, all of which were garaged there. The open area resembled nothing more than a luxury car rental agency. Mercedes, Caddies, BMWs, a couple of Lincolns, Lexuses and Infinitis, a Jaguar and one Corvette, all hemmed in my pickup, but I found a slot and soon made my way to the front of the house. “I guess this is the place for the meeting, I said to one attendant.” *Tiene razón, Señor,*” he said and nodded.

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My hostess, whom I instantly offended, I fear, by overlooking the cautionary sign and letting the cat in when I passed through the front door, looked like a character from Central Casting sent over to

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Switzerland Sets Example for Income Equality

BY ROBERTO SAVIO
We are in transition to a different system. This can be done through peaceful and cooperative means, or by a continuation of this growing social injustice.

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Vermont’s Governor Peter Shumlin Still Bullied by Monsanto

BY WILL ALLEN
Vermonters are beginning to wonder: What’s the governor really afraid of?


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fill a role in a horror film. No more than 5'1" and built something like a turnip, an effect in no way diminished by a white-and-purple dress, her hair, which was piled high on her head in the shape of an inverted hornet's nest, contained at least three different colors: black, white, and a kind of pinkish gray. She was so elaborately made up, she looked like a walking corpse. Her orange-colored, stiletto nails extended a full inch from each fingertip, and one of her eyes was blue, the other brown, and it wandered. Her teeth, which I'd guess were original, were stained green, for some reason, and she had no eyebrows. I guessed her to be well into her eighties. She carried a cane, but she didn't use it, except to threaten the intrusive cat; I was very polite and careful not to arouse ire, all the same. Although abundantly friendly and hospitable, she was, in truth, utterly grotesque.



So was the house. A large sign erected by the front gate warned, "Prayer is the Answer." There was no word about abandoning hope; even so, that was a caution. I was ushered through and past what appeared to be two capacious living rooms and into the "Large Room" or so it was designated. Along the way, I threaded my way through a forest of antique accent tables, tiny nonfunctioning wooden chairs, and a hectare of bookshelves, but the only book in evidence was by Glenn Beck, reposing solo on a mahogany coffee table next to a crystal table lighter. I don't know when I've seen so much tasteless porcelain, glassware, and ceramics adorning every available shelf and tabletop. Memorial plates, ceremonial figurines, and what were apparently souvenirs from world travels were jumbled haphazardly among other random brick-a-brack with no discernible plan for display other than the fact of ownership. Truly awful artwork, paintings and sculptures, were scattered about everywhere, ranging from small indefinable statues to what appeared to be a huge framed poster depicting a giant William B. Travis standing Gulliver-like astride the Alamo's chapel (complete with copula, which, of course, it didn't have until the 1920s), surrounded by tiny Mexican soldiers, holding up a rifle in one hand and a sword in the other, and shouting the words, printed in bright red, "Victory or Death!" The figure was adorned, for some reason, in formal attire, complete with tails and white tie. In scale, the Mexicans were roughly the size of mice.


Through the windows of "the Main Room" I noted a fieldstone patio that gave way to a brick-edged body of water about the size of an

 Eventually Sequester Will Cause Real Pain - And Among First to Suffer Will Be Hungry Children

Eventually Sequester Will Cause Real Pain - And Among First to Suffer Will Be Hungry Children

BY JOE CONASON

Evidently a principle is at stake that can be vindicated only by taking food from the mouths of pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and infants.

 The Crucifixion of Tomas Young

The Crucifixion of Tomas Young

BY CHRIS HEDGES

Young will die for our sins. He will die for a war that should never have been fought.



Ryan's Regressiveness Redux

BY ROBERT REICH

Austerity economics — of which Ryan's upcoming budget is the most extreme version — is a cruel hoax.

Olympic swimming pool, in the center of which stood a miniature (six or seven feet tall) replica of the Statue of Liberty, with water shooting out of the torch. Spaced throughout the house were other vivid reminders of Americana and Texana of one sort or another. There also were a number of dead animals, stuffed and mounted in attitudes of predatory perusal; raccoons seemed to be favored, for some reason. The furniture varied from Second Empire to late Victorian to indifferent American, with Persian rugs scattered about over hard wood. I was put in mind of some flea markets I've seen. Around fifty women were in attendance. The membership averaged in age, I'd say, around 70, with the youngest being a relatively attractive woman of about 50, who, she said, was a graduate of the college where I teach, class of 1989, and who wanted to know if I remembered her. I didn't, since I joined the faculty in 1998, but this did not deter her from insisting that *she* remembered *me*. She was the only one there under 60, I'm sure. The pancake makeup and hair spray concession was doing well, along with lilac-scented perfume that was as dense as the air around the average chemical plant.

There was no smoking, of course, and no booze. But oh, my, the money. You could smell that. The fruits of decades if not centuries of gross profits from oil, cotton, "caddle," land acquisition and creative accounting were on vivid parade. At first, I was taken aback by the elaborate costume jewelry they all seemed to be wearing, but as they came closer to introduce themselves, I realized that all these gems were real. One woman had on a necklace of what appeared to be emeralds the size of quarters. There are probably South African diamond mines with fewer quality gemstones in residence than were adorning elaborately manicured fingers, liver-spotted wrists, and wattled necklines. I determined that if the Texas economy depended on the sales from Nordstrom's and Tiffany's, to say nothing of local plastic surgeons, that all will be well in the future. The food layout on a 12' table complete with lace tablecloth and silver coffee service, was clearly catered and looked delicious; although I was directed to eat, I didn't sample any of it. I'd already let the outdoor cat in; I didn't want to risk spilling and soiling an expensive oriental rug.

The formal meeting was held in a specially designed meeting room that had been added on to the back of the house, facing what Granny Clampett would have called "the see-ment pond." There were plenty of folding chairs, an altar (complete with crosses, a chalice, and candles), and a small table where three tiny flags--US, Texas, and Protestant Christian--were stuck into tiny holders that fell over whenever anyone passed near them. Although they always have a program, no lectern or even table was provided for a putative speaker's notes. I dutifully took a chair then stood when, after a great deal of confusion created by the chapter's chaplain's inability to light one of the candles with a "gadget," a butane lighter (the trigger mechanism she deftly handled, but the thumb-switch activating the gas flummoxed her), was resolved by the production of book of matches, the meeting was launched with a non-denominational prayer. The chalice was ignored. The heavenly


supplication was followed by the careful snuffing of candles, then the elocution of the "Pledge of Allegiance," a unison reading of the "Preamble to the Constitution," and something called, "The Oath to Citizenship," which read for all the world like an adaptation of "The Apostle's Creed," but with patriotic jingos substituted for religious references—"Constitution" for God, "Freedom" for Faith, "Liberty" for Everlasting Life, "Congress" for Evangelical Church, etc.; then there was the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the Texas Flag. All of these recitations were solemnly performed. I wondered about the order of events.

Next up was the business meeting. The treasury report revealed that this chapter has 110 active (and still living; proceedings were interrupted for a memorial prayer for three members who had died since the last meeting) members and more than \$25,000 in the bank. I belong to a couple of major regional academic organizations with less than half that in disposable income. They were quibbling over spending \$500 to send gift packages to 100 soldiers in Afghanistan. Among items to be included were small toiletries, bags of trail-mix, baby-wipes, and "magazines." I was curious as to what magazines the group might approve of, and speculated about *Car and Driver*, *Field and Stream*, *National Geographic*, possibly *Playboy* or even, for that matter, *Playgirl*; but they turned out to be mostly cross-word puzzle and word-game magazines. Just what a lonely soldier on the front wants most, I decided. Most of the room expressed profound shock that the US Postal Service provided boxes into which items could be packed; they sold, postage included, for \$15.95, a sum deemed to be outrageous for a cardboard box. "No wonder they're in financial trouble," a woman near me whispered. After some debate, they decided to go ahead with the project.

After the business meeting, I was introduced. My presentation went over very well. Or so they said, and said, and said. I have no idea who they've had previously, but whoever it was must have been damned boring. I talked about Eisenhower's life from the books I've reviewed, and they seemed astounded by facts that most all of them remembered. Several announced that they wanted to take a course from me. One woman announced that she wrote a paper in college on the Suez Crisis and wondered if she got it right. They seemed perplexed when I noted that before reading the two books, I'd always found it remarkable that few if any present-day Republicans ever even mentioned Eisenhower as one of the bright stars of the GOP. After studying his presidency, though, I concluded that he may well have been too much of a progressive to qualify for more than honorable mention. This raised the question, "Aren't *all* presidents progressive?" The only potential sour note was when I noted that at the time Eisenhower was tapped for the GOP nomination, he had never voted in a general election (Expressions of shock rippled through the room) and when I offered two quotes from Ike: "I cannot see why anyone in his right mind would want to be a Republican," and "The two foundations of any democracy are housing and food. That's what people want and need, and when they can't have them, they revolt." Heads visibly

ratcheted back when I read the latter. I shouldn't have done it, I guess, but I couldn't resist, especially after one of the members had previously risen and urged them each to write to Justice Scalia and tell him to stand firm on declaring the voting rights act unconstitutional.

On the other hand, afterwards, one woman put a claw on my forearm and explained that there always had been only two kinds of Democrats in Texas—"a Yarborough Democrat and a Shivers Democrat." That," she said, "was what made me a Republican." A lady nearby overheard, leaned in and with a chuckle said, "You got that right, Honey!" Eventually, I made my getaway, though, and mostly unscathed, although I was warned that at least four of them would be sending me some ancestral story for me to adapt into a book. I said I looked forward to receiving them, but when they asked for my address, I also lamented that somehow, some way, I had forgotten to bring any business cards with me. As none had pen and paper handy, they were all disappointed.



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ABOUT CLAY REYNOLDS

*Reynolds' first novel, **The Vigil**, won an "Oppie Award" in 1986; his third novel, **Franklin's Crossing** was entered into the Pulitzer Prize competition for 1992; in 2012, Reynolds was awarded the prestigious Spur Award for Short Fiction for his story, "The Deacon's Horse." Reynolds' critical evaluations and feature articles have appeared in several national magazines, including **Chronicles**, **American Way**, and **Texas Monthly**; his short fiction has been published in **Writers' Forum**, **South Dakota Review**, **High Plains Literary Review**, and **Cimarron Review**. He has regularly contributed book reviews and feature columns to several metropolitan newspapers; for more than ten years, he was a regular contributor to **Publishers Weekly** and **Kirkus Reviews** and has written for **The New York Times**. Reynolds has nearly forty years of university teaching experience, presently **Professor of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas** and serves as **Director of Creative Writing**.*

32 comments on "How the Texas 1% Live"

SWRICKETT

March 11, 2013 8:03am

This piece doesn't have anything to do with stereotypes or even satire because it is reportage with what could be considered a normal response by the narrator. Not much input from the narrator was required at that. The experience itself told a revealing story in which extreme wealth, women's traditional behavior in Texas due to such wealth, and ill-fated "college education" in that era meant finding a husband, are all inherent.

The story tells itself. I thank you for reminding me how the holders of 98% of the wealth in TEXAS mostly live and behave. I'm of that age bracket and I am ever so grateful my choices and experiences have led me down different paths. Without the wealth.

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WILL

March 11, 2013 7:07am

Question - who exactly is "RBecker" (pseudonym for Clay Reynolds??) and who made him the Lord God of all things deemed satire? Satire is fiction based on reality - satire is NOT reportage based on presumption.

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PKIBBLE

March 11, 2013 1:24pm

So after thundering down an absolute and apparently irrefutable definition of the real, true, authentic nature of satire ("satire is based on reality---satire is NOT reportage based on presumption") as if it were Holy Writ, you accuse Mr. Becker of usurping the prerogatives of divinity. Sounds like the envy of one god directed toward another, sort of the like the competing deities of classical mythology. Also sounds like you need to brush up on your understanding not only of satire but of irony as well.

BTW, just finished re-reading Hunter S. Thompson's Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, a piece of reportage based on the presumption that most of the people he encountered were despicable freaks or morons. This was set in a real (not fictional) place called--- what was that name again?---oh, yeah, Las Vegas, which admittedly contains an unhealthy chunk of the surreal. As Philip Roth noted, that's why a satirist has so much trouble keeping up with the incredibilities of "real-life" America today.

Speaking of reportage, I think I'll also read some of Mark Twain's aggressively unpatriotic dispatches on our country's wars against uppity furreners, based on the presumption that imperialism maybe had its downside. For example, here's Twain on the Moro massacre in the Philippines:

General Wood was present and looking on. His order had been, 'Kill or capture those savages.' Apparently our little army considered that the 'or' left them authorized to kill or capture according to taste, and that their taste had remained what it had been for eight years in our army out there--the taste of Christian butchers.

Was the massacre Twain reported on a work of "fiction"? The victims would no doubt have surprised to hear this. But they couldn't because they were, you know, dead---in strictly "reality" terms.

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RBECKER

March 11, 2013 8:41am

You should get out more, especially at Nation of Change. I have been a featured writer and earlier an official blogger here for two years. I also appear at OpEdNews, at RSN, occasionally at Alternet and other sites.

Just google:

Nation of Change Robert S. Becker

I live in Northern California and Reynolds in Texas and I posted every one of my comments. I use my real name. I also have a Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Berkeley, studied satire with experts, and was an academic for a dozen years before shifting to business, then consulting, and for a decade have written on politics, culture, religion, art, movies, etc.

Your speculation that I am someone else typifies someone who spouts off about what he doesn't know. Your definition of satire is misleading as satire can be both fictional and realistic. What the satirist does is puncture established values by applying different ones and the reader must share the joke or the satire falls flat. Gulliver's Travel is fictional satire; Andy Borowitz does more realistic hyperbole, and exaggerated reportage is certainly part of satire. From Wikipedia, fairly accurate definition:

"Satire is a genre of literature, and sometimes graphic and performing arts, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, and society itself, into improvement.[1] Although satire is usually meant to be funny, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit as a weapon.

A common feature of satire is strong irony or sarcasm—"in satire, irony is militant"[2] —but parody, burlesque, exaggeration,[3] juxtaposition, comparison, analogy, and double entendre are all frequently used in satirical speech and writing. This "militant" irony or sarcasm often professes to approve of (or at least accept as natural) the very things the satirist wishes to attack.

Satire is nowadays found in many artistic forms of expression, including literature, plays, commentary, and media such as lyrics.

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WILL

March 11, 2013 9:23am

Hilarious. What a pompous ass Mr. "Official Blogger" is. More than ever I stand quite firmly behind my initial statement -- who made RBECKER Lord God of all things satire? (What a phony crock of PHD delusion.)

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PKIBBLE

March 11, 2013 1:42pm

Which leads me to stand quite firmly behind my conclusion that RBECKER's PHD "delusions" are preferable to you sub-GED effusions/confusions/protrusions or similar id-ish eruptions and whatever failed sessions with your therapist that may have inspired them.

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RBECKER

March 11, 2013 11:34am

So, who is "Will" and what proves he's not an ornery troll? An "official blogger" at Nation of Change is one who appears on the official section called "The Blogs," that is, as periodic columnist. Sorry if my education and many years as a political essayist separate me from those who just have opinions and outrage at those who just might know more about the subject at hand. Standing firmly on sinking sand doesn't make for stability.

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RBECKER

March 11, 2013 9:52am

Always happy to amuse the willfully ignored. So what are your credentials for expertise in satire? Here's a bio I've been foisting on the world for years:

Educated at Rutgers College (BA) and UC Berkeley (Ph.D, English) I left university teaching (Northwestern, U. Chicago) for business, founding and heading SOTA Industries, high end audio company from '80 to '92; from '92-02 I did marketing consulting & writing; from '02 until now, I scribble on politics and culture, looking for the wit in the shadows.

For all others, more literate, peruse a political satire I wrote in 2009 based on the famous 17th Andrew Marvell poem:

http://open.salon.com/blog/robert_s_becker/2009/11/10/to_our_coy_president

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GENE ELDER

March 10, 2013 1:34pm

Hello:

I did read this article and having grown up in Dallas you can understand why I choose to live in San Antonio.

Very entertaining read and I suspect it is true, even though it sounds like you may not really get along with anyone.

Gene Elder

Archives Director for the HAPPY Foundation, a GayBLT history archives by the Alamo. elder4tomato@yahoo.com

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MIKIT

March 10, 2013 1:17pm

Had a good friend with the best take on the flight of Shivers Democrats to the Republican ranks in the 50s. It was because they awoke and had to realize they had been Republicans all along. I thank my always a Republican mother for forcing me to attend meetings very much like the one described here. That experience helped greatly in realizing I was no Republican.

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MICHEAL CWYNAR

March 10, 2013 1:12pm

This post may be a true lens to certain "types" but it still does little but rise to the level of classic "cheap shot." Is this the example of how we begin to develop an understanding or dialogue with those of differing takes on how things work or is it just frustrated hopelessness going to the next step and rousing the mob to see the "other" as unsalvageable. Indeed, this is creative writing but to what end?

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RBECKER

March 10, 2013 4:01pm

One person's "cheap shot" is another's brilliant satire. What if I found yours a cheap shot as you don't get a millimeter below the surface. And how many folks who only have Glenn Beck prominently displayed have you convinced of anything? Or think Scalia right on Voting Rights? Or think it's peachy keen for good Americans to pledge allegiance to the state of Texas -- or to the Texas of their confederate imaginations? Right, persuasion, here we come.

What did you add to the "understanding or dialogue" that this essay produced, other than "frustrated hopelessness"? If this is a "true lens" and funny, to boot, I say that's plenty.

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ROLIVER

March 10, 2013 12:10pm

There is a way to offer critique without being personal, but Reynolds didn't find it. This article is unspeakably rude. I sense an age and culture gap here, yet the author thinks that because these folks are entrenched in unattractive and ignorant paradigms it's perfectly okay to poke fun at them. If he were writing in general terms, okay -- but specifically describing people who have tried to do something nice for you in recognizable and distinctly unflattering terms is more than simply rude. It is cruel.

I live in Texas, and there's a lot to criticize. But, wow, basic manners dictates that you don't dump turds on your hosts, no matter how few common points you find with them. And I'll wager that he wouldn't write such demeaning, nose-in-the-air judgments about a bunch of entrenched, narrow-minded, older tribal gentlemen in the interior of Ecuador: That wouldn't be "cool". Flaunting his cultural disconnect in a knee jerk and very uncivilized way (let's remember these are real people who were NICE to him) is grotesque -- he's judging them while behaving in the most uncouth possible way!

Wealth plays too large a part in our society. Entrenched wealth, in any state, is unattractive to the degree that it unduly determines our shared destiny and it leads to an entitlement for power, and to even more money in always fewer hands. It is dangerous and destructive to our democracy. But none of the individuals whose lives have been limited by their insular experiences, communal blinders, or frightened spirits deserves this shameful treatment. The author should have been less personal and more professional -- more intellectually studied and less vicious. By measuring actual humans through his personal superiority matrix, Reynolds reveals himself to be self-important, judgmental, and narrow minded -- characteristics he decried in his victims. But to their credit, they were not rude to him.

I have lived in Texas for twenty years, not by choice. If you do not make an effort to understand people in an anthropological way you cannot and will not ever be able to offer leadership. The people Reynolds describes are not bad people -- they are limited people who could learn to move, perhaps hesitatingly, toward change. They have an incredible amount of fear. The condescension of people like Reynolds simply turns them off to any message that might start to challenge their paradigm: Eisenhower's observations, for example. They need more quotes from Ike and fewer smirking, smarmy rude digs. As for Reynolds, he needs to spend a weekend with a different segment of the 1% -- I recommend Emily Post and Amy Vanderbilt!

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PKIBBLE

March 11, 2013 12:48pm

This nice-Nelly squeamishness is misplaced. By and large, satirists don't play well with others, largely for their unforgivable habit of seeing things for what they really are rather than what they're supposed to be. This makes for some shocking displays of bad manners.

In this case, you're asking the author to unsee what he saw in order to placate the raging spirits of Emily and Amy. This reminds me of Nancy Reagan's complaint about Joan Didion's "unfriendly" (i.e., accurate) portrait of Mrs. R. back when her spouse was governor of California.

Mrs. Reagan had graciously (naively!) granted Didion an interview for the Saturday Evening Post. The two seemed to get on well as they chatted the afternoon away. Imagine Nancy's horror when she was subsequently rewarded with this less than flattering profile:

"...Nancy Reagan has an interested smile, the smile of a good wife, a good mother, a good hostess, the smile of someone who grew up in comfort and went to Smith College...and who has a husband who is the definition of a Nice Guy, not to mention Governor of California, the smile of a woman who seems to be playing out some middle-class American woman's daydream, circa 1948. The set for this daydream is perfectly dressed [on the rented Sacramento estate], every detail correct....[Nancy Reagan's smile] is a study in frozen insecurity...."

Talk about a breach of good manners---and good taste! My dear, one simply doesn't insult the hostess into whose home one was invited. If only Didion had made a greater effort to bridge the Cultural Divisions that separated her from the future First Lady, why, then our reporter might have received another invitation to tea---this time to the White House---and Nancy's husband might have been persuaded to be a little nicer to those welfare queens (code phrase for "the poor")and air traffic controllers AIDS patients and Sandanistas and the like. Or not.

Of course this is really a matter of personal preference, but in my opinion a satire that isn't "unspeakably rude," or even speakably rude, wouldn't be much of a satire. And yes, I know the classic definition of Horatian (gentle) vs. Juvenalian (biting) examples of the genre. The latter seems the best fit for the outsize follies of our time.

Or perhaps any time. Would Swift have profited from perusing a book of etiquette before writing A Modest Proposal for dealing with the "problem" of Irish overpopulation and resulting poverty? Had he done so, he might have been prevented from producing a sentence like this: "A young healthy child, well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled."

Surely Swift should have known that such mean-spirited sniping would only serve to make the impoverished Irish feel even worse about their plight (assuming some oral version of this recommendation eventually filtered down to a largely illiterate population). And he should also have known that such an outrageous suggestion would only serve to offend the delicate sensibilities of the masters of these downtrodden souls.

If only Swift had tried to Reach Out and find some Common Ground that could have brought rich and poor together in one heartwarming Kumbaya moment. Alas, deeply entrenched, willfully blind stupidity and ignorance is seldom so easily dislodged. Just ask our current president, who has found that reaching across the aisle in order to resolve differences and achieve mutual understanding has played out so very, very well.

Hey, ultimately we're all in the same boat, right? Except it's the 1% who are the ones paddling away in the lifeboats while the rest of us are waltzing on the deck of the Titanic. Ewww, mean-spirited: that's just the way they learned to survive. Show a little empathy for our betters.

As Alice Roosevelt Longworth famously said (later cribbed by Steel Magnolias), "If can't say something nice, come sit by me." Pretty good starting point for any aspiring satirist in this crazy world.

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RBECKER

March 11, 2013 1:45pm

Thanks, PKibble. I agree with every word, in fact concede your attempt to teach the opinionated but not well informed surpasses my feeble tries. Your sense of satire and irony fit exactly what I learned from Paul Fussell at Rutgers when he introduced me to Gulliver's Travels, S. Johnson, and the 18th C.

Your Didion story could not be more apt and I just can't resist wondering if "frozen insecurity" answers to the raised voices and overstated assaults on this posting. To see Reynolds as anti-woman because he includes two graphic details is insupportable. To chastise a satirist for being edgy is testimony to a lack of appreciation and knowledge of what drives great satire.

Some people just don't get the joke and I know one satire doesn't fit all sizes. You can sit next to me anytime, if you have nothing good to say about those who invite invective. Your addition honors an essay I thought exceptional and well-written (which is why I posted so laboriously afterwards when I thought it ill-treated).

No, PKibble isn't another of my hidden names, Will, nor is he, as far as I know, Lord God of anything. But damn it, he knows his stuff and knows how to address excess, with a fine satiric touch himself.

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CLAY ADAMS

March 10, 2013 1:34pm

But Roliver, you didn't hear how those old biddies took him apart after he left! They criticized his clothes, his shoes, his hair, and his bad manners for letting the cat in. After he left, they spent the rest of the afternoon pointing out all his faults, the ways he was different from them. They got so wound up doing that, that two of them had to take their smelling salts, and several others took nips from little flasks in their purses.

Sheese, give us a break!

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RBECKER

Now this comment is funny -- and creative and matches the essay at hand. Little flasks, indeed! Large flasks, please, as this is Texas.

March 10, 2013 1:48pm

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RBECKER

"because these folks are entrenched in unattractive and ignorant paradigms it's perfectly okay to poke fun at them."

March 10, 2013 1:09pm

Seems like a terrific reason to write satiric profiles and a fetching story to me.

"it leads to an entitlement for power, and to even more money in always fewer hands. It is dangerous and destructive to our democracy. "

Seems like an overwhelmingly, compellingly good reason to write satire and stories of the ultra-wealthy in their own private, generally covert realms. Gee, who really cares about destruction of democracy in a political piece at N of C? Got any lower (or higher) standards for what justifies scrutiny?

"I recommend Emily Post and Amy Vanderbilt!"

Back at you. For I doubt these paragons would have endorsed your overly personal, ad hominem attacks on an established novelist whose work transcends the CHARACTERS he creates (or details he uses to communicate). "Unspeakably rude" rebounds on itself, if that's the measure for what is political satire on a political site.

You have no way to know if these portraits are wholly true-to-life. Perhaps he's combining various people or addressing more than one event, and you certainly have no way to determine whether nameless characters in a satiric portrait are "bad people or not." Nor does anyone, nor for me does Reynolds, with other fish to fry than simply personal judgments.

This is satire, with insight, and well done IMO, not news, biography or public indictment by name, rank and serial number. I have no idea what sources produced this reportage. Maybe it happened and sticks to facts but there are no details that would identify anyone to any general audience. Would Post or Vanderbilt consider your crude manners above reproach, laden with personal conclusions and nasty attacks about which you can only guess or project your emotional reactions? I think not.

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ANONO

The biggest thing in Texas is a Texan's ego. That aside, facts are facts. Texas is a national problem. Every time Texans gets involved on a national level, Bad Things Happen!!!

March 10, 2013 11:03am

President Kennedy assassinated in Texas.

LBJ, a Texan myring us in the Viet Nam War.

Reagan, played a Texan in Hollywood, invaded Grenada and funded the Taliban and almost got every living thing on the planet nuked.

George H W Bush, an Ivy League Texan giving us Iraq War I

George W Bush, a Texan, 9/11, The Afghanistan War, Iraq War II, the Great Recession.

Barrack Obama, closet Texan prolonging 9/11, the Afghan War Iraq Wars I & II and the Great Recession and selling out the country to liars thieves rapists and murders for a few coin.

The list goes on.

If not for Austin City Limits and Willie Nelson, forcing the secession of Texas from the Union would do the nation a favor.

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RBECKER

Yes, Texas does offer singular qualities and people, but this seems illogical,

March 10, 2013 12:01pm

"Reagan, played a Texan in Hollywood, invaded Grenada and funded the Taliban and almost got every living thing on the planet nuked."

Now, Molly Ivins is my favorite Texas columnist, with Hightower in second, but Reagan can't be blamed on Texas, and certainly not for playing a Texan. No end to that train ride.

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ANONO

March 10, 2013 2:48pm

Good point.

Maybe this is better?

"Reagan, Hollywood Texan....."

Most definitely add Hightower, Ivins, the mythical Lone Ranger and many other good people from Texas to the list of reasons to allow Texas to remain part of the United States.

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MOUNTAINMAN23

March 10, 2013 10:54am

Which all goes to prove that in addition to hoarding most of the world's wealth the uber-wealthy commit the second crime of not spending it well.

Glad you escaped relatively unscathed Mr Reynolds.

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RBECKER

March 10, 2013 11:01am

Yes, nicely put. I suppose we'd have less moral objection to concentrations of great wealth if it was used to help others, to share funds so others had more opportunity. Some wealthy, like Gates and Buffett, are very careful about finding effective ways to share enormous wealth.

Romney claimed he donated 10% of his "income," but even that was fudged, and he still has numerous homes -- and is passionate in expanding the CA one he has . Who needs five houses or a house of 10K square feet for two or three people? 100' boats for a family of four? I recall the Capra movie about the guy indicted as crazy for wanting to help others.

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RBECKER

March 10, 2013 10:24am

Will:

Who exactly is "all"? Where is all this other Texas bashing you seem so defensive about? This piece doesn't go on with bashing Texas but certain people who live there. Did you miss that?

There is nothing "primitive" here -- no loudmouth, gun-crazed yahoos -- but what you entirely miss is the extraordinary wealth on display, plus the bad taste. You also miss the high comic impact and the exceptional writing. Not only don't I see the Texas bashing you seem obsessed with, but there are no "stereotypes" here that would fit in "every state in the union." And this isn't about Texas "failures" but immensely successful, if intellectually limited and likely powerful 1% types.

Where else do we find bogus homages to Alamo heroes? Where else but the Lone Star State would any group of what sounds like DAR types pledge alliance to their ex-country? There is nothing "brash or loud" here and you utterly miss the delicacy of the satire -- and the danger of the people here.

Sorry you are 'weary,' and defensive and you don't enjoy what I found terrifically humorous and on target -- and NOT just about Texas but how out of touch are the richest among us. How many first-hand, unplanned reports of the 1% do you see? I can't remember one. So if you stop exaggerating in a brash, loud way, you might appreciate the fine satire here. Instead of objecting to what you agree is hardly untrue, why not write your own celebration of your illustrious state.

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SUSAN BEGY

March 10, 2013 10:18am

Mr. Reynolds, I understand you are describing an experience and the characteristics of a particular, parochial group that is dramatically, shamefully, and unappealingly out of touch and unaware. I am certain I would have had a similar response to this group. However, are you aware that some of your descriptions are also shameful in their reliance on out-dated and perpetually oppressive stereotypes? I refer to the use of "gossiping" as it pertains to women. Although one can guess at the naive and uninformed nature of their discussions, how do you know that their conversations will turn 'gossipy' when you are not present? Women most definitely do not have a monopoly on gossiping. And was it necessary to point out natural, physical characteristics of age here--"liver-spotted wrists" and "wattled necklines" in order to get to the heart of the matter? You are reinforcing destructive notions concerning the physical appearance of older women, or older people in general. Although I suspect

that if you were describing a corresponding group of male Texans you would not have described their physical characteristics in quite the same way, a way that blindly feeds into the stereotype that when women pass the period of youthful beauty it is disgusting. Collective cultural misogyny runs extremely deep, my friend. Your point can be made without perpetuating it, if you are a bit more vigilant.

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PKIBBLE

March 11, 2013 2:58pm

"Women most definitely do not have a monopoly on gossiping." Why would you think that Mr. Reynolds would suppose otherwise?

Mary McCarthy, the late novelist and critic, said that "the novel is gossip," although of a more complex and refined variety. She was obviously including male practitioners of the trade, who historically have tended to outnumber their female counterparts.

In nonliterary situations, men can gossip as much as women, but their style of gossiping tends to be different (at least in my experience). Women's gossip is more straightforward and recognizes itself for what it is, whereas men's gossip tends to be more devious, full of veiled allusions to someone's sexuality/ethnicity, etc. Of course this kind of indirection does not apply to fratboys, racists, or Howard Stern.

"You are reinforcing destructive notions concerning the physical appearance of older women, or older people in general."

It is true that the brunt of ageism in this society is predominantly directed toward women, but I question whether Reynolds' description of a cohort of aging Texas good ole boys would have been more flattering. I'm a 64-year-old man and have my share of wattles (no liver spots---yet). If someone describes this aspect of my failing flesh, are they reinforcing a "destructive notion" of what it means to get old? My lifetime of wrinkles and blotches are real and can't be willed away in the name of political correctness (or by surgical intervention, since I'd rather spend my money elsewhere). Cast a cold eye, as Yeats said and as any honest reporter---or satirist---understands, and even given the inevitably selective bias of vision, you need to report that what you saw is what you saw, whatever the risk of hurt feelings.

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RBECKER

March 10, 2013 10:55am

S. Begy:

Any writing, any literature, may be challenged for alleging qualities to one group or gender or age as advancing "stereotypes." But I have never met a woman like the host described here, with three types of hair color and no eyebrows. Where is the stereotype in a highly individualized profile? A good satirist takes what he gets and looks for amusement and insight, without worrying that women may, or may not, at times gossip, especially in this sort of social group (and I doubt men gossip less, just differently).

Unless you know Mr. Reynolds' other works (novels and apparently an enormous amount of writing), you have no evidence whatsoever to "suspect" he would not find equally telling details in equally striking satire of men. This is total speculation, even self-fulfilling fantasy. Will there be a withdrawal?

What "blindly feeds stereotypes" IMO is pulling out details from the whole and turning what offends you into the big crime of "cultural misogyny." That says more about your high sensitivities than what's presented here in toto. What's missing in your rather humorless response is the "vigilance" of balance, good sense, and perspective. Loosen up, "my friend" (talk about weak, stereotypic ploys) and enjoy the fun and wit here. That is very rarely the case with political commentary.

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SUSAN BEGY

March 10, 2013 6:51pm

Alas, RBecker, I did not find this piece particularly witty and fun, the significance of his political commentary was lost, and you have no knowledge of my humor. My response was targeted to the easy, glaring stereotypes that Mr. Reynolds was lowering himself to in this particular piece, not the "individualized profile" that you referred to. Perhaps you could benefit from a little more sensitivity? You could comment on my ability to provide balance, good sense, and perspective only if I had critiqued the entire essay. What you failed to recognize is that I was addressing only one aspect of this "satirist's" column, which left me no desire to explore his other works. And if my suspicions of Mr. Reynold's possible portrayal of men is speculation, I am curious as to how you could be so certain of any of my "fantasies", self-fulfilled or fully fulfilled by a tall, dark....oh, but I digress. I stand behind my comment. Our cultural misogyny runs very deep and he fed the beast. Perhaps his other writings refer to cheap Jews and water-melon munching Negroes? Unless you are a female over the age of 50, you have little or no knowledge of the types of quiet and insidious discrimination that this particular group

faces. Most in the media fail to tread as gingerly when it pertains to women as they do with other groups. At least he did not use the term 'hysterical'. Will there be a withdrawal, RBecker?

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RBECKER

March 11, 2013 1:36pm

I withdraw any expectations that you will hear my explanation, nor appreciate Mr. Reynolds' brand of satire. One can find tiny, third-order pieces of anything, even Shakespeare, and rush to a high hobbyhorse and bellow at the moon. I have no ideas, nor projections about you, and I stick only to what commenters say and how they behave, that is, what appears in front of my eyes.

That misogyny runs deep, I don't disagree, but that does not give you free reign to root out its appearance -- then stamp what you manifestly overstate as wicked. Your evocation of "hysterical," out of the blue, speaks volumes to your ingenuity to project far and wide.

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WILL

March 10, 2013 9:36am

Whееe, let's all now dump shit on rich, honky Texans! I GUARANTEE this kind of primitive behavior described by Reynolds occurs in every state in the union. But because Texas is bigger, brasher, louder, coarser, richer and just plain more fun to castigate (than say Idaho) Reynolds shamelessly pulls out all the stops. My family is five generations in one county in rural Texas. I'm a gay, flaming liberal Democrat and trust me - no one can trash our states failures better than me. But I get a little weary of the constant bashing at such an easy, crowd-pleasing target. Where is there a liberal Austin in Mississippi? Why does Texas lead the nation in wind power? Hard to believe, but Texas has the most stringent fracking laws in the country. Where is there a more formidable collection of world class art museums within blocks of each other than Ft. Worth? Why does the Houston Ballet, The Dallas Opera and the astounding visual art scene of San Antonio continually exceed nationwide expectations? Ignorant, boorish clouts are found everywhere, Mr. Reynolds , (talked with a Manhattan cabbie lately?) Try reaching for something a bit more challenging next time rather than just the low hanging fruit of worn out stereotypes.

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GENE ELDER

March 10, 2013 1:32pm

Hello:

I did read this article and having grown up in Dallas you can understand why I choose to live in San Antonio.

Very entertaining read and I suspect it is true, even though it sounds like you may not really get along with anyone.

Gene Elder

Archives Director for the HAPPY Foundation, a GayBLT history archives by the Alamo. elder4tomato@yahoo.com

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RBECKER

March 10, 2013 10:55am

whoops. See response above to Will

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