

VOLUME XVI, NUMBER 2, SPRING 2016

CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship

Bradley C.S.
Watson:
Russell Kirk

Michael
Nelson:
**Political Sex
Scandals**

Angelo M.
Codevilla:
**John Quincy
Adams**

James V.
Schall, S.J.:
**Modern
Catholic
Thought**

James W.
Ceaser:
**Scruton vs.
the Left**

LIGHTS, CAMERA, FACTION!
ESSAYS BY MARTHA BAYLES, CHARLES R. KESLER,
AND WILLIAM VOEGELI



R. Shep
Melnick:
**Ending
Extreme
Poverty**

Allen C.
Guelzo:
**Did the
Slaves Free
Themselves?**

Robert K.
Faulkner:
**Heroes,
Old &
New**

Anthony
Esolen:
The Iliad

Mark
Helprin:
**Defense
Is Missing
in Action**

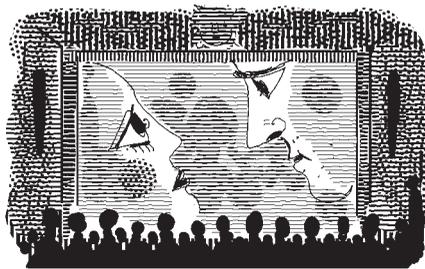


A Publication of the Claremont Institute

PRICE: \$6.95
IN CANADA: \$8.95

SHADOW PLAY

by Martha Bayles



Enemy of the People

LIKE MANY AMERICANS, I HAVE BEEN watching the Republican presidential campaign degenerate into a back-alley pissing contest, and wondering what on earth has been happening to our political discourse. On the morning of his disastrous showing in the New York primary, Ted Cruz called the Trump campaign “a Kim Kardashian reality show.”

Waved aside by MSNBC pundit Joe Scarborough, Cruz’s comment did smack of sour grapes. But it wasn’t entirely wrong. Indeed, it contained an important lesson—and warning—about the role of commercial television in the resistible rise of Donald Trump.

Trump is a master of Twitter and other social media, but his natural habitat is television. In March, a firm called mediaQuant tracked the amount spent by each candidate on TV and radio ads, compared with the amount (calculated in advertising dollars) each received in unpaid coverage. For Cruz, the figures were \$22 million and \$313 million, respectively; for Bernie Sanders, \$28 million and \$321 million; for Hillary Clinton, \$28 million and \$746 million. But Trump was off the chart: only \$10 million in paid exposure, and \$1.9 billion in “unpaid” exposure.

I put “unpaid” in quotes because those many hours of exposure *were* paid for, lavishly, by advertisers. Ever since the party reforms of the 1970s, the process of nominating the president has been shaped by commercial television as much as by the parties. Despite bouts of worrying that television was becoming the more powerful partner, the two worked pretty much in tandem until 2008, when the Internet joined the mix, followed by social media in 2012.

To many observers, the entry of social media into the nomination process means an end to the influence of commercial television. But

that’s not what we are witnessing this year. What we are witnessing is an alliance between social media and commercial television to dominate the process—and, deliberately or not, wrest control of it away from the parties.

The reason for this is simple. Instead of replacing commercial television, social media seem to be enhancing its power and extending its reach far beyond any previous imagining. When every stumble, gaffe, blooper, and insult goes viral, the prize goes not to the best debater or leader but to the best getter and keeper of popular attention. And I don’t have to tell you who that is.

Not a True Tribune

IN THE EARLY STAGES OF TRUMP’S CAMPAIGN, some of my savvy political friends found him refreshing. Yes, he’s obnoxious, they said, but he’s raising issues that both parties have been avoiding. And he’s defending a group of struggling Americans—low-income whites, especially men without a college degree—who have no other defenders at the moment.

In other words, my friends defined Trump as a populist. This is accurate in the sense that, however much our political elites may dislike Trump’s huffing and puffing, the issues he huffs and puffs about are real: the heavy-handed enforcement of “diversity” in education and the workplace; the lack of control over America’s borders; the massive shift of jobs overseas; the willingness to capitulate to America’s enemies; and the general feeling that the American Dream is fading.

Not only that, but when elite critics accuse Trump of sexism, racism, nativism, homophobia, and militarism, his support only grows. This should not be surprising. Of all

the demographic groups in America, the one most frequently tarred with these accusations is low-income white men without a college degree. No wonder they cheer when Trump says, “The hell with political correctness!”

But here’s the rub. If Trump were a true tribune, cutting through the moral evasiveness and verbal smog that passes for campaigning nowadays, this election would be exciting instead of dispiriting. But he is not a true tribune, or even a populist in the usual sense. Instead, he’s a creature of reality TV.

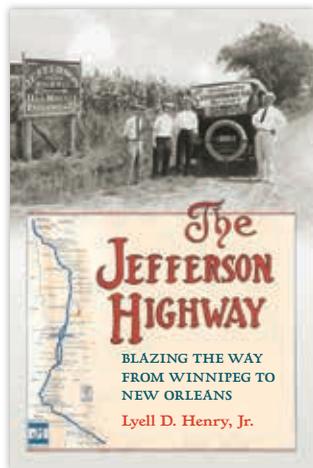
There are two kinds of reality TV: the talent-based kind, where singers, dancers, chefs, and other ambitious amateurs compete on the basis of hard work and skill; and the exhibitionist kind, where naïve, deluded people compete on the basis of foolishness and shamelessness—and we the audience are invited to laugh at, and feel superior to, the greed, stupidity, and asinine preening of our fellow citizens.

Donald Trump spent 11-plus years of his life immersed in this world—a fact that has received amazingly little attention from serious political observers. His original show, *The Apprentice*, started off as talent-based (sort of) but quickly devolved into an exhibitionist circus. During each season, more than a dozen contestants tried to win a salaried position in Trump’s investment company by performing certain tasks, such as selling a product, creating a commercial, or negotiating a deal. At regular intervals, the contestants would gather in the “boardroom,” where Trump would choose the winners—and crush the losers with his famous line, “You’re fired!”

Over time, the boardroom became the whole point, with Trump taking sadistic pleasure in pitting the contestants against one another, even after the job applicants were

The Jefferson Highway

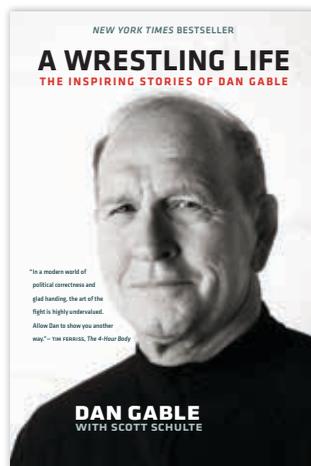
Blazing the Way from
Winnipeg to New Orleans
by Lyell D. Henry, Jr.



220 pages · 65 b&w photos · 3 maps
1 illustration · \$29.95 paperback original

A Wrestling Life

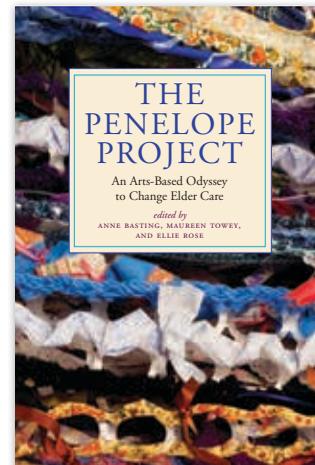
The Inspiring Stories of Dan Gable
by Dan Gable with Scott Schulte



172 pages · 28 b&w photos
\$14.95 now in paperback!

The Penelope Project

An Arts-Based Odyssey to
Change Elder Care
edited by Anne Basting,
Maureen Towey, and Ellie Rose



230 pages · 16 color photos · 1 map
\$24.95 paperback original

IOWA where great writing begins

University of Iowa Press · order toll-free 800.621.2736

   uiowapress.org

A collection of essays from the Witherspoon Institute
Available at AMAZON.COM

“The scholars of the Witherspoon Institute have dedicated their careers to holding our nation accountable to its ideals. In *The Thriving Society* they consider the future of our culture; for those invested in our nation, its institutions, and their fellow man, it is essential reading.”

Arthur Brooks
President, American Enterprise Institute

The Thriving Society

ON THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING



Edited by:

James R. Stoner, Jr.
Louisiana State University

Harold James
Princeton University

Featuring essays by:

Harvey Mansfield
Harvard University

Roger Scruton
Ethics and Public Policy Center

Robert P. George
Princeton University

Candace Vogler
University of Chicago

John Haldane
University of St. Andrews

And others . . .

<http://winst.org/publications/print/the-thriving-society>


Princeton, New Jersey


Barcelona, Spain

replaced with C-listers and relaunched as *Celebrity Apprentice*. The nastier and more shameless the behavior in the boardroom, the greater his pleasure. But don't take my word for it. Here's an online review by one disillusioned fan:

For the first couple of seasons, I thought "The Apprentice" was a highly engaging and exciting show.... The new season 6 is nothing more than a big joke and it has absolutely nothing to do with business.... [T]he focus is mostly in the boardroom where the contestants are expected to do everything to keep them on the show (that means lying, trash-talking, backstabbing etc.) The boardroom can be entertaining to watch, but it's entertainment at it's low-point.... The tasks on the show are, at most, boring and mostly a showcase for the companies who are dumb enough to pay NBC for the publicity. In earlier seasons at least some of the contestants had a bit of integrity, now it seems like the contestants would kill their own mother.... It also seems like Donald Trump's massive ego becomes bigger and bigger.... [T]o be honest, I can't see why anyone with a common sense would want to work for him. [H]e just likes to trash people.

In the entertainment media, this is mainly a matter of bad taste. In politics, it is something far worse: a rupture of the barrier between political discourse and degraded entertainment. There's an old adage about a vat of wine standing next to a vat of sewage. Add a cup of wine to the sewage, and it is still sewage. But add a cup of sewage to the wine, and it is no longer wine but sewage. Is this what Donald Trump has done to our politics?

Some Crucial Distinctions

CAN THE DAMAGE BE REVERSED? ON the positive side, it is true that "Little" Marco Rubio self-destructed when he tried to out-trash-talk Big Donald. But on the negative side, it is hard to imagine the commercial TV networks being able to resist the next exhibitionist candidate. Unlike the parties in their old king-making days, the networks refuse to take responsibility for their role in the nomination process. When Trump swept all five states in the April 26 primary, Joe Scarborough bragged about the accuracy of his predictions compared to those of other pundits. But like his fellow talking

heads, Scarborough denies having the slightest influence over voters' perceptions of the candidates.

This refusal of responsibility is understandable but disturbing. It's understandable because the networks have made the nomination process so damn entertaining—and profitable—it's hard to imagine either they or the audience wanting to go back to the old restrained ways. But it's disturbing because when restraint is abandoned, the American tradition of free speech is threatened.

If you think this fear exaggerated, allow me to make the case. At the heart of our tradition is a crucial distinction between three kinds of limits on speech: 1) coercive censorship imposed by a state; 2) self-censorship practiced by an individual or institution under threat of state coercion; and 3) voluntary restraint exercised by individuals or institutions in accordance with accepted norms of civility, decency, and propriety.

As I have argued previously in these pages, 1) and 2) are closely related. Properly defined, self-censorship is when an individual or group chooses not to say, publish, or post something for fear of being harassed, arrested, imprisoned, or physically attacked by agents working directly or indirectly for the state. By contrast, voluntary restraint is when an individual or group chooses not to say, publish, or post something for reasons freely arrived at.

It is not easy to draw the line between self-censorship and voluntary restraint. But today, most Americans do not even try. Instead, we confound the two, characterizing every sort of voluntary restraint as self-censorship.

In part, this is because we regard freedom of speech as an absolute, uncompromising principle, according to which all limits on speech, from legal censorship to voluntary restraint, are condemned, and all excesses of speech, from obscenity to slander to blasphemy, are accepted. Indeed, we are exhorted to applaud offensive speech as proof that we *really, really* believe in free speech. If coercive state censorship is simplistic and dangerous, so is this absolutist view.

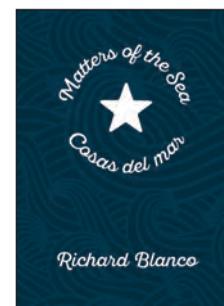
Columbia historian Henry Steele Commager once wrote, "Censorship always defeats its own purpose, for it creates in the end the kind of society that is incapable of exercising real discretion." Let me turn that around, and suggest that without real discretion—that is, without a strong tradition of voluntary restraint—a society invites coercive censorship.

Every society places some limits on speech, but some are repressive tyrannies and others are, for all intents and purposes, free. In

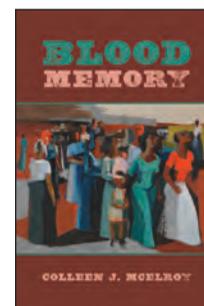
NEW FROM PITT POETRY SERIES



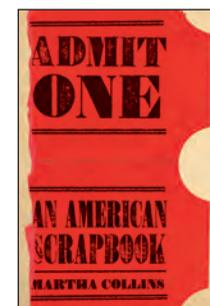
Orbit
ARTHUR VOGELSANG
Paper \$15.95 • 88 pp.
eBook available



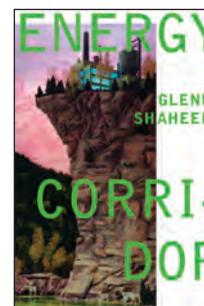
**Matters of the Sea /
Cosas del mar**
RICHARD BLANCO
Paper \$9.95 • 48 pp.
eBook available



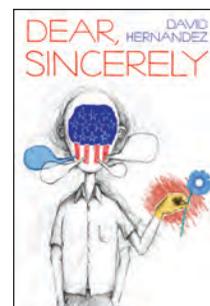
Blood Memory
COLLEEN J. MCELROY
Paper \$15.95 • 128 pp.
eBook available



**Admit One: An
American Scrapbook**
MARTHA COLLINS
Paper \$15.95 • 104 pp.
eBook available



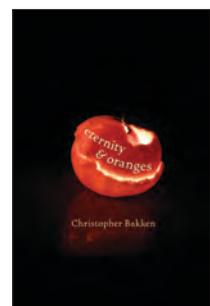
Energy Corridor
GLENN SHAHEEN
Paper \$15.95 • 88 pp.
eBook available



Dear, Sincerely
DAVID HERNANDEZ
Paper \$15.95 • 80 pp.
eBook available



Manual for Living
SHARON DOLIN
Paper \$15.95 • 112 pp.
eBook available



Eternity & Oranges
CHRISTOPHER BAKKEN
Paper \$15.95 • 88 pp.
eBook available

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH PRESS
www.upress.pitt.edu 800.621.2736



accounting for the difference, a key factor is whether a given society can maintain a shared sense of what is, and is not, appropriate in a particular setting. To put it simply, we are in trouble if we can no longer agree that what is funny in a reality show is not funny in a presidential debate.

From Russia with Trash

RETURNING TO TELEVISION, LET US step outside the American bubble for a moment, and consider a curious fact—namely, that exhibitionist reality shows were a staple of Russian TV in the mid-2000s, just as Vladimir Putin was consolidating his power and preparing to crack down on press freedom.

This was not an accident. Putin’s media wizards encouraged exhibitionist shows, for three reasons. The first and most obvious was money: this type of programming attracts eyeballs, and therefore advertising revenue. The second, less obvious reason was image: Putin and his cronies wanted desperately to appear cool and hip; they would have done anything to avoid looking like dull, dowdy Soviet apparatchiks.

The third reason is not obvious but in my view important: exhibitionist reality TV has a dampening effect on the growth and health of

civil society. Think about it. By making ordinary citizens look stupid and offensive, reality TV fosters cynicism and hostility, as opposed to hope and cooperation.

Here’s an example: in 2001, a show called *Behind the Glass* (*Za steklom*) placed six young contestants in an apartment where they were continually filmed by 26 cameras—and watched by a TV audience extending from Russia to Ukraine, the Baltics, and Central Asia.

Unlike their counterparts in the Western reality show *Big Brother*, who for all their shamelessness rarely disrobed, the participants in *Behind the Glass* frequently stripped and engaged in sexual foreplay. And when two of them finally had sex on camera, the tabloid *Komsomolskaya Pravda* crowed, “Max and Margo finally did it!”

In Soviet times, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* was the high-minded, heavily didactic official paper of the Communist Union of Youth. So it was ironic to see it praising young Russians who, in the words of veteran pundit Vladimir Pozner, “have nothing to believe in...no moral fiber, no ideals.”

Behind the Glass was followed by a slew of even trashier shows, featuring screaming arguments and physical fights that were encouraged, not stopped, by the producers.

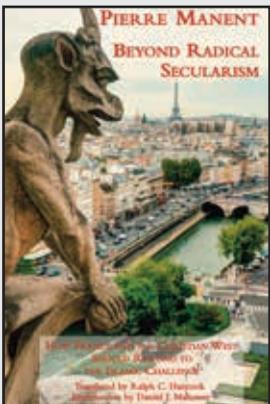
Were these shows created with the deliberate intention of stunting democracy? It’s hard to say, but consider: civil society in post-Soviet Russia was a fragile new growth, pushing up through the cracks of the old regime. It needed sunshine and nutrients, in the form of independent associations, social trust, and open political debate.

But Russian civil society did not get sunshine and nutrients. Instead, it got herbicide, in the form of crime, corruption, social disorder—and, I would add, degrading entertainment. And it’s hard not to see a certain calculation behind the degradation. In the words of Valery Komissarov, a Putin loyalist who produced some of the worst reality shows during that time, “When people ask me, ‘why do you pick so many idiots?’ I know that I have done my job correctly.”

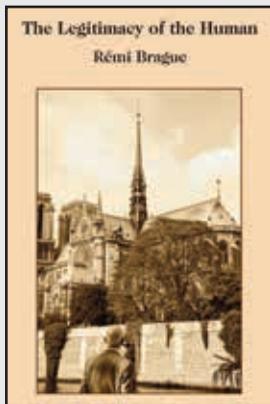
In closing, I would remind the reader of what happened next. Young Russians did find something to believe in—or rather, *someone*. A strong, all-knowing leader named Vladimir Putin, who promised to clean up the mess and make Russia great again. America is not Russia, and Trump is not Putin. But our democracy is ailing right now, and personally, I would rather give it the sunshine and nutrients of a real populist movement than the herbicide of Donald Trump.

St. Augustine’s Press / Books coming in June – August

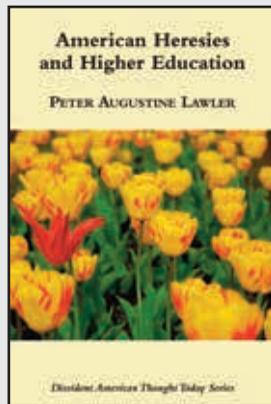
25% discount for all our titles through August 30, 2016. Order online, www.staugustine.net; use code CLAREMONT.



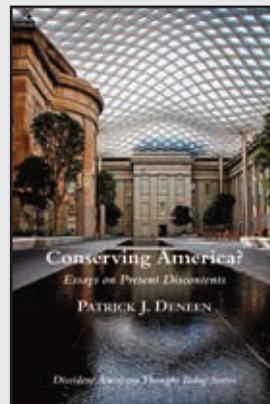
Brague, *The Legitimacy of the Human*. \$26, cloth



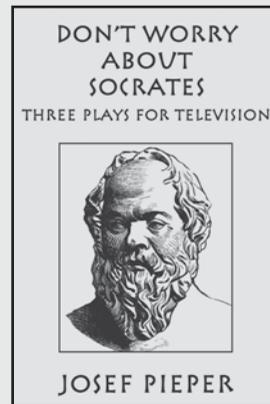
Brague, *The Legitimacy of the Human*. \$26, cloth



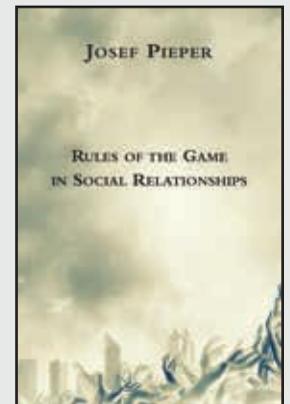
Lawler, *American Heresies and Higher Education* \$20, pb



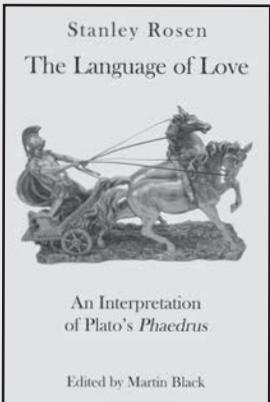
Deneen, *Conserving America?* \$19, paper



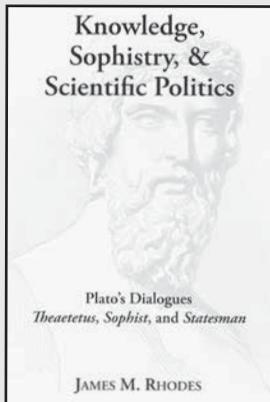
Pieper, *Don't Worry about Socrates*. \$25, cloth; \$15, pbk



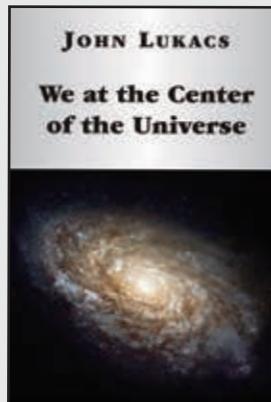
Pieper, *Rules of the Game*. \$19, cloth; \$11, paper



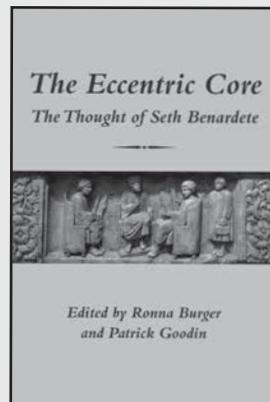
Rosen, *The Language of Love* \$30, cloth



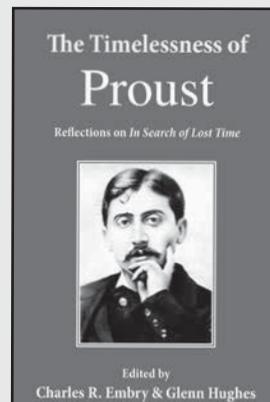
Rhodes, *Knowledge, Sophistry, & Scientific Politics*. \$32.50 cl



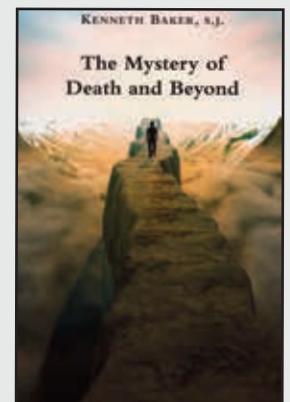
Lukacs, *We at the Center of the Universe*. \$18, cloth



Burger & Goodin, eds., *The Eccentric Core*. \$26, paper



Embry & Hughes, eds., *The Timelessness of Proust*. \$17 pb



Baker, *The Mystery of Death and Beyond*. \$17, paper

The CLAREMONT REVIEW OF BOOKS is a publication of the CLAREMONT INSTITUTE
FOR THE STUDY OF STATESMANSHIP AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

Subscribe to
the *Claremont Review of Books*

“The Claremont Review of Books is the preeminent intellectual journal of conservative ideas and books. It does for conservatism what the New York Review of Books has done for liberalism and leftism.”

—Ron Radosh

Subscribe to the *CRB* today and save 25% off the newsstand price. A one-year subscription is only \$19.95.

To begin receiving America's premier conservative book review, visit www.claremont.org/crb or call (909) 981-2200.

CLAREMONT
REVIEW OF BOOKS
1317 W. FOOTHILL
BLVD, SUITE 120,
UPLAND, CA
91786

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 504
UPLAND, CA