

## **Thoughts on the essays in “The Awakening”**

Bill Menke, April 5, 2018

### **Something Has To Give, by M. Doherty**

The degree to which the “foundation” needs to be rebuilt is a key question. I have the sense that we will need to change the foundation, but a few years after the rebuilding, we might have a hard time fathoming why parts replaced were foundational at all. Although the vast majority of us would be judged to have failed the litmus test of a good scholar by the standards of Harvard in the 1720’s, we would now judge those standards to include a lot of excess baggage.

### **We’re Not Even Close, By S. Marcus**

By Vertigo, does the author mean the Hitchcock film, the Ward Novel or something else? I must be outside the in-group!

I am reminded of Bella Abzug, who said “Our struggle today is not to have a female Einstein get appointed as an assistant professor. It is for a woman schlemiel to get as quickly promoted as a male schlemiel.”

### **Motherhood While Black, by W. Pirtle**

University culture stigmatizes family in many ways. Mothers definitely bear the brunt of the stigma, but I think anyone who values of family ties feels it. A great part derives from the collegiate expectation that we work all the time. I would not seek to prevent a scholar from working all the time, but I would not reward him or her for doing so, either.

### **Power is Hot, Let’s Admit It, by A. Dreger**

I agree that we academics do not have a good sense for how we should judge human relationships, and especially relationships involving academics, except of course what #MeToo has brought to the forefront, that predatory relationships are very, very bad. Furthermore, because we have no agreed upon models for good relationships, we tend to allow all sorts of prejudices – some of them patently Victorian - to color our feelings towards other academic’s relationships. And in doing so, we risk doing them significant professional harm.

### **Presidents, Use Your Voice! by P. McGuire**

I like the "Don't get mad, get even." advice, but I would put it differently, “Work towards an overarching victory and recognize that not every skirmish along the way is worth the price of winning, and that even an occasional loss can be put to good use.”

### **Tradition and Discontent, by N Anid**

Change is slow, and as the author points out, right now it’s going in the right direction. But I don’t think that direction is guaranteed. We all need to work against backlash and backsliding.

### **A Monumental Reckoning, by A. McClintock**

These are poignant stories. I agree that #MeToo, far from trivializing rape, has led to people becoming outraged about how common it is.

### **Our Shameful Support of the Status Quo, by C. Ambar**

The advice, “Listen with the intent to understand, not with the intent to respond” is sound. We need as many forums for listening as possible.

### **We Need Another Hashtag, by W. Dimock**

From my own STEM perspective, the humanities do indeed have “dream statistics”. We need to understand the things they did right.

### **Numbers Matter, by M. Norton**

“Numbers Matter” - that’s the grand premise, isn’t it? Having achieved some semblance of gender balance, will it persist? Not without recognizing its value and working to maintain it, I would guess.

### **Power is Still Too White, by K. Blain**

Yes, I suppose that it is.

### **Seven Theses on Gender and Power, by H. Case**

These are wonderful theses. Concerning the last, I can’t resist quoting Tolkein, who wrote “‘oft evil will shall evil mar’. But the first two get at the heart of academia and the problems within it: the discussion of ideas is a key part of academic life and that not taking people’s ideas seriously is a terrible form of exclusion from it.

### **I Had a Dream About You Last Night – a Sexual Dream, by Martha Jones**

The author is very perceptive when she says that a story of adversity tends to evolve towards a mythic tale of surviving adversity, and away from an analysis of the losses suffered from having experienced the adversity. The former offers hope to other survivors; the latter empowers change.

### **What Affirmative Action Didn’t Change, by C. Potter**

Is a white man’s support of diversity a Faustian bargain? Have I, a white male who supports diversity, sold my soul to some ideological devil? Is my focus primarily on being rewarded by the university administration for being politically-correct? It’s a fair question to ask, because studies show that men are often rewarded, and rarely penalized, for diversity-valuing behavior (whereas the opposite tends to be true for women and minorities). Who really can judge their own motivation? But early on, I found an argument made by a colleague, that I should strive to improve the lot of the next generation (which includes my children) pretty compelling. So perhaps my actions are based, at least to some degree, on principle.

### **Well Girl, What Makes You Think You Can Teach, B. Dziech**

Life is not just about accruing power. And if academic power is influence over thought, then any instructor has a good deal of it.

### **Good Choices and Bad Excuses, by N Petrzela**

Always having to be on guard for the possibility of aggression has a toll on a person. It adds to stress and leads to loss of opportunities. Women shouldn't have to feel that it's normal!

### **Don't Let This Moment Pass, by N. Keohane**

I find the third point - that women need to work together - to be most thought-provoking. Maybe I'm missing something in my department, but I am not seeing much organization among, or even cooperation between, women faculty members. Maybe that just reflects us scientists – male and female, alike – being too idiosyncratic to really agree upon all but the most basic common goals.

### **The Trouble with Genius, by S. Bari**

I believe that our attitudes are undergoing a 'phase change'. A decade from now the opinions that we held a decade ago will seem barbarous. Sure, we can blame ourselves about accepting the practices of that era. But we can also be happy that we have an opportunity to break with the past.

A mentoree can easily turn into a disciple. Unfortunately, many acceptably good mentors don't deserve to be gurus.

### **The Academy's Pink Collar, by A. Brickey**

My experience, too, is that women are disproportionately marginalized by low-paying adjunct positions.

### **Secondhand Smoke from College Presidents, by C. Spencer**

Bowdoin is our family school, not Bates!

### **The Perils of Anonymity, by R. Freeman**

I am extremely cynical about the academy's ability to wield power for high moral purposes. Even recently empowered people – maybe even especially recently empowered people – are tempted to abuse it.

### **How Universities Stigmatize Motherhood, by L. Mercado-Lopez**

More broadly, university culture stigmatizes family. The collegiate expectation is that we're to work all the time.

### **It's OK to Lead Like a Woman, by M. Silver**

Sure, leading like a woman is OK. But I don't see the style portrayed by the author as specifically feminine.

**Nice Work, If you can get It, by J. Ratner-Rosenhagen**

Yes, I agree that we're about intellectual empowerment. I would go on to say that we better not leave out anyone who is seeking it.

I also agree that the goal of diversity is more easily achieved in an expanding market, not a shrinking one. Many of the pro-diversity policies of the National Science Foundation (from whom I receive research funding) seem to be predicated on growth, and are not, in my opinion, very realistic.

**Beyond Gender, by J. Burnstein**

One of the most compelling stories I've heard about the geoscientist Marie Tharp was how she realized that the proposition of Australia having rifted off of Antarctica implied that the fracture zones in the Southern ocean must strike north-south, not east-west as they had been depicted in early maps. She was a great scientist and a great woman scientist, too (in that order).

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The Awakening, Women and Power in the Academy, Chronicle of Higher Education, at:

<https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/the-awakening>