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## Night of the Hollow Men: Notes From the Democratic Convention

By Jeffrey St. Clair  
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+ Since my co-editor Joshua Frank prefers to go surfing rather than do his reportorial duty and watch the DNC Convention from gavel-to-gavel, he's telling me that I have to write another account of tonight's proceedings. I'm not sure I'm up to it 'frankly.' What would Hunter Thompson do? Oh, yes, he would get his body and mind in fighting form by having breakfast. I guess I'll follow the good Doctor's example: "Four Bloody Marys, two grapefruits, a pot of

coffee, Rangoon crêpes, a half-pound of either sausage, bacon, or corned-beef hash with diced chilies, a Spanish omelette or eggs Benedict, a quart of milk, a chopped lemon for random seasoning, and something like a slice of key lime pie, two margaritas and six lines of the best cocaine for dessert.” All to be consumed while naked. *Snarf! Sniff! Belch!* ALRIGHT! I’m primed. Bring on Biden!

+ Margie Kidder was one of Hunter Thompson’s best friends. I asked her if this menu remotely resembled his real appetites. Margie told me that she and Hunter were together during the 1984 Democratic Convention in San Francisco, where his main obsession was in scoring some cocaine to get him juiced for covering the tedium of the convention.

“Here’s what Hunter would do,” Margie told me. “He believed firmly in getting your cocaine first, which at that convention involved spending a lot of time with a gay friend of mine he referred to in his writing as “the bowl of fruit”. Then you got your drinks lined up and we would sit and watch the TV in the press room. I kept insisting in going out onto the floor to interview what often turned out to be ex-lovers of mine, who I couldn’t really quote for obvious reasons. He was disgusted with me. At one point, back at the St Francis hotel, Hunter screamed down the hall at me “You are a political neophyte! You are a dangerous woman!” Then he went off to a party at Ann Getty’s house or apartment and called her a fascist dyke and punched a hole in her living room wall and Pat Caddell (the Democratic pollster) and I had to race over with my trans driver Greta and our 1960s Cadillac convertible loaned to me by the gay community and rescue Hunter from the well-dressed and horrified Democrats. Sen Patrick Leahy thought he was funny. Few other Democrats did. But then Leahy often rode around with us in that Cadillac.”

+ Terry McAuliffe, the Clinton’s former BFF (second now to Elizabeth Warren), mentor to Tim Kaine in the art of political grifting and current governor of Virginia, has an ego the size of Trump Tower. McAuliffe knows all of the Clintons secrets. He knows what they think and how they deal. McAuliffe gave an early morning interview to Politico, where he confided to the reporter that Hillary was only pretending to oppose the TPP to neuter one of Bernie Sanders’s main campaign themes. The governor assured the reporter that after the election Hillary would once again support the job-killing trade pact with a few cosmetic adjustments. The McAuliffe Leak exposed the worst kept secret in Washington.

+ Bill O’Reilly did his best last night to calm a perplexed nation, still reeling from Michelle Obama’s allegation, which had not been vetted by the Texas School Book Commission, that slaves had built the White House. Yes, it’s true, O’Reilly told his anxious viewers, but relax the slave construction workers were, in fact, “well-fed and had decent lodgings provided by the government.” With these ameliorating words from a professional historian, Fox Nation slept soundly.

\* A few days ago, Michael Moore hauled himself like a stranded walrus onto the set of the Bill Maher Show, where he predicted that Trump was going to win in the fall. Those of us who know Michael Moore knew that this was a con, a scare tactic to drive potential Greens, Libertarians or stay-at-home anarchists to vote for HRC. Michael Moore does this every general election. Flirts with a Third Party candidate, then folds. He has previously confessed his obsession with Hillary, an obsession that borders on the sexual.

In his book, *Downsize This!*, Moore confessed his “forbidden love” for Hillary. He described her as “one hot shitkickin’ feminist babe.”

Now into my inbox lands a message from Moore under the subject heading: “Add Your Name?” How quaint, I thought, I didn’t think we’d been on speaking terms since his deplorable betrayal of Nader in 2004. I was crushed to discover that this was actually a fundraising letter for MoveOn.org, imploring me to join with Moore and Lena “*friggin*” Dunham to “do everything we can to stop Trump.” Sicko, indeed.

+ Trump is a carnival barker of bullshit. This morning at his press conference in Scranton he tweaked Clinton by calling on the Russian hackers to release her emails. The reaction was seismic. Trump is inviting a foreign nation to spy on the US! Trump is calling for an enemy of the US to interfere in the American election! *Lions, tigers and bears, oh my!*

+ The Democrats reacted with predictable hysterics, calling Trump’s remarks “treasonous,” which is ridiculous. What Trump actually said was that “if” Russia did in fact hack into Hillary’s email account then they should release the emails, especially the 30,000 emails that her lawyers deleted AFTER they were subpoenaed.

+ Shortly after offending all of the foreign policy elites in both parties with his remarks on Russia, Trump broke with Republican orthodoxy again by announcing that he would support a \$10 an hour minimum wage. Mike Pence, who opposing any minimum wage, must be having a hard time keeping up with the new talking points. The liberals, of course, reflexively denounced Trump’s plan as “incoherent.” But it is one more sign that Trump is trying to outflank Hilary on a range of issues. Fortunately for him, he doesn’t have to veer his Rolls that far to get to the left of Clinton.

+ The US is shocked! Shocked, I tell you!! That any government might want to interfere in US elections. It is morally wrong. It violates international law. It’s the kind of action that violates every sacred principle of Democratic governments. (See Bill Blum, see Zoltan Grossman.)

+ In their quest to ensure a fully-informed American electorate, the Russian hackers should also release Trump’s tax returns and the text of Hillary’s Goldman Sach speeches.

+ The neoliberal ticket is now consecrated. The nomination of the unapologetically pro-fast track, pro-TPP Tim Kaine approved without objection. Change (of positions) you can believe in. “At least he’s not Putin,” Jelle Versieren told me. “Nominating Putin would definitely be worse.”

+ Hillary’s new BFF, Elizabeth Warren, refused to say whether Tim Kaine was the “right pick” for the Democratic Party. Instead Warren mumbled that Kaine “is a good man, he has a good heart, and he has a lot of experiences. I think he is going to be a valuable member of the team for Secretary Clinton and a valuable member of the team when she is president of the United States.”

+ New York Mayor Bill DeBlasio is now on stage. Wonder if he'll do a reprise of his "Colored Person Time" routine as a way to win back some of those Trump voters in western Pennsylvania?

+ Bernie Sanders hasn't left the building with the Sandernistas. He gave a speech this morning to the Texas delegation, where he called Trump the "worst candidate in modern history." If that's true, what are they scared of? The election should be a cakewalk.

+ Almost every speaker on stage today has repeated the phrase "scary Donald Trump." They are working overtime to scrub away the image of Madeleine Albright from last night, which caused so many Democratic children to have a sleepless night.

+ Jesse Jackson is a hollow shell of his former self. Once one of the most electrifying speakers of our time, he now is thoroughly pacified and house trained. He can't really believe what he is saying about the woman who called black teenagers "super-predators"? What does he really mean when he says that you can "trust" the woman who pushed for the destruction of welfare that further impoverished the lives of poor black mothers and their children? "Hillary Time? Hope Time?" Jackson couldn't even look at the camera when he wrenched out those tortured phrases. If Jackson wasn't embarrassed for that speech, I was on his behalf. Once he was a rebel against the System. Now he is a hired gun for the elites.

+ Who is up for a drinking game during Tim Kaine's speech!? One shot of mezcal for every formerly long-held position that Kaine's reverses himself on tonight. If you don't pass out, then congratulations, you are probably one of Hunter Thompson's illegitimate children...

+ The Clinton campaign is saturating the airwaves with a commercial featuring a montage of some of Trump's most offensive remarks with shocked children looking on. In fact, most children probably watched few if any of Trump's heresies before they saw all of them at once in Hillary's commercial. Is it really about protecting the kids, Hillary?

+ Harry Reid and his wife just shuffled on stage wearing sunglasses they must have picked up at the House of Blues in Vegas. This is probably the last time we'll see Harry Reid at one of these things. I like Harry Reid. I don't know why. If I thought hard about it, I probably wouldn't. But I do. He's a former boxer and is still a fighter, even if he is so often punching the wrong targets. Alex and I interviewed him about 10 years ago. He was totally unpolished and unvarnished. We could have been talking to somebody in a bar. In fact, we were talking to somebody in a bar. Reid stood up to the nuclear lobby and won. He single-handedly kept nuclear waste out of Yucca mountain. You won't see his kind in the future Democratic Party of pre-packaged Westworld-like clones.

+ The ambitious Lt. Gov. of California Gavin Newsom just praised the "sunny optimism" of Ronald Reagan, specifically referencing the Gipper's "tear down that Wall" speech, one of the most rabid rants of the Cold War era.

+ The Boho Gov. of California Jerry Brown, proponent of fracking and oil drilling, is who the DNC picks to speak about climate change? Is Bill McKibben committing seppuku? One fracker

endorsing the environmental bona fides of a ticket of two frackers. Give them points for consistency. Is Brown auditioning for Secretary of Interior or the board of Exxon. Is there a difference?

Why did the Democrats feel as if they could send out Jerry Brown to talk about global warming? Because Gang Green is already “all in” for Hillary and the DNC thought they could stick it right in their face with impunity (they’d be right).

+ This gun violence sequence is unfolding like a flashback to Death Night at the Republican convention.

+ There’s Chief Charles Ramsey, the former police commission for Washington, DC., talking about gun violence and the “war on cops.” You remember Ramsey don’t you? He’s the man who instituted traffic checkpoints in largely black sections of DC where information on detained motorists who were committing crimes was entered into a mass police database. Ramsey also ordered the illegal mass arrests of more than 400 protesters (perhaps even one of you) in Pershing Park during the World Bank and IMF protests in 2002. The city of DC was ordered to pay nearly \$2 million in fines as compensation for this trampling of civil rights. So much for the Constitution. Perhaps Hillary is auditioning Ramsey for the next Secretary of Homeland Security. Do you feel more secure?

+ Cpt. Mark Kelly, Space Cowboy, just praised the “awesome extent of American power and capability” that engineered the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. The Democrats are doubling down on the Iraq War.

+ Naturally, Commander Kelly’s homily to the Iraq War is followed by a group sing of ‘What the World Needs Now’ as a statement against gun violence! Maybe Yoko denied them the rights to ‘Give Peace a Chance?’ No matter which way you turn people are living in an Alt Reality.

+ In a strange cinematic interlude, the big screen behind the stage just aired a surreal film warning that Trump couldn’t be trusted with the “nuclear button”, which was partially narrated by ... the nuclear bomber himself, Harry Truman!

+ Leon Panetta, the CIA’s master of drones, is being shouted down with “No war, No drone” chants, most of them coming from the Oregon and Washington state delegations. Play on, Sandernistas!

+ Leon Panetta sniveling about Russian hacking is the best laugh of the night. Didn’t his own hackers, working with their cohorts in Mossad, unleash the malicious Stuxnet worm on Iran?

+ The floor managers are in crisis mode. They have given all of the delegates on the floor “Stronger America” placards which they are waving with patriotic vigor and have them shouting “USA! USA!” to drown out the anti-war protesters. Did they import these people from the Trump rally in Scranton? They cut the lights to the anti-war protesters section and they responded with their Flashlight apps on their cellphones. Be prepared people!

- + Are they arresting and waterboarding the protesters in the Oregon and Washington delegations now before Biden and Obama speak? Please text home!
- + Right on cue, Rachel Maddow denounced what another MS-DNC hack called the Lunatic Left for heckling Leon Panetta, director of the CIA's remote control killing program. "It made no sense," she said. Which means it must have been impeccably timed.
- + And now an important message on decency, justice and morality by Joe Biden, the man who betrayed Anita Hill and wrote the Clinton Crime Bill.
- + Did they run the Biden speech through the plagiarism software? They should make sure to use the UK edition.
- + For the Democrats the only man on Earth scarier than Donald Trump is Vladimir Putin, who Biden seems to believe is the Dr. Moriarty of Moscow.
- + Introducing Michael Bloomberg to present the Billionaire Seal of Approval to Ms. Hillary Clinton!
- + Bloomberg: "We don't need a bomb thrower as president." Apparently, we need another drone launcher, instead!
- + Leave it to Bloomberg to give the most coherent indictment of Trump. There's no hate quite as pure as that between rival billionaires.
- + Re: Lenny Kravatz: They seem to be alternating the Love Songs with the War Speeches.
- + Get the mezcal out, here comes Citizen Kaine. Will he embrace his inner neoliberal? Or make a false confession about his sudden epiphanies on trade, bank regulation, the death penalty, abortion, and collective bargaining rights?
- + Tim Kaine is off to a halting start. Perhaps they should have had Kaine on at 3 pm? He has a goofy quality that would be endearing in a TV weather personality.
- + If Hillary and Kaine are elected, will Toni Morrison dub Kaine the first Hispanic VP because he spoke some snatches of Spanish tonight?
- + Tim, Kaine, the Jesuit Missionary, talked about witnessing the horrors of the Honduran dictatorship without mentioning that it and its death squads were entirely supported by the US government and that the same generals were put back into power in a coup supported by Hillary Clinton!
- + Tim Kaine looks like he honed his rhetorical chops by watching home videos of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. Did the Clintons ever see him give a speech or did they just take Terry McAuliffe's word for it? Nothing against the great Fred Rogers, of course.

+ Kaine, the Wall Street bag man, quoting John McCain's economic advisor for the 2008 campaign as an expert witness is probably not the most compelling testimonial against Trump.

+ Obama enters to the banal mewling of Bono! How apt. At least he didn't profane James Brown or Smokey Robinson.

+ Obama may have been impotent to stop the killing of the kids at Newtown or the church members in Charleston. But he had complete authority to stop the killing of children, doctors, nurses, and wedding parties in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan killed by his drone strikes.

+ Optimism is the word from the O Man, which means things must be much worse than we think.

+ With a smile on his face, Obama claims "gay marriage" as a victory on his resume, even though he opposed it.

+ Obama: "There are pockets of the country that never recovered from factory closings." Pockets? Those pockets are big enough to shoplift the Great Lakes.

+ Now Obama is quoting Reagan. Truman and Reagan have been quoted more frequently than any other figures at this convention. In fact, Obama's speech is played in the key of Reagan. He has said that he sees himself as a "transitional figure" like, yes, Reagan. He has exceeded beyond his expectations.

+ Obama just said Hillary has been caricatured by some on the Left. I assume he's referring to the jacket cover of Doug Henwood's deliciously vicious book, *My Turn*.

+ Obama could sell Trump Steaks to a vegan.

+ Obama swears that Hillary is the "most qualified person ever to run for president." Perhaps. But she's qualified in all the wrong directions.

+ Exit to Stevie Wonder. When Hillary surprised Obama on stage, she had the look of love in her eyes, as if she had just jilted Bill for Barack. But then wouldn't you after Bubba's creepy stalker speech last night?

This was a night dominated by the hollow men of the Democratic Party: Panetta, Kaine, Biden and Obama. Men who knew better, but did worse. The theme was liberal virility, strength, and managerial efficiency. Missing was any empathy for the homeless and the hungry, the poor and the downtrodden. It was a frontal embrace of the neoliberal order, a demonstration that the Democrats have the competency and toughness to manage the imperial order in a time of severe internal and external stress.

The last three hours weren't a full-throated repudiation of Sanderism, so much as a casual dismissal, as if the core concerns Bernie's movement gave voice to regarding the ravages of

economic inequality didn't even merit their attention. And Bernie sat passively in the imperial box seats with Jane squirming at his side, watching it all unfold.

Barack Obama possesses so many scintillating skills, perhaps more skills than any other political figure of the modern era. Yet he put those magical gifts to such meagre, timid and often brutal uses. What a waste.

His is the tragedy of a squandered presidency.