



*Anyone can make a mistake, but only a
fool persists in his fault.*

—Cicero

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TRASH-STOCK 99

WRITTEN: Catelyn Kalm **DESIGNED:** Oliver Higgins

If you or anyone you know lived in the United States in 1969, you might've heard of a little festival called Woodstock.

The original '69 Woodstock Music and Art Fair was a cultural (or, rather, countercultural) pillar of the decade, indicating to some the end of the '60s culture wars and a hopeful look to the future.¹ The festival, which advertised itself as “a weekend of peace and music,” was such a cornerstone in the lives of many young people who attended that it altered their mindsets, some even to a point of splitting life into Before and After Woodstock.²

But, by many accounts, Woodstock '69 was a success by pure luck.³ This was due in part to the organizing team of promoters and investors responsible for the event: four guys in their early twenties, including one named, sigh, Michael Lang (he'll be back later). Unsurprisingly, this group of young guys ended up having a hard time with many of the logistical aspects of festival planning.⁴ Still, the great attitudes of the hippies who arrived in town ready to help out the locals (in exchange for using their front yards as a stomping ground for the weekend, of course) managed to win over some of the residents, and the unmatched ~vibes~ of the festival are what kept it afloat through the chaos. Emphasis on the “unmatched.”

Many Woodstocks would come to follow, but only two big enough to note. The first was Woodstock '94. This 25th anniversary celebration of the original Woodstock promised “2 more days of peace and music,” echoing the sentiment of the first. It ended in rain and what was essentially a giant mud bowl, but the organizers still recorded it as a success.⁵

By 1999, Woodstock '69 had been able to live nestled in the hearts of the event-goers for 30 years since that first iconic August weekend. That is, until the devil on Lang's shoulder started to whisper about how they could do it all over, yet again, but



- get this - they could make more money! And that brings us to the second noteworthy festival in this family: Trashstock—oops, *Woodstock* '99. Sure, that may all sound good and dandy, but the way in which Lang and other organizers of the 1999 Woodstock went about this weekend, from their cost-cutting measures to their face-palm-worthy decisions, made it stand out in history for a much more negative reason than the first.

Possibly the first place Woodstock '99 went wrong was in the venue. If there's one way you surely aren't going to replicate the same flower power, communal atmosphere expected at a Woodstock festival, it's by setting it against the backdrop of an abandoned Cold War-era military base. The Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, New York may not have been the Ritz, but at least it was cheap and it already had some of the infrastructure for supporting a festival of the expected caliber.⁶ Oh, and did I mention it was cheap? And, sure, Woodstock festivals had historically had difficulty securing locations because of the crowds they attracted, but it almost seems like no thought was given at all to the fact that the tarmac, which covered essentially the whole base, would amplify the effects of the heat and leave those in attendance with nowhere to hide from the sun.⁷ This would later prove detrimental in the 100 degree heat of a July afternoon.

In another severe contrast to the original festival, Woodstock '99 sold out—Lang had secured many sponsorships, from

Redbull to Converse, that especially targeted the artists' designated area and the camera crews.⁸ This capitalistic venture was undertaken to, of course, raise more funds; however, it not only turned Woodstock's idea of "peace and love" on its head, but also created a stark contrast to the horrid conditions left for the rest of the crowd.

The food service was one of these failures to the young festival-goers. Unlike the free food offered at Woodstock '69, the organizing team chose to outsource the catered food options this time around. So, they were no longer in control of the prices, and the vendors were subject to a supply-and-demand type pricing situation.⁹ The extreme heat radiating off the tarmac alone meant that you had to drink a gallon of water an hour just to stay upright.¹⁰ The bottled waters were originally \$4 (a steep enough price for teens in 1999), and by the end of the weekend, the prices soared above \$9.^{11,12} It was reported that some even had to sell their personal belongings for money to buy food or get home.¹³

Truly one of the most scarring experiences at the 1999 Woodstock festival was the sexual violence committed in the crowds. Women, especially, were groped and assaulted at extremely high rates while crowd surfing, dancing, and just walking around the grounds. The freedom (and nudity) one might've expected at a Woodstock festival came to a crashing halt when confronted with the ethos of the actual crowd of people in

attendance. As one then-teenage girl who was in attendance described body surfing in the crowds, “There’s the people that are legit trying to carry you and actually move you along like they’re supposed to be. But there’s equally as many dudes, like, grabbing your boob and, you know, getting a squeeze on your butt as they’re passing you along.”¹⁵ There are even sickening videos of what can only be assumed to be a fraction of the assaults playing out during pay-per-view coverage of the event. Thanks, MTV.

By day two of the festival, it was clear that the bathroom situation was another unaddressed concern. The porta potties were smelly, dirty, and frankly very unsanitary.¹⁶ By day three, the area had turned into an, um, contaminated brown lake. (That’s about as far as I want to go into that one.)

Another infrastructure failure became evident by day two, too: the trash from the estimated 400,000 festival-goers was starting to pile up with nowhere to go.¹⁷ The ever-so-essential sanitation team, again outsourced by Lang to cut costs, was nowhere to be found.¹⁸ One photographer who was there put it well: “Looking down at the stage, ... I could see trash every place. And I said, ‘That is going to be the downfall of Woodstock ‘99...because these kids are not gonna be happy. We’re not taking good enough care of them.’ They wanted the Woodstock spirit.”¹⁹

Sure enough, another questionable planning choice became more evident to the event organizers as the crowds ramped up: the musical acts themselves. If they were going for peace and love, they might’ve made the wrong choice by okaying nu metal bands like Korn and Rage Against the Machine along with aggressive performers like Kid Rock to set the tone for the festival. The whole lineup showed a slightly more diverse music spread, with some more alternative/pop rock from Alanis Morissette and Sheryl Crow, and a blessing from a group of Tibetan monks, but it seems like that wasn’t enough to calm the crowds. After Limp Bizkit’s performance on Saturday night, the base had already been trashed. The tensions and frustrations in the crowd were just building up that next day, and it was all leading up to the final headliner—The Red Hot Chili Peppers.

The nail in Woodstock ‘99’s coffin wasn’t the destruction, or even the sea of trash building up since day one, but, actually, a candlelight vigil originally intended to spread a peaceful anti-gun violence sentiment on the last night.²⁰ In a move that might’ve only been safe with a crowd more like the one in 1969, candles were passed out to the audience and, while the Red Hot Chili Peppers played on, the candles, and subsequent small fires, began to be set aflame all around the site.²¹ These flames grew and grew until the part of the site closest to the main stage was even nearly engulfed in fire.

So, in true Woodstock fashion, the ‘99 festival ended in chaos. But, it also ended in flames. Literally. With “Fire” playing on in the background.

While some concert-goers can still look back on that day as a beautiful hallmark of youthful rebellion, this cannot be true for then-54-year-old Lang and the rest of the team. They had a responsibility to the youth attending, their parents, and everyone who has ever held Woodstock near and dear, but instead they just left a bit of a stain on the legacy of Woodstock.

Musically, yes, Woodstock is so iconic that I don’t feel the need to emphasize the epic performances and bands at the festival. You can rewatch those over on YouTube to your heart’s content. I personally have taken issue with the planning that, time and time...and time...and time again, has just proved to be inadequate.

The most recent money-grab bearing this same, dare I say, worn-out name, was the since-canceled Woodstock 50, planned for the original’s 50th anniversary in 2019. Lang was involved behind the scenes of this one too, so it should come as no surprise that it didn’t pan out. Like its predecessors, this Woodstock iteration’s city permits caused it many problems, ultimately leading to the abandonment of the project entirely.²²

So, will the Woodstock blunders ever end? Unfortunately, this writer fears for the worst.²³ ■

Notes:

1 What many refer to as the 1960s “culture war” was a power struggle between more radical and more conservative ideals in American society, especially pertaining to recent conflicts over the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. But that’s a whole paper in and of itself. Ronald Helfrich. “‘What Can a Hippie Contribute to Our Community?’ Culture Wars, Moral Panics, and The Woodstock Festival.”

2 “My dad was there and talks about it the way other men talk about war... ‘It changed me,’ he’d say, and he loved it for that.” Ronald Helfrich. “‘What Can a Hippie Contribute to Our Community?’ Culture Wars, Moral Panics, and The Woodstock Festival,” Article, 2010.

3, 22 David Browne. “‘It Was One Problem after Another’: How Woodstock 50 Fell Apart.”

4 They had to relocate it twice, had a fraction of the sanitation and health procedures required for over double the expected amount of participants that ended up arriving, and faced some backlash from the local community of Bethel, New York for the riff raff they were bringing to town...to name a few. Ronald Helfrich. “‘What Can a Hippie Contribute to Our Community?’ Culture Wars, Moral Panics, and The Woodstock Festival.”

5 Janny Scott. “Woodstock: Music Fades and Muddy Trek Begins,” Article, 1994.

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 Jamie Crawford. Trainwreck: Woodstock ‘99, Netflix Docuseries, 2022.

11,13 Christopher O’Connor. “Woodstock ‘99 Report #56: Festival Cashes In With Over-The-Top Prices,” Article, 1999.

20 This had become an important cultural movement after the tragic mass shooting at Columbine High School earlier that year. Jamie Crawford. Trainwreck: Woodstock ‘99.

21 Jamie Crawford. Trainwreck: Woodstock ‘99.

23 Please, no one tell me about Woodstock 2029, I won’t be able to bear it.

LA MALINCHE

Written by Claire Kowalec & Designed by Oliver Higgins

Malinalli, Malintzin, Doña Marina. Traitoress, conquistadora, slave, victim. Each of these names and terms swirl around the myth of La Malinche, a young Indigenous woman who helped topple the Aztec Empire. Yet, it's unclear whether she intended to cause that outcome. La Malinche—a term understood to mean “traitor” or one who disowns their own culture in favor of (or in fascination with) another—has a fraught relationship with Mexico, given the various ways she's been portrayed throughout time.¹

Little contemporary evidence can help us shine up the lens through which we view La Malinche; instead, accounts written years and even centuries after her death, plus limited sources from the years immediately following her death, create a grimy film that doesn't want to be separated from the glass. Did Malinalli, as she was likely called in her native language, really mean for Hernán Cortés to conquer the Aztecs and the surrounding Indigenous communities that were familiar to her? Could her role as an interpreter and informant have created one of the most grave, impactful historical blunders of human history? Or did she intend to ally with the Spanish conquerors and willingly give up information that contributed to the fall of medieval Mesoamerican civilization?

Lots of words, lots of thoughts... Let's scale it back to what we know.

Scholars debate the birth name of the Aztec chief's daughter who would eventually help Cortés conquer the Aztecs. Some argue that Malinalli could have been her birth name, though Malintzin includes the suffix “-tzin,” a mark of respect that could have reflected her social standing.² Either way, our figure's names reflect the changing identities she occupied: Indigenous enslaved person, servant to colonizers, mother of Mexico and broader, multicultural Latin America.

Malintzin's early life—as well as the rest—is hard to illuminate. Some of the facts differ ever so slightly between different accounts, but the gen-

eral gist is clear. She was born into an upper class family, the daughter of an Aztec chief, and was therefore educated and familiar with the dialects used in the courts of Moctezuma (hint: heavy foreshadowing).³ After her father's death, her mother remarried and had a son, to whom the inheritance would be given. Yet Malintzin, the oldest, needed to be out of the picture before this could happen: her mother sold her into slavery to compensate. Based on the literature surrounding this episode of Malintzin's life, it seems that the oldest son would automatically inherit the family's wealth—Aztec society was patriarchal, but not to the extent that European society was and still is (that's a whole other can of worms).⁴

Before being sold into slavery, Malintzin already had an understanding of Nahuatl, the Aztec language of her birth, but learned a Mayan language called Yucatec during her travels as an enslaved person.⁵ What's important to us is that she was somehow sold to a Nahua community that bordered the Atlantic Ocean, where Cortés would land in a few years—1519, to be exact.⁶

From Cortés's perspective comes a narrative most of us are pretty familiar with: seeking wealth, the opportunity to spread the Spanish-Christian Empire and culture, and glory for “discovering” a new corner of what seemed at the time to be an ever-expanding plane. Taking it step by step, Hernán Cortés landed in the “New World” in modern-day Cuba in 1519, most likely with all of those ideas in mind.

Cortés had an official named Jerónimo Aguilar who led him from Cuba to Mexico, acting as his interpreter. Aguilar had been enslaved in a Yucatec-speaking community in the past, and therefore brought important language abilities to what would become a very historical, dramatic transaction between Spain and the medieval Mesoamerican empires.

Here is where the pieces begin coming together. Cortés and Aguilar arrived at Tabasco, an Indig-



enous settlement off the coast of Mexico. After originally resisting any discussion or cooperation with the Spanish invaders, this Maya community instead decided to welcome the invaders with gifts of gold, food, and 20 enslaved women.⁷ Malintzin was one of those women. Young, bright, and assertive, Cortés and Aguilar quickly noticed something unusual about one of the enslaved women. As Aguilar spoke with her in Yucatec, he discovered—much to his fascination and surprise—that she was also wonderfully fluent in Nahuatl, the Aztec language she had grown up speaking. Not only that, but her command of the upper-class dialect of Nahuatl in particular would later become invaluable. Quickly, Aguilar taught Malintzin how to speak Spanish, making her the officially trained link in communications between those three key groups: the Mayans, the Aztecs, and the Spanish. Given her deeply important role in Cortés’s operation, she was given a name that revealed her value to the Spanish: Doña Marina, which she took after being baptized as a Christian. Although she was given to the Spanish as an enslaved person, it appears that she joined their side readily and lended a hand as an interpreter in order to do so.⁸

From that point onward, Malintzin—whose Aztec honorific title “-tzin” was replaced with a Spanish one, Doña—traveled alongside Cortés and his forces at all times, acting as an interpreter.

But she also seemed to have a keen eye for political maneuvers and distinguished herself as an advisor to Cortés, too.⁹ It’s important to note that Doña Marina had a key part in the Spanish effort to communicate with and then topple the Mesoamerican empires, but she was still fundamentally seen as an Indigenous woman above all. The honorific title of “Doña” which the Spanish bestowed upon her clearly indicates how much they valued her linguistic abilities and insider knowledge. “Doña” was traditionally used to reflect courtesy toward a Spanish or Portuguese lady, the masculine opposite being “Don” (think of Don Quixote).¹⁰ It represented her acceptance into Spanish society, into the world of Cortés and out of the Indigenous one. But at the same time, the Spanish view of the Indigenous peoples they encountered was always derogatory, condescending, and a justification for slavery and cruelty. A chronicler named Juan Gines de Sepulveda wrote an account of the Aztec conquest about twenty years after it happened, depicting the emperor Montezuma as weak and unsure and his subjects as “natural slaves.”¹¹ If we look at the fall of the Aztec Empire as something as inevitable as Spanish history makes it seem, we don’t take into account how much Doña Marina catalyzed that fact.

Doña Marina translated Cortés’ conversations with Moctezuma while she was Cortés’s second—

hand woman. In that sense, she was an intermediary, but also held immense power during an intense power struggle between the two competing entities. At that same time, using her connections with local people and groups to keep tabs on the inner workings of the conflicts between the Aztecs and the Spanish, she got the scoop on two insider plots to dispel the Spanish. In Cholula, she found out that the Cholulans were preparing an assault on Cortés' troops.¹² With this knowledge, the Spanish justified a brutal attack on the Cholulans, using the help of their allies, another Indigenous group known as the Tlaxcalans. The Spanish knew that as an imperial power, the Aztecs had subjugated several Indigenous groups, and that many of those groups were unhappy with Aztec leadership. Many of them were receptive to the possibility of breaking away from the Aztec powers-that-were. Perhaps that would welcome a different, better imperial power. Or maybe that hope would be a farce until they could throw off both or *any* imperial powers.¹³ While the Spanish were allied with the Tlaxcalans against the Cholulans, taking on the different sectors of the Aztec nation-state, Doña Marina also uncovered a plot by the Tlaxcalans to overthrow the Spanish. Cortés reacted the same way and brutally put down any possibility of armed revolt from the Tlaxcalans. Essentially, Marina hindered the Indigenous powers' ability to organize and stand up against the Spanish as they tried to withstand Spanish colonization and domination. The big question here is pretty obvious: why?

If Doña Marina willingly offered up intelligence from her informants, making the Spanish and Cortes aware of possible attacks so they could prepare counterattacks (or pre-attacks?), it might not be so far of a jump to say that she was helping the Spanish cause. We will never know her personal reasons for this decision, or whether she intended to help the Spanish or was somehow coerced; she later became Cortes's mistress and had a personal relationship with him, eventually giving birth to their son Martín (one of the first mestizo children to be born in Mesoamerica).¹⁴ But sources don't share any insight into her love or affection for Cortés... maybe because there wasn't any.¹⁵ Perhaps her upbringing, characterized by the death of her Aztec chief father and her subsequent enslavement, could have made her skeptical or unhappy with the power systems at play (that's a personal observation). Depending on how you see

it, she could be a victim of her time and position, manipulated into betraying the greater Indigenous community. She certainly has a reputation for that.¹⁶ But she could also be a politically dexterous female who helped topple an entire empire, which few people in history, let alone women, can say.

"La Malinche" means traitor, one who fetishizes a culture that's not one's own, and whore.¹⁷ It also represents the Indigenous woman who gave birth not only to Martín, quite literally half Spanish-European and half Indigenous American, but to an entire country (Mexico) and region that sees itself as such. She's a mother and an Eve, as one historian writes: "Like the biblical Eve, Malinche is the scapegoat, the ambivalent accomplice who 'opened' Mexico to conquest and subjugation."¹⁸

Yet the question remains: Did she mean to achieve the outcome that she did? Or was it a grave historical blunder that led to the fall of medieval Mesoamerican civilization? We really can't be sure. ■

Notes

^{1, 3, 5} Gracie Anderson, "Who Was La Malinche?" Website, 2021. Accessed September 21, 2022.

² Kristina Downs, "Mirrored Archetypes: The Contrasting Cultural Roles of La Malinche and Pocahontas," Journal Article, 2008: 398. For the record, this is an awesome article and I wish I had more space to talk about how we view and study Indigenous women; as you can tell, I think the mythologized figure of La Malinche and her cultural legacy are super interesting. Pilar Godayol, "Malintzin/La Malinche/Doña Marina: re-reading the myth of the treacherous translator," Journal Article, 2012: 65. Joanne Danaher Chaison, "Mysterious Malinche: A Case of Mistaken Identity," Journal Article, 1976: 514.

⁴ Caroline Dodds Pennock, "Chapter 26: Gender and Aztec Life Cycles," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Aztecs*, 2017: 387.

⁶ Thomas J. Brinkerhoff, "Reexamining the Lore of the 'Archetypal Conquistador': Hernán Cortés and the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec Empire, 1519-1521," Journal Article, 2016: 179.

⁷ Godayol, "Malintzin/La Malinche/Doña Marina: re-reading the myth of the treacherous translator," Journal Article, 2012: 63.

⁸ Roberto A. Valdeón, "Doña Marina/La Malinche: A historiographical approach to the interpreter/traitor," Journal Article, 2013: 164.

⁹ Ibid. Farah Mohammed, "Who Was La Malinche?" Website, 2019. Accessed September 21, 2022.. Brinkerhoff, "Reexamining the Lore," Journal Article, 2016: 179. Chaison, "Mysterious Malinche," Journal Article, 1976: 515.

¹⁰ "Dona, n.," Oxford English Dictionary, Website.

“NOT TO ME. NOT IF IT’S

...weasels”

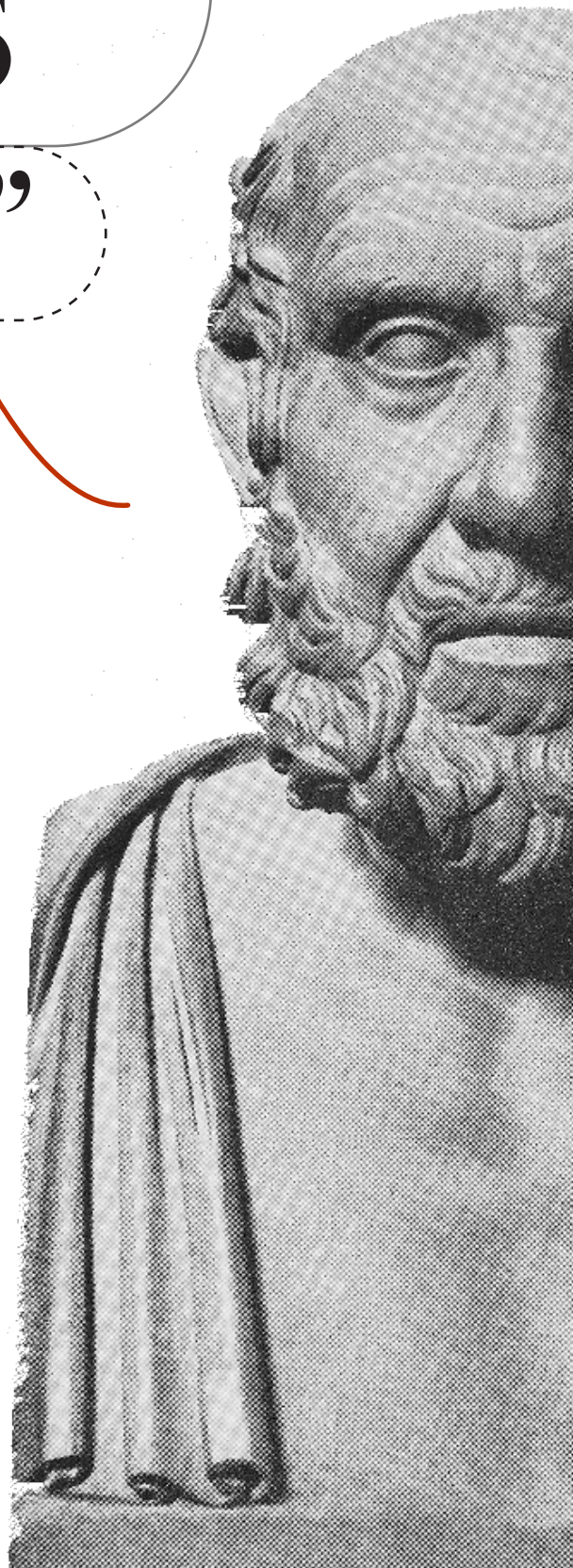
Written by William McClelland Designed by Oliver Higgins

Are you an actor? If so, my deepest condolences. If you aren't, but you know someone who is, also my deepest condolences. It's a tough life out there, performing upon the stage for all to see, like a jester jingling his miserable way across the throne room of a medieval European court while the king cheers and claps and debates with himself on whether to decapitate you today or tomorrow. To act, one must completely separate their personality from their body so that they might inhabit that of another. And while that gives us some great media, it also means actors can be insufferable in their attempts to perfect their body-snatching craft.¹ I should know. I am one. *shocked gasps from the audience*

Alright, yeah, fine, I'll stop making fun of theater kids.² In all honesty, acting for the theater is a really tough thing to do. You've got to memorize where to go on the stage, what to say while you're moving over there, and how exactly you're going to say those things to communicate very specific feelings. You can't just mosey on up there, say your lines in unmoving monotone, and then skip back off stage to the tune of roaring applause. That'd be boring as fuck for everyone involved, for one thing. You've got to keep all of that shit in your head at once, then do it all at once, and, oh yeah, you get to *physically watch everyone in the audience judge your performance the entire time you're doing it*. Kinda sorta nightmare fuel! So, I'll admit it: acting isn't exactly a walk in the park. For my part, I can barely remember whether or not I'm out of mushrooms while I'm grocery shopping at Meijer, so memorizing walls of text and blocking and notes on how to deliver lines really doesn't come easy.

I should probably tell you why I'm waxing non-poetic about acting, in a history magazine no less. Well, I just really wanted to make it clear how impressive it is, despite what I literally just said about actors being insufferable.³ It's important for me to point out that it's impressive because it makes the story I'm about to tell you that much funnier. Or more aggravating. Whatever; that can be up to you. Anyways, gather round, ye folke, and allow me to tell you a little tale about a guy named Hegelochus.

Let's throw it back together.⁴ The year is 408 BCE; somehow, you've managed to Bill and Ted yourself all the way to Ancient Athens as it existed during the winding-down of the Peloponnesian War.⁵ The City Dionysia, a huge festival for Dionysos celebrated annually in Athens, is in full swing. Everybody's talking about the hot new tragedy Euripides is about to drop at the Theater of Dionysos that night for the big playwriting competition; it's a good one, they



say. It centers around everybody's favorite matricide, the killing of Klytemnestra—the wife of the Mycenaean king Agamemnon—by her vengeful son Orestes. Euripides has even used that big brain of his to come up with an awesome name of the show: *Orestes*, which is a fun, original, and super creative title, if I do say so myself. Nice, say the Athenians, buzzing excitedly as they leave home to go fuck around inside the city walls.⁶ Nothing like spending a Saturday night on the slopes of the Acropolis mulling over some good ol' bloodshed, homoeroticism, and burning questions of what makes an action count as justice rather than revenge.⁷ It's truly going to be a night to remember.

The people gather in the theater, and the lights go down. And by "lights" I mean the sun, because it's Ancient Greece.⁸ Anyways, the actors begin to file in, emerging from the sides and the tunnels beneath the wings of the semicircle stage. The chorus sings, and thus the show begins.

It doesn't take long for it to become an unforgettable performance. You see, dear reader, the man playing the titular character of Orestes was an actor by the name of Hegelochus. We don't know much about ol' Hegelochus, but what we do know is that about 280 lines into the show, he managed to absolutely shit the bed. He just fucking bungled it. Really make an entire ass of himself, irreparably.

Before I explain what happened, allow me to digress and tell you about some Ancient Greek for a quick moment (I promise this is relevant). Ancient Greek relied a lot on pitch for the spoken language. The meaning of a word could totally change depending on how your voice modulated while saying it; for example, the word γαλῆν (*galēn*) is completely different from the word γαλήν (also *galēn*) because of how the accent is pronounced. The first of those—γαλῆν—has an accent called a circumflex (that little wavy line), which means that the speaker's pitch while saying that letter should rise and then fall. On the other hand, γαλήν has an acute accent, which means the pitch should simply go up when that letter is said. This is important, because this is what doomed Hegelochus to a life and death of sheer and utter mockery.⁹

It was the line, "After the storm, I see calm water once again" that would be Hegelochus' demise.¹⁰ In Greek, the line goes, "ἐκ κυμάτων γὰρ αἶθις αἶ γαλήν' ὁρῶ."¹¹ Take a look at that apostrophe at the end of "γαλήν'." It means that the ending of the noun—γαλήνα, which means "calm sea"—is *elided*; basically, since Word 1 ended with a vowel (γαλήνα) and Word 2 (ὁρῶ) started with a vowel, Word 1 dropped the last letter so it can just kind of slide into Word 2. So, γαλήνα ὁρῶ → γαλήν' ὁρῶ. Making sense? Cool.¹² Well, Hegelochus managed to turn γαλήν' ὁρῶ into γαλῆν ὁρῶ, adding a little

stop between words where there hadn't been one before. Unfortunately, doing this meant "calm sea" came out as "weasel."

He hadn't gotten enough breath, was the thing. He needed the little stop in between words, hadn't figured out exactly how deeply he'd have to inhale to make it through the line, so instead of saying, "After the storm, I see calm water once again," he said, "After the storm, I see a weasel once again." Absolute madman, this guy.

We technically don't know whether *Orestes* won the competition that year, but I think it's safe to say it probably didn't.¹³ Hegelochus, in the meantime, became the laughingstock of Athens; he was relentlessly mocked in a number of different texts by Euripides' contemporaries like Aristophanes, Sannyrion, and Plato (no, not that Plato; this one's a different guy who I hate less).¹⁴ It seems pretty unfair, given that it was a tiny slip-up, but the Greeks took their theater seriously. It was a religious matter; this was all happening during a HUGE festival devoted to the god of theater, so they all got a bit touchy. Plus, who doesn't love to play the critic now and again?

But, for a guy that lived in society that cared a lot about personal glory and how you'd be remembered after death, this kind of situation must really, really suck. If I forget a line while performing, I hope the audience doesn't remember during the next scene, much less 2500 years later. Alas, Hegelochus will just have to deal with it. Maybe after this perfect storm of mockery and goofs at his expense, he just might get to see a weasel. ■

Notes

¹ Looking at you, Jared Leto and Jeremy Strong. Get over yourselves.

² For now.

³ Both of these can be true. Dialectics, baby!

⁴ NOT LIKE THAT

⁵ Anne Carson, *An Oresteia*, Book; Big war between the city-states of Athens and Sparta, for those who don't know. Sparta won, because literally all Spartans did was practice slashing and chopping and killing and violence while Athenians were, like, writing poems and inventing the worst philosophical takes you'll ever hear in your life. And also hating women and poor people. Ancient Athenians sucked, man.

⁶ Um. Let's say this is figurative. Yeah! Uh. Yeah.

⁷ And brother, I have to agree.

⁸ It would be at LEAST another thirty years before they had THAT kind of technology. At LEAST.

⁹ Absolute CLOWNERY. Imagine getting your pitches wrong. COULD NOT be me (<-- actively struggles to read Greek aloud during class).

¹⁰ Euripides, "Orestes," Play.

¹¹ Ibid. Euripides.

¹² If not, sorry, I tried my best. Google it I guess?

¹³ Euripides would get over it. Sort of. He died two years later, but his plays *Bacchae*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *Alcmaeon in Corinth* would win him some posthumous glory in 405 BCE!

¹⁴ Mary Lefkowitz, "Aristophanes and Other Historians of the Fifth-Century Theater," *Journal Article*, 1984.

VERY POINTLESS!

THE AMERICAN VICE-PRESIDENCY

◦ Written by Quin Zapoli

◦ Designed by Oliver Higgins

“Being vice president is like being declawed, defanged, neutered, ball-gagged, and sealed in an abandoned coal mine under two miles of human shit. It is a fate worse than death.”¹ So sayeth Julia Louis-Dreyfus, in the series finale of *Veep*, a show focused entirely on the American vice presidency and its many flaws. The vice presidency is a bit of a mess. With only two Constitutional duties—serving as president if the incumbent dies and breaking ties in the Senate—the vice presidency is mainly pomp and circumstance.² Despite that, the vice presidency and some of its 49 inhabitants have proven just how chaotic—and dangerous—the office can be.

It’s important to note up front that the vice presidency was not a priority at the Constitutional Convention. It wasn’t even discussed until the closing weeks and wasn’t included in the Virginia Plan nor the New Jersey Plan—which served as the basis for the U.S. Constitution.³ Alexander Hamilton’s own plan for a new form of government was the only one to make mention of the vice presidency.⁴ Hamilton’s plan was to call the Senate’s presiding officer “vice president” and have them temporarily take over the presidency if the president were to die.

The only reason the office was created at all was to justify the founders’ obnoxiously complicated system to elect the president—the infamous Electoral College. Initially, the founders were concerned that electors would only vote for a candidate from their home state, so they gave each elector two votes and required that at least one be cast for a candidate from a different state.⁵ The votes were to be completely equal, but every elector would naturally have one preference (after all, the presidency is one office). So, to accompany the second vote, the founders created a second position: the veep. If the founders’ lack of foresight wasn’t obvious, the first three veeps should clear things up. John Adams—the first veep and one of the most respected and powerful individuals in early Ameri-

can history—famously said to his wife, “My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived.”⁶ Adams’s own veep was Thomas Jefferson, the Eugene H. Krabs to Adams’s Sheldon J. Plankton. When Adams died, newspapers reported his last words as “Jefferson still lives,” implying Adams was trying to outlive his old rival (although, unbeknownst to Adams, Jefferson had died hours earlier).⁷

The tense pairing was the fault of Alexander Hamilton himself. In the election of 1796, Hamilton, who wasn’t particularly fond of Adams or Jefferson, tried to use the poorly thought out electoral system to rob both of the presidency. He convinced some Jefferson voters to cast their second vote for Thomas Pickney, Adam’s intended veep.⁸ If everything worked out, Pickney would come in first (receiving votes from all Adams supporters in addition to some Jefferson supporters) and become president, even though he was running for veep. Everything did not work out, and instead, Adams came in first and Jefferson in second. Jefferson proceeded to spend most of his time as veep trying to undermine his boss, who he intended to run against in the election of 1800.⁹

The third veep was Aaron Burr, the guy who shot Alexander Hamilton (funny how things work out). In the election of 1800, 73 electors (a slim majority) voted for Thomas Jefferson. Every single one of them also voted for Jefferson’s running mate, Aaron Burr.¹⁰ Seems like a logical outcome; everything was working as intended. Except for that each of the electors’ two votes was equal. Jefferson and Burr were tied. The fate of the election was in the hands of the House of Representatives; Burr and the anti-Jefferson Federalist Party tried to negotiate their way to a Burr presidency, but after a week of total electoral chaos (which is just what you want in a fledgling democracy) the House caved and Jefferson was elected.¹¹

That’s how we got the 12th Amendment, adopted

in 1804—not two decades after the Constitution itself.¹² Of all the Constitution’s intertwined branches and rules, one of the first things the new government changed was how the veep is elected. That is how screwed up the vice presidency was from the outset. The 12th Amendment was far from a perfect solution, too, as it created a scenario where the vice presidential nominee is not most qualified to assume the presidency but to promote the election of the presidential nominee.¹³

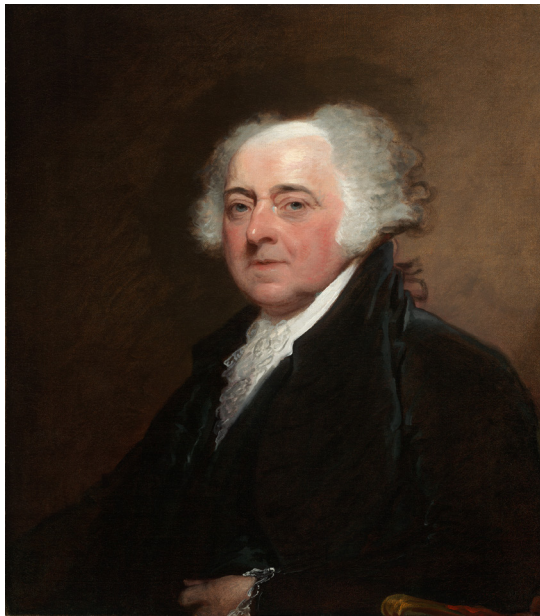
The 12th Amendment fixed one of the more obvious issues with the vice presidency, but it wasn’t nearly enough. For another 163 years, there was still no way to replace a veep if, for some reason, the office was left vacant. That happened a whopping 16 times.¹⁴ Sixteen times, roughly once a decade, there just wasn’t a veep, sometimes for years at a time.

There are a myriad of reasons the country could be veepless. Some died of old age because only old dudes could be convinced to run for veep.¹⁵ The first veep to resign was John C. Calhoun, who served under both President John Quincy Adams and President Andrew Jackson and used his position as president of the Senate to stifle both of their agendas.¹⁶ He actually resigned to become a senator, valuing that over the vice presidency.

The office was also left vacant whenever a veep became president. Funnily enough, it was also way too vague how that transition was supposed to happen, specifically whether the veep would step in as “acting president” or whether they would fully ascend to the presidency. In 1841, Vice President John Tyler decided that the latter was true. When President William Henry Harrison died just over a month into his term (listen to your grandmothers: wear a damn coat), Tyler went for it. He took the oath of office and moved into the White House.¹⁷ If he received a letter that addressed him as “Vice-President-Acting President,” he sent it back, like a mafia don whose pasta fagioli just ain’t right.¹⁸ While his confidence is certainly impressive, the fact that Tyler unilaterally decided that he was president and that no one thought to stop him, is another example of the vice presidency’s vagueness undermining popular representation.

The Constitution’s vague wording came up again in October of 1919 after President Woodrow Wilson had a stroke and spent his last years as president virtually incapacitated.¹⁹ Vice President Thomas R. Marshall didn’t have Tyler’s metric shitton of unearned confidence and was thus unwilling to declare Wilson unfit and assume the presidency

himself. Political scientist Joel K. Goldstein outlines the Constitutional reasons for Marshall’s hesitance. He cites that, at the time, the Constitution did not define “inability” nor did it say who (the cabinet? The vice president? The Supreme Court?) could define it. The Constitution was also still (78 years after John Tyler) unclear whether the vice president should serve in an acting capacity or not. That concern was compounded by the chance that Wilson could recover. If he did, it would’ve



himself. Political scientist Joel K. Goldstein outlines the Constitutional reasons for Marshall’s hesitance. He cites that, at the time, the Constitution did not define “inability” nor did it say who (the cabinet? The vice president? The Supreme Court?) could define it.²⁰ The Constitution was also still (78 years after John Tyler) unclear whether the vice president should serve in an acting capacity or not. That concern was compounded by the chance that Wilson could recover. If he did, it would’ve been an open question whether Wilson or Marshall would be president.²¹ For context, this confusion left the country essentially leaderless as the world recovered from World War I.

The 25th Amendment, adopted in 1967, finally clarified issues faced by both John Tyler and Thomas Marshall.²² The vice president is to become the president if the incumbent dies, resigns, is removed, or is otherwise unable to serve. And it is the Cabinet that decides when a president is “unable.” It also allowed for the appointment of a new vice president, so the office was not vacant so

frequently for so long. By then, though, the vice presidency had brought up yet another issue, that of its constantly fluctuating power.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt felt strongly that the veep should have a more impactful role in the executive branch, and considered his first two veeps, John Nance Garner and Henry A. Wallace, key advisors.²³ Yet, FDR's third vice president, Harry Truman, was famously out of the loop on presidential decision-making—even though FDR was on the verge of death and we were in the middle of the biggest war in human history.²⁴

The second half of the 20th century saw a wide variety of veeps, with a wide variety of powers and responsibilities. Vice President Richard Nixon, who served under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, was carefully informed of White House decisions and was a key foreign policy advisor to Eisenhower.²⁵ Nixon and his first vice president, Spiro Agnew, strongly disliked each other. The pair once had a days-long standoff over who would attend an event—Nixon wanted Agnew to go but refused to ask him himself, and Agnew refused to go until Nixon asked personally.²⁶ President Jimmy Carter revolutionized the vice presidential selection process and had a close relationship with Vice President Walter Mondale.²⁷ Vice President Dan Quayle, who served with President George H.W. Bush, misspelled the word “potato” and likely cost Bush up to 8 points in the popular vote in the 1988 presidential election.²⁸

The vice presidency has certainly gained power in the last 100 years, but because that power depends on the presidential-vice presidential relationship, it is incredibly flexible. Sometimes you get a useless veep like Quayle or Agnew, other times an appropriately influential one, like Mondale or Nixon. And sometimes you get Vice President Richard Bruce Cheney, known to his friends as Dick. Dick Cheney became the most powerful veep ever

because no one knows what the veep is supposed to do. So Cheney convinced President George W. Bush to let him do everything. He had influence over virtually every area of policy: he negotiated the 2001 tax cuts, ran a prominent energy policy task force, and helped prepare a defense against terrorists if they were to obtain weapons of mass destruction.²⁹ And all of that was before 9/11. On 9/11, Cheney went as far as ordering the military to shoot down an unidentified plane heading for D.C.³⁰ Afterwards, Cheney was instrumental in creating and implementing warrantless mass surveillance of domestic and international targets—the program was his “brainchild.”³¹ Cheney showed America what the veep can do: pretty much anything because no one bothered to write down what they can't do.

The carelessness with which the vice presidency was shoehorned into our political system has severe and often novel consequences that we are still, 235 years later, suffering from. Michael Stokes Paulson writes that if a vice president were impeached, constitutionally, they would be the one to preside over their own impeachment hearing—something Agnew could have abused if he hadn't resigned.³² It is still an open question whether the veep is a member of the executive branch or the legislative branch—something Cheney used to ignore an executive order related to the classification of national security documents.³³ Before the January 6th, 2021 insurgency at the U.S. Capitol, President Donald Trump argued that the Constitution gave Vice President Mike Pence full authority over counting electoral votes, and thus, authority to ignore the ones he didn't like.³⁴ It isn't just election shenanigans centuries ago or John Tyler stepping into the presidency like a frat boy stepping into a 400-level biochem course he has no business being in. Tiny inconsistencies like this still plague the vice presidency—and, in turn, all of us. ■

Notes

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AND THEY ALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN

THE PYRAMID SCHEME CRISIS THAT CAUSED A CIVIL WAR



Imagine you're sitting at a restaurant, reconnecting with an old friend from high school. She tells you that she's running her own business. You congratulate her, expecting the conversation to move on. But she doubles down. She explains that you, too, could be your own boss, set your own hours, and make a six figure salary from the comfort of your own home. "It's so easy, you'd be stupid to let such a good opportunity slip through your fingers," she advises, going on to explain that all you need to do is pay a small \$5355 start-up fee, recruit some people to work below you, and then you're on your way to making millions.¹ Your friend reveals she's selling supplements for a company called Shmerbalife, and seems to be making good money, but in your gut, you know something is off. If it were that easy to make that much money, wouldn't everyone be doing it?

And you'd be right to think that. Shmerbalife, and other multi-level marketing schemes like it, are a form of pyramid scheme.

A pyramid scheme is a business model that recruits participants through the promise of payments or services, which can only be fulfilled through the recruitment of new members.² In most models, investors take a share of the profits of the people who work below them, and in turn, a percentage of their profits are given to the member who recruited them, as well as the member who recruited that member, and so on. The result is obvious: people who get in first make the most money, whilst the majority of participants fight simply to break even.

Now imagine that the TV at the bar starts playing the midday news. The well groomed presenter announces that not only has Shmerbalife gone bankrupt, but that their financials were fabricated. They are fully insolvent and unable to pay off what they owe to their employees. In all likelihood, your friend would be very upset, but be okay in the long term. She'd be able to go back to her day job, pay off her loans, and ultimately lead a normal

life. But what if nearly two thirds of the country had invested money, and in most cases significant money, into the schemes? What if they made up nearly half of your country's GDP?³

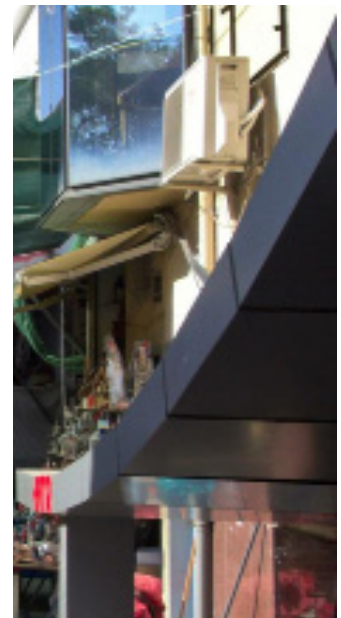
That was, in fact, the situation in Albania by the early days of 1997, when two prominent pyramid schemes declared insolvency. By March, the country had erupted into chaos, with citizens militarised and fighting government forces in what amounted to an all-out civil war.

But how did pyramid schemes gain such a foothold in Albania? Why were so many swayed by their unrealistic promises of prosperity? Simply put, the country was set up for failure from the beginning.

In the wake of the Second World War, as the eyes of the Western world were locked firmly on the newly liberated Germany and the looming threat of the Soviet Union's growing influence, a familiar tale was unfolding in a small country in southeastern Europe. Following German occupation in 1943, citizens were promised the establishment of an independent and neutral state. Instead, Albania became a battleground for warring forces of nationalism and communism. In 1944, the communist-led National Liberation Movement triumphed over German and nationalist forces, and set about establishing a new government.⁴

With all of the tyranny of Stalin and none of the charisma, Enver Hoxha stepped up to lead the Party of Labour in the newly established People's Republic of Albania. Initially, Hoxha did what any sensible leader of a small European communist country would: align himself with the USSR as a Soviet satellite state. On the home front, he went about modernising his small country. Over the course of his 31-year rule, Hoxha instituted rapid industrialisation and collectivisation. Despite measurable increases in quality of life, including increased literacy and comprehensive healthcare, the changes proved to be fleeting. After Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev's more liberal approach alienated the Albanian dictator. A true Stalin fanboy, Hoxha instead flirted with Chinese communism. But by 1970, Sino-Albanian relations too had stagnated, deteriorating entirely after Mao Zedong's death in the middle years of the decade. Failing to find another suitable dictator to develop a parasocial relationship with, Hoxha instead doubled down on his policies of isolationism and self-sufficiency.⁵ Albania became a hermit state. Travel restrictions made entering or leaving the country functionally impossible.⁶ With no outside support and few resources of their own, Albania's infrastructure began to collapse and living standards deteriorated. Shortages and poverty were widespread. Even after Hoxha's death in 1986, efforts by his successor to court the West were not enough to pull the country out of financial ruin.

It was in this fraught economic state that Albanians witnessed the collapse of communism as it swept across the Eastern Bloc. Disillusioned with a government which had run their once booming economy to the ground, and frustrated by limitations on their personal and political freedoms, citizens mobilised in December 1990 to organise protests, strikes, and demonstrations against the communist leadership. Within months, the first multi-party election was held, eventually leading to the victory of





the Democratic Party and its leader Sali Berisha in March 1992.

Berisha's policy line was simple. Whatever the communists were doing? Just do the opposite of that.⁷ And so, Albania entered an era of unfettered capitalism. With a populace who, having been cut off from the rest of the world for the past forty-odd years, knew nothing of how to operate in a free market economy, surely nothing could go wrong, right?

If you guessed "wrong," you would be correct. Despite Albania's relatively smooth transition from a centralised planned economy to a market economy, reform of the financial sector was limited. There were only three state banks, which held 90% of the country's deposits. Due to a growing trend of bad loans, restrictions were placed on the size of the loans the banks could offer, which led to the formation of an informal credit market to meet the demand of the private sector. These informal lending companies were regarded as harmless, or even beneficial to the economy. It was not long, however, until a second class of companies emerged. Instead of making loans, these firms took deposits and invested on their own accounts. Due to lack of regulation in the financial sector, these companies eventually morphed into what we would now recognise as pyramid schemes.⁸

Most pyramid schemes in Albania operated on a very simple principle. New investors are attracted by the high returns on offer, and their funds are then used to pay returns as promised to the first investors. Despite being insolvent from the start by

nature, the schemes were initially successful. Many working class people put any money they made from selling goods directly into the pyramid schemes, whilst those more well off sold their homes, moved into rented accommodations, and invested their money instead. To continue to attract new customers, the schemes raised their interest rates, in turn making it more and more difficult to make interest payments, which continued to drive the rates up. Average interest rates on offer for one popular scheme, Sude, hovered somewhere between 5-10% per month. At its peak in 1996, however, Sude promised to double initial investments in just two months.⁹ Other firms were forced to raise their rates in response to remain competitive. The ticking of the time bomb was getting harder and harder to ignore.

January 1977 marked the beginning of the end for Albanian pyramid schemes. Interest payments from Sude had halted, and investors were prevented from retrieving their money. Maksude Kaneda, the company's owner, made an address to the restless crowd gathered beneath her balcony, finally declaring her bankruptcy. Though often seen as a breaking point, Sude's declaration of bankruptcy was only the beginning. Riots followed as more companies admitted to insolvency. Many industries temporarily ceased production. Trade was interrupted. Meanwhile, major pyramid schemes continued to reassure the public that they were legitimate. After Sude collapsed, the government did attempt to intervene in two schemes. They sent in liquidators and managed to retrieve between 40 and 60% of the capital. But this only served to further public distrust of the govern-

ment. Perhaps unwilling to confront the scale of the lie they'd bought into, investors chose instead to blame state meddling for destroying otherwise honest companies. The worst, however, came in March, when the nation's armouries were raided. 700,000 guns disappeared into a total population of 3.5 million. Albanians padded their walls with books to absorb stray bullets as people tested their new weapons in city streets. The government lost control of large swathes of the southern part of the country. Berisha realised the situation was untenable, and agreed to hold new parliamentary elections before the end of June. An interim government was appointed, only to inherit a desperate situation they had no resources to mend. Some 2,000 people had been killed in the violence that followed the pyramid schemes' collapse, the economy was crashing, and trust in the government was low.¹⁰

In July, the newly elected parliament finally made a move to regulate the investment sector. They appointed administrators from international accounting firms to liquidate the schemes, returning the money to investors. It took until March 1998 to gain full control of all the companies. Much had already been lost, squirrelled away into off-shore accounts or private equity funds.

In 2008, the bubble burst. The bonds that were propping up the economy finally went bad, as one after another, Americans were forced to default on their mortgages. Despite institutional and government posturing, the high-risk housing loans individuals had been persuaded to take on had never been for their benefit. They were for the banks, the hedge funds and the pension funds, the people whose money makes money. They were for those who knowingly handed out financial death sentences to maximise their portfolio earnings. Separated by an ocean and a decade, Albania's economic collapse was far from anyone's mind, but it's hard not to see the parallels. When we ask how so many fell prey to pyramid schemes, it is important to not assign the blame to individual stupidity. Rather, it is important to remember the structural factors that laid the groundwork for such a dramatic collapse — the poverty which drove desperate people towards any chance at making money, a lack of education about market economies and how to navigate them, and the greed of those who ran the schemes. Without proper support and education for those who need it most, unfettered capitalism is at its most dangerous. ■

Notes

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A Dangerous Duo:

One Man's Horrific Inventions

Written by Catelyn Kalm
Designed by Claire Churchill

Lead poisoning and a hole in the ozone: two of the most impactful environmental problems.¹ But, could one man ultimately be responsible for them both? Well, I guess they do say two is better than one, don't they? Thomas Midgley Jr.—an inventor and chemist mainly based out of Columbus, Ohio in the early twentieth century—would certainly agree.² Two of his most impactful creations include a leaded gas additive and the refrigerant/aerosol Freon. It just so happens that they both had extensive environmental consequences. It's unclear, though, if he ever saw or realized the true impact his inventions would have on the environment for decades after his death.



Credit: James Vaughan

Now, it's possible this guy alone wasn't all bad, or maybe not even bad at all. There were other factors at play while Midgley was doing his research, including contributions from General Motors and his boss and fellow engineer, Charles Kettering. But, even with the best intentions, it's possible that the harm caused by leaded gas and ozone depletion can still be causally traced back to Midgley and his colleagues. Again, assuming the best intent. Originally trained as a mechanical engineer, Midgley started working at the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (DELCO) in 1916, which had just been purchased by the General Motors (GM) company. After pausing to work on innovating new airplane fuel during World War I, he began to dedicate his attention again to GM's chemical research.³ By the time of his death at age 55, Midgley was even president of the American Chemical Society. In his 20 years active in the field, Midgley was thought of as an important researcher with many discoveries in chemistry, including stopping inefficient knocking in gas-powered engines with his lead additive to gasoline. He had also discovered a new refrigerant/aerosol made out of fluorine, among a few more (slightly less noteworthy) contributions.⁴ The first major discovery was a solution for internal combustion engines'



knocking problems, which were essentially distinct, loud “knocking” sounds that were associated with fuel unexpectedly combusting in the engine before getting the chance to be purposefully sparked, thus creating random patterns of combustion and making the engine work less efficiently.⁵ Midgley was tasked by Kettering to create a gasoline that would be able to withstand the compression necessary in the engines of new, crankless cars.⁶ He started working systematically through the elements and found ethanol worked well as a gas additive, but it was not cost effective enough for him, so he moved on.⁷ Eventually, in 1921, he landed on none other than tetraethyl lead

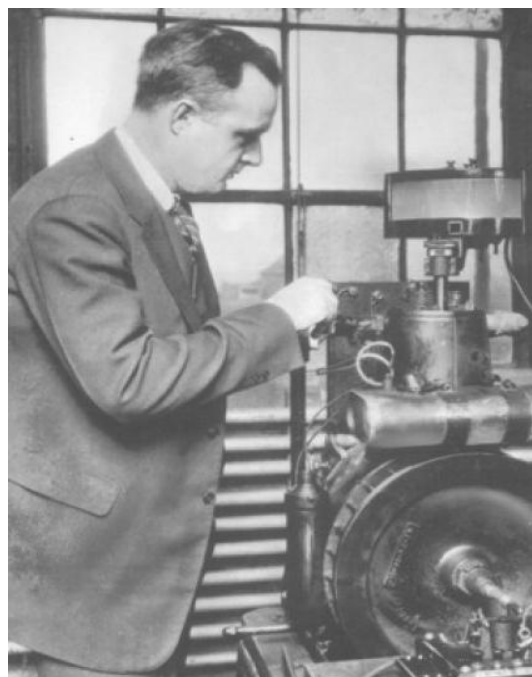
“Other prominent scientists at the time even reportedly tried to contact Midgley about the dangers that would fall upon society if he released tetraethyl lead to the world. He didn’t listen.”

(TEL), which would happen to make them a lot more money.⁸ Now, alarm bells should be going off with any mention of lead preparing to make its global debut. After all, it had been known for many years, even at that point, to have been a toxic substance. So, in one of the most suspicious acts of this story, they patented the formula with their additive simply named “ethyl,” conveniently leaving out any mention of lead.⁹ Midgley, Kettering, and General Motors all went in on the patent together, so it seems possible the large company exerted pressure on Midgley to come up with the cheapest additive possible, and can ultimately be responsible for the colossal environmental damage.¹⁰ Other prominent scientists at the time even reportedly tried to contact Midgley about the dangers that would fall upon society if he released tetraethyl lead to the world.¹¹ He didn’t listen. He even demonstrated pouring the additive onto his hand and inhaling the vapors for a full minute at a press conference to



prove its safety.¹² But, suspicious detail #2, he had been feeling the effects of lead poisoning himself, and had even been quietly traveling far away to Florida to clear out the old lungs.¹³ Of course, then, when plants opened up to start manufacturing the tetraethyl lead, their workers began getting sick, too.¹⁴ But I’m still supposed to believe no one at the top realized the negative health effects? Anyway, after Midgley did such a good job with finding that lead additive, next, Kettering tasked him with finding a new, nontoxic and nonflammable refrigerant, for air conditioning and refrigerators.¹⁵ In a similar systematic fashion, Midgley eventually found that chlorofluoromethane worked well as a refrigerant, and labeled this compound Freon 12.¹⁶ During an early demonstration of the gas, Midgley even inhaled it and used it to blow out a candle.¹⁷ Freon was classified as the first chlorofluorocarbon (CFC). So, perfect! Not flammable, presumably not toxic, that’s a winner, right? Unfortunately, wrong. As it turns out, CFCs end up floating up into the atmosphere, where they build up after a long time.¹⁸ Because they are so light, they are able to decompose right

near the ozone layer, where they have been shown to deplete the ozone while amplifying greenhouse gas effects.¹⁹ But, this widespread knowledge of the ozone and climate change wasn’t around in Midgley’s time, to be fair. Thomas Midgley, Jr. ended up dying of a sad accident in 1944, at the young age of 55. Again, he was also active in the American Chemical Society up until his death, and even gave a speech about his research shortly before his passing. So, it’s a lit-





It's more unclear if Midgley was able to fully absorb the consequences of his discoveries during his life. Today, Midgley's two most famous contributions may prove to be a bit more troublesome than they even appeared back in his day, when he was actively receiving awards and accolades for his work in chemistry. Maybe I'm being dramatic, but his scientific discoveries just happen to come in the flavor of enormous global disasters, so forgive me.

As it turns out, both of Thomas Midgley Jr.'s biggest inventions had two very long and impactful environmental consequences for many groups of people and the world as a whole. His first invention, leaded gasoline, almost immediately began to be used around the world, with the last country only actually banning the use of leaded gas in cars as recently as 2021.²⁰ When cars burned the fuel with Midgley's additive, lead was released into the atmosphere, and, thus, it was spread across the globe.²¹ While some of the shorter-term effects of lead exposure people felt from the lead additive included hallucinations, visual distortions, and death, the invisible effects of the lead spread throughout the atmosphere will be felt for generations after Midgley, too.²² Especially

when exposed as children, people can experience cognitive deficits and behavioral differences starting from even minimal lead exposure.²³ Lead exposure has also been shown to damage the cardiovascular system in adults, too.²⁴ So, his mistake could have adverse impacts on populations within the area of lead exposure (basically, everywhere) for years and years to come.

While the toxic effects of lead exposure were widely known at the time of Midgley's invention of the lead additive, ozone depletion effects from CFCs were not as familiar, since they were such a new innovation. The damage to the ozone layer caused by Freon gas and similar CFCs were still another huge problem, though. Not only does the ozone depletion caused by CFCs contribute to climate change as a whole, but it also leaves humans more vulnerable to sun damage and cataracts from the unfiltered sunlight.²⁵ Damage to the ozone layer, in a positive feedback loop with rising global temperatures, is also associated with a greater exposure to UV radiation; this harms the Earth's biodiversity, amplifies the effects of greenhouse gasses, and reduces crop yields.²⁶

So, one thing's for sure: we've been feeling it, Thomas.

But, who was the real bad guy here? Was it Thomas Midgley Jr.? Charles Kettering? General Motors? I'd say, maybe all of the above.

■

Notes

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THE MISTAKE OF MISEDUCATION

 Trey Droste

I assume if you're reading this magazine, you love history right? Haha, WRONG! Statistically speaking, that is. Let's say you're a randomly sampled student who just so happened to pick this volume up. In this theoretical case, you most likely hate history; in fact, you think it's the most boring subject there is! What? You think I'm a bit too sure? Still don't believe me? Well, why don't you take a little journey with sociologist James Loewen and I to uncover the truth behind one of the largest mistakes in how our education system's curriculum is set up.

In 1995, Loewen published a little book entitled *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. While not necessarily a revolutionary social text, it still uncovers startling truths to how overwhelmingly hated history is in the psyche of the average American student. As you'll see in a moment, it's good that he could use math to prove it! Loewen found that 83% of American high school graduates never took a history class again in college, and that the subject was constantly ranked as the least popular topic among students. This finding has been backed up by a plethora of data in the years following. In 2004, Gallup Polls found that only 7% of students chose history as their favorite, compared to 23% choosing math (which, despite commonly being stereotyped as the least popular, was preferred three times as much as history).

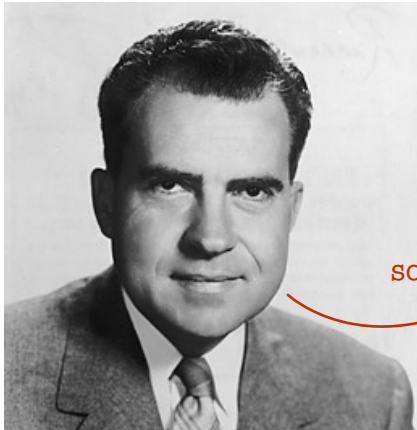
Loewen's analysis that history was quickly becoming the scourge of many children is a prediction that unfortunately appears to be materializing, and that's a mistake in itself! In 2020, American test scores in history were abysmal compared to their international peers, and dropped further by the year. In higher education too, the number of history majors as a percentage of all college majors fell 22.7% between 2007 and 2017. This disinterest in history merits serious concern. I could spend all day discussing the empirical and emotional benefits studying history can bring to normal kids (unlike myself), but that would just be preaching

to the choir. The real key to solving this mystery is to learn exactly why kids are so overwhelmingly disinterested in the version of United States history they are spoonfed. As Loewen discovered, the answer to this mistake was printed into the textbooks, literally.

Oh, the textbooks. I'm sure you've heard a lot about them over the past couple of years. In my life, they've been a point of contention for as long as I can recall! In 2014, the state of Michigan was embroiled in a scandal over a series of proposed amendments to its social studies curriculum. Conservative groups were outraged by the addition of "core democratic values" as a phrase describing America because it was supposedly partisan. Those groups also wrote up a counterproposal advocating that, among other changes, references to the Ku Klux Klan's reign of terror, stories about movements to promote civil and gay rights, and mentions to any disabilities should be removed. While one may scoff at how ridiculous this may seem, it doesn't take more than a moment of thought to realize why these topics were cut. These topics force students to confront our nation's past. Yet, sometimes the truth just isn't what sells.

This brings us back to the textbook industry, a private and lucrative one at that. In 2020 alone, \$7 billion dollars in revenue was gained by private textbook publishers, the vast majority of which sell their products to local elementary and high schools. Given that public schools usually receive 45% of their budget funding locally, it's apparent that these publishers would want to keep these districts as repeat buyers. But how do you balance a political situation ever-so tediously trying to erase any mention of unsavory history while also attempting to educate the children? There's a simple answer to that one: you don't.

That's exactly what James Loewen discovered. In his seminal research, he unearthed memorandums from Newhouse (a top publisher in Loewen's time) stating that anything "controversial" which



Richard Nixon

it's all
communism!!!

sounds about right



Lewis Powell

may provoke ire should be cut if possible. And given that one half of all school districts (despite only accounting for about one fifth of all students in the US) are located in rural areas whose interests tend to fall more within a rather conservative view, it's no surprise that it's simply an economic choice to keep history dry, unappealing, and unengaging. Even if it doesn't spark intellectual rigor, it will still sell, because that's exactly what the districts and backers want. This uninteresting curriculum means children are more likely to remain disengaged with the material, no matter what harm it may bring to their own sense of knowledge and self-concept. This is not to say that the students in these districts or even their parents are knowingly malicious, but rather they, along with the rest of us who were forced to read these versions of history, are victims of a massive mistake. It's not to say that these boring textbooks were published via intentional conspiracy, but rather due to a logical outcome of a business model focused solely upon profiteering. And that's the essence of a mistake! But just what types of misinformation were being spread in these history books? Oh, just about anything imaginable. Controversial contemporary topics, such as the Vietnam War (which lasted twenty years and killed millions with sweeping implications for foreign and domestic politics) was covered, on average, anywhere between zero and four minutes. Not days. Minutes. Early American history didn't fare much better. Loewen found that a key detail was cut from the story of the Pilgrims: that they justified their right to claim the shoreline by stating God was clearing the land of Native Americans via plague (90% of whom had been tragically killed by disease in recent years). Practically every event from chattel slavery to the Red Scare was altered or rewritten.

These glaring omissions frightened Loewen immensely, as he saw nuance turn into straight stories that could not be objectionable in any way whatsoever. Context was stripped, and history be-

came a series of disconnected anecdotes instead of a broader, more intricately connected web to string truth from. The underlying questions were gone. Lessons such as "How did the Pilgrims' attitude affect later attitudes toward land rights in the new colonies?" and "How did the backlash against the Vietnam War shape the public's perception of their own government?" vanished instantaneously. As if there were no questions to ask. As if there were no mistakes in American history to reconcile with. By framing the historical events in a certain way, textbook authors could decide which questions students ask—or don't ask. Loewen was devastated, and his research pleaded with readers to undo the mistakes and instead infuse truth into history curricula.

While that plea provides a powerful pathos, it also charges an even deeper question asking how a population disengaged from their own history interacts with their society's key institutions. Here we find that as it turns out, there may be even deeper interests at stake beyond mere money alone. Before his confirmation to the Supreme Court, Lewis Powell, an appointee of President Richard Nixon, drafted a memorandum to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (the most powerful business lobbying group, mistaken by many to be an actual government division) in 1971 calling for an all out attack on education in the United States. He stated that robust campus intellectualism was a direct threat to the business interests of the U.S. government, and that a proper education would only spur a Communist revolution that would undermine the security of profits. He cites Ralph Nader, a politician who supported such radical measures as seat belt laws and ensuring your Ford Pinto doesn't blow up because Ford refused to spend an extra \$11 to fix the known design problem, as an example of just how "dangerous" regulation and community activism could be to U.S. profits.

Powell's recommendations included phrases such as ensuring "textbooks should be kept under

constant surveillance” (direct quote) and that “incentives might be devised to induce more ‘publishing’ by independent scholars who do believe in the system.” It should come as no surprise to any savvy reader than the system Powell is referring to is a society controlled by business interests alone. Given educated workers’ preference toward unionization, Powell notes that educated labor unionists were acting insidiously because they “insist that textbooks be fair to the viewpoints of organized labor.” Powell is afraid of this, not because he worries about whether such views are their own distortions of history, but rather because “Their (labor unions’) success, often at business’ expense, has not been inconsequential.” Powell later went on to serve in the Supreme Court between 1971 to 1987, becoming a key figure in the American conservative movement thereafter. It goes without hammering the point in, that perhaps, certain interests in this country benefit from the atrocious American history curriculum, a mistake by design.

I leave you, dear reader, with a proposition. What does it say about the most powerful country to have ever existed if they feel an unstoppable and compulsory need to censor the truth of their own formation? What does such misrepresentation do to the very esteem of its citizens? How do they react to the actions of their own nation if not given full explanations? These are some questions that I will never be able to give a fulfilling answer to. But if the American textbook industry is any example to go off of, then we might just have to start asking the deeper questions of economy, sociology, and power that induce the conditions to provide a misinformed and mistaken history in the first place. ■

Notes

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GUESS THAT FLOP!

by Quin Zapoli with design by Ian Sandler-Bowen

Even history's greatest cultural icons and most dominant corporations have a Flop Era. Guess which option is the creator's biggest flop!

1.

Sir James Paul McCartney has had a wildly successful career spanning almost 60 years. That being said, one of these albums is absolute dogshit:

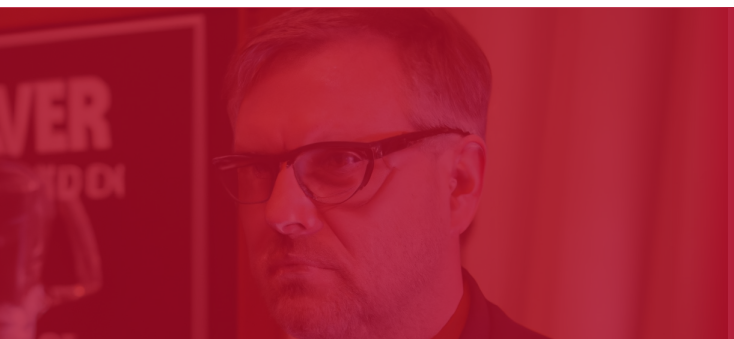
- A. *Ram* (1971)
- B. *Chaos and Creation in the Backyard* (2005)
- C. *Press to Play* (1986)



2.

David Fincher, the award-winning director of mainly psychological thrillers, saw one of his most well-known films flop at the box office:

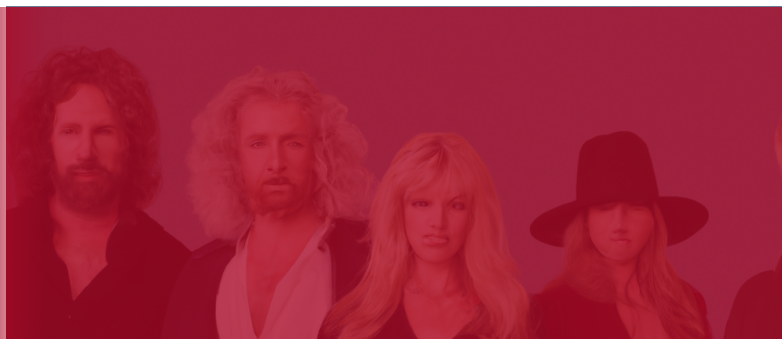
- A. *Fight Club* (1997)
- B. *Mank* (2020)
- C. *The Social Network* (1986)



3.

Fleetwood Mac made a lot of good music. All three of these albums are acclaimed by critics and by me, yet one of them just didn't work out commercially:

- A. *Tusk* (1979)
- B. *Fleetwood Mac* (1975)
- C. *Rumours* (1977)



4.

Andrew Stanton, a key figure in our childhood, made a huge mistake in choosing to direct one of these films:

- A. *John Carter* (2012)
- B. *WALL-E* (2008)
- C. *Finding Nemo* (2003)



5.

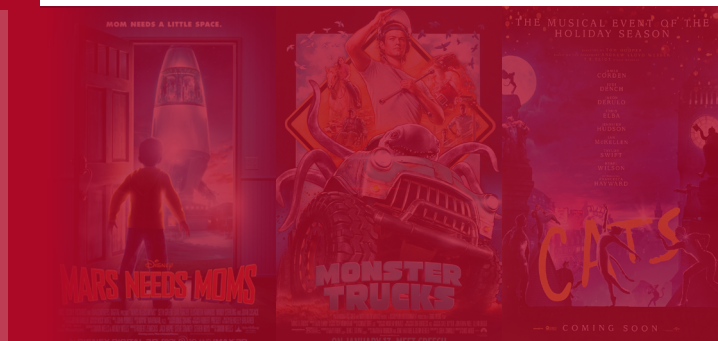
Madonna is widely considered the Queen of Pop, but that doesn't exempt her from total failure:

- A. *Music* (2000)
- B. *Rebel Heart* (2015)
- C. *Like A Prayer* (1989)

6.

All of these movies are terrible. One of them lost more money than any movie ever:

- A. *Mars Needs Moms* (2011)
- B. *Monster Trucks* (2016)
- C. *Cats* (2019)



GUESS THAT FLOP! ANSWERS

1.

C. *Press to Play*, a delightfully horrible album capping off Sir Paul's extensive Flop Era (pretty much the entire 1980s).

4.

A. *John Carter* is really not that bad. Still a flop though.

2.

A. *Fight Club* is considered a cult classic but bombed at the box office.

5.

B. *Rebel Heart* was Madonna's first album not to debut at number one. It debuted at number two, which for frickin' Madonna is a flop.

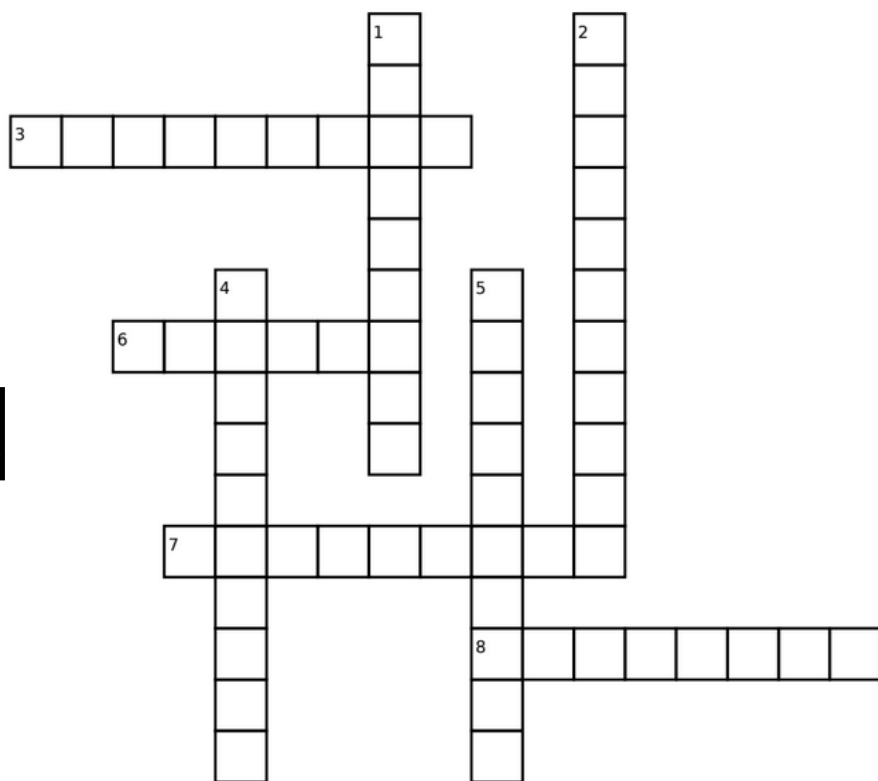
3.

A. *Tusk* is one of my favorite albums. When it was made, *Tusk* was the most expensive album ever created at over \$1 million. But only sold four million copies, massively underperforming *Rumours*' 23 million.

6.

A. *Mars Needs Moms* lost \$110.5 million.

the crossword



CHECK THE FLOP FACTS!

Borack, John. "Paul McCartney's 5 worst solo albums." 2022.

Cormier, Roger. "15 Albums That Cost a Fortune to Make." 2014.

Gilbert, Ben. "25 of the biggest failed products from the world's biggest companies." 2019.

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Ryan, Joal. "Biggest movie flops: The 42 biggest box-office flops." 2021.

Tall, Kevin. "The Real Reason Fight Club Bombed At The Box Office." 2022.

Taylor, Drew. "The Untold Story of Disney's \$307 Million Bomb 'John Carter': 'It's a Disaster.'" 2022.

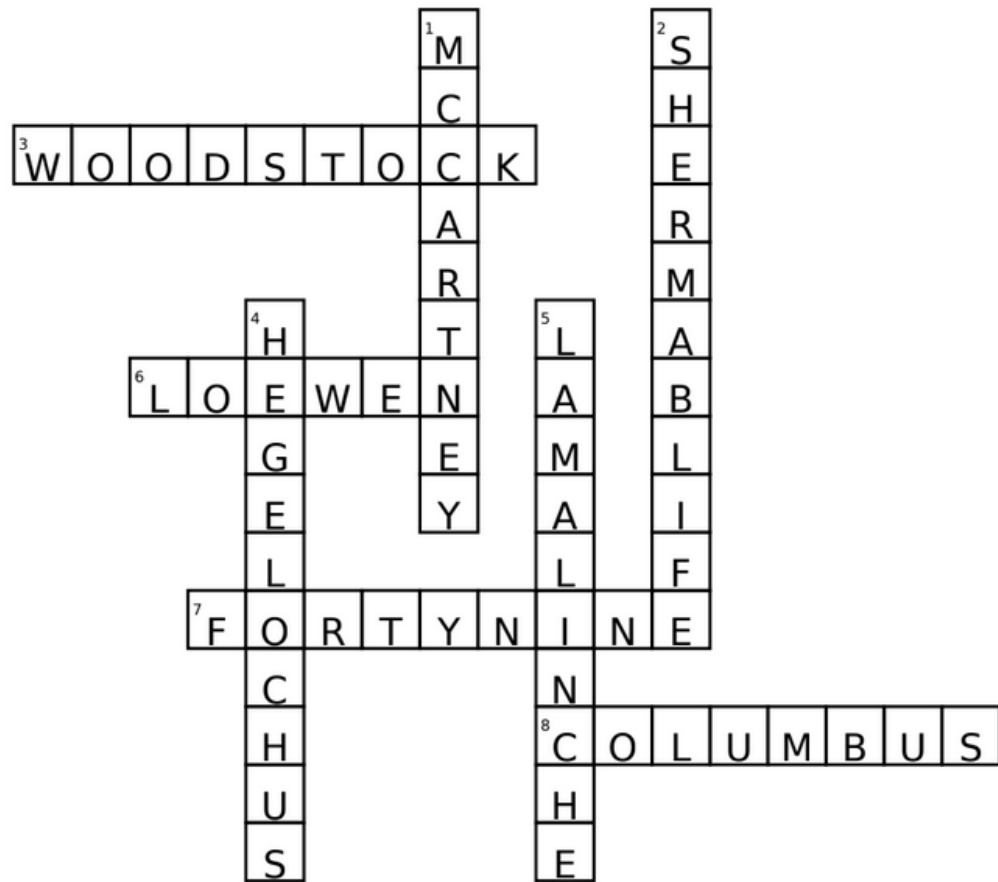
Down

1. Last name of the Beatle who, despite a career spanning almost 60 years, did in fact make some bad music.
2. An outstanding opportunity that you too can take advantage of if you're into pyramid schemes.
4. An Ancient Greek actor who accidentally said "weasel" instead of "calm sea" in the middle of a play.
5. A young Indigenous woman who helped topple the Aztec Empire.

Across

3. A music and art fair held in 1969 which has come to represent 1960s counterculture.
6. Last name of the author of Lies My Teacher Told Me, which in part explains just how much American students hate history.
7. Number (spelled out) of people who have been unfortunate enough to serve as Vice-President of the United States.
8. The birthplace of three just awful things: leaded gas additive, Freon, and the Ohio State University.

the crossword (answers)



1. McCartney, Last name of the Beatle who, despite a career spanning almost 60 years, did in fact make some bad music.
2. La Malinche, A young Indigenous woman who helped topple the Aztec Empire.
3. Woodstock, A music and art fair held in 1969 which has come to represent 1960s counterculture.
4. Woodstock, A music and art fair held in 1969 which has come to represent 1960s counterculture.
5. Shermablife, An outstanding opportunity that you too can take advantage of if you're into pyramid schemes.
6. Loewen, Last name of the author of Lies My Teacher Told Me, which in part explains just how much American students hate history.
7. Hegelochus, An Ancient Greek actor who accidentally said "weasel" instead of "calm sea" in the middle of a play.
8. Columbus, The birthplace of three just awful things: leaded gas additive, Freon, and the Ohio State University.



A Note from the Editor-in-Chief...

Aaaaaand we're back! We here at the *Archive* are stoked to present to you the first of our Fall Semester 2022 issues: *The Flop Era*! Our team has worked very hard over the past few months to write, edit, and design this issue, and we're so excited to share it with you all!

A few thank yous are in order. First and foremost, thank you to our wonderful writing, editing, and design teams for all of their time and dedication to the magazine—you're all incredibly talented, and it's a pleasure to work with you all. Secondly, thank you to LSA Student Government for their generous financial support; we couldn't publish without it! A huge thank you to our founders, Julia Kravchenko and Celine Rajoulh, as well; congratulations on your recent graduation, and we wish you the best! Last but certainly not least, thank you to all of our wonderful readers for coming back with every new issue. Putting together a magazine is a difficult thing, especially when the publication is still new and the process still being perfected, so we thank you all for your continued support and enthusiasm as we continue to move into the 2022–2023 school year.

As always, make sure to follow us on Instagram and Twitter @thearchivemich for updates about publication, applications, and other fun stuff. You can also find more information about the organization on our website, www.themichiganarchive.com. Once again, thank you to you all for your support, and we hope you enjoyed *The Flop Era*!

Will McClelland
Editor-in-Chief

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