

# The New Criterion

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## The Hamilton follies, cont'd

*On the ivory sepulcher.*

Over the years, we have several times cast a mournful glance at little Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. This expensive “liberal arts” institution, which is just about to celebrate its bicentennial, has made itself into a poster child for all that is trendy and meretricious in American higher education. At Hamilton, it is business as usual to invite Annie Sprinkle, a porn-star turned “performance artist,” to demonstrate the use of sex toys to students and other members of the community. If there is a writing class to be taught, Hamilton administrators think it clever to invite Susan Rosenberg, the felon and former member of the Weather Underground, to be an “artist- and activist-in-residence.” Ward Churchill, who compared the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to a Nazi administrator, was just the sort of anti-American radical that would appeal to Hamilton, so it was not surprising that the overwhelmingly left-wing faculty should seek to invite him to address the young scholars there. In their latest act of pedagogical irresponsibility, Hamilton has hired Alessandro Porco, a Canadian “poet” whose chief claim to fame are poems celebrating the porn star Jill Kelly, known to her admirers as “The Anal Queen.” It would not be appropriate to quote Mr. Porco’s poetry in these pages. We’ll just observe that in one typical effusion the poet portrays himself, in unspeakably graphic terms, sexually molesting the twin daughters of George W. Bush. One critical observer asked what the response would have been had Mr. Porco decided to focus his pornographic attentions on the daughters of President Obama instead of President Bush. Answer came there none.

That’s a good question, but perhaps even more to the point is the fact that, while Hamilton College is busy hiring smut-peddlers masquerading as poets, it is also dismissing serious scholars like Christopher Hill, the historian and prize-winning novelist, who was recently jettisoned by the school. His sin? Being a white male of traditional scholarly aspiration and accomplishment who specializes in such unfashionable subjects as the origins of common law. There has been a lot of talk recently about “the higher education bubble.” The sound of the gas oozing out is particularly noticeable at institutions like Hamilton, where moral paralysis competes with shopworn radicalism to produce a ghastly travesty of higher education. A few years ago, the public was distressed by Hamilton’s gross irresponsibility, but the consternation eventually gave way to titters: Who could take those spoiled children seriously? Now, we suspect, the dismissive

levity will slide slowly into the wearied indifference of contempt. Despite its lavish endowment, Hamilton College, like so many institutions of higher education, is living a posthumous existence. It may continue to twitch, like a severed frog's leg stimulated by electric shock. But the vital spirit is gone, a victim of institutional suicide.

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