

*True Crimes and Misdemeanors: The Investigation of Donald Trump* by Jeffrey Toobin: A Review and a bit more.

When I chose this book for review, I was confident that it might well be the standard, almost definitive account of the drama we have recently been through, particularly the Robert Mueller investigations of the possible cooperation of the Trump presidential campaign with the Russian efforts to influence that election in his favor and of Trump's possible obstruction of the FBI investigation into Russia's and the campaign's activities—also of the impeachment investigation that followed. I was mistaken. The book is a valuable one and a very reliable reporting, perhaps the best so far, of those events. But like so much else in our current public life, succeeding events (some people call them scandals and outrages) and revelations have demanded our attention and drastically altered our understanding of events.

Valuable and complete as it is, Toobin's book must now be understood in the context of the revelations in Michael S. Schmidt's *Donald Trump v. The United States: Inside the Struggle to Stop a President*, published on September 1.

So, first Toobin's book. This is Jeffrey Toobin's ninth book. We also know him as the knowledgeable, judicious legal analyst for CNN. Toobin reports the efforts of Mueller and his team in full and also the efforts of President Trump's shifting legal team. His conclusion is a surprising one—that Rudy Giuliani, comical as his antics may have been, was the most effective, because he treated Trump's problems as political rather than legal. Toobin also concludes that Mueller, buttoned-down avoider of the spotlight that he is, was successfully played by Trump's legal team and by attorney general William Barr.

Toobin is emphatic in his judgements. He writes that Mueller was “all Super Ego” and that Barr was Trump’s “toady.”

Toobin treats the impeachment hearings and trial fully, giving full credit to Adam Schiff and also to Mitt Romney’s carefully measured courage.

Schmidt’s book, which Village Books does not yet have in, adds measurably to our understanding of events. He makes clear that in addition to the two areas of investigation that Mueller was pursuing, there was a third: a counterintelligence investigation directly into Trump’s personal and business ties to Russia. The reason? Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein defined Mueller’s authority and omitted that area from it, even though there was at the time an on-going FBI investigation of those matters. Rosenstein did not inform the FBI fully of his charge to Mueller. As a result, Mueller and the FBI were both under the impression that the other was pursuing such an investigation.

Schmidt has some other tidbits: that Mitch McConnell fell asleep during an intelligence briefing about Russian interference; that Trump repeatedly ordered McGahn to order the Attorney General to prosecute Hillary Clinton and James Comey.

I recommend Toobin’s book and have Schmidt’s book on order.

Bob McDonnell