

ABOVE THE LAW! RISE OF THE WARRIOR-COPS | *William J. Astore*
FORGOTTEN COUP AGAINST 'THE MOST LOYAL ALLY' | *John Pilger*
REVERSING ORWELL'S MOST FAMOUS ROUTE | *Trevor Hoyle*

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WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

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NO TRUE FRIENDS IN A RACE WAR

“By the time I arrived in downtown Oakland, California, the protests were peaceful. Young people marched and chanted against a backdrop of fresh graffiti and boarded-up windows. Most of their signs were scrawled with “DEFUND THE COPS” or “WHITE SILENCE IS VIOLENCE” or “BLACK LIVES MATTER”. Perhaps a mantra’s power really does lie in repetition. A woman in a slow-rolling Eldorado convertible, flanked by marchers, held up a sign that read: “POLICE BRUTALITY IS SMALL DICK ENERGY”. Her phrase cuts to the heart of the issue – the male drive for dominance yields endless cruelty” – **JOE ALLEN** (PAGE 12)



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Issue 208 June 2020

Contents

Writing Worth Reading | Photos Worth Seeing

Insights

- 5 **Rings of power that debase democracy**
George Monbiot
- 7 **Failed state status? Here comes the US!** / *Sam Pizzigati*
- 9 **The juggled identities of Africa's soccer stars**
David Storey
- 10 **Conflicting narratives & Trump's distortions**
Caitlin Johnstone

Issues

- 12 **No true friends in a race war** / *Joe Allen*
- 18 **The rise and fall of a 'colour revolution'**
C.J. Hopkins
- 22 **Above the law! The rise of the Warrior-cops**
William J. Astore
- 26 **Reversing Orwell's most famous route**
Trevor Hoyle
- 32 **Forgotten coup against 'the most loyal ally'**
John Pilger
- 36 **When it's admirable to steal music**
Ross Cole
- 38 **Flying, walking, looking, thinking** / *Linh Dinh*
- 42 **The pandemic is a time to profit** / *Sonali Kolhatkar*
- 44 **Walled in** / *Mats Svensson*
- 49 **Random thoughts on hair, words, acting and roads**
Andrew Fischer
- 55 **Final Words** / *Thomas S. Harrington*



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Insights

The UK House of Parliament seen from the south bank of the River Thames.

Photo: Wikimedia



George Monbiot

Rings of power that debase democracy

DO the people of Britain live in a democracy? You may well ask. An unelected adviser seems to exercise more power than the Prime Minister, and appears unanswerable to people or Parliament. The Prime Minister makes reckless public health decisions that could put thousands of lives at risk, apparently to dig himself out of a political hole. Parliament is truncated, as the government arbitrarily decides that MPs can no longer join remotely. As the government blunders from one disaster to the next, there seem to

be no effective ways of holding it to account.

Established power in the UK is surrounded by a series of defensive rings. As soon as you begin to name them, you see that the country is a democracy only in the weakest, shallowest, sense.

Let's begin with political funding. Our system permits billionaires and corporations to outspend and outmuscle the electorate. The great majority of money for the Conservative party comes from a small number of very rich people. Just five hedge fund managers have given it £18

million over the past 10 years. The secretive Leader's Group grants big donors special access to the Prime Minister and his frontbenchers in return for their money. Courting and cultivating rich people to win elections corrupts our politics, replacing democracy with plutocracy.

This grossly unfair system is supplemented by outright cheating, such as breaching spending limits and secretly funding mendacious online ads. The Electoral Commission, which is supposed to regulate the system, has deliberately been kept powerless. The maximum fine for winning an election (or a referendum) by fraud is £20,000 per offence. Democracy is cheap in this country.

Despite such assistance, the Conservatives still failed to win a majority of votes at the last election. But, thanks to our

Insights

preposterous, outdated first-past-the-post electoral system, the 43.6 percent of the vote they won granted them a crushing majority. With proportional representation, we would have a hung parliament. Five years of unassailable power for Johnson's Conservatives, even as popular support collapses, would have been impossible.

The structure and symbolism of Parliament, with its preposterous rituals and incomprehensible procedures, could scarcely be better designed to alienate people, or to favour former public schoolboys, educated in a similar environment. Even its official emblem tells us we are shut out. It's a portcullis: the means by which people are excluded from the fortress of power. The portcullis is topped by a crown, reminding us that power is still vested symbolically in an unelected head of state. Many of her actual powers have been assumed, in the absence of a codified constitution, by the Prime Minister.

These powers are routinely abused, by all governments. Prime ministers bypass Parliament, governing through special advisers like Dominic Cummings. When they make catastrophic mistakes, they have the power to decide whether or not there should be a public inquiry, and, if there should, what its terms and who its chair should be. It's as if a defendant in a criminal trial were allowed to decide whether the trial goes ahead and, if so, what the charges should be, and to appoint the judge and jury.

Even when an investigation does take place, the Prime Minister can suppress its conclusions, as Boris Johnson has done with the Russia report by Parliament's intelligence and security committee, that remains unpublished. Does it contain details of unlawful donations to the Conservative party? Or about Conservative Friends of Russia? This group is closely associated with a man who has subsequently come under suspicion of being a Russian spy. He has been photographed with Boris Johnson, whom he described as a "good friend". What was going on? Without the report, we can only guess.

The same inordinate powers enabled Johnson to suspend Parliament last autumn, until his decision was struck down by the Supreme Court, and to terminate remote access for MPs this week, preventing many of them from representing us. He is, in effect, a monarch with a five-year term and a council of advisers we call Parliament.

The House of Lords is a further defensive ring within this ring. Some of its seats are reserved for hereditary aristocrats. Some are reserved for bishops, making this the world's only country, other than Iran, in which religious leaders have an automatic right to sit. The rest are grace and favour appointments, keeping power within existing circles. Many of them are granted to major political donors, reinforcing the power

of money. In any other country, they would call it corruption.

Despite a vast array of new democratic techniques, pioneered in other countries, there has been a total failure to balance our supposedly representative system with participatory democracy. This failure grants the winning party a scarcely-challenged power, on the grounds of presumed consent, to do as it pleases, for five years at a time. Even when public trust and consent collapse, as they have now done, there are no effective channels through which we can affect the decisions government makes.

These formal rings of power are supported by further defences beyond government, such as the print media, most of which is owned by billionaires or multi-millionaires living offshore, and the network of opaquely-funded thinktanks, that formulate and test the policies later adopted by government. Their personnel circulate in and out of the Prime Minister's office.

Our political system has the outward appearance of democracy, but it is largely controlled by undemocratic forces. We find ourselves on the wrong side of the portcullis, watching helplessly as crucial decisions are taken about us, without us. If there's one thing the coronavirus fiascos show, it's the need for radical change. **CT**

George Monbiot is a columnist for the Guardian, where this article first appeared. His website is www.monbiot.com.

Insights

Photo: publicdomainpictures.net



Sam Pizigatti

Failed state status? Here comes the US!

AMERICANS have at various times in our past battled horrific bouts with infectious disease. And Americans have lived through times of sheer economic desperation. But we've never – until this corona spring – experienced both at once.

The stats out this week have made this grim landmark “official.” Over 100,000 Americans now dead from Covid-19. Over 40 million claims for unemployment insurance. No nation on Earth has lost as many people to the coronavirus. No rich nation on Earth has a population less economically secure.

The United States is becom-

ing, commentators have begun to contend, a “failed state.” We don't, to be sure, have warlord gangs speeding through our neighbourhoods, brandishing automatic weapons out of open-top jeeps. But we do have fanboys of our nation's top elected leader carrying long guns into legislative chambers and screaming red-faced at lawmakers they despise.

“We are one trigger-pull away,” laments veteran Mideast journalist Lucian Truscott IV, “from what happens every day in places like Kabul and Mogadishu and Tripoli.”

Our core institutions, adds Jacobin editor Seth

Ackerman, betray “a deep lack of administrative capacity,” be those institutions the bureaucracies that deal with safety-net benefits or the mail or even elections. State unemployment offices run on obsolete 1960s-era software that only “old retired former programmers” know how to fix.

The corona pandemic has put a spotlight on that obsolete software – and so much more.

“The crisis demanded a response that was swift, rational, and collective,” notes George Packer in the *Atlantic*. “The United States reacted instead like Pakistan or Belarus – like a country with shoddy infrastructure and a dysfunctional government whose leaders were too corrupt or stupid to head off mass suffering.”

So who to blame? Donald Trump makes an obvious and deserving target. But the failures of our ruling order predate his troubled and reckless administration. Our “chronic ills” – everything from “a corrupt political class” to a “heartless economy” – have gone, Packer points out, “untreated for years.”

How can we halt our national descent into full-bore “failed state” status? Taking a moment to contemplate how a “successful state” operates might be a good place to start.

In a successful state, people thoughtfully identify the problems they share in common and democratically debate a variety of possible solutions. But this

Insights

democratic dialogue doesn't just happen. Democratic dialogues only unfold effectively and efficiently when people actually share common problems.

That commonality has been disappearing in the United States over the past half-century. The culprit? Rising economic inequality. Our richest have become ever more rich and lead lives ever more distant from the lives Americans of modest means lead. The problems that vex average Americans – paying the rent, finding health care, affording college – keep no rich people awake at night.

On paper, that shouldn't matter. Our democracy has many more average-income than high-income people. Our government's priorities ought to reflect the concerns average-income people share. But the wealthy in the United States don't just have lots more wealth than everyone else. They have lots more power, and that power works to ensure that government addresses their problems, not ours.

The corona pandemic, political scientists Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson observed earlier this week, has “laid bare” this fundamental inequality dynamic. The clearest case in point: Our ruling Republican Party's major-domos have gone “to the mat for the superrich.” They have “twisted relief bills to provide unrelated tax cuts and no-strings bailouts, shuttered the Senate amid a national health and economic crisis,”

and “continued to float toxic ideas in an election year” – like “making people give up some of their Social Security benefits in return for a financial lifeline today.”

If these two political scientists – authors of the soon-to-be-published *Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality* – are painting an accurate picture, we ought to see the same sort of political processes at play in other deeply unequal societies facing crises like pandemics. Turns out we do.

To be more specific: Societies with smaller gaps between their rich and everyone else, the latest research shows, consistently do better fighting infectious disease than more unequal societies.

So finds Mauro Guillen, a professor of management at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton business school. His new working paper, *The Politics of Pandemics: Democracy, State Capacity, and Economic Inequality*, examines how epidemic outbreaks have played out in 146 countries since 1995.

Inequality, Guillen's research shows, makes epidemics “much, much worse, especially in terms of the number of people affected.”

Why should that be the case? For starters, notes a Wharton introduction to Guillen's work, inequality “undermines people's compliance with epidemic containment policies such as social distancing and sheltering in place because people at the low end of the socioeconomic scale cannot afford to stay at home.”

Successful states have the

capacity – the resources – to make compliance more likely and treatment more effective. They provide safety-net supports. They don't need to go hunting for masks and ventilators. They have more robust public systems in place for dealing with emergencies.

But many exceedingly rich people have little interest in supporting public systems of any sort. They don't send their kids to public school or frolic in public parks or ride to work on public transportation. They live in an exclusive private world and like things that way. They see spending for building up public capacity as just another excuse to raise taxes on the wealthy.

The predictable result: In societies where wealth concentrates, public support systems wither. Communities lose the capacity to confront and overcome unexpected change.

“State capacity is a bulwark against the occurrence and ill effects of crises and emergencies,” as Wharton's Guillen concludes, “while economic inequality exacerbates them.”

We need a vaccine to beat the coronavirus. But more equality might help a good bit, too. **CT**

Sam Pizzigati co-edits *Inequality.org*. His recent books include *The Case for a Maximum Wage* and *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970*. Follow him at [@Too_Much_Online](#).

Insights

David Storey

The juggled identities of Africa's soccer stars

Support is a useful prism through which to explore aspects of national identity. This is particularly so with football, given its popularity and global reach. International teams are often portrayed as the embodiment of the nation for the duration of a match. They carry the nation's hopes and dreams.

Yet it's becoming common to see footballers competing for a country other than the one they were born or raised in. The regulations allow this if they are eligible for citizenship of the country.

This raises questions for those interested in issues of identity, citizenship and belonging. An investigation into how many players transfer their sporting allegiance and why can shed light on the often complex, multi-layered and contingent nature of national identity.

I conducted a study into the question of the identity choices of players with African family backgrounds. This revealed that players choose which country to represent for different reasons. Some players may be motivated by a sense of cultural affinity. For others it's an opportunity to play international football and advance their career.

Switching allegiance

In recent years, a number of



Photo: Wikimedia

MANCHESTER UNITED'S PAUL POGBA: Born in Guinea, plays for France.

African countries have opted to select players born outside the national territory. The sizeable African diaspora in Europe provides an expanded field of potential talent. Colonial history and continuing migrant links mean there are many European-born footballers with close ethnic and family ties to African countries, so it makes pragmatic sense to tap into that resource.

Morocco and Algeria have for some time been prominent in drawing on their diasporas. They have relied heavily on European-born players of Algerian or Moroccan descent such as Riyad Mahrez and Sofiane Boufal. Some of these players represent France in youth or under-age

teams but elected to play for the country of their parents at senior international level.

The extent of this phenomenon is clear if we look at the squads from recent international tournaments. Of the 368 players registered in the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations tournament, 93 were born outside the country they were representing. The majority of these (69) were born in France. A further 22 players, although born in Africa, grew up in a European country.

If these are added to the 93, then approaching one third of players at the tournament were playing for a country they were not born in or had not lived in since early childhood.

At the 2018 FIFA World Cup, five African countries participated in the finals. Morocco had 15 European-born players, plus another two who grew up in Europe. Tunisia and Senegal each had nine while Nigeria had four (plus two more who grew up in Europe). In total, 38 players for these five countries were born in Europe, the majority in France (25).

At the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations, of the 552 players registered in the tournament, 129 were born outside the country they were representing. Once again, most of these were born in France – 86. And a further 30 players grew up in a country other than the one in which they were born. Nineteen of Morocco's squad were born outside the country, 10 of them in France; 14 of Algeria's squad were born in France.

Insights

Overall, it seems francophone African countries in North and West Africa are more prone to draw on their diasporas. France's colonial past leaves a big footprint on Africa's sporting present.

Some players have made it clear in press interviews that identity issues influence their decision. For example, the French-born former Cameroon international Benoit Assou-Ekotta (son of a migrant Cameroonian footballer) has publicly expressed a strong sense of Cameroonian identity.

Me playing for Cameroon was a natural and normal thing. I have no feeling for the France national team; it just doesn't exist. When people ask of my generation in France, "Where are you from?", they will reply Morocco, Algeria, Cameroon or wherever.

His comments appear to reflect a wider set of issues relating to marginalisation and discrimination surrounding ethnic minority groups in France and elsewhere, highlighting disaffection and a rejection of French identity.

More pragmatic issues can be seen in the case of Swiss-born Joël Kiassumbua. In a television programme, the then Swiss youth international goalkeeper displayed little interest in his father's country of DR Congo. (He ended up playing for them at senior level, though.)

In 2013 Saido Berahino, born in Burundi but who came to the United Kingdom as a refugee at the age of ten, spoke of his desire to play for England in highly

functional terms: "I want to play at the best level with the best players at the best tournaments".

Five years later he said he would "always be a Burundian" and switched to playing for that country.

The failure to advance to senior level may lead to a decision to represent another country. But it may ultimately come down to the simple issue of which country asks first.

Paul Pogba may be happy to represent France but, had he been less gifted, the French opportunity would likely not have arisen and he might well have followed his brothers' decisions to represent their parents' country of Guinea.

Professional motivations may underpin many decisions, but these surely also reflect the duality of the players' identities. A player's background will clearly shape their self-identity but the wider socio-political context may have a bearing too. Whatever the feelings and motivations of players, the declaration of a sporting nationality that may differ from an "official" one reinforces the need to see identities as fluid and flexible rather than fixed and unchanging. **CT**

David Storey is Principal Lecturer in Geography, at the University of Worcester, in England. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com.

Caitlin Johnstone

Conflicting narratives & Trump's distortions

RIGHT-WING pundit Ann Coulter went on a surprisingly vitriolic anti-Trump rant recently, calling the president a "complete blithering idiot", an "actual retard", and "the most disloyal human God ever created", for his treatment of Jeff Sessions and his failure to build the border wall per his campaign promise.

"Coulter is right", comedian Tim Dillon tweeted in response. "Trump doesn't really care about

immigration or the wall, it was just the way to win. He likes winning. You don't live your entire life being a Hollywood star who hangs with the Clintons and Jeffrey Epstein and then decide you actually like people from Ohio".

Which is true. Trump and his handlers understood that rising anti-immigration sentiment in America was a key to winning the presidency, but he never cared about immigration and never had any intention of going out of his

Insights

way to do anything about it (which is why even his deportation numbers are still below Obama's). Just one of the many ways where the popular narrative about Trump – the story everyone's telling about him – differs wildly from the reality.

It is normal to have multiple contradictory mainstream narratives running about a president at the same time, and for none of those narratives to be accurate. Obama was simultaneously a progressive champion of sanity and a socialist Muslim from Kenya hell bent on America's destruction, none of which was true, but both of which were believed with equal fervour by either side of the illusory partisan divide.

What's unusual about Trump is that there are multiple contradictory narratives running about him at the same time within the same political factions. His own base is able to hold the belief that Trump is a brilliant strategic mastermind who is commanding a covert counter-coup to overthrow the Deep State, while simultaneously excusing all the many, many establishment capitulations that he makes as being beyond his control. Much like Schrödinger's proverbial pet, Trump exists for them in two mutually contradictory states at once: a hero who is taking down the Deep State, and a hapless victim who can't control what happens in his own administration because it's all being controlled by the Deep State.

On the other side of the imaginary partisan divide, Democrats spent years advancing the mutu-

ally contradictory narratives that Trump is at once (a) idiotic, (b) mentally ill, and (c) running a covert operation to sabotage America in the interests of Russia – but cleverly evading detection under intense scrutiny. They also hold him as presenting an unprecedented threat to American democracy and also perfectly safe to keep voting in support of continuing and expanding his military and surveillance powers.

None of these narratives have anything to do with reality, yet they consume an immense amount of oxygen in US political discourse while Trump continues and expands the many depraved agendas of his predecessors.

Trump is not a populist champion of the little guy, or a closet Nazi working to establish a white ethno-state, or a Kremlin asset,. He is simply a miserable rich man from a miserable rich family who did what it takes to get elected to the presidency of a racist, corrupt, bloodthirsty, empire and remain there for a full term. Everything else is narrative that is wholly divorced from reality.

The reason we can have wildly popular narratives dominating mainstream political discourse for years on end without their containing a shred of actual reality is because human experience is dictated by mental stories far more than most people realise. Establishment power structures, that have their hands in both parties of America's two-handed political sock puppet show, stand

everything to gain and nothing to lose by using narrative control to keep the public debating fake nonsense instead of the horrible things this administration is doing such as imprisoning Julian Assange for journalism, vetoing attempts to save Yemen, inflicting starvation sanctions on Iran and Venezuela, and initiating cold war escalations against two nuclear-armed nations.

If people truly understood the extent to which mental narrative dominates their experience of life, propaganda, advertising and all other forms of psychological manipulation would be regarded by our society similarly to physical assault or property theft. For anyone who is interested in the pernicious ways narrative manipulation is used to keep people confused and conflicted while powerful people roll out toxic agendas, Trump is a very interesting case study indeed.

If humanity is to survive, people are going to have to evolve beyond the sticky relationship with mental narrative which enables establishment spinmeisters to keep an entire nation transfixed by fake stories about a conventionally evil president instead of pushing for the real changes we'll need to make if we're to overcome the existential hurdles looming on the horizon. Learning to distinguish reality from narrative will send the whole prison crashing down. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian journalist, who blogs at www.caitlinjohnstone.com

Joe Allen

No true friends in a race war

In this fight we're expected to take a side, and if you choose not to you're assumed to be an enemy

BY the time I arrived in downtown Oakland, California, the protests were peaceful. Young people marched and chanted against a backdrop of fresh graffiti and boarded-up windows. Most of their signs were scrawled with “DEFUND THE COPS” or “WHITE SILENCE IS VIOLENCE” or “BLACK LIVES MATTER”. Perhaps a mantra’s power really does lie in repetition.

A woman in a slow-rolling Eldorado convertible, flanked by marchers, held up a sign that read: “POLICE BRUTALITY IS SMALL DICK ENERGY”. Her phrase cuts to the heart of the issue – the male drive for dominance yields endless cruelty. Deep down, every man wants to be the alpha dog. A flamboyant black guy danced on the back of the Eldorado as if he was in a Madonna video, periodically feigning punches onto an imaginary face. Commuters honked their horns in approval.

Lust for power is a human uni-

versal, nudging history from one atrocity to the next. In primal systems, power simply justifies itself. The big man is king because he is big. In more elaborate systems, power is justified by avenging the victim.

Today, George Floyd has become a global symbol for the black victims of alpha dominance. He encapsulates the centuries-long history of Euro supremacy and African oppression. Cellphone photos and surveillance footage of the incident show a white cop kneeling on a black man’s neck. The cop looks confident and smug. The black man’s face is filled with desperate terror. Spittle gathers on his lips. For nearly eight minutes, he’s crushed to the ground. The dehumanisation is sickening. All of this is over a fake \$20 bill.

“I can’t breathe”, Floyd pleads. “Momma... Momma...” The white cop digs his knee into the black man’s neck as the gathering crowd begs for mercy.

There would be no mercy.



Photo: Thomas Hawk / Flickr.com

George Floyd was pronounced dead before the ambulance reached the hospital. But his soul was selected for glorification.

During the three-and-a-half years since Hillary Clinton lost the election, more than 3,000 police killings have occurred with nearly zero national coverage. Many victims were unarmed. In 2019 alone, 14 unarmed black men were killed,



THE NAME GAME: Protesters leave a stark message on an Oakland shop window.

as were 25 unarmed white men. Besides their friends and family, no one cared.

Then, for reasons we can only speculate on, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery suddenly became symbols of black victimhood and white cruelty. Their stories were broadcast on every news channel and amplified by a billion social media accounts.

Righteous fury exploded across the world.

“Say their names!”

Although the mob’s rage had been exhausted, downtown Oakland bore the scars of the previous week’s riots. Windows were smashed. ATMs dripped with dried spraypaint. Trashbags were

piled high in front of the Oakland Police Department’s doors. Graffiti covering the face of City Hall read “FUCK THE POLICE” and “ACAB”, which of course stands for “All Cops Are Bastards”. Besides protesters, vagrants, and the occasional disaster tourist, the city centre was a ghost town.

Progress comes at a cost, but that price is rarely tallied by pro-

gressives. According to a June 3 report by Al Jazeera, nearly a dozen people have died so far in America's "mostly peaceful" movement to preserve black lives. A disproportionate number were black cops. One was guarding a federal building here in Oakland. Dozens more people have been injured, some permanently maimed. Hundreds of stores across the country, many of them black- or minority-owned, have been smashed and looted. Some were burned to the ground.

The progressive response? "Whatever. That's just the price of doing business in a racist society."

Discerning minds know that alpha dog cruelty transcends race. The same smartphones that document police violence have also been recording the dark side of anarchy. Numerous videos have emerged of furious black mobs beating the ever-living shit out of hapless white store-owners and careless naysayers.

In Minneapolis, MN, an old white lady on a mobility scooter was repeatedly punched and then sprayed with a fire extinguisher while onlookers laughed. In Dallas, TX, 20 boots united to turn a skinny white kid into a twisted mess on the pavement. In Rochester, NY, a white couple trying to defend their store were beaten bloody with 2x4 boards. In nature, red in tooth and claw, the alphas devour the omegas.

The progressive response? "Whatever, racist. You're missing the point. BLACK LIVES MATTER".

If you keep up with radical anti-establishment media such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, ABC, CBS,

The symbolic content of black victimhood is no invention. The inequality in America is undeniable

NBC, MSNBC, the *Atlantic*, Vox, NPR, Democracy Now!, the BBC, the CBC – and half of the time, Fox News – you know they all agree with the progressives. Some lives are more equal than others.

In downtown Oakland, the wanton destruction has cleared space for artistic expression, much of it spiritual. Colourful murals now cover the plywood storefronts up and down Broadway. Many are beautiful. Special honour is reserved for an idealised memorial to George Floyd, just north of 17th Street. Mourners have been laying flowers and lighting votive candles for more than a week. If the nightly news is any indication, their prayers are being heard. Even Jeff Bezos has given his blessing.

Covering ten blocks, local artists have painted finely crafted memorials to the fallen: Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling.

These symbols of black victimhood represent a statistical reality. Of the thousand or so Americans killed by the police every year, around a quarter are black. According to the "Fatal Force" index maintained by the

Washington Post (last updated 6/6/20), police killed 1,003 people in America in 2019. As in any given year, there were more white victims (405) than black (249), but that proportion obscures the per capita rate. Whites make up 62 percent of the American population. Blacks make up 13 percent. That means blacks are nearly three times as likely to be killed by cops.

The underlying causes are complicated by many factors – including the frequency of police interactions – but what's important is that the symbolic content of black victimhood is no mere invention. The inequality in America is undeniable.

Allegorically, the death of George Floyd represents the 400 year history of slavery, segregation, social rejection, and ongoing police violence that hangs over us. These realities cannot be forgotten by anyone serious about moral accountability or the pursuit of truth. To be sure, the particulars are complicated. No saint is free from sin, so to speak. Nevertheless, these symbolic motifs have catalysed something genuine, giving concrete expression to the nagging fears and resentments that many blacks have been holding in silence. They give air to a pervasive mistrust of white people that's too often justified.

Sacred symbols express deeper realities, bringing phenomena to consciousness and effecting social change. A successful symbol will become more real than mere facts on the ground. A major problem with the BLM movement is that its symbolic system leaves much of the wider world unaccounted for. As the name implies, its iconography is warped by Afrocentrism,

leaving disenfranchised whites to fend for themselves.

The most disturbing footage of police brutality I've seen to date, out of dozens, is the senseless killing of the 26 year-old pest exterminator Daniel Shaver. In 2016, this working class white kid was shot by a power-tripping white cop at a shitbag La Quinta Inn in Mesa, AZ.

In the bodycam video, we see Shaver grovelling on the ground in the hotel hallway. The amped up police officer, who was answering a complaint that someone had a gun, yells at Shaver to crawl forward. The kid is crying, begging the cop not to shoot. You can see his gym shorts slipping from his waist.

The cop turns his alpha vibe to maximum volume. Shaver gets more and more confused. In the end, the kid reaches down to grab his loose shorts one too many times. The cop unloads his assault rifle, turning another working class white boy into chopped liver. Investigators found a couple of pellet guns in Shaver's hotel room. Apparently, the kid used them to kill pests.

As usual, the policeman was suspended with full pay. Other than *Reason* magazine and the *Atlantic*, this story got almost no coverage. Daniel Shaver wasn't deemed worthy enough to become a symbol.

Whatever their intentions, the left's exclusive focus on the black per capita death rate masks the staggering number of whites who die by police hands. It ignores the parallel trajectories of oppressed blacks and underclass whites. The key to cooperation is common

The left's focus on the black per capita death rate masks the staggering number of whites who die by police hands

cause. But the current cult-like fixation on blackness produces divisive half-truths. It alienates potential allies in the campaign against police brutality. Maybe that's the point. If political dominance is the goal, the fastest route to mobilisation is tribal antipathy.

"All Lives Matter" may be a tone-deaf slogan, typically used to antagonise, but it's still relevant. Year after year, whites make up the numerical majority of police shootings. Yet we see no serious attempt to galvanise the public around these incidents. It's as if their lives don't matter.

- In 2019, police shot 405 whites (25 were unarmed), and 249 blacks (14 unarmed)

- In 2018, police shot 454 whites (25 were unarmed), and 229 blacks (23 unarmed).

- In 2017, police shot 459 whites (31 were unarmed), and 224 blacks (22 unarmed).

- In 2016, police shot 468 whites (22 were unarmed), and 234 blacks (19 unarmed).

- In 2015, police shot 497 whites (32 were unarmed), and 258 blacks (38 unarmed).

This trend is thoroughly documented by the "Fatal Force" index at the *Washington Post* (updated 6/6/20), and corroborated by the *Guardian's* aborted catalogue of

police killings, "The Counted".

So where are the heart-wrenching exposes and challenging think pieces? Where are the marches and memorials for slain whites? Because public discourse rarely touches on this reality, a large swath of American whites remain unconcerned about authoritarian overreach. They believe police brutality won't affect them or their kids, so they tend to side with the authorities. Especially in times of crisis.

When tribal whites – roughly half of the country – see footage of burning cities and other whites getting curb-stomped in the name of "justice," they don't worry about alpha dog cops. They come away fearing black thugs and white agitators. As their deplorable hearts harden, an increasingly militarised police force comes to represent a safe society.

Since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the motif of white alpha dogs attacking black victims has become America's dominant cultural narrative. So far in 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd have been selected to represent cosmic reality for white liberals and people of colour. The other half of America is also confronted by their tragic deaths, whether they like it or not.

Meanwhile, a parallel narrative is unfolding out in MAGA country. It's the forbidden history of black-on-white murder. No one can understand racial tension in America without first grasping this profane inversion of the prevailing mythos.

If government statistics are to be trusted, violence within racial

groups (ie, white-on-white and black-on-black) accounts for the vast majority of murders in America (roughly 90 percent and 80 percent, respectively). Objectively speaking, you're far more likely to be killed by someone of your own race than another. But, as with the central BLM motif, such statistical trends are irrelevant to subjective mythology. Interracial murders hold intense symbolic significance for pro-white activists. For them, the victims become martyrs. Hundreds are added each year.

According to the data published in the FBI's *Uniform Crime Report (Table 6)* and the *Victimization Survey* conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the overwhelming majority of interracial violence in America is black-on-white. This is true in both absolute numbers and per capita. In 2015 500 whites were murdered by blacks. In 2016 the number was 533. In 2017 the number was 576. In 2018 the number was 514. Contrary to the dominant narrative, each year white-on-black murders were under half of those totals.

I can think of two good reasons the mainstream media (including Fox News) refuse to report or analyse these numbers in any meaningful way. The cynical interpretation is that the image of black alphas attacking white victims isn't politically expedient under the current paradigm. More charitably, it should be obvious that – both historically and currently – this incendiary motif serves to activate white tribalism and inspire sweeping prejudice, possibly to violent ends.

In either case, the media's silence is futile, and ultimately more dangerous than an open

Objectively speaking, you're far more likely to be killed by someone of your own race than another

discussion. This unsettling data is already widely known among conservative whites and intellectually honest leftists. Left unacknowledged by our leading public voices, these numbers are easily exaggerated on the digital fringe.

One downside of tribal justice is collective guilt. Up here in the overworld, working class whites are held responsible for the exploits of the ruling class. Underground, whites stigmatise peaceable blacks by the violent behaviour of a few. This order could quickly be reversed. As the dissimulating liberal establishment strains to control the narrative, white identitarians are being radicalised in the shadows.

So far in 2020, six names have come to represent cosmic reality for tribal whites, but they remain unknown to the other half of America: Martha McKay, Joyce Whaley, Denise Nibbe, Nettie Spencer, and Paul and Lidia Marino. These were white people killed by blacks exerting alpha dominance.

For inscrutable reasons, we've seen no CNN contributors speculate on motives, no deep analysis in the Atlantic, no breathless NYT editorials on the role of media influence or the anti-white rhetoric

of woke activists. No connections are made to collective racial identities, at least not out in the open. Instead, these incidents are gathered together and woven into a coherent mythos on right-wing web aggregates, far out of sight, where they burn in the collective memory of disaffected whites.

● Hughes, AR – ABC News – On March 25, Martha McKay (who was white) was stabbed to death in her bed-and-breakfast by Travis Santay Lewis (who was black). In an astonishing twist, Lewis had murdered McKay's mother and cousin on the same property twenty-three years earlier. He had only just been paroled. The killer drowned trying to escape police. His motive remains unknown.

● Knoxville, TN – WBIR – On April 7, Joyce Whaley, Denise Nibbe, and Nettie Spencer (who were white), were stabbed to death in a Pilot truck stop by Idris Abdus-Salaam (who was black). The killer was shot by police in the parking lot after refusing to relinquish his knife. A notebook containing "graphic writing" was reportedly found in his truck, but for whatever reason, no media outlet has followed up to explore possible motives.

● Bear, DE – *New York Post* – On May 8, the elderly couple Paul and Lidia Marino (who were white), were visiting the Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery when they were gunned down by Sheldon Francis (who was black). Nothing was stolen. The killer retreated into the woods during a shootout with police, where he died of a gunshot wound. At the time, social media was on fire with the story of a black jogger getting lynched in Georgia. Unfortunately, the news

media have shown no interest in uncovering his motive.

Over the years, hundreds of these stories have been collected by white identitarians. There's no absolute equivalency to be drawn between the aggression of white cops and black delinquents – no social locations are equivalent – but the parallels are clear. In each case, a sense of violation triggers the tribal instinct. The resulting chronicles of brutality read like a scorecard in a race war. “Our side killed x – your side killed y”. The implicit threat of “an eye for an eye” hangs in the background.

The sporadic violence of the 2016 elections may have been a warm up. Once again, white liberals and disillusioned blacks are lining up on one side. Tribal whites and other conservatives are lining up on the other. As each side stares the other down, both look past the unchained dogs within their own ranks. Enclosed in groupthink, either side can only see the threats posed by the other. We need an honest conversation about race now, before the aspiring alphas close their eyes and open fire.

Matt is a black photographer from Oakland. He approached me on the sidewalk to thank me for coming out. I didn't mention that I wasn't there to join the march, but as we talked, I learned that he

This bipartisan denial of reality only underscores how quickly we are entering a period of crisis and revolt

wasn't either. He explained that he was showing support through art and intense conversation. Turns out we have a lot in common. A 1968 Yashica camera was slung around his neck – one of those elaborate cube-shaped contraptions like my grandma used to have – and an old Nikon 35mm was tucked away in his leather bag. He reminded me of an old friend.

I listened to his hopes for an open future. He listened to my fears of impending catastrophe. Naturally, the conversation turned heavy. He told me that he was afraid of the police. Even though he'd never been harassed by them personally, he was convinced that all cops are bastards because they cover for each other's crimes.

I wanted to tell him that I spent my anarchic youth in constant confrontation with the police, but didn't want to give an impression of false solidarity. Without question, the arrogant boys in blue should be demilitarised and resocialised, but I know for a fact they're not all

bastards. Competent police work is essential. If thousands more die in an orgy of lawlessness, will their lives matter?

Years ago, Matt and I would probably part as buddies, but those days are behind us. We did well to share a nod of mutual respect.

I can remember a time when racial harmony seemed well within our reach. As a student, I've trusted black teachers with my psyche. As a climber, I've trusted black men with my life. As a lover, I've trusted a few black women with my senses. There have been fights and petty squabbles, but they were few and far between. The black men and women in my life have shown me tremendous friendship and warmth – disproportionately so. But as the Lion of La Cruzeiro told me years ago: “Change is the only constant”.

There are no true friends in a race war – only allies and enemies. Organic relationships give way to the artificial rules of “allyship”. Kind words mean nothing without reciting the approved mantras. As the nation divides, each of us is expected to take a side. If you remain true to yourself, both sides will call you an enemy. That only leaves one choice for an honest man. Better to be a pariah than a liar. **CT**

Joe Allen writes about race, robots, and religion. These days, he's based out of a survivalist bunker on wheels

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C.J. Hopkins

The rise and fall of a ‘colour revolution’

The rebellion in Minneapolis was not a “fake” uprising. There’s always an authentic uprising at the centre of every regime-change op

SO, the GloboCap-Resistance Minneapolis Putsch appears to have not gone exactly to plan. Once again, Trump failed to go full-Hitler, despite their best efforts to goad him into doing so. They gave it a good shot, however. It was more or less a textbook regime-change op, or “colour revolution” or whatever you call it. All the essential pieces were in place. All they needed Trump to do was declare himself dictator and impose martial law, so the generals could step in and remove him from office.

Unfortunately for the Resistance, Trump didn’t do that. Instead, he did what he usually does, which is make a total ass of himself on international television. Which ... OK, was cringeworthy, but didn’t quite provide the GloboCap gang with the pretext they needed to perp-walk him out of the Oval Office. Which, needless to say, was incredibly frustrating. After four long years of propaganda foreplay, there we were, finally at the moment of truth, and Adolf goes and loses his erection.

This guy is the worst literal Hitler ever.

Still, as far as regime-change ops go, and given that this one was a domestic operation, so trickier than the usual foreign version, I’d give the Resistance a B+ for effort.

Now, before my “conspiracy theorist” readers get too excited about where I’m going with this column ... no, this was not a “fake” uprising. There was an authentic uprising at the centre of it. There’s always an authentic uprising at the centre of every regime-change op, or at least the type that GloboCap has been carrying out and attempting recently. Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, the Ukraine, Bolivia, Venezuela; these things go pretty much by the numbers.

Here’s a quick breakdown of how that works.

First, you need your civil unrest, large-scale protests, rioting, looting, indiscriminate violence, and so on. Any number of “trigger events” will be sufficient to get this going. Once it is, you can grow it and focus it. A lot of this unrest needs to be authentic, so it’s best to conduct an overwhelming

multi-year propaganda campaign to delegitimise and demonise your target as some sort of treasonous Hitlerian monster who’s responsible for every major problem in the country. That way, no matter which trigger event gets things going, it will be his fault.

You will want your local government officials to allow this civil unrest to go on until it reaches the point where rioters and looters are rampaging through the hearts of cities, raiding both high-end corporate chain stores and local mom-and-pop-type businesses, and brutally assaulting their defenceless proprietors. This does not mean that these local officials have to restrain or stand down their cops. On the contrary, you want them to unleash their cops, on the protesters, rioters, and TV reporters (during their “live” reports, if possible), and just generally beat the living crap out of everyone. The goal is to generate as much hatred as possible against the regime you are trying to change, and to pressure your designated Hitler-target into losing his patience and overreacting, so you want things to get extremely ugly.



AFTERMATH: A man walks past a burning Minneapolis building after the riots that followed George Floyd's death.

Then, you unleash the power of the media to whip folks up into a mindless frenzy of rage against your designated Hitler. You have your “respectable” pundits publish articles calling for his removal from office. You get the military (and former military) to start making noise about how your Hitler is out of control and on the brink of fascism. Then you wait for your Hitler to overreact and attempt to call in the military and impose some form of martial law, at which point you can safely depose him, and pretend that democracy has won the day.

The media is essential here,

because you need to convince the majority of the public (ie, not just the people protesting and rioting) that things have gotten so out of control, and your imaginary Hitler has gotten so dangerous, that a military coup is the best solution.

What you're looking for are headlines like these:

“We are teetering on a dictatorship” – CNN

“Words of a dictator”: Trump's threat to deploy military raises spectre of fascism”

– *The Guardian*

“Donald Trump is Trying

to Start a Race War” – *Rolling Stone*

“Remove Trump Now” – Slate

“The Trump Presidency is Over.” – *The Guardian*

“Trump Must Be Removed” – *The Washington Post*

Also, while the media are doing their thing, you want to get any former members of the intelligence community (or the secret police) to issue public statements like this:

“There should be no place in American society, much less in our government, for the depravity being demonstrated daily by Donald Trump. Members of his Cabinet

who enable such behaviour are betraying their oath of office by supporting an increasingly desperate despot.” – John Brennan, former CIA director

Then you bring the politicians and the military in. This kind of language will usually do it:

“The fascist speech Donald Trump just delivered verged on a declaration of war against American citizens. I fear for our country tonight and will not stop defending America against Trump’s assault.” – Senator Ron Wyden

“These are not the words of a president. They are the words of a dictator.” – Senator Kamala Harris

“There is a thin line between the military’s tolerance for questionable partisan moves over the past three years and the point where these become intolerable,” a retired general said.” – The New York Times

“We must reject and hold accountable those in office who would make a mockery of our Constitution ... We can unite without [Trump], drawing on the strengths inherent in our civil society. This will not be easy, as the past few days have shown, but we owe it to our fellow citizens; to past generations that bled to defend our promise; and to our children.” – General James “Mad Dog” Mattis, former Secretary of Defense

Once the generals have started in growling, you get the media to hype that, hard. Headlines like these will get people’s attention:

“**Revolt of the Generals**” – *The Washington Post*

“**The Officers’ Revolt**” – *Slate*

“**President Donald Trump is facing an unprecedented**

Corporate media did their best to harness the rioting that follows the murder of an unarmed Black person by the cops

revolt from the elite corps of ex-military leaders and presidents ...” – CNN

“The US president’s desire to act the strongman poses urgent questions that America’s generals, voters and allies must all answer” – *The Guardian Editorial Board*

If you can, it is always a really nice touch if you can drum up ... oh, let’s say 280 former national security officials who are really concerned about the state of democracy and “the misuse of the military for political purposes”, and get them to spontaneously call each other up and decide to write a letter together accusing your Hitler of “dividing Americans”, which the media can then disseminate, widely.

And, of course, what you need for the “educated classes” is an official propagandist like Franklin Foer (who broke the big story about the non-existent “Trump-Russia server” back in 2016 and was rewarded for his service to GloboCap with a lucrative staff writer position at the *Atlantic*) to come right out and explain that what’s happening is a textbook regime-change operation (because

you don’t have to dupe the “educated classes”, most of whom will already be on your side). Something more or less like this:

“Twitter’s decision to label Trump’s posts as misleading was a hinge moment ... once Twitter applied its rules to Trump – and received accolades for its decision – it inadvertently set a precedent ... a cycle of noncooperation was set in motion. Local governments were the next layer of the elite to buck Trump’s commands. After the president insisted that governors ‘dominate’ the streets on his behalf, they roundly refused to escalate their response. Indeed, New York and Virginia rebuffed a federal request to send National Guard troops to Washington, DC. Even the suburb of Arlington, Virginia, pulled its police that had been loaned to control the crowd in Lafayette Square. As each group of elites refused Trump, it became harder for the next to comply in good conscience. In Sharp’s taxonomy, the autocrat’s grasp on power depends entirely on the allegiance of the armed forces. When the armed forces withhold cooperation, the dictator is finished”.

As I said, it went pretty much right by the book.

After four long years of official propaganda designed to convince the Western masses that Donald Trump is literally Hitler, GloboCap, the liberal Resistance, and the corporate media all did their best to harness the authentic protests and rioting that routinely follow the murder of an unarmed Black person by the cops, and use it to remove him from office. It would

have been a spectacular catharsis, a fitting climax to the War on Populism, but Trump refused to play his part ... so, OK, maybe he's not as dumb as I thought, or at least not totally suicidal.

No matter, it's still a big win for GloboCap. Forcibly removing Trump from office is, and has always been, gravy. The main goal of the War on Populism is to delegitimise and demonise him, and everyone who voted for him (and Jeremy Corbyn, and even Bernie Sanders, and everyone who voted for them). Trump is just a symbol, after all.

It's the dissatisfaction with global capitalism (and its smiley, happy, valueless values, and its post-ideological ideology) that GloboCap is determined to crush, so they can get back to the unfinished business of restructuring the entire Middle East, and anywhere else that's not playing ball, and dissolving what is left of national sovereignty, and transforming the world into one big marketplace,

***If I wrapped myself
in kente cloth and
got down on my
knees in public, that
might help me get
my mind right***

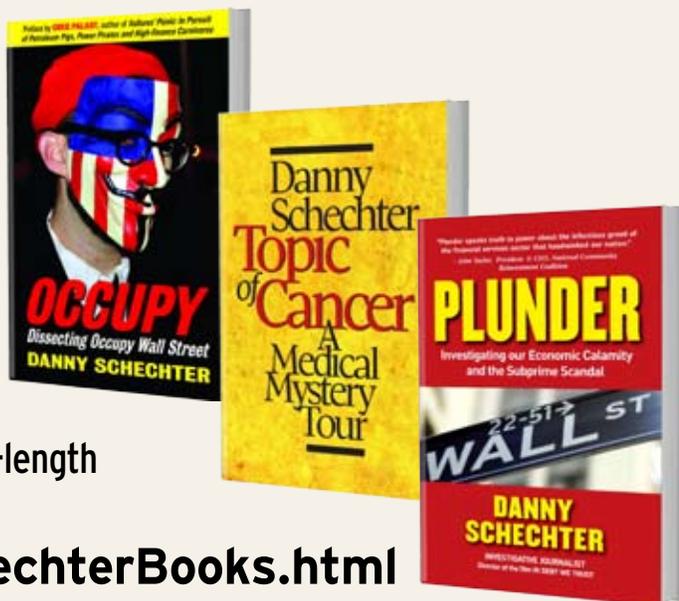
where there will be no fascists, no evil Russians, no religious extremists, no racist statues, no offensive movies, or books, or artworks, no more unauthorised ass-clown presidents, and everyone will be "contact-traced" with their digital health-certificate implants, and the children will stand inside their little "social-distancing" boxes and circles and sing the Coca-Cola theme song through their anti-virus masks at school ...

Sorry ... I got a little off-track

there. I forgot that this was strictly about racism, and police brutality, and nothing else. I'll try to stick to the script from now on, but it might be difficult, given my "privilege". Maybe, if I wrapped myself in kente cloth and got down on my knees in public, that might help me get my mind right. Or, I don't know. What do you think? **CT**

C. J. Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing and Broadway Play Publishing, Inc. His dystopian novel, *Zone 23*, is published by Snoggswothy, Swaine & Cormorant. Volume I of his *Consent Factory Essays* is published by Consent Factory Publishing, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Amalgamated Content, Inc. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org.

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William J. Astore

Above the law! The rise of the Warrior-cops

They see protesters, as well as the reporters covering them, as the enemy and themselves as the “thin blue line” of law and order

FROM their front porches, regular citizens watched a cordon of cops sweep down their peaceful street in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Rankled at being filmed, the cops exceeded their authority and demanded that people go inside their houses. When some of them didn't obey quickly enough, the order – one heard so many times in the streets of Iraqi cities and in the villages of Afghanistan – was issued: “Light ‘em up”. And so “disobedient” Americans found themselves on the receiving end of non-lethal rounds for the “crime” of watching the police from those porches.

It's taken years from Ferguson to this moment, but America's cops have now officially joined the military as “professional” warriors. In the wake of George Floyd's murder on May 25th, those warrior-cops have taken to the streets across the country wearing combat gear and with attitudes to match. They see protesters, as well as the reporters covering them, as the enemy and themselves as the “thin blue line” of law and order.

The police take to bashing heads

and thrashing bodies, using weaponry so generously funded by the American taxpayer: rubber bullets, pepper spray (as Congresswoman Joyce Beatty of Ohio experienced at a protest), tear gas (as Episcopal clergy experienced at a demonstration in Washington, DC), paint canisters, and similar “non-lethal” munitions, together with flash-bang grenades, standard-issue batons, and Tasers, even as they drive military-surplus equipment like Humvees and MRAPs. (Note that such munitions blinded an eye of one photo-journalist.) A Predator drone even hovered over at least one protest.

Who needs a military parade, President Trump? Americans are witnessing militarised “parades” across the USA. Their theme: violent force. The result: plenty of wounded and otherwise damaged Americans left in their wake. The detritus of America's foreign wars has finally well and truly found its place on Main Street, USA.

Cops are to blame for much of this mayhem. Video clips show them wildly out of control, inciting violence and inflicting it, instead of defusing and preventing it. Far

too often, “to serve and protect” has become “to shoot and smack down”. It suggests the character of Eric Cartman from the cartoon *South Park*, a boy inflamed by a badge and a chance to inflict physical violence without accountability. “Respect my authoritah!” cries Cartman as he beats an innocent man for no reason.

So, let's point cameras – and fingers – at these bully-boy cops, let's document their crimes, but let's also state a fact with courage: it's not just their fault.

Who else is to blame? Well, so many of us. How stupid have we been to celebrate cops as heroes, just as we've been foolishly doing for so long with the US military? Few people are heroes and fewer still deserve “hero” status while wearing uniforms and shooting bullets, rubber or otherwise, at citizens.

Answer this: Who granted cops a specially-modified US flag to celebrate “blue lives matter”, and when exactly did that happen, and why the hell do so many people fly these as substitute US flags? Has everyone forgotten American history and the use of police (as



THIN BLUE LINE?: Body armour-laden cops face tee-shirted protesters in Washington DC.

well as National Guard units) to suppress organised labour, keep blacks and other minorities in their place, intimidate ordinary citizens protesting for a cleaner environment, or whack hippies and anti-war liberals during the Vietnam War protests?

Or think of what's happening this way: America's violent overseas wars, thriving for almost two decades despite their emptiness, their lack of meaning, have finally and truly come home. An impoverished empire, in which violence and disease are endemic, is collapsing before our eyes. "When the looting starts, the shooting starts", America's self-styled wartime president promised, channelling a racist Miami police chief from 1967. It was a declaration meant to turn any American who happened

to be near a protest into a potential victim.

As such demonstrations proliferate, Americans now face a grim prospect: the chance to be wounded or killed, then dismissed as "collateral damage". In these years, that tried-and-true military euphemism has been applied so thoughtlessly to innumerable innocents who have suffered grievously from our unending foreign wars and now it's coming home.

How does it feel, America?

I joined the military in 1981, signing up in college for the Reserve Officer Training Corps, or ROTC. I went on active duty in 1985 and served for 20 years, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. I come from a family of firefighters and cops. My

dad and older brother were firefighters, together with my brother-in-law and nephew. My niece and her husband are cops and my sister worked for her local police department for years. My oldest friend, a great guy I've known for half a century, recently retired as a deputy sheriff. I know these people because they're my people.

Many cops – I'd say most – are decent people. But dress almost any cop in combat gear, cover him or her in armour like a stormtrooper out of Star Wars, then set all of them loose on the streets with a mandate to restore "LAW & ORDER", as our president tweeted, and you're going to get stormtrooper-like behaviour.

Sure, I'd wager that more than a few cops enjoy it, or at least it seems that way in the videos cap-

tured by so many. But let's remind ourselves that the cops, like the rest of America's systems of authority, are a product of a socio-political structure that's inherently violent, openly racist, deeply flawed, and thoroughly corrupted by money, power, greed, and privilege. In such a system, why should we expect them to be paragons of virtue and restraint? We don't recruit them that way. We don't train them that way. Indeed, we salute them as "warriors" when they respond to risky situations in aggressive ways.

Here's my point: When I put on a military uniform in 1985, I underwent a subtle but meaningful change from a citizen to a citizen-airman. (Note how "citizen" still came first then.) Soon after, however, the US military began telling me I was something more than that: I was a warrior. And that was a distinct and new identity for me, evidently a tougher, more worthy one than simply being a citizen-airman. That new "warrior" image and the mystique that grew up around it was integral to, and illustrative of, the beginning of a wider militarisation of American culture and society, which exploded after the 9/11 attacks amid the "big-boy pants" braggadocio of the administration of President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney as they set out to remake the world as an American possession.

Why all the "warrior" BS? Why "Generation Kill" (one of those memorable phrases of the post-9/11 era)? Was it to give us a bit more spine or something to rally around after the calamity of those attacks on iconic American targets, or perhaps something to take

Cops are a product of a socio-political structure that's violent, racist, flawed, and corrupted

pride in after so many disastrous wars over the last 75 years? It took me a while to answer such questions. Indeed, it took me a while to grasp that such questions were almost beside the point. Because all this warrior talk, whether applied to the military or the cops, is truly meant to separate us from the American people, to link us instead to wider systems of impersonal authority, such as the military-industrial-congressional complex.

By "elevating" us as warriors, the elites conspired to reduce us as citizens, detaching us from a citizen's code of civics and moral behaviour. By accepting the conceit of such an identity, we warriors and former warriors became, in a sense, foreign to democracy and ever more divorced from the citizenry. We came to form foreign legions, readily exploitable in America's endless imperial-corporate wars, whether overseas or now here.

(Notice, by the way, how, in the preceding paragraphs, I use "we" and "us", continuing to identify with the military, though I've been retired for 15 years. On re-reading it, I thought about revising that passage, until I realised that was precisely the point: a career military officer is, in some way, always

in the military. The ethos is that strong. The same is true of cops.)

In 2009, I first asked if the US military had become an imperial police force. In 2020, we need to ask if our police are now just another branch of that military, with our "homeland" serving as the empire to be conquered and exploited. That said, let's turn to America's cops. They're now likely to identify as warriors, too, and indeed many of them have served in America's violent and endless wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. These days, they're ever more likely to identify as well with authority, as defined and exercised by the elites for whom they serve as hired guns.

In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, the warrior-mercenary mindset of the police has been fully exposed. For what was Floyd's great "crime"? At worst, if true, an attempt at petty theft through forgery. He'd lost his job due to the Covid-19 crisis and, like most of us, was lucky if he saw a one-time check for \$1,200, even as the rich and powerful enjoyed trillions of dollars in relief.

Rarely are the police sent to prosecute scofflaws in high places. I haven't seen any bankers being choked to death on the street under an officer's knee. Nor have I seen any corporate "citizens" being choked to death by cops. It's so much easier to hassle and arrest the little people for whom, if they're black or otherwise vulnerable, arrest may even end in death.

By standing apart from us, militarised, a thin blue line, the police no longer stand with us.

A friend of mine, an Air Force

retired colonel, nailed it in a recent email to me: “I used to – maybe not enjoy but – not mind talking to the police. It was the whole ‘community partners’ thing. Growing up and through college, you just waved at cops on patrol (they’d wave back!). Over the last five years, all I get is cops staring back in what I imagine they think is an intimidating grimace. They say nothing when you say hello. They are all in full ‘battle rattle’ even when directing traffic”.

When military “battle rattle” becomes the standard gear for street cops, should we be that surprised to hear the death rattle of black men like George Floyd?

Perhaps you’ve heard the saying “speaking truth to power”. It’s meant as a form of praise. But a rejoinder I once read captures its inherent limitations: power already knows the truth – and I’d add that the powerful are all too happy with their monopoly on their version of the truth, thank you very much.

It’s not enough to say that the police are too violent, or racist, or detached from society. Powerful people already know this perfectly well. Indeed, they’re counting on it. They’re counting on cops being violent to protect elite interests; nor is racism the worst thing in the world, they believe, as long as it’s not hurting their financial bottom lines. If it divides people, making them all the more exploitable, so much the better. And who cares if cops are detached from the interests of the working and lower middle classes from which they’ve come? Again, all the better, since that means they can be sicced on protesters and, if things get out of hand, those very

No more “thin blue line” BS. No more cops as warriors. No more special flags for how much their lives matter

protesters can then be blamed. If push comes to shove, a few cops might have to be fired, or prosecuted, or otherwise sacrificed, but that hardly matters as long as the powerful get off scot-free.

President Trump knows this. He talks about “dominating” the protesters. He insists that they must be arrested and jailed for long periods of time. After all, they are the “other”, the enemy. He’s willing to have them tear gassed and shot with rubber bullets just so he can pose in front of a church holding a Bible. Amazingly, the one amendment he mentioned defending in his “law and order” speech just before he walked to that church was the Second Amendment.

And this highlights Trump’s skill as a wall-builder. No, I don’t mean that “big, fat, beautiful wall” along the US border with Mexico. He’s proven himself a master at building walls to divide people within America – to separate Republicans from Democrats, blacks and other peoples of colour from whites, Christians from non-Christians, fervid gun owners from gun-control advocates, and cops from the little people. Divide and conquer, the oldest trick in the authoritarian handbook, and Donald Trump is good at it.

But he’s also a dangerous fool in a moment when we need bridges, not walls to unite these divided states of ours. And that starts with the cops. We need to change the way many of them think. No more “thin blue line” BS. No more cops as warriors. No more special flags for how much their lives matter. We need but a single flag for how much all our lives matter, black or white, rich or poor, the powerless as well as the powerful.

How about that old-fashioned American flag I served under as a military officer for 20 years? How about the stars and stripes that draped my father’s casket after his more than 30 years of fighting fires, whether in the forests of Oregon or the urban tenements of Massachusetts? It was good enough for him and me (and untold millions of others). It should still be good enough for everyone.

But let me be clear: my dad knew how to put out fires, but once a house was “fully involved”, he used to tell me, there’s little you can do but stand back and watch it burn while keeping the fire from spreading.

America’s forever wars in distant lands have now come home big time. Our house is lit up and on fire. Alarms are being sounded over and over again. If we fail to come together to fight the fire until our house is fully involved, we will find ourselves – and what’s left of our democracy – burning with it. **CT**

William Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and history professor. His personal blog is [Bracing Views](#). This essay first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](#)

Trevor Hoyle

Reversing Orwell's most famous route

He went North looking for Wigan and inequality; my trip would take me in the opposite direction – from Wigan to Bognor Regis

BE careful what you throw away. Clearing out some old files, dumping them into a waste bin, I noticed a label that read, *The Road to Bognor Regis*. The title stirred a long-lost memory. I retrieved the battered folder, made a cup of coffee, and sat down to revisit what my idealistic younger self had been up to thirty-odd years ago.

The top sheet – a letter to my publisher, John Calder – brought it all back. It was the god-awful 1980s. The UK was being throttled and Thatcherised to death, what with the miners' strikes, the poll tax, the headlines shrieking about the North-South Divide.

*Two of my novels: *The Man Who Travelled on Motorways* (might have been a prescient title for Dominic Cummings' autobiography) and the dystopian *Vail*, the latter being my state-of-the-nation screech from the heart, had been published by Calder's.*

This is the letter I wrote to him in November 1986.

Dear John,

THE ROAD TO BOGNOR REGIS

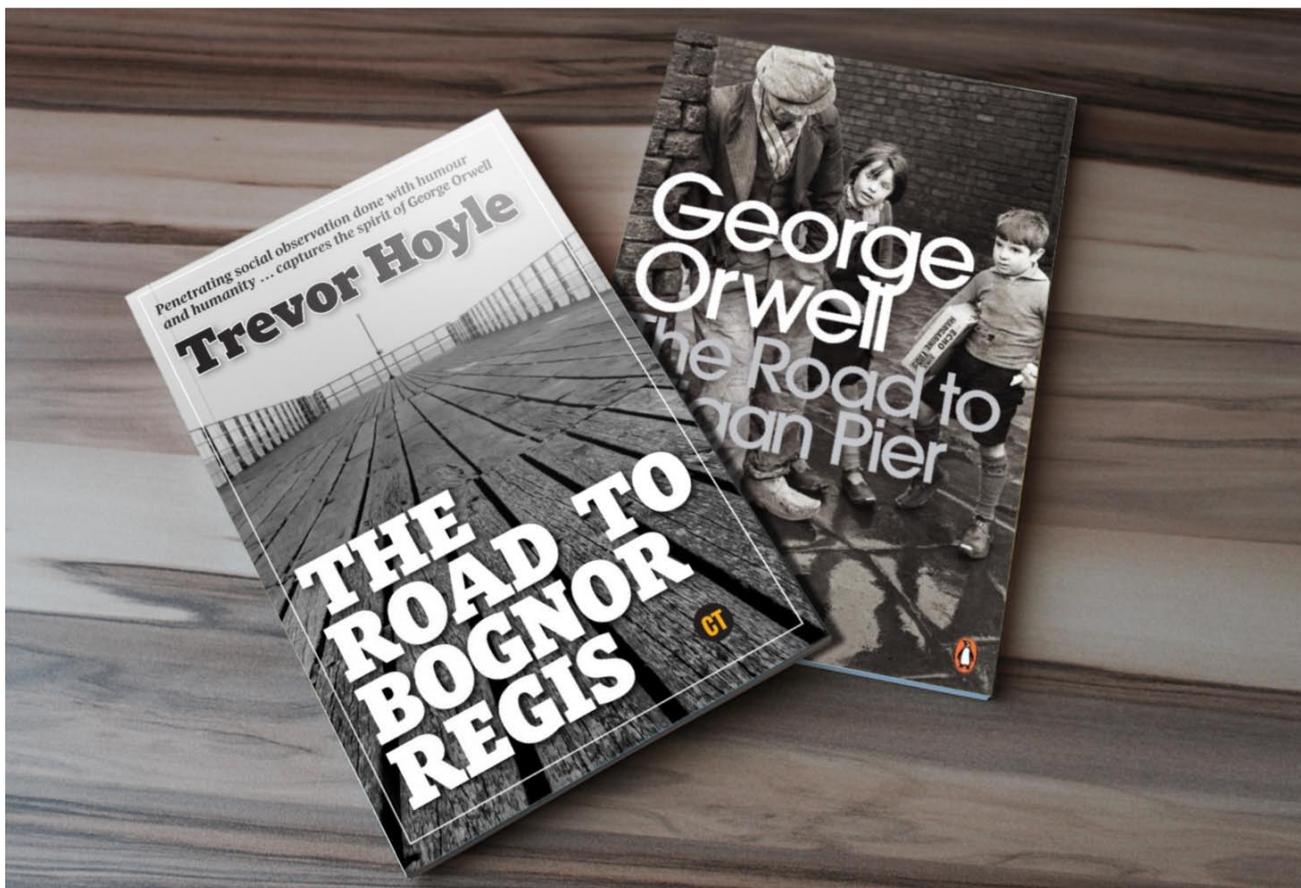
In January 1936 George Orwell set off on a seven-week tour of the industrial areas of the north of England. As an intellectual upper-middle class observer his purpose was to investigate and report on the conditions of the working class, and to bring to the attention of the disinterested, relatively affluent south the plight of millions of working people in the "forgotten" half of the country in the depths of the Depression. Orwell was, amazingly, only thirty-three when he wrote *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which was published by Gollancz in 1937.

In 1986 millions of people are suffering the social consequences of economic change; and once again there is in the north a mood of bitterness, apathy and despair – a feeling that central government and The South, while perhaps better informed than before, are really just as disinterested and uncaring as they were fifty years ago. As someone who was born in Lancashire (where Orwell did much of his research) and who still lives here, these changes are for me an everyday living reality, affecting people I know, and not just the

distant, abstract result of economic policies. The North-Side Divide might be a handy cliché for broadcasters and newspaper editors; for those of us on the "wrong" side of the line it's more than just a glib sound-bite on the six o'clock news.

An opposing and (as far as I know) original approach to the task Orwell set himself would be, quite simply, to reverse the process. Instead of following in Orwell's footsteps and reiterating the tired familiar tale of gloom and bleak despair in our northern towns and cities, perhaps it would be more useful and illuminating if a northerner set off on a tour of the south, and by inference rather than direct comparison, obliquely demonstrated the differences and inequalities which divide the two halves of the nation.

In just the same way that Orwell sought to convey a highly subjective, impressionistic vision of the north, its conditions and its people, my idea is not to produce a colourful travelogue, or a catalogue of facts and figures, but to feel free to rearrange times and places and events to suit the narrative structure; and, again like Orwell, to employ the novelist's technique of combining several individuals into a



ON THE ROAD: Hoyle planned to counter Orwell's famous trip to Wigan with his own literary journey from Wigan to Bognor.

composite character. So my aim is not to come up with an "objective" or "balanced" report, even supposing such a mythical beast exists.

Bognor Regis epitomises to the northerner the cosy and complacent slumbering south. Also I like the sound of it, both as a place and as a title. With Bognor as my focal point, I also plan to visit Herne Bay, Tunbridge Wells, Eastbourne, Brighton, Worthing, Dorchester, Weymouth, Lyme Regis, Bridgewater, Wells and Swindon. My intention is to produce a book of 70,000-75,000 words by May 1st, for publication in Autumn 1987.

As a postscript, Orwell included a political analysis in which he prophesied either the coming of an "effective Socialist party" or "a slimy Anglicised form of Fascism, with

cultured policemen instead of Nazi gorillas and the lion and the unicorn instead of the swastika". He also looked forward to the time when "the class-difficulty may solve itself more rapidly than now seems thinkable" – with hindsight a vain and rather naive hope. I am not a "political writer" in the sense that Orwell was, and therefore the postscript I have in mind is a look at the Wigan of today, how it has changed since Orwell's visit and what are the realistic expectations of its people in the latter part of the 1980s.

The proposed book could be seen as the documentary mirror-image of VAIL, and perhaps would capture the imagination of readers by being regarded as non-fiction (and therefore "true"), not least in owing its

inspiration to Orwell's famous book, aptly on the 50th anniversary of its publication.

Yours etc, Trevor

My fictional take on the North-South Divide had been Vail, and 1984 its publication year being an auspicious omen in my mind if no one else's. The novel had picked up some good, prestigious reviews ("... a comedy which is even blacker than the diesel and grime with which the eponymous hero covers his head for his appearance on television, fronting a programme called Bootstraps." – Times Literary Supplement) and in consequence sold in its dozens.

To give an idea of the compari-

son between Orwell's 1936 odyssey and my attempt, you need a flavour of the original:

THE ROAD TO WIGAN PIER

by George Orwell

Chapter 1

THE first sound in the mornings was the clumping of the mill-girls' clogs down the cobbled street. Earlier than that, I suppose, there were factory whistles which I was never awake to hear.

There were generally four of us in the bedroom, and a beastly place it was, with that defiled impermanent look of rooms that are not serving their rightful purpose. Years earlier the house had been an ordinary dwelling-house, and when the Brookers had taken it and fitted it out as a tripe-shop and lodging-house, they had inherited some of the more useless pieces of furniture and had never had the energy to remove them. We were therefore sleeping in what was recognizably a drawing-room.

That was Orwell's beginning. This is the abridged opening chapter of the book I was planning and intending to write:

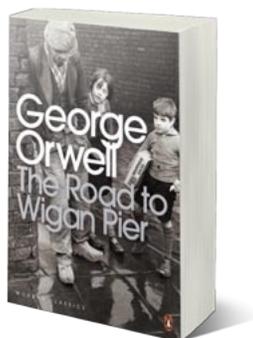
THE ROAD TO BOGNOR REGIS

by Trevor Hoyle

Chapter 1

THE first sound you hear is the gentle thud and lisp of the waves on the shingle. This seemed to be the opening I was looking for, but as it turned out my expectations and prejudices were confounded, not to say ill-judged.

From the big bay window of my hotel room I looked down



“There were generally four of us in the bedroom, and a beastly place it was”

on the black shiny Brylcreemed head of the porter swabbing the front steps. The foreshortened angle emphasised the ponderous swell of his paunch, supported by a straining brown leather belt. He threw the bucket of steaming soapy water, made a few swipes with his mop, and then stood, feet apart, cigarette jutting from the corner of his mouth, contemplating with leisurely satisfaction the quiet promenade at this early hour of a Saturday morning.

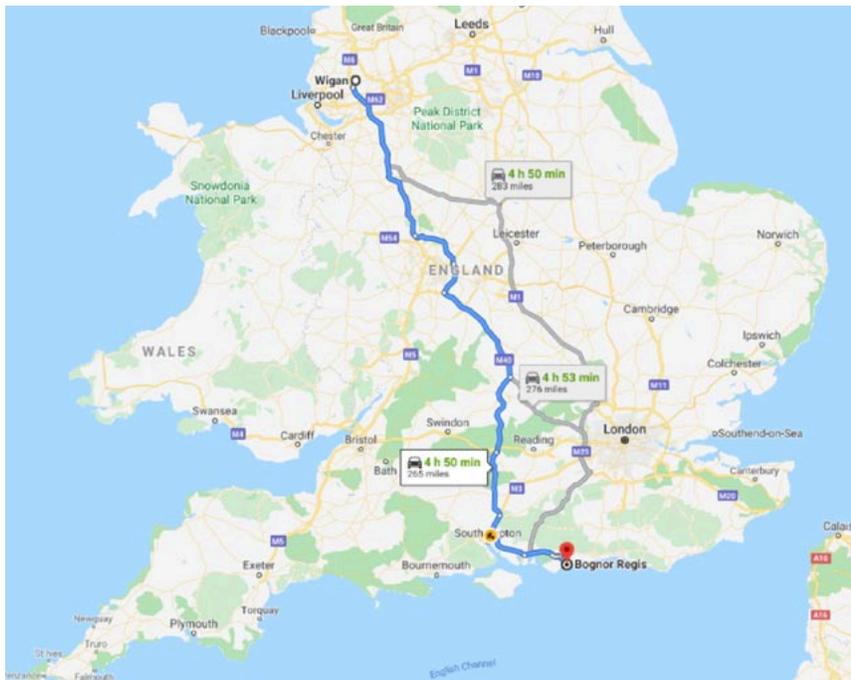
It must have been about nine o'clock. There were a few walkers with their dogs on this mild morning. An elderly woman with her head wrapped in a purple chiffon scarf and wearing sun-glasses tottered along, as if leaning into the wind, if there had been any. It was late November and the resort was empty of tourists. An Irish folk group called The Fureys was the forthcoming attraction at the Pier Pavilion, making their Only Sus-

sex Appearance! *Top Gun*, *Critters* and *Psycho III* were showing in the area.

The man on the steps had a thin black moustache, like the greasy tar strip Akim Tamiroff wore in the Orson Welles' film *Touch of Evil*. There was something seedy and slightly disreputable about him. I imagine seaside resorts down here to be swarming with such people – helpers, servers, swabbers, clearers-up – getting their bed and board and a pittance in exchange for portering, odd-jobbing, moving furniture, etc. Elsewhere they would be on the dole, but here they manage to survive because of the excess fat that cushions a town where unemployment is round about the 7 per cent mark.

In the dining-room the cereal bowls were lined up on a side table, already filled with cornflakes, and a single jug of watered orange juice. Two elderly people, a man and a woman, bearing the marks of genteel subsistence, were discussing a local cafe where the prices were reasonable and the helpings generous. The woman was doing most of the talking, and eventually became apologetic that she was so tardy – “I'm always the last, aren't I?” – in polishing off the last scrap of toast.

Of the few other occupants were two young girls, and a child of two or three who was clamped to the table in a kind of plastic vice. The older of the two girls, who was very fat, with pale inflated arms stretching the sleeves of her dress, I took to be the child's minder or sister, but she turned out to be the mother, capably hoisting it up over her shoulder where it goggled at me with a mouth smeared



HEADING SOUTH: Looking for an idyllic town that didn't exist.

with toast crumbs and jam, head cushioned on the rolling folds of the girl's neck. On the way out the mother stopped to have a word with a man sitting alone, in his forties, I guessed. The most noticeable thing about him was his hair, starting low and square on his forehead and rising at thirty-three degrees in symmetrical waves to a sheer, hacked-off drop at the back. He wore a striped shirt and non-matching striped tie with a Windsor knot, heavy tweed jacket, and in his breast pocket a glimpse of handkerchief, with three or four assorted ballpens. When they had gone he carried on shovelling in bacon and egg and mopping his plate, just as a hungry child would, then wiped his mouth and pulled out a worn tobacco pouch and rolled a cigarette. When he got up to leave, I saw he was wearing fluffy red carpet slippers.

I don't suppose this type of

harmless eccentric can only be found in second-rate hotels on the south coast. But he did strike me as typical of those I had seen aimlessly wandering the streets, most of them elderly, a bit lost and out of touch with mainstream life. They are a form of southern bag-people, living in shabby gentility, who instead of dragging themselves along the gutters looking for scraps or lying sprawled and bleary-eyed amongst empty bottles of cheap sherry, keep up some kind of respectable front while actually leading marginal, hand-to-mouth lives only a step or two removed from real penury.

The main shopping streets of Worthing were jingling merrily into Christmas, with the help of Paul McCartney assuring us from a stereo speaker outside an electrical store that everyone was "simply having a wonderful Christmas-time". Nearby there was a shop with an artificial leg

in the window. It was surrounded by bed-pans, walking-frames, items of thermal underwear, and ingenious contraptions of incontinence equipment. I wondered if this was the famous "Body Shop" I had heard about. According to the local paper, Princess Di was to open a new Body Shop factory extension in a few days' time. But no, further along the street I came upon the real thing, faked up with green paint and gold-leaf to resemble a 1930s village store, with dainty plaited baskets in the window and a heavenly smell wafting onto the cold pavement.

The local paper had in fact led its front-page story with the Princess coming to look round a residential centre for the handicapped, run by the Sussex Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, and almost as an aside had mentioned the new extension at Littlehampton. But who was fooling who, I wondered? The "noblesse oblige" angle was respectable cover for the real business of bestowing Royal favour on a thrusting entrepreneurial success story.

"I have always been a fan of Princess Diana," the deputy matron told a reporter. "I'm so excited I haven't been able to think what to say to her. She has said she does not want any fuss but she will be getting two bouquets."

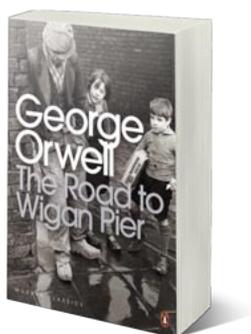
The charity collectors were out in force that day; I've forgotten what good cause they were collecting for – cancer perhaps, or stroke victims. There is certainly enough surplus cash sloshing around down here to provide resources and equipment that the NHS and the social services can't. Two full pages in the local paper

were given over to a hospital scanner appeal, which has raised £60,000 towards a target of half-a-million spondulicks. A sailing club raised £350 at a snooker and raffle evening; a youth football club collected £26.66; the Soroptimists Club held a Glitter and Glow evening; twenty hefty beer drinkers were planning to tow a double-decker bus along the prom.

This is all tremendous heart-warming stuff. You can't help but feel a glitter and glow at the efforts of these selfless folk, helping others worse off than themselves.

I began to wonder whether I was uniquely alone as a mean-spirited Scrooge in detecting an unhealthy, almost rancid odour in this plethora of blatant begging and wholesome Christian charity. Because what it does (and is intended to do) is divert our attention and nullify any pangs of conscience we might otherwise feel about a society that has abdicated its responsibility in caring for the sick, disabled and elderly. Indeed, we feel righteous and absolved when we drop thirty pee into a collector's box for a worthwhile cause. It allows us to go blithely on our way, averting our gaze and closing our minds to the real, fundamental question, which is (obviously) why do we need to collect money in the first place?

On the radio the other day an ex-cabinet minister was asked his views on Childline, a charity recently set up to help children and young people suffering physical and sexual abuse. Ten thousand calls had come in during the first week, and the service was existing on a shoestring and the goodwill of volunteers. The ex-cabinet minister said that Childline was



***To the southerner,
the North is a
smoking slag heap,
a labyrinth of mills,
terraced houses and
cobble streets***

providing an essential service and that with Christmas approaching we ought to seriously consider making a donation. No suggestion, you will note, that the government should get involved by contributing some taxpayers' dosh to the fund. Had this radical notion been put to him I expect his response would have been a wagging finger and an admonition that you don't solve problems by "throwing money at them". And yet, curiously, this glib slogan is without fail applied to social reforms or the improvement of public services – never to buying missiles or tanks or spending £300 million on advertising campaigns to sell state assets to the people who already own them. "Throwing money" at something works in some cases, apparently, not in others.

Driving west along the coast road, I passed through late-Victorian and Edwardian villa civilisa-

tion, the route taking me inland a few miles and curving down to Bognor Regis. As we all do with places we've never been to, I had formed a hazy mental picture of what to expect. Let me try to conjure up how I, a northerner, might envision it.

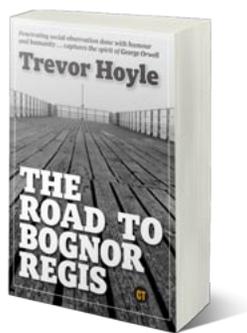
First it would be small; a cosy, clean, genteel town tucked away into a gently folded green landscape. No factory chimneys of course, no signs of any industry whatsoever. The streets would be narrow and curved, set at interesting angles to one another, gradually converging from the higher slopes to a square or a quietly bustling main street ...

The people would be well-fed and well-dressed, in understated English good taste. There would be bookshops with trays of remainders on the pavement under faded green awnings, antiques shops, cafes with check tablecloths, fishmongers with their cold slabs open to the street, a small public library in mock-Gothic and stained glass, pubs with saloon bars but without juke boxes, a bandstand in a neat formal park, and perhaps a small civic theatre presenting the local amateur society's latest musical production. To object that this is hopelessly old-fashioned and naively romantic is to miss the point. I knew the vision I carried in my head bore little connection to the reality I expected to find. Just as, to the southerner, the North is one vast smoking slag heap, a dark labyrinth of mills, terraced houses and cobble streets – despite the knowledge that much of it (but not all) has been swept away – so my view of this small West Sussex town was idyllic and mythologised.

Disappointingly, the town was flat. Not a gently folding hill to be seen. And instead of an elegant promenade, the road along the sea-front was like a somnolent suburban avenue: a few strollers dotted about, the odd stray dog, an old lady in a wheelchair with her head swathed in a tartan scarf and a hat jammed down over her ears. Facing the sea were the usual “courts”, which seems to be the fancy name given in these parts to nondescript jerry-built blocks of flats

This being a Saturday, the main shopping street was busy. People collecting for charity (as usual) outside the central Post Office. Had I been dumped on this street from outer Mongolia and opened my eyes to see the plastic and neon signs above the shop-fronts – Curry’s, Marks & Spencer, Fosters Menswear, Boots, DER, WH Smith, McDonald’s, Dixon’s, Paperchase – I could have been in any town or city in Britain and not known the difference; there was no difference. North vs. South has been obliterated. We have all been flattened and rolled out to lie neatly and uniformly on the endless conveyor belt of mass advertising, mass marketing, mass consumerism. The same tastes, the same needs, the same shops, the same goods, the same people. Everywhere and everything determined by the marketing experts’ graph.

And this daft quest I had embarked upon, this folly – setting out to look for the “other” England, the soft underbelly of the nation, the mythical South of my prejudices and imagination – was exposed for what it was: a mission



The brutal gaping differences Orwell had witnessed in the 1930s were no longer there – on the surface at least

without purpose for a goal that didn’t exist, because there was nothing to find except more of the same. A fool’s errand.

We might pretend that we’re different from that lot “down there” or superior to that lot “up there”, and perhaps superficial differences do still exist, but we’re more homogenous now than we’ve ever been. More the same, definitely, than different. For all the talk of education helping us to nurture our inner selves and develop our unique talents, for all the fashionable theories of achieving personal goals through freedom of expression and equality of opportunity – for all the political cant and mass media bullshit – quite the reverse has happened. What has happened is that a gigantic invisible steamroller has trundled across the land – the metal nameplate on its side reads “Consumerism” – and stamped

us all flat, as indistinguishable one from the other as so many pancakes.

**End of chapter one.
(End of book as it turned out.)**

As this opening chapter testifies I did undertake and complete part of the itinerary I had outlined in my letter to John Calder. Stopping briefly at Tunbridge Wells, I’d gone on to Brighton, Worthing and Bognor, staying a day or so at each place.

But what stymied the project was that stroll down the main street in Bognor. The brutal gaping differences Orwell had witnessed in the 1930s were no longer there – on the surface at least. Everything was superficially the same as where I’d just come from, and it left me wondering what the hell there was to write about.

Of course there was plenty to write about. Reading the letter and chapter again after all these years, I think it was a worthwhile idea and I wish I’d persevered and stuck with it. The book might have turned into a fictionalised social survey that disproved the very thing I’d started out to prove, so the wrong assumptions (on my part) might have been the point of writing it. **CT**

Trevor Hoyle is a writer and novelist based in Lancashire, England. His most recent novel is the environmental thriller *The Last Gasp*, published by Jo Fletcher Books (Quercus). His website is www.trevorhoyle.com.

John Pilger

Forgotten coup against ‘the most loyal ally’

How sections of the Australian elite colluded in an Anglo-American conspiracy against maverick prime minister Gough Whitlam

THE Australian High Court has ruled that correspondence between the Queen and the Governor-General of Australia, her viceroy in the former British colony, is no longer “personal” and the property of Buckingham Palace. Why does this matter?

Secret letters written in 1975 by the Queen and her man in Canberra, Sir John Kerr, can now be released by the National Archives – if the Australian establishment allows it. On November 11, 1975, Kerr infamously sacked the reformist government of prime minister Gough Whitlam, and delivered Australia into the hands of the United States.

Today, Australia is a vassal state bar none: its politics, intelligence agencies, military and much of its media are integrated into Washington’s “sphere of dominance” and war plans. In Donald Trump’s current provocations of China, the US bases in Australia are described as the “tip of the spear”.

There is an historical amnesia among Australia’s polite society

about the catastrophic events of 1975. An Anglo-American coup overthrew a democratically elected ally in a demeaning scandal in which sections of the Australian elite colluded. This is largely unmentionable. The stamina and achievement of the Australian historian Jenny Hocking in forcing the High Court’s decision are exceptional.

Gough Whitlam was driven from government on Remembrance Day, 1975. When he died six years ago, his achievements were recognised, if grudgingly, his mistakes noted in false sorrow. The truth of the coup against him, it was hoped, would be buried with him.

During the Whitlam years, 1972-75, Australia briefly achieved independence and became intolerably progressive. Politically, it was an astonishing period. An American commentator wrote that no country had “reversed its posture in international affairs so totally without going through a domestic revolution”.

The last Australian troops were ordered home from their mer-

cenary service to the American assault on Vietnam. Whitlam’s ministers publicly condemned US barbarities as “mass murder” and the crimes of “maniacs”. The Nixon administration was corrupt, said the Deputy Prime Minister, Jim Cairns, and called for a boycott of American trade. In response, Australian dockers refused to unload American ships.

Whitlam moved Australia towards the Non-Aligned Movement and called for a Zone of Peace in the Indian ocean, which the US and Britain opposed. He demanded France cease its nuclear testing in the Pacific. In the UN, Australia spoke up for the Palestinians. Refugees fleeing the CIA-engineered coup in Chile were welcomed into Australia: an irony I know that Whitlam later savoured.

Although not regarded as on the left of the Labor Party, Gough Whitlam was a maverick social democrat of principle, pride and propriety. He believed that a foreign power should not control his country’s resources and dictate its economic and foreign policies. He proposed to “buy back the farm”.

In drafting the first Aboriginal



BEFORE THE COUP: Gough Whitlam meets later-disgraced President Richard Nixon at the White House in Washington.

lands rights legislation and supporting Aboriginal strikers, his government raised the ghost of the greatest land grab in human history, Britain's colonisation of Australia, and the question of who owned the island-continent's vast natural wealth.

At home, equal pay for women, free universal higher education and support for the arts became law. There was a sense of real urgency, as if political time was already running out.

Latin Americans will recognise

the audacity and danger of such a "breaking free" in a country whose establishment was welded to great, external power. Australians had served every British imperial adventure since the Boxer rebellion was crushed in China. In the 1960s, Australia pleaded to join the US in its invasion of Vietnam, then provided "black teams" for the CIA.

Whitlam's enemies gathered. US diplomatic cables published in 2013 by WikiLeaks disclose the names of leading figures in both

main parties, including a future prime minister and foreign minister, as Washington's informants during the Whitlam years.

Gough Whitlam knew the risk he was taking. The day after his election, he ordered that his staff should no longer be "vetted or harassed" by the Australian security organisation, ASIO, which was then, as now, tied to Anglo-American intelligence. A CIA station officer in Saigon wrote, "We were told the Australians might as well be regarded as North Vietnamese collaborators".

Alarm in Washington rose to fury when, in the early hours of March 16, 1973, Whitlam's Attorney-General, Lionel Murphy, led a posse of Federal police in a raid on the Melbourne offices of ASIO. Since its inception in 1949, ASIO had become as powerful in Australia as the CIA in Washington. A leaked file on Deputy Prime Minister Jim Cairns described him as a dangerous figure who would bring about "the destruction of the democratic system of government".

ASIO's real power derived from the UKUSA Treaty, with its secret pact of loyalty to foreign intelligence organisations – notably the CIA and MI6. This was demonstrated dramatically when the (now defunct) *National Times* published extracts from tens of thousands of classified documents under the headline, "How ASIO Betrayed Australia to the Americans".

Australia is home to some of the most important spy bases in the world. Whitlam demanded to know the CIA's role and if and why the CIA was running the "joint

facility” at Pine Gap near Alice Springs. As documents leaked by Edward Snowden revealed in 2013, Pine Gap allows the US to spy on everyone.

“Try to screw us or bounce us”, Whitlam warned the US ambassador, Walter Rice, “[and Pine Gap] will become a matter of contention”.

Victor Marchetti, the CIA officer who had helped set up Pine Gap, later told me, “This threat to close Pine Gap caused apoplexy in the White House... a kind of Chile [coup] was set in motion”.

Pine Gap’s top-secret messages were de-coded by a CIA contractor, TRW. One of the de-coders was Christopher Boyce, a young man troubled by the “deception and betrayal of an ally” he witnessed. Boyce revealed that the CIA had infiltrated the Australian political and trade union elite and was spying on phone calls and Telex messages.

In an interview with the Australian author and investigative journalist, William Pinwell, Boyce revealed one name as especially important. The CIA referred to the Governor-General of Australia, Sir John Kerr, as “our man Kerr”.

Kerr was not only the Queen’s man and a passionate monarchist, he had long-standing ties to Anglo-American intelligence. He was an enthusiastic member of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, described by Jonathan Kwitny of the *Wall Street Journal* in his book, *The Crimes of Patriots*, as, “an elite, invitation-only group... exposed in Congress as being founded, funded and generally run by the CIA”.



The joint Australia/USA communications facility at Pine Gap near Alice Springs in central Australia

“The Brits were actually decoding secret messages coming into my foreign affairs office”

Kerr was also funded by the Asia Foundation, exposed in Congress as a conduit for CIA influence and money. The CIA, wrote Kwitny, “paid for Kerr’s travel, built his prestige, even paid for his writings ... Kerr continued to go to the CIA for money”.

When Whitlam was re-elected for a second term in 1974, the White House sent Marshall Green to Canberra as ambassador. Green was an imperious, sinister figure who worked in the shadows of America’s “deep state”. Known as the “coupmaster”, he had played a central role in the 1965 coup

against President Sukarno in Indonesia – which cost up to a million lives.

One of Green’s first speeches in Australia was to the Australian Institute of Directors, described by an alarmed member of the audience as “an incitement to the country’s business leaders to rise against the government”.

The Americans worked closely with the British. In 1975, Whitlam discovered that MI6 was operating against his government. “The Brits were actually decoding secret messages coming into my foreign affairs office”, he said later. One of his ministers, Clyde Cameron, told me, “We knew MI6 was bugging Cabinet meetings for the Americans”.

Senior CIA officers later revealed that the “Whitlam problem” had been discussed “with urgency” by the CIA’s director, William Colby, and the head of MI6, Sir Maurice Oldfield. A deputy director of the CIA said, “Kerr did what he was told to do”,

On November 10, 1975, Whitlam was shown a top secret telex message sourced to Theodore Shackley, the notorious head of the CIA's East Asia Division, who had helped run the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile two years earlier. Shackley's message was read to Whitlam. It said that the prime minister of Australia was a security risk in his own country. Brian Toohey, editor of the *National Times*, disclosed that it carried the authority of Henry Kissinger, destroyer of Chile and Cambodia.

Having removed the heads of both Australian intelligence agencies, ASIO and ASIS, Whitlam was now moving against the CIA. He called for a list of all "declared" CIA officers in Australia.

The day before the Shackley cabled arrived on November 10, 1975, Sir John Kerr visited the headquarters of the Defence Signals Directorate, Australia's NSA, where he was secretly briefed on the "security crisis". It was dur-

Invoking archaic vice-regal "reserve powers" invested by the British monarch, Kerr sacked the prime minister

ing that weekend, according to a CIA source, that the CIA's "demands" were passed to Kerr via the British.

On November 11, 1975 – the day Whitlam was to inform Parliament about the secret CIA presence in Australia – he was summoned by Kerr. Invoking archaic vice-regal "reserve powers" invested in him by the British monarch, Kerr sacked the democratically elected prime minister.

The "Whitlam problem" was solved. Australian politics never

recovered, nor the nation its true independence.

The destruction of Salvador Allende's government in Chile four years earlier, and of scores of other governments that have questioned the divine right of American might and violence since 1945, was replicated in the most loyal of American allies, often described as "the lucky country". Only the form of the crushing of democracy in Australia in 1975 differed, along with its enduring cover up.

Imagine a Whitlam today standing up to Trump and Pompeo. Imagine the same courage and principled defiance. Well, it happened. **CT**

*John Pilger's website is www.johnpilger.com. This article is abridged from *The Coup*, in John Pilger's book, *A Secret Country*, Vintage Books, London. See also Pilger's film, *Other People's Wars* – www.johnpilger.com/videos/the-last-dream-other-peoples-wars*



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Ross Cole

When it's admirable to steal music

Acts of theft may be absolved or justified only if the stolen thing is advanced in some way and made yet more covetable

IN Noah Baumbach's semi-autobiographical film *The Squid and the Whale*, the young protagonist Walt performs a song at a school talent show that he claims to have written himself. He wins first prize, his girlfriend loves it, and at dinner his overbearing dad says that it reminds him of his second novel.

But of course Walt gets found out. He didn't write it, Roger Waters did. It's the song *Hey You* from Pink Floyd's 1979 album *The Wall*. Confronted by the school therapist, Walt concedes: "I felt I could have written it ... so the fact that it was already written was kind of a technicality".

It's something most of us have felt before. Plagiarism as an assertion of identity, a misguided sense that we own the things we love. The composer Igor Stravinsky once referred to this affliction as "a rare form of kleptomania" – plundering of the musical past as raw material for the present.

Stravinsky was doing some-

thing quite different to Walt. He refashioned his stolen sources into something new: Russian folk melodies were incorporated into *The Rite of Spring* and material from the classical era gave rise to *Pulcinella*. And yet Stravinsky tells us that *Pulcinella* was not only the first of his "many love affairs" with the past, but also "a look in the mirror". Just like Walt, then, Stravinsky's plagiarism was a form of deferred and narcissistic self-recognition.

We can look at such acts in one of two ways: either as an unethical infringement of somebody else's intellectual property or as the symptom of an attitude that under-

pins creative endeavour across the arts. In one of his *Red Hand Files* bulletins, the singer-songwriter Nick Cave urges us to embrace the second of these:

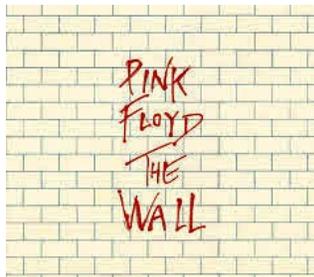
The great beauty of contemporary music, and what gives it its edge and vitality, is its devil-may-care attitude toward appropriation – everybody is grabbing stuff from

everybody else, all the time. It's a feeding frenzy of borrowed ideas that goes toward the advancement of rock music – the great artistic experiment of our era.

"Plagiarism," writes Cave, "is an ugly word for what, in rock and roll, is a natural and necessary – even admirable – tendency, and that is to steal". We could tell the history of rock as a twisted genealogy of theft, beginning with Elvis's debut single – a cover of Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup's *That's All Right (Mama)* in 1954.

Cave likewise treads in Elvis's footsteps with his 1985 album *The Firstborn Is Dead*. It features tracks such as *Tupelo*, a paraphrase of John Lee Hooker's spine-chilling *Tupelo Blues*; and Blind Lemon Jefferson, a homage to a blues singer of the same name. These singers had, in turn, written their songs by drawing on a shared tradition of stock or "floating" verses native to the deep south.

The further back you look, the more such hybridity and assimilation comes to the fore. The blues itself, as Africanists such as Ger-





SHARING TRADITION: Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds perform at the Beacon Theatre, New York.

hard Kubik have noted, emerges from a complex and centuries-old process of creative interplay between the Arab-Islamic world of north Africa and musical cultures of the Sudanic belt, displaced through Atlantic slavery.

Of course, Walt's performance of *Hey You* would not fit within Cave's vision of stealing as "the engine of progress". For Cave, acts of theft are absolved or justified only if the stolen thing is advanced in some way and made yet more covetable. Elvis, in this reading, is effectively pardoned for his appropriation of *That's All Right* to the extent that his white-skinned version of the blues (white-washed as rock and roll) was an act of "mutating and transforming" the genre that sparked a new mass cultural form still very much alive today.

Another reading, however, is

possible: that this new mode of expression was yet another instance of a dominant culture taking "everything but the burden" from African Americans – a longstanding relationship characterised, as the historian of blackface minstrelsy Eric Lott memorably put it, by "love and theft".

But what Cave is really referring to is a trope central to the literary critic Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence". No doubt we've all come across the following quote, variously attributed to Picasso, Stravinsky, William Faulkner, and Steve Jobs: "Good artists copy, great artists steal". It seems to have emerged during the late 19th-century, but was most famously expressed by TS Eliot in 1920 as "immature poets imitate; mature poets steal".

Borrowing, Eliot notes, is perfectly normal – what distinguishes bad thieves from good ones is that the former "deface what they take", whereas the latter "make it into something better, or at least something different". In the right hands, Eliot is saying, plagiarism can lead to the creation of "unique" works rather than mere hackneyed replication. This modernist dictum chimes with Cave's claim that artistic crooks must "further the idea, or be damned".

So is it ever possible to be original? The lazy answer is no. A better answer is that originality is always a scandalous collaboration with the past. **CT**

Ross Cole is Research Fellow, Music and Politics, at the University of Cambridge. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com.



"A mannish woman's jean jacket had a large, dark shape on the back, where a ridiculously glittery red heart had been".

Linh Dinh

Flying, walking, looking, thinking ...

In a flash, this earth went from being wide open to shockingly shuttered

ALTHOUGH the compulsion to travel is universal, nearly all of it is done virtually, and I'm not just talking about the internet, of course, but reading books, looking at photos, telling and hearing stories, or just thinking.

We can't stand to be confined to one spot knowing everything else

is out there, so even while sitting still we must move, if only mentally, our legs shaking, our eyes darting non-stop.

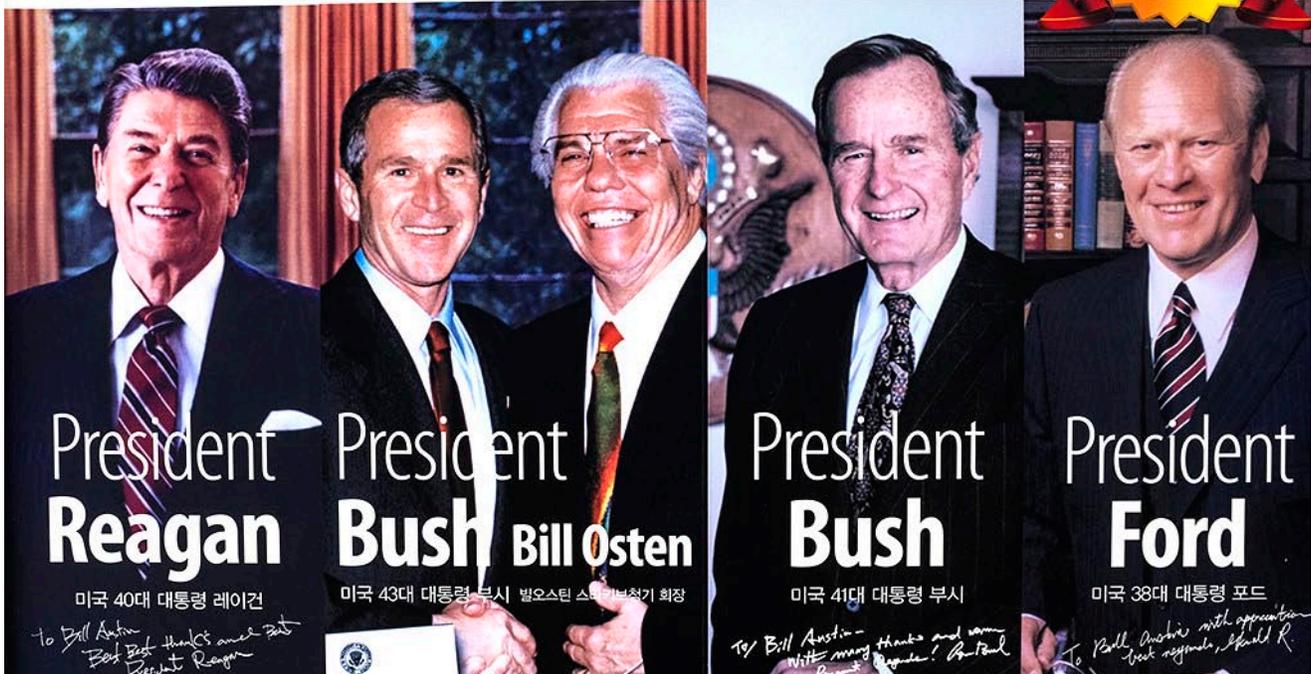
Every country is huge. Gigantic! A small town is already infinite. Our bodies and minds are tiny. Going anywhere, we're lesser than an ant touring Tokyo. With his pin-sized intellect, he's undoubt-

edly thinking, "I've got this bitch. Tokyo ain't shit".

I'm sitting in Lotte Mart in Busan, South Korea, drinking a cheap cup of coffee. How did I become so wealthy? There's abundance everywhere I look, with everything manufactured, delivered and tastefully arranged, just for me. (I got here on the Busan Subway,

선택한 스타키보정기!

Photo: Linh Dinh



With the US presidents "there was also the CEO of Starkey Labs, Bill Austin, although his last name was misspelled as Osten".

which had been laid out and maintained at great cost, also for me.) Within reach is a package that reads, "DESSERT FOR LUCKY RICH," and nearby are so many varieties of rice, all cleanly husked and elegantly packaged. As for the people, everyone is so clean and nattily dressed, because they dare not startle or offend me. Had I stayed in my room, I'd have denied myself all of this splendour.

On the subway, a middle-aged man in a well-worn black suit walked through two cars to address everyone, section by section, then he'd bow deeply, as if apologising. Everyone ignored him. He wore glasses with thick, black frame. His chin jutted out. His chest was sunken.

On the platform of Seomyeon

Station, a mannish woman's jean jacket had a large, dark shape on her back, where a ridiculously glittery red heart had been.

Yesterday I was in Waegwan, a village of 34,000. I had glimpsed it just once from a passing train, and knew nothing about it. My hunch was amply rewarded. Right across the station, there was Café Plenty, with its tiny teddy bear clutching a cross, two small Rothkoesque paintings and a plant vase inscribed with "LOVE GROWS BEST IN LITTLE HOUSES." The music was like Liberace paying tribute to Erik Satie.

The traditional market had ornate, lacy gates that made me think of seaside arcades, but inside, the mood was subdued, for commerce was slow. I noticed a shutdown Vietnamese eatery, Hidden Corner Joint. When the coronavirus

flared up in South Korea three-plus months ago, many Vietnamese fled home, thus starving these businesses.

At a hearing aid business, there's a sign showing four US residents, all Republicans. Along with Ford, Reagan, Bush and Bush, there was also the CEO of Starkey Labs, Bill Austin, although his last name was misspelled as "Osten". When it's not your alphabet, words are just wiggly lines. I'm only starting to figure out the Korean for s, a and ong, and I've learnt exactly two words, "neh" for "yes", and "mandu" for "dumpling".

"Neh, mandu", and since I also know Cass and Terra, the two (godawful) brands of cheap Korean beers, I'm a fully functioning member of South Korean society. "Neh, mandu. Cass".

In a foreign place, you can make



The US soldiers "were going to the gigantic Shinsegae Shopping Mall in Dongdaegu. They don't get out much, apparently".

the dumbest mistakes, so a couple of times I've picked up packets of tampons thinking they're facial tissues, but that's OK. Now that I'm an expert on Korean tampons, I can unequivocally recommend NADA 101, for the name alone. Surely, it's a riff on Dylan's "It's alright ma, I'm only bleeding".

As a minority, and soon-to-be undocumented worker, I should look into running for office under an anti-discrimination, social justice platform, for I've had it up to here, man, with all the microscopic aggression directed against me, day and night, by all 50-million Koreans! Smiling, some even attempt to speak to me in English, as if I don't understand their language, which is true enough, but that's not the point. Out of pure malice, they're only using English to waterboard me

with their deeply inhumane accusation that I don't belong here! Just this afternoon, I walked by a woman who wore a black T-shirt with big white letters, aimed right at my face (mostly because I was looking at her boobs), "IT'S TIME TO GO HOME".

With all the dumplings I've eaten, I've contributed so much to the South Korean economy. Don't Koreans realise I built their, I mean *our*, country?

In Busan, most whites I see are Russians, so when I spotted a white in Waegwan, I thought maybe he was Russian, then I saw six blacks, four women and two men, marching into the train station.

I've been in South Korea for three months, and just about every day, I'd walk miles and take the

subway, train or bus all over, but only yesterday did I see sagging pants, showing underwear! Cultures are different in every way.

It turned out they were American soldiers, among the 1,500 stationed at nearby Camp Carroll. They were going to the gigantic Shinsegae Shopping Mall in Dongdaegu. They don't get out much, apparently.

Back in Busan, I looked up Waegwan. During the Korean War, the US Army believed North Korean soldiers were among refugees trying to cross a bridge there, so it blew up this bridge, killing hundreds of people.

I also found out about Lou's Chitown, run by a real Chicagoan. Though they don't have Chicago hot dogs – what's wrong with you, Lou? I might have to run back to Waegwan, just to try Lou's cheese

steak. Mostly, though, I want to hear Lou's story.

Cattle'chuted through iconic sights, the mass tourist comes home with photos, mostly of himself, to show that he has been to London, Paris, Amsterdam, Munich, Prague, Venice and Barcelona, etc., all in a week, but a city's highlights are its least authentic selves, for they are packaged for outsiders, and swarmed by them, while locals mostly stay away.

To experience a truer Paris, you should spend an afternoon in Belleville instead of around the Eiffel Tower and, since each city is already its greatest museum, you would gain more insights roaming randomly through Parisian streets than at the Louvre.

Since every city, town or village is its most complex, nuanced and stimulating book, you can never finish contemplating any of them, even the one you've lived in forever.

Virginia Woolf agrees, "As we step out of the house on a fine evening between four and six, we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous tramps, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room. For there we sit surrounded by objects which perpetually express the oddity of our own temperaments and enforce the memories of our own experience [...] But when the door shuts on us, all that vanishes. The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of

Giving me my cappuccino, the pretty cashier bowed very deeply, as if I was some ancient sage

perceptiveness, an enormous eye".

I've often spoken of peak travel, meaning never again could so many people zoom so freely across this earth, with some even fantasising of rocketing beyond it. With the coronavirus, we're suddenly grounded, but this would have happened anyway, soon enough. Our wobbly zeppelin economy was overdue for a crash. Having reached the peak of everything, we must brace for much turbulence on the way down.

Though the travel industry will recover ground, peak roaming is toast, but this doesn't mean we can't poke around here, there and everywhere, with our eyes wide open. To travel any distance is to march into an infinity of fresh definitions, but much of this is lost if you're moving too fast. That's why it's ideal to walk (or crawl even), for only then can you measure, sample and caress this earth with your body.

I finish this piece in Herry's Café. Giving me my cappuccino, the pretty cashier bowed very deeply, as if I was some ancient sage. I do have white hair sprouting all over, especially from my nose.

Near my guesthouse, there's a fortune teller who has gotten the

wise man look down to a T. Advertising himself as an "Oriental Predictor", he also sells statues of celestial beings and fabulous beasts. Since it's nothing for him to pronounce how and when you're going to get rich, have sex or die, I should pay him four measly bucks to meekly ask, "Wise guy, please tell me when can I leave South Korea?"

There are no international flights from Busan, and very few from Seoul. Most days, I check to see if any nearby country might let me in, but this is the only message I've encountered, "All foreign passengers will not be allowed to enter or transit through". In a flash, this vast earth went from being more open than ever before to shockingly shuttered.

"Grasshopper, you're pretty much fucked". the most honourable sage will tell me. "You can stay here illegally and collect cardboard for a living, or you can fly back to the US, and share a room with your buddy, Chuck Orlovski. He's also garrulous and flatulent, so you two are a great match. Together, you can explore Nanticok, Shickshiny, Ransom and Koonsville. Four more bucks if you want to hear how you're going to die. It ain't pretty, but it never is. Time's up!"

Time's up for this article as well. There's a great performance outside, so I must run and see it, right this second. For my benefit, thousands of Koreans are acting just like Koreans. There is so much beauty and generosity, it's astounding. Ciao! **CT**

Linh Dinh's latest book is Postcards from the End of America. The author has a photo blog at www.linhdinhphotos.blogspot.com.

Sonali Kolhatkar

The pandemic is a time to profit

Even in the midst of the pandemic, the rich are getting richer and bolder in their fight against working Americans.

THE American Enterprise Institute's (AEI) Michael Strain wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* recently explaining how "The American Dream Is Alive and Well", and that in his opinion this nation has, "bigger issues than inequality".

Strain's piece is part of the paper's new pandemic-era series called "The America We Need", and engages in a set of impressive mental gymnastics to conclude that it ought to be of no concern that the rich are getting richer and that it would be better to focus instead on, "the relatively slow rate of productivity growth", or "the long-term decline in male employment".

Michael Strain is incredulous over our fixation on the concentration of wealth at the top, asking, "Do Americans really care as much about inequality as the attention by media and liberal politicians suggest?"

He adds, "Given that income inequality has been stagnant or declining over the most recent decade, the timing... is odd" for a conversation "about whether

inequality suggests that capitalism itself is broken". However, inequality continues to steadily rise – a fact it seems the pro-free-market American Enterprise Institute is hoping we ignore.

In his op-ed, Strain chants a mantra that he and other proponents of capitalism want to realise through sheer repetition: "Capitalism isn't broken. The game isn't rigged. Hard work does pay off".

Most insultingly, he maintains that, "American workers are resilient and are accustomed to facing – and overcoming – economic challenges".

In other words, because American workers are used to being screwed over by the economy and most have seemingly managed to survive it, they will continue to do so in the face of ever-increasing hardship.

Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) questioned Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin during a Senate hearing on May 19, "How many workers will die if we send people back to work without the protections they

need, Mr. Secretary? How many workers should give their lives to increase our [gross domestic product] by half a percent?"

Mnuchin responded, "I think your characterisation is unfair", but the Trump administration he attempted to defend has in fact forced people back to work, namely in the meatpacking industry. President Donald Trump invoked the Defense Production Act – not to direct the commercial production of much-needed medical and protective equipment, but rather to provide cover to the meat industry as it seeks to force workers back into a dangerous environment.

Thousands of workers have become infected in recent months. But if meatpacking workers contract the disease and die, it is their fault, according to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, who recently claimed that it was the "home and social" conditions in the lives of meatpacking plant workers that were responsible for their Covid-19 diagnoses. He even went as far as suggesting more law enforcement surveillance of those communities where

meatpacking workers live in order to police social distancing.

Making clear just how little Republicans in particular care about workers, Trump has opposed extending unemployment insurance for laid-off workers. His Labor Department has encouraged companies to snitch on workers so that their unemployment benefits are cut off if they are too fearful of returning to work. And, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell wants to protect corporations from liability in coronavirus-related lawsuits by workers.

Republicans have also refused to take up any more stimulus bills even as more than 38-million Americans have lost jobs in just nine weeks.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, showing just how blind he is to the pain of workers, said, “I don’t see the need right now”. Senator McConnell echoed this, saying, “I don’t think we have yet felt the urgency of acting immediately. That time could... [come], but I don’t think it has yet”.

Time and again conservative politicians, in shilling for the rich, have indicated that American workers, rather than being essential, are simply expendable. This is their version of a class war.

The White House’s latest idea for helping workers is to cut corporate taxes in half as a way to incentivize overseas jobs to return to the US. Larry Kudlow, the White House’s top economic adviser, touted a payroll tax cut as a way to put more money into Americans’ pockets.

He failed to mention that cutting payroll taxes meant a cut in

payroll-tax-funded programmes such as Medicare and Social Security – programmes many Americans rely on that the class warriors have wanted to cut for years.

Amazingly, the stock market appears to not care that there is record unemployment as week after week even with skyrocketing unemployment, the Dow Jones and Nasdaq indices remain buoyed. Indeed, the indicators that are announced with much fanfare every day on the popular radio programme *Marketplace* have never had a real bearing on the well-being of American workers, no matter how much enthusiasm host Kai Ryssdal musters during his announcements. To his credit, he has admitted as much, explaining that the “wealthiest 10 percent of American households own 84 percent of all stocks”.

Before the pandemic, Trump bet his reelection on a low unemployment rate and the buoyancy of the stock market. Now, with official unemployment figures so incongruent with the stock market’s growth, he has a harder time making a claim of widespread economic prosperity. In fact, there was no prosperity even before the pandemic. The official unemployment rate was low, but that did not indicate how many people had quit looking for work or how poor quality those jobs were. The pandemic has exposed the fact that Trump’s claims of financial triumph were always more of a mirage than a miracle.

As the anguish of millions of American workers remains irrelevant to the corporate profiteers

and their political benefactors, we are expected to rejoice in the fact that Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon, could become the world’s first trillionaire in a few years. It would be convenient for Michael Strain and the American Enterprise Institute if we are convinced to ignore such obscenity and focus instead on workers remaining “resilient” as the rich wage their class war.

The only rational response to the absurd state of the US economy is to insist that billionaires (and especially trillionaires) are simply not allowed to exist. After the first \$100-million, there is no need to continue to amass any more wealth. Congress could easily enact laws to tax billionaires heavily enough that they remained more than comfortable for the rest of their lives while funding necessary services that huge numbers of Americans could benefit from: paid sick leave, Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, and so much more.

There is no justification for individuals to hoard so much wealth compared to the rest of us. But they will never give up that wealth voluntarily. They will instead fight tooth and nail, lie and cheat, to preserve and expand their inconceivable riches. Against such a class war there is only one option. **CT**

Sonali Kolhatkar is the founder, host and executive producer of “Rising Up With Sonali,” a television and radio show that airs on Free Speech TV and Pacifica stations. This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.



Above:
The apartheid
wall surrounds
a resident's home
at Abu Dis.

Next page:
Bethlehem
is closed.
2007.

Matts Svensson

Walled in!

Israel and its defenders firmly deny suggestions that the country is an apartheid state. But images and stories from a new book showing constraints on the lives of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation tell a very different story





ONLY the bravest critics of Israel, unafraid of being branded antisemitic, seem prepared to point out the obvious similarities between the country's racial policies and those of the Afrikaner regime that inflicted apartheid on South Africa's black citizens in the years before international sanctions brought democracy to that country in the early 1990s.

However, a close look at *Apartheid is a Crime: Portraits of the Israeli Occupation*, Mats Svensson's photographs and observations from his years as a Swedish diplomat in Israel, should dispel any notions that that country is less of an apartheid nation than South Africa was.

In his forceful introduction, Ramzy Baroud, whose family were victims of the 1948 Nakba that saw Palestinians forced from their homes by rampaging

APARTHEID IS A CRIME

Portraits of the Israeli Occupation

Mats Svensson

Published by Cune Press

www.cunepress.com

US \$25

Israeli soldiers, asks, "How could the most told story in the world be one of the least understood? How could what should be an uncontested truth be so distorted?"

Svensson follows by taking readers on a journey in words and pictures through Palestine during its turbulent recent past – a period of wanton destruction of society, the building of a massive – and illegal – separation wall that marches unrelentingly through farms and villages, forced removals, and military checkpoints that dehumanise those often forced to wait hours before they can get to work each day.





Previous page:
Dominoes painted on the wall.
Bethlehem, 2013.

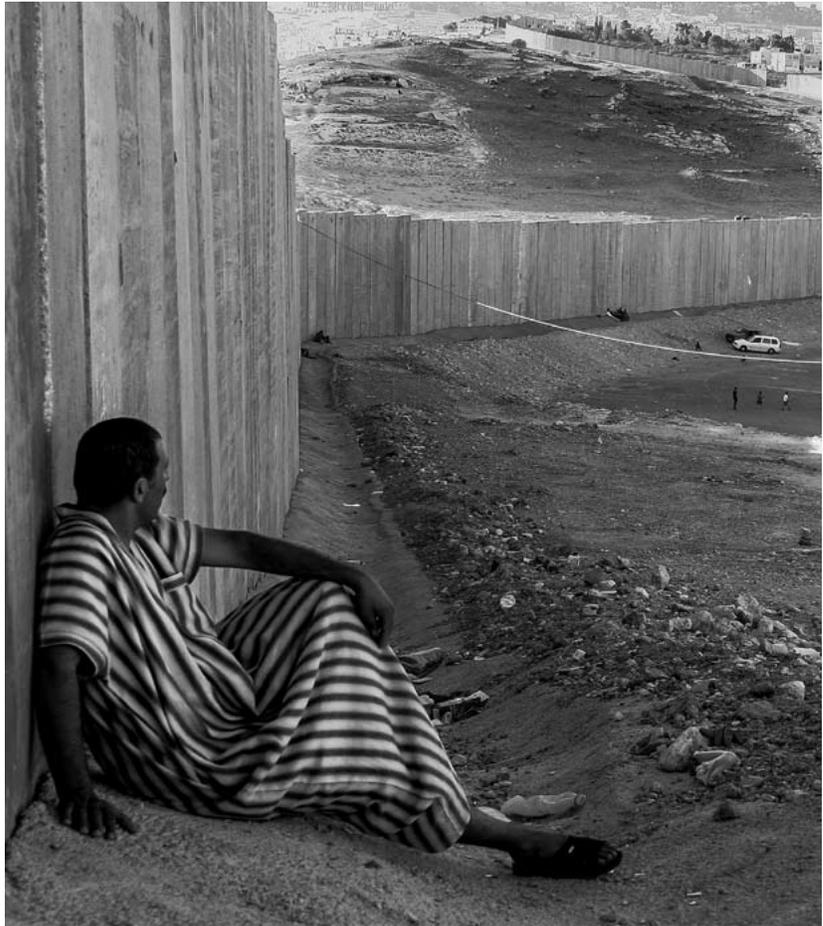
Left: Keys on the
separation wall at Abu Dis.

Below: The wall surrounds
Bethlehem. Soon after this
photo was taken,
the opening to the left
was closed.



Svensson is also critical of the international diplomacy that took him to Palestine. “We were docile, obedient as sheep”, he writes. “We worked to build a state under occupation, to revive an already-dead peace process, support the Palestinians, security services, democratic elections and refugees. While we worked, Palestine was disappearing. Before us, Palestine became smaller and smaller. We knew it was too late ...”.

The nine chapters of *Apartheid is a Crime* won't solve the problems facing the country as it faces a massive new Israeli land grab, aided and abetted by the Trump White House, but they should be enough to convince the observer that, yes, Israel is as guilty of the crime of apartheid as South Africa was. The main difference is that Black Africans *knew* that international sanctions would ensure that one day their suffering would end. Palestine has still to attain that small achievement. – TS



Dreaming of a way out. Abu Dis, June 2005



This view of the Mount of Olives is now hidden by the wall at Abu Dis.

Andrew Fischer's
Random Thoughts



Art: David Anderson / www.dandersonillustration.com

Hair raising

MANY years ago I wrote a short story titled *Maria's Hair*. Its inspiration was a co-worker at a telecom company at which I'd been hired as a temp to perform various computer-related support tasks.

I felt an attraction toward Maria the instant we met. She was on the short side, not beautiful, but adorably cute/pretty, in the way only a girl changing from bobby socks to stockings (Frankie Avalon, 1959) can look. Since she appeared to be in her early thirties, this incongruent aspect of her appearance intrigued me. Additionally, Maria spoke and zipped around with abundant enthusiasm. She was, in a word, perky.

However, the most fascinating aspect of the young woman was her hair. It was similar to Mary Tyler Moore's hair in the eponymous 1970s TV show, but bouncier.

I couldn't imagine how she managed to fix it that way, and it always caught my attention, so that I could hardly keep my eyes off her.

In any case, we had one lunch date, where she quickly informed me that – and I quote – “I'm not interested in dating”. Bummer. At least she didn't order the lobster.

Years later, the memory surfaced and I wrote a short story, *Maria's Hair*, about a man so obsessed with his girlfriend's beautiful hair that he insists on making love to it. Yes, you read correctly.... I submitted the story to a men's magazine for publication. It was rejected and returned, but enclosed was a sheet from a small notepad with two handwritten words: *good writing*.

Paying the price

THERE have always been plenty of advertisements featuring popular actors, before

and after they achieve a degree of fame. I completely understand the performers' motivation: cash. An actor doesn't have much during his/her “struggling” period, and can command oodles of it when successful.

What I don't understand is how anyone over the age of twelve can be influenced by ads with actors, especially when they appear in TV commercials as themselves. These are people whose regular job it is to say anything for money. Hand them a script and a paycheck and they'll bark like dogs if their directors say so.

Now, I'm not trying to disrespect their profession, but actors will swear they've been using a certain brand of toothpicks for twenty years if you pay them enough. I'm sure some current actors, for example Tom Selleck (reverse mortgages) and Jennifer Lopez (shampoo) are earning multiples of six figures for a day's work. Even the

longtime host of “Jeopardy” Alex Trebek (insurance) has gotten into the game... somewhat ironically, I would suggest.

Like, wow!

THE word “like” should be stricken from the English language. Maybe it was cool during the beatnik era in the 1950s, when cats and chicks could use it as a pseudo-expletive, such as “It was like, wow, man!” (which sounds really dumb today), but almost 70 years later it’s been hacked and hackneyed to death.

For decades people have been using it in everyday speech as a way to pause during a sentence, often in order to think of a way to finish it, with the word “was” preceding “like”. For example: instead of sounds saying “I loved that concert so much I was speechless”, it’s verbalised as “I loved that concert so much I was, like... speechless”. Around the world grammarians’ brains are imploding like supernovae.

A second issue with “like” is that it has pushed the word “as” to the sidelines. When I hear newscasters say “Like we reported yesterday...” I almost upchuck my Campbell’s chili. They should be saying, “As we reported yesterday”. Now, I’m not a grammar

genius and in casual speech I make plenty of grammatical errors, but well-paid professionals on television should be held to a higher standard, right?

Hmm... writing all this down just reminded me of one of my worst faux pas. About 25 years ago I was on a dinner date with a woman who had informed me that she was a “grammar freak”. She specifically railed against ending sentences with a preposition; eg, at, for, in, off, on, over, under. That offence was something I rarely committed, so I was confident in the extreme. However, a waiter came over and asked if we wanted a second round of drinks. I glanced at my date who shook her head no, and I said, “We’re fine where we’re at.” Oops. You should’ve seen her face, and after that night I never saw it again. (I did manage to survive, however.)

Hole truth

WHY are manholes placed off centre in traffic lanes, where my tires will always run over them? It makes no sense – they should be in the centre. And don’t tell me that they’ve intentionally been set toward the side of the road for safety purposes during road work – there are plenty of manholes that love to find my left-side

wheels. Thumpity-thump! Thumpity-thump! Almost every road upon which I travel has this defect.

To make matters worse, the manhole covers are almost never flush with the road surface. Instead, they’re one or more inches deep, so the sound becomes: Boomity-boom! Boomity-boom! Quite a test for my shock absorbers, and how many caster/camber/toe-in alignments are necessitated by this incompetence, I’ll never know. What I do know is that I and other motorists hate driving over the darn things and do our best to swerve around them whenever possible....

Several times a week I drive over a Twilight Zone-esque manhole-nexus of six consecutive manholes a few miles from home. They’re spaced apart a foot or so. Why on Earth should such apparent goofiness exist? My theory is that this is the place where hundreds of sewer workers get together after work to grab a beer someplace. **CT**

Andrew Fischer is an accountant and author of two books. Purgastories, a collection of short stories, is available at amazon.com. He enjoys his fiancée and designing board games; the latter can be downloaded at no charge from boardgamegeek.com.

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Final Words

Thomas S. Harrington

A nation's descent into bathos

Bathos is a wonderful word that describes an awful lot of what we are now living through.

When I pedal around neighbourhoods festooned with hearts to honour the latest herd of invented heroes, when Airbnb – the very Airbnb that operates happily and shamelessly in the apartheid state of Israel – writes to say that “discrimination is the greatest threat to a community built on belonging and acceptance”; or when I watch Spielberg’s cartoonish film on Lincoln, and so many even less artful products of the same history-flattening genre, what I see, above all, is bathos.

Unable to cope with the reality of what we have become as the denizens of a brutal empire that fails us on the most basic levels of generating and sustaining humanity, we have, under Hollywood’s strangling tutelage, become past-masters of the mawkish.

Out of touch with the practices of real seeing and feeling, and the habits of hard thought needed to generate solutions to our many problems, we seek relief in the feel-good bromides handed to us by our tormentors, and get so attached to them that we get offended when someone identifies them as, to quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the “cheap grace” that they are.

Bathos and first cousin mawkishness are clear signs of resignation, the sadly talismanic reflexes of a society of unanchored adults that, faced with serious problems, chooses to retreat again and again into the false safety of childish narrative.

Truly bathetic.

Thomas S. Harrington is professor of Hispanic Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. His most recent book is *A Citizen’s Democracy in Authoritarian Times: An American View on the Catalan Drive for Independence* (University of Valencia Press)

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