

As our knowledge of the world grows, our knowledge of danger grows also. We need to add some more horsemen to the original Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse - climate change, mind control, even meteors. Yet we are conditioned to ignore this, to keep consuming, as if we can cover up the truth. This is the story of how the cover-up has failed.

Medea's Mask: The Human Face of Chaos

By Jay Turney

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MEDEA'S

THE HUMAN FACE OF CHAOS

MASK

Jay Turney

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MEDEA UNVEILED

A human being is a walking breathing package of death, torture and murder for the rest of the planet. We are embodied entropy, the greatest accelerator of disorder in the history of organic life.

The history of our destructiveness can be told in the standard format of names, dates, places and casualty figures. This is all just quantifying a million years of slow suicide.

Pain digs in, deeply remembered in our very cells, rearranging the very structures of our bodies and rearranging our reactions to everything.

The storage of pain and painful defensive body armor in the circulatory, fluid electromagnetic and chemical processes of our lives is what kills us in the end. Rhythmic entropy, histological dissonance breaks us apart incrementally, and is the reason we crave more pleasure and luxury, at the expense of all others. Our continual remorseless unconscious pain is the source of our sins: greed, gluttony, cowardice, the willingness to make others suffer much so we might enjoy marginally more.

What a knot of perversity is the human race, what a dark burning ladder to hell is the human heart, that very bastion of dynamic equilibrium, spreading chaos at the expense of a local and self-serving order, so-called. The order of a city drowning in its own garbage.

If it is true that God created man out of chaos, when he did so he recreated chaos in allowing man to evolve. Man is anthropomorphized chaos, the violent negation of vitality, the slaughterer and abortionist of his fellow animals and plants, the perverse mad scientist experimenting with ecosystems.

In the domain of humanity, strange sights begin to multiply, intimations of death seen only by the vigilant.

Just as death is not unfathomable to an elderly bachelor, a Kafkan antihero such as has even less right to exist than Kafka felt he had, this same post-modern sage alone in the forest or under a bridge can afford to sense the impending doom others repress.

Death prepares a place for himself in every adult heart, and not a few young ones, but we refuse to acknowledge its presence. The heart aches, the body is sore but the mind, insulated in an amniotic-like bell jar of false paradise, refuses to feel anything. Hothouse flower that the mind is, pampered pet of the big man and the shaman, it allows us to oscillate between bliss and decay, between agony and denial of pain's reality,

between lust for power and the bone-deep feeling of impotence. Thoughts of course are often about the body, and even, self-referentially, about the strange illusion of eternity in consciousness, but when pain is so constant, as death seeps in ineluctably, we begin to seek nourishment in the bizarre, the impish, the horrible, tales of terror, lurid reports of sordid gore.

Catastrophe has been added as a refinement for our jaded tastes. We are all cheap nihilists now.

Conscience is in this time the reverse of an inner voice – it is just a way to enhance your self-regard as a popular or at least not hated part of the crowd. It has become an internalized censor and beadle, exactly as Freud said. Because Freud believed in no other sanction for the conscience, he dethroned God and put the death wish in that vacancy.

So those foolish enough to think their private thoughts have value apart from the coercion of gigantic adults and then gigantic titans of law enforcement and bribed justice are burned at the modern stake of polite internet mobs, virtuous rapists called journalists, opinion polls and other post-medieval torture machines, for the crime of having one heretical thought. A white carpet shows even a drop of red wine better than a burgundy one. Fear drives the liberal idealist as much, or more, than the cliché of the paranoid touchy

conservative. The paranoid conservative is honest about what he fears – race pollution, called something else, and other forms of profanation of his or her sacred space. The idealist has to swallow the bile of pretending to care about the fates of total strangers, an exercise so contrary to traditional human social arrangements that the idealist can only get the bitter taste of self-mutilation out of his guts by coercing others to be as miserable, and self-righteous, as he must be. She has to pretend the oscillating waves assembled by his TV screen into propaganda props really are people whose fates are dependent on her.

Fear and self-loathing are the hard meal the liberals must be taught to relish. Once you get this, and work on this problem of self-truth every day, the way feeble men and women work on their muscles, you can build the courage to say no, and to look every politician in the eye knowing that, if he really annoys you, you have the duty to spit infected phlegm into your hand and shake his hand with the filth that most truly represents his thought processes.

But none of these liberals want to accept the conditions of their victory, for it is the consequence of living in a system whose values are assigned numerically and abstractly, creating an artificial world

that is somehow supposed to justify the loss of all human valuations.

The omnipresent state is a paranoid fear of those who feel guilty about being freed, often against their wills, from the past burdens of family and religion. Actually, the state is always in danger of being undermined.

The state which enlarges itself at the expense of other states must somehow combine some form of Roman law – the law of central authority – with customary laws, that is, the accumulated customs, rituals and mores of particular regions. Roman law adjudicates among the customary laws of annexed or conquered peoples.

This centralized state is always subject to corruption, which spreads despite the enmity of the people because they have no alternative, and paying taxes and bribes, which eventually becomes indistinguishable, is preferable to destruction by the state. But as long as society is not completely taken over by abstract system of thought which can consistently apply a numerical value to every member, resistance is theoretically possible. The founders of the Enlightenment were so significant because they believed power could be kept checked by “reason,” not comprehending – how could they have so early? – that

they were reifying an instrumental faculty into a transcendent one, almost a metaphysical superstition of its own, and one not nearly as easy to adjudicate as they believed, nor one sanctioned, as the bad old traditions were, by use, and a certain amount of empirical justification. The appeal to reason became an appeal to a rationalized symbolic system, the monetary economic system of capitalism, based first on slavery, then industrial exploitation, then rampant and triumphalist consumerism, in which hedonism, at its best a blend with other values, becomes the sole source of satisfaction, and is thus guaranteed as much artificial renewal and stimulation as possible. The natural progression to “freedom is slavery” is obvious and almost inevitable.

So now we live in a new irrational secular religion of democracy and consumerism, enforced by the subtle and gradual, but still ruthlessly pursued, inclusion of each household in a network of electronic loyalty-testing, self-policing groups of delators and snitches, and consumer-monitoring devices. Under cover of this religion, itself a modification of the earlier Victorian religion of progress, a neoliberal, neo-bourgeoise pseudo-intellectual elite is stealing power from the management class of late, post-industrial, post-modern capitalism.

The heavy-handed nature of these pseudo-intellectual usurpers, whose authority is based on physical attractiveness, blandness and slickness, with a smattering of college education and illusion of self-confidence on camera, is evident once they begin to dominate our communications systems. Whenever they are frustrated in pursuit of their goals, they suddenly turn tough as a buddy-movie hero. Hannah Arendt spoke of the banality of evil; though it doesn't happen often, all one has to do is contradict or try to confront the pleasantly smiling television people to see them suddenly turn vicious.

Authority that profoundly knows its own illegitimacy has a tendency to turn mean when one of its ceremonial or ritual fig leaves is removed. The authority truly lies with us, with the viewers, the consumers, but even more, it lies within us, in the way our minds and nervous systems, our very bodies work. After more than a century of psychological theories, which only in the past fifty years have been scientifically measurable, and centuries more before that of the metaphysical speculation that eventually became more specialized psychologies, we still don't know how or why the various electromagnetic fields detectable in our bodies become what we experience as thoughts. We don't even know exactly how we

experience thoughts themselves, or what form those experiences take before they cross the threshold of conscious awareness. As the Buddhists say, “What did your face look like before you were born?”

We don’t know what our thoughts “look like,” for while many psychologists speak of sub-audible thoughts or some other paradoxical means of expressing the sound of a tree falling in an uninhabited forest, it seems more likely that the precursors to our conscious thoughts are visual. We have the evidence of altered states, such as dreams, hypnogogic and retinal imagery, daydreams, reveries and free-associated memories, all of which seem to appear from nowhere, ready-made and coherent without any relation to our conscious concerns, which indicate images were, from an evolutionary perspective, converted into sounds by first spoken and then written language. In fact, those who meditate, or just take drugs like amphetamines or narcotics, and experience the sudden appearance of very complex and condensed symbols (known to the Hindus as mandalas), are aware that these symbols, once investigated, tell stories based on the relations of the elements of the picture to each other internally, just as hieroglyphs and pictographs do.

We should assume the image, not the word, was the first mental representation of the “outside world,” really

the threshold between “inner” and “outer,” which is exactly what a representation is, that is, something that can mediate between two worlds because, like our brains and perceptual systems, they are made up of the same elements the world itself is – subatomic particles and molecules, chemical elements and compounds.

The linear world of our written language, and seemingly also of our conscious thoughts on the surface of our awareness, takes a disproportionate amount of our mental energy, because we are social animals and that linear process is how we educate and socialize our progeny and bind our societies and groups together. That is why the alphabet, based on units of sounds and not representational images, defeated the image with the beginning of the city states in the Middle East based on division of labor, the unequal organization of material goods into property, and the inclusion of conquered people to do the unskilled labor, including breeding, which implies an organized military capable of establishing lines of supply from the home state to the peoples whose conquest is projected.¹ The alphabet was more efficient in transmitting commands long distance to both economic and military cohorts.

As with other forms of concentrated order in nature, the organization of mental energy required by linearity increases the export of free energy from the

organization to the environment from which it initially drew its energy. Perhaps the shifting from text to images we see on the Internet, driven by advertising, is an attempt by collective humanity to decrease entropy. Changing the source of our information from words (novels, newspapers) to images (movies, TV, smartphone apps), of course is only a temporary solution, and by turning the world into algorithms based on written instructions, artificial intelligence is even more streamlined and efficient, once the initial energy down payment – the creation of machines capable of generating intelligent activity – is made. For the machines are after all made in our image, as extensions of our bodies, and the digitalization of images themselves is more efficient because our neuronal systems themselves work by a digital, inhibition versus stimulation process that occurs at the very synapses in our brains.

This electronic world is negentropic for the machines that actually run on information, but the result for the social human world has been and will be intensely entropic, especially for the use of human language, as we can already see most obviously with Internet slang, based on simply dropping all but the first letter of every word, as well as the explosion of

technical jargon both as acronyms (http, etc.) and not as acronyms.

All the implications Orwell drew from the ability of governments to destroy literacy and replace it with clichés and platitudes so devoid of true content that they can mean anything the authorities want them to mean flow from this symbolic degradation, this impoverishing of our common social language, not merely to vulgarity (the nightmare of every cultural conservative) but something much more dangerous – the crippling of vulgarity itself and its replacement by meaningless statements handed down from propaganda ministers.

In a similar way, oppressed minorities have been turned into lifestyles, and the people who thought they were shedding their chains only find they are in worse chains, that is, an invisible force field constructed like a fishbowl in which the individual freedom for which the struggle for civil rights was fought has been turned into a constant Kafkaesque vigilance and self-examination lest one betray the sensitivity of some alleged “friend” or “ally” located hundreds of thousands of miles away, if anywhere.

When a common language no longer binds us together, authoritative force and coercion are the only means to do so. Thus, neighbors turn into snitches, the

police have access to more information about you than the FBI ever had on the most dangerous public enemy, and the President's own lawyer can be turned against him based on the threat of spending the rest of his life in jail over a rumor, and a candidate for the Presidency can be politically hobbled by some mistake on her E-mail account.

The neoliberals, trapped like the reactionaries in the logic of late capitalism, in a system in which only money talks, can only promise that manufacturing and achieving new rights will give their cultic followers more stuff. For when the promised erotic freedoms are achieved, and what was once taboo is routine, post-operative boredom and remorse set in, with only buying junk as the way to fill the hole not filled by a few more lays per decade.

The market for this almost endlessly renewed pile of insipid crap is generated by the engorgement of the masses on electronic consumer capitalism, which works equally well or badly no matter which party is elected to power and given the electoral prerogative of enriching the donor class and lobbying class, and by the way "empowering" a few dozen think tanks or social justice scams.

So despite universal condemnation the two-party system limps on. The two antagonists need each other,

and not only for psychological reasons such as warding off ennui when this or that pseudo-conflict is resolved. The sick dysfunctional relationship between the capitalists who generate the booby prizes of consumer goods and the masses who are urged almost to literally kill the geese that lay the fool's gold eggs.

This pseudo-intellectual tidal wave generates its own reactionary adversaries, usually funded and inspired by the late capitalist management class trying graspingly to hold on to scraps of its alienated power.

The plight of the reactionary is that in an artificial world completely propagandized by neoliberalism, many of their leaders understand the phoniness of the struggle for rights in identity politics, and would like to subvert the hypnotic hold these promised rights hold over those with no power by simply agreeing to them as a thing of no importance.

This never works, because the neoliberals can always come up with a new disgruntled group or cause for a less recent aggrieved group that is bound to enrage the conservatives, who the neoliberals can stigmatize anew as "haters." As if hate itself is not a legitimate emotion! (It certainly is a legitimate emotion for the groups the neoliberals are trying to trick into supporting them.)

The human mind is at best circular, not linearly infinite. It can return us to the thalassic, as Freud's disciple Ferenzci called it, the inanimate source of being that Ferenzci saw as a theoretical, and provable, refinement of Freud's death wish or death instinct.² Intellectually, our highest achievement in the natural sciences, quantum theory, and the electronic manipulation of matter this theory makes possible, returns us to the source of creation so that we may create artificial worlds in which we do not die. This urgent cultural need to pretend death does not exist can be seen from the beginning of humanity's knowledge of death itself, in religious rituals and the mythologies meant to rationalize them, in the creation of sacred space³, which are now, ironically screens on which nothing can hold up as sacred. Even the sacred-like movie image is drained of its transcendence on the small screen.

Even if a book or oral saga ends badly, the readers or listeners are still standing supreme, triumphant temporary gods looking down on the fates of others, whether or not we are actually emotionally purged by the experience.

What we are really returned to is a simalucrum of the chaos before creation. Even if we make it to other planets, we will have to terraform them to meet our

requirements. And even if we could make artificial planets, terraform them, and then put them into orbit, we will still be false gods, unable to ultimately control either chaos or death.

The electronic manipulation of reality already implied by the telegraph and telephone is our updated version of grabbing the fruit of the tree of life in a fake Eden. No return to Eden is likely, only a sideways movement to another New Frontier, a Disneyland without the happy ending.

For part of our recreation of chaos is our obsession with catastrophe. Catastrophism, the half-dreaded, half-adored anticipation of global disaster, has been growing since the 1920's. Since from the standpoint of nature's values, nothing is perverse, only more or less successful, this weird obsession, which comes so naturally to even the most dedicated humanist, may have some survival value. Yet like any adaptation, it may also have gone way past its usefulness, since human beings are in charge of the technology that threatens us most directly, so much so that it's useful to look at humanity as embodying the theoretical Medean faculty of the natural world, as well as such scenarios as death by carbon.

On the way to this future, simulations of reality will become both more absurd and more necessary, just as

doses of addictive drugs must be increased even just to maintain the old boredom.

Even as we plead and beg for more ‘real’ news, we really don’t want it, and would rather encourage elaborate hoaxes that fit in with the expensive entertainments we glut ourselves with.

Our capacity for self-deception is great, especially as such self-deception helps us better to deceive others. Thus, up to a point, this capacity has survival value. But adjusting to uncomfortable facts cannot take place only through cultivating illusions. Human knowledge, and as far as we know it is exclusively human knowledge, of our probable fates, individually and as a species, probably demands unwarranted optimism, but not a synthetic reality that eventually cuts us off from environmental clues about what dangers we may face, and that trumps the artists’ peculiar brand of illusion, meant also to alert, at least in the best cases, and not just to soothe and anesthetize.

In the world of politics, it is natural that we accept a certain amount of cant and hypocrisy put out by the party we support, as long as we have sources to refresh our healthy skepticism about this ugly process. Instead, we have developed a fanaticism that even extends to two mutually exclusive bulldog press that exposes lies – told by the other side only!

The fact that the times the press ever exposed liars in high places is actually rather small, and has been shrinking even as government and its willingness to lie grows stronger, does not refute the fact that many journalists had a sense of mission that caused them to favor one party while being skeptical about the ambitions of both, or all of them. Now, even this assurance is gone, and we find ourselves reeling from one red herring to the next, barely able to trust even the moving pictures of events taking place right before our eyes – with a camera held by whom? And positioned where? A place that happens to be perennially newsworthy, so that in a period of drastically slashed news budgets, travel expenses and the need for hiring new people and opening new bureaus can be reduced?

Post-modernists and deconstructionists have lamented the capacity for language to deceive us, especially when it is a tool in the hands of authority. But the authorities themselves, and among them I number the small army of influential corporations, publicity firms, advertising agencies and all the would-be artists and journalists who go along with them to enrich themselves and upgrade their prestige, have not been satisfied with words alone as a manipulative and coercive tool, and the great majority of the people

themselves have proven reluctant to read anything that contradicts their prejudices or strains their faculties.

Thus, the image has replaced the word. Perhaps, in the beginning, the image was the logos, and assuming the logos was a word might have been a mistake. Surely the animals, that is, the higher mammals from which we evolved think in pictures, in memories of what they have seen, where they have found food and discovered predators. They do not speak, so how could they follow any kind of plan, or fulfill any instinctual need, without something like an image, a symbol, to organize their behavior? Isn't it likely that we too, in the beginning, thought in images, before we turned our inarticulate cries and groans and shouts into words?

Perhaps our slavery to the word was meant to last only a few thousand years out of hundreds of millennia?

Our first known languages were pictures, or symbols of objects, ideas and concepts, and of parts of speech expressing the activity of such abstracted or generalized things. Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese ideograms are two examples of such writing. The characters, that is the letters, in such writing are pictures or symbols directly relating to a particular symbol, and many of these symbols change their meaning, just as numbers often do in a mathematical

equation, by being placed in a different position in the overall matrix of symbols.

Just as a “3” has a different meaning depending on whether or not it is inside or outside a pair of parentheses or brackets, the eye symbol in hieroglyphics changes its meaning depending on the symbols around it.

Humanity eventually developed symbols based on the sounds of words, not actual things referred to, for there is a vastly smaller number of possible sounds of utterances than possible referents. This simplified writing and reading, but learning both skills was and is extremely difficult, depending on both short and long-term memory, and rapid analytical abilities that take in, identify and assimilate new words at great speed while fitting them into the words and sentences already themselves rapidly assimilated.

Yet by capturing the actual flow of “life” via visual images that imitate experience, modern electronic media can bypass our analytical and critical skills. Moving visual images can capture and hold our attention the way a stream of words simply cannot. Narrative verbal flows, despite the ingenuity of the best novelists, can’t compete with this burgeoning ocean of images.

The visual is much more faithful to our actual experiences than logically separating experience into linear steps and logical procedures.

However, no one can deny that we think dualistically, that we divide reality into pieces, that, like almost every living thing, we have a sense of territory, of what is ours, even of what is rightly human, and what is non-human, even radically Other. And we divide what is human into what is sacred, and what is profane.

For a long time, religions have envisioned the final failure of the tenuous barrier protecting the sacred space within which humans founded social life from profane encroachment, meaning the return of chaos exemplified by such “everyday phenomena” as demons, the vindictive souls of the dead, hostile deities. This possibility of the ruination of order by disorder (and here social space and order are synonymous) was important to every known aboriginal culture. Shamanism can be traced back to Western Siberia and Central Asia, the true cradle of religion, if not civilization.⁴

The shaman, who was often both a transvestite and transgendered individual, had to die to this life, usually between adolescence and adulthood, aided in this initiation by tutelary spirits, vision quests and a careful

assimilation of power via inoculation against the fiercest spirits. This person suffered a symbolic dismemberment and reconstruction, just as, later, Inanna, Ishtar, Osiris and Dionysus experienced⁵. This dismemberment, followed by a resurrection “up” to heaven and a return from that trip with wisdom for the tribe, especially knowledge about evil spirits and how they commune with vulnerable humans, such as ambitious sorcerers or jealous and covetous neighbors, and how they can be stopped.

Evil, the profane at its most destructive, was a concern of shamanism and the religions either influenced by it or derived from a common source. (Jung’s collective unconscious, strictly speaking, only applies to this collective unconscious background.)

Zoroaster made salvation possible for the commoner, not just the pharaoh or god-king. That is what is meant by salvation religions. Since Zoroastrianism significantly influenced Judaism as it has been preserved both in the Torah and non-canonical books, especially the salvation cults of post-Exilic Judaism such as the Essenes, who preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls, and had an incalculable influence on both the cult of John the Baptist and early Christianity, the so-called Western religions of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are considered salvation

religions, as were religions which have died out since then, such as Greek mystery religions and Mithra and Isis worship.

The God of the Old Testament, like a shaman watching over his people, watches over the collective state of humanity as well as each individual. To know evil, in the terms of the Old Testament, is to die. To eat, to assimilate and digest that knowledge is to be capable of understanding that death is always approaching, and that understanding cannot be maintained with impunity. Knowing you are going to die changes things. If language enabled us to create an artificial world of abstractions we can manipulate, then maybe it enabled us to consider death as an entity and not just an event, an entity that can be fixed and controlled within a protected sacred space that represents materially the immaterial or spiritual, or at least pneumatic (for breath, air and soul were all synonyms for them) reality of words.

Words are breath-manipulation, and the breath was the soul, so words are the Logos, the soul organized, the chaos of the wind moving over the face of the waters in Genesis by the Creator, and now by the shaman or priest in the sacred space or temple.

Trying to efface the sacred structure at its source, as the most radical post-modern philosophers, such as

Deleuze and Guattari and Derrida, accounts for talk about the evolution of the despotic signifier as the source, not just the implement, of social and political despotism. Derrida, in *Writing and Difference*, even sees the outcries of one of his favorite literary subjects, Antonin Artaud, as breath being stolen by society in its guise as words⁶ Artaud's inspiration, literally his breath, was pre-verbal – for Deleuze and Guattari the partial objects from which we assemble our perceptions of so-called whole objects, for Derrida the (completely metaphorical) hole at the center of all structures.

The very urgency of such philosophical radicalism is itself catastrophism. Things are bad – not just the threat of nuclear annihilation, but the regimentation of a society tempted to rebel against a society defined by holding that nuclear sword of Damocles over everybody's heads.

This regimentation has usually been directed more against the young males of any given society, including hunting and gathering societies and agricultural societies, as they are the most violent, aggressive, and thus paradoxically most life-sacrificing (I do not say self-sacrificing) element of society.

The ability to direct the young male to destructive and self-destructive activities for the benefit of the rest of society has been the hallmark of all successful

cultures, and this has run parallel to the deadliness of weapons and thus the need to make weapons, and all other technologies, more and more long-distance and remotely-controlled. This deadly spiral has resulted in the delegation of responsibility for murder and rape so vast that it has thrown a shadow over each and every moral pretension of the human race, including all religions and all secular idealism, including *laissez-faire* conservatism, democratic liberalism, socialism and state socialism.

The entire human race is implicated in this, because the whole human race benefits from this delegation of moral responsibility, first to young male warriors, then to machines, for despite the rhetoric of feminism, the vast majority of women will tolerate only young attractive males as mates for the reproduction of the species. In the case of young women, this paradox is less hypocrisy than a double-bind in which their elders have ensnared them, and it should also not be forgotten that small armies of young women have been drafted, if you will, into the service of male lust as concubines, prostitutes and rape victims. Society refuses to take responsibility for its greed and acquisitive violence, and the male refuses to take responsibility, to paraphrase the movie *Tootsie*, for his own orgasms.

The violence and contempt for rules which marks the adolescent male also made them the backbone of criminality, which often in history has been the way under-privileged and marginal cultures have redressed injustice, through organized piracy, vendettas and banditry. The rise of the cities, and their impossibility as a solution for the problem of employing displaced agricultural workers and other refugees, has made them a far more potent source of crime and other so-called anti-social activities than the countryside, which was once the prime source for disdain for law and organized crime.

We see this transparently in today's United States, where although the rhetoric of the "cracker," "redneck," "white trash" or survivalists and "preppers" draws media attention (for notorious reasons) the most bloody and disruptive sources of crime and outlawry are the cities.

What hasn't changed about criminality is that, though liberated women have made some sensational inroads into distinctions formerly held by men, young men are still its foot soldiers, just as they are the foot soldiers still of the legalized crime known as military service, as well as the quasi-military forces that fight crime.

Since the nuclear sword over our heads will be used, despite wishful “thinking” to the contrary, will be used by both male and female politicians if necessary, self-serving, pious platitudes about the male war machine belong more to the rhetoric of seventies album covers and New Age self-pleasuring than a serious discussion of current nightmares. Where the gender difference really is a difference is in the scope of violence that affects our daily lives much more directly. All of humanity stands morally condemned by the fact that guns, bombs and nuclear weapons exist. If it is important to your self-esteem to assign blame for this, clearly the male is somewhat more guilty than the female, though one should always remember what Frederick of Prussia said about Maria Theresa when informed she’d shed tears while signing the tripartite agreement between Russia, Austria and Poland to rape Poland in 1765: “She wept, but still she took⁷.” So we are all condemned, and live under the sign of that condemnation by whomever and whatever has the authority to punish that collective guilt. What is more interesting to me is, under the shadow of this curse, we still have to live. Unless the novel of Artzybasef known as *Breaking Point*, or the medieval heresy of Catharism makes a comeback, and collective suicide becomes a real option, we have issues of daily bread to contend

with. That day to day struggle with violence and violent images, especially both global and domestic terrorism, is the domain to which we now will later ourselves.

The unconscious daily effect of long-distance communication, war-making, industrial planning and production, voyeurism, i.e., the long-distant and remote-control nature of our lives, on the collective and individual psyches of a nation have rarely been speculated about.

Astoundingly, the question of what ails us has never even been put this way, though in other, self-laudatory contexts, the striking advances in communication and transportation have been, if anything, overly remarked.

With the advent of the Web, and Web apps, on somewhat and very mobile systems, even the dullest among us can't ignore the fact that we live in long-distance, not incidentally or intermittently, but structurally.

This didn't have to be a necessary corollary of globalism, though it has turned out that way. Given our present political climate, globalism may be a convenient scapegoat for the moral evil of deferring responsibility with long-distance technology, but globalism and evasion of responsibility right here at home are two separate issues. Even if we were to

suddenly attempt what used to be called economic autarky, like Japan before the Meiji Restoration, for example, trying to be self-sufficient and ignoring commercial and financial dealings with the outside world, we would still live our lives vicariously through electronic simulation and virtual reality.

Thus each individual now has the potential not for “total information,” but total disinformation. We have the right not just to garbled factoids and half-truths, but to our own private isolation booths of utter unreality.

I say unreality more as a contrast to surreality than to reality itself, pure reality always being problematic. Surrealism took elements of the real and mashed them together incongruously to communicate truth to others, especially non-artists. Such collages and mash-ups are sanctioned by the unconscious itself, especially by dreams, fantasies and reveries. Even hyperrealism can function as an epiphany, the lifting of an isolated part of our environment suddenly to the forefront.

The utter unreality of our electronic entertainments, all converging theoretically on virtual reality, have no such benefits. The motive for virtual reality is not social progress or, at its most conservative, self-awareness for a gifted few, but more profits for those who already ridiculously have too much.

Once, one could recognize oneself in the heroes of novels and movies. They may not look like me, but they acted like me, at least the “me” that might exist on a really good day, for a really good reason.

Very few men on earth were as charming as Carey Grant, but the secret to Grant’s consummate appeal was that slight hesitation, that slyly skeptical lifting of one eyebrow at a woman’s compliment, an affected surprise over his good fortune so skillfully done that we knew, deep down, it began (as in Grant’s case it surely did) as a genuine response to an impoverished orphan being elevated to stardom.

Very few women on earth had Joan Crawford’s combination of raw sexuality, driving ambition, and tantalizingly angular good looks, but again, the secret was that it was an open secret. After her bubbly, silent movie period of youthful sex appeal, as she grew older, she disdained the pout, the coyness and the lowered lids of the coquette, and made her point with a disarming frankness that captivated men and wore potentially jealous women down (for the most part).

The other great, unique stars of the studio age, and the afterglow of that era, such as Garbo, Davis, Tracy, both Hepburns, Newman, Brando and Mitchum, all can be analyzed as people who came from humble or even destitute backgrounds, (Katherine Hepburn was an

exception, but her prominent intellectual parentage if anything made her work harder), who enabled us to “want to be them , or want to sleep with them⁸.” “Sleep with” in this case is not just a cloying euphemism, because watching movies, we were dreaming with our eyes open.

Movies after the 1980’s, for reasons that might require a combination of Judith Crist and Edward Gibbon to explain, we no longer feel the allure either of the mysterious of the Golden Age or the appeal of the everyman or anti-hero of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. I do not respond to robots, space ships, comic book superheroes, insulting, wise-cracking animals, or any of the rest of the weapons forged by Hollywood to seduce thirteen year old mentalities. The greatest weapon, the discovery of the cinematic attention span by social scientists as unprincipled as *Dr. Strangelove* or Pynchon’s *Dr. Pointsman* has been a greater innovation than Cinemascope, Technicolor, 3-D or Imax. By standardizing film editing to this newly exploited psychological truth, hoping to catch all the global market possible as the jaded domestic market shrinks, movies have abandoned the creative individualism of the directors, the only real claim to art the movies had, as the French New Wave theorists well knew.

Movies make a lot of money to cover the losses of the subsidiaries of the conglomerates. Movies push a lot of cheap plastic merchandise and make fortunes for a small army of actors, agents and producers. They provide millions with gee-whiz conversations for a day or two. But, with few exceptions, they no longer matter the way they used to. And like network television, they have themselves to blame, and only a fool would grieve for them.

There was more human striving and achievement in one “cornball” Esther Williams spectacle than in the entire array of movies this year from May to October.

Now, people who feel left out of the bonanza are making their naked grab for the cash, as if they sense the glory days are almost over. This is almost the only interesting thing to say about Hollywood today, and of course it’s not about art, but money only. Since the out groups are not promising to make movies that appeal to us aesthetically, but just to fill the vacancies left over in the blockbuster game, once all the sexist former tenants are forcibly evicted, and the figures so far indicate that even by their own monetary terms they will fail (without a 2008 style taxpayer bailout?), this is good news only for the .0001% of the population that stands to gain from another “amazing, unpredictable” turn of events in the USA.

Ironically, just as traditional TV is about to be eclipsed by new streaming technology made inevitable by the industry's mercenary arrogance, the experience of self-recognition and psychological epiphany we sought from novels and movies is now available only, and rarely, on basic and premium cable.

This is an area where the “out” groups are sorely needed, thanks to the laziness that almost always makes white males the subject of these new limited dramatic series. Never has the anti-hero, which is just a synonym for a worldly success in some very competitive arena, been more fully explored, at least not since the novels of Stendhal and Balzac. (Only the rare talent of an Orson Welles could examine this type in a two-hour format.) Why does this anti-hero, or any one of his colleagues or enemies, have to wear a white face? For women's roles in these shows, except for *Orange is the New Black*, have been as wives or eye candy.

But since these productions involve prestige, and future careers, more than money and red-carpet divinity, they are not as subject to coveting and avarice as movies and network TV are.

And the mutually destructive, zero-sum game mentality of the networks -v- the streamers seems to be doing what it always does to popular art in the USA – strangling it in the cradle.

For one depressing similarity adheres to these innovative dramas – they are almost all limited to crime and the punishment of crime.

The reasons for this are not as obvious as one may think. Crime is inherently dramatic. It has an obvious story arc – planning the caper, executing it, getting away, getting caught (or not). The entertainment staples of fear and paranoia, bloodshed and violence, loyalty and betrayal can be amply exploited. Male criminals, and the cops who chase after them, tend to favor rough, sexually available “broad and dames.” All these factors guarantee a certain number of crime shows year in and year out.

But the almost exclusive domination of crime, and especially crime families, demands another explanation: crime dramas bring up issues of social justice, class warfare, violence against women and children, political and police corruption, without actually expanding our awareness of them. Crime shows can exploit these themes without shedding any actual light on them. The burning questions are not, what historically causes crime, what kinds of people are drawn to it and are good at it, what can we do about it, what does it say about society in general, but will the protagonist get away with it? Is there a police detective smart and

dedicated enough, or a snitch ballsy and cunning enough, to foil the crime lord?

All the issues that would be central to a novel or a good film are peripheral here. They are mainly about personalities. Does he (almost always a he) have what it takes? If he doesn't, what will destroy him? Because if law and order catches him, it almost seems to be random luck.

Of course, this is far better than the actual *Law and Order* franchise on TV, and its many copycats. The "Law and Order" mentality is one of the main reasons network TV is unwatchable. "The Ego and its Own" stance of cable dramas almost makes up for 25 years of nightly network prosecutorial fascism, with its total disregard for the reality of police work (in spite of the naturalistic trappings), the motives and ethics of district attorneys, the preponderance and viciousness of white collar criminals, the likeliness of them being pursued by their own political appointees, and the severity of their sentences when (on TV, as with Perry Mason, there is no if) they are convicted.

Law and Order is not only genteel, right-thinking fascism, it is a placebo that does more harm than placebos are supposed to do. Unlike *Dragnet*, *Mike Hammer*, or the other 1950's cop and detective shows, you get nothing in return for your cuddling up to

crypto-Nazism, which is the true name for these idealized Star Chambers and “Special Victims Units.”

Maybe the creative community itself, at least semi-consciously, rebelled against being held hostage to this noxious tripe – hence, *The Wire*, *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad*, *Better Call Saul*. Maybe we have those yuppie Himmlers Dick Wolf and JJ Abrams to thank, inadvertently, for the new shows. (Sometimes, unintended consequences work out for the better.) Within any creative community, the mediocre and meretricious outnumber the brilliant. Yet the brilliant are often able, as the Renaissance artists, Elizabethan playwrights, and great 19th century novelists were, to provide fructifying rain along with the flash and thunder, and achieve enough popular appeal to win a small profit and big award-winning bragging rights for their corporate masters. Then, mediocrity is either shamed into silence or, more typically, ripping off the brilliant.

Unfortunately, we have little enough to do but work, and then wait with growing impatience for the Next Big Thing, knowing full well that creative types aren't strippers who can just drop their pants or floss their buttocks cheeks with a thong bikini to gratify the audience. I fear many will get tired of waiting, and we will pass, if we haven't already, the saturation point for

new shows on streaming devices. (In 2016, almost 500 new scripted shows debuted, which was more than double the previous record.⁹) Nobody can watch, let alone review, such a glut, and so these new cultural warriors, as we have seen with all the Silicon Valley monopolists so far, will just use fear and boredom to strong-arm consumers with more money than brains into subscribing to a cornucopia of trash. And the omnivorous garbage consumers, as they do in every other area of American culture, will force the rest of us to wallow in their swill in order to find that proverbially elusive winning ticket numbers.

The influence of crime shows is insidious because they crowd out of our leisure time-based culture even the possibility of an intelligent discussion of our collective social nightmares. Politics has failed us, and for the first time in my life, even the average voter understands this. Intellectuals and social scientists have become the tools of the politicians and social engineers. The last hope, as so often in the past two centuries, would seem to be the artists. One doesn't have to commit the error of inventing the "genius" as our new secular messiah. One only has to realize art's (rather sporadically fulfilled) potential for showing us who we are, a function provided in paleolithic, Egyptian, Assyrian, Greco-Roman, Chinese, Japanese, Persian

and Indian cultures. Art has often failed here, too – did great art humanize the pharaohs who ordered the Pyramids, or the Byzantine despots who squandered the wealth of the Eastern Empire?

Yet it is hard to disregard the greatness of the art of the Greeks, or the Romantics who rebelled against the Industrial Revolution. And for many, the crassness of our commercialism has been examined and thus mitigated by our Melvilles, Thoreaus, Dreisers and many lesser figures.

The refusal not only to face the truth, but even to go down the roads that might lead us there, is the result of our governing cultural drift. Thankfully, this assertion does not have to be labored over, for if not quite self-evident, our fascination with the particular kind of escapism saturating our obsession with crime is right before everyone's eyes every night of the week, beginning with our local news and not ending until the cable equivalent of the old late, late show.

These amoral melodramas represent a step back from the brilliant film noirs of the 1940's, which was tragedy in a minor key. And contrasted with the Victorian novel of the 19th century, and novels in the USA during the early part of the last century, which taught middle-class readers about the underside of our prosperity and the price even the winners were paying

for it, modern movies and TV sacrifice their own stated goal for what will sell to various statistically-determined fragments of the old Lowest Common Denominator. Gunplay, sex play, and cartoons dominate. The indirect, cinema-verite snapshots of the 1970's, only half-heartedly revived by the failed independent films movement, was quickly replaced by the blockbuster mentality of the 1980's.¹⁰ The economic stakes were higher, and the "little" movies were no longer welcome.

Film *noire*, though greatly helped along by a cadre of expatriate European directors fleeing the Nazis before the war, remains one of the USA's most impressive contributions to 20th century world culture. Though film *noire* consists of a number of various striking stylistic elements, one of its main themes, as well as sources of its popularity, was the return of veterans from World War Two to rootless, marginally-employed lives in the large cities themselves swollen and sprawling from the war and post-war economic production booms. Along with them, or already there, was a similar new population of single women – many deprived of husbands, boyfriends, fathers and brothers by the war, and like the men determined to forge a new identity in the big city.

These beta males came back to a nation already girding for a possible third world war. These men had seen violence on an unprecedented scale, conducted in a mechanized, inhuman form likewise never seen before on this earth. Film noire often left the issue of the hero's status in the war implied, but what we have to do to reconstruct and understand those times is to know the vast gray area where crime and war touch.

I ask again: just what is the status of a man who returns home after having been asked, no, ordered, to do what in peacetime, and if done back home, are considered abhorrent atrocities? Psychologists strongly affirm that taking the life of another is a violation of one of our deepest taboos, and that doing so, even in the "legal" context of a war, creates a trauma that time never erases. And as depicted in the film noirs, men living restlessly in the city, competing for precious jobs and for an identity, cut off from the past, living amidst booze, broads and boredom, had little choice, when crushed between the profit-driven criminals and the outnumbered, desperate police, but sublimate their search for an identity or be destroyed. The hard lesson of these movies, surprisingly raw and uncensored, was that the rugged individualism for which the wars for democracy were being fought was a cheap illusion, like the idea of heroism itself. His enemies back home were,

if possible, even less honorable than the enemy overseas had been.

The crisis of the cities, run by gangs and simmering with resentment that makes effective policing impossible, has gone on for fifty years and is not so much a crisis as a long-term fact. Any realistic approach to this fact, possible trip wire for a civil war, is doomed from the start by a culture that vicariously worships guns, violence and the vendetta and that has little patience with an honest social science that neither condescends or peddles placebos, self-serving platitudes of the polarized left and right, themselves just Pavlovian dogs in the grip of a corrupted party system and its spoils system.

The usual glacial pace of economic change for those suffering at the bottom could be accelerated by thoughtful use of our technology, which for once could prove its merits with a targeted approach to the worst areas, monitoring progress with precision and distributing tax money for infrastructure and small businesses where it is needed. Our vaunted security systems should be used to force local politicians and bureaucrats to follow through on these projects and not use them, as they have for fifty years, to line their own pockets and cements their political bases. But the ancient aristocratic prejudice against physical work

extends now to mental work as well. People who could be brought into government jobs are now drained off by the ridiculously lucrative, top-heavy neo-liberal corporate culture of our Silicon Valleys. As we have seen with both the disastrous roll-out of Obamacare and the security at the State Department, the technical proficiency of our government is inadequate.

Tedious, sententious moralizing may feel good, but does nothing to address how the poor feel and how they see themselves in our nation. Smugly repeating that the poor have never had it so good, hypocritically asking how anyone with a smart phone or big screen TV can really be poor while refusing to admit those consumer goods just put the circus in bread and circus, means nothing in an environment bounded by sudden death by gunfire, fear of the law and hopelessness for the future. The devil's brew of despair, nihilistic rhetoric and automatic weapons (not to mention an anarchist's cookbook of plastic explosives, fertilizer bombs, pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails) isn't made less tempting by sanctimonious calls for temperance.

Fattened by the drug wars and armed to the teeth, gangs have turned key parts of every city over 200,000 people into fortresses as impregnable to the law as the mountain hideouts and pirate nests of other times. The city is the true new fortress, not the absurd actual rural

hideouts of “free white men” that experience has shown are paper citadels.

Three destinations for city youth will exist – the gangs, prison or college campuses, for savvy gangsters will see college campus as soft intellectual targets for recruitment and indoctrination.

When you deprive the young male of opportunities, he will give you cause to regret it. This is as true of Buffalo and Detroit as it is of Cairo, Mosul, Istanbul, Baghdad and Gaza.

The real beginning of the modern jihad was in 1997, with the bombing of the US embassies in Africa, and the true beginning of our domestic terror war was the first mass school shooting at about the same time, itself made psychologically easier by the 1995 bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, which was itself payback for the slaughter of a religious minority by the Federal government of Janet Reno, a war criminal, based on knowingly false charges of child abuse.

The Big Lie that catering to every middle class white woman’s whims is our main social crusade may get Hillary Clinton elected, or may create a whipsaw reaction that sees Trump elected, but whatever the immediate outcome, stupidly covered by a mediocre journalistic class like dogs with their noses pressed up

against the advertisers' anuses, it will not turn the army of the unemployed from a liability to an asset on capitalism's grim balance sheet.

I'd worry less about the phony war on women than the real war on both men and women who don't conform to a TV version of acceptability. I predict that no matter who is elected, you will have not only more Bostons, Ft. Hoods, Orlandos and San Bernadinos in your futures, but also more Fergusons, Baltimores and Dallases. And, not that long from now, your first dirty bomb attack on American soil.

For it is truly a fool who says, living, like a true modern pseudo-intellectual, by meaningless numbers alone, that we are safer than ever before. Sudden death by bomb or gun has an impact on the soul, both individually and collectively, that far outweigh the supposed infrequency of those deaths. Even in ages when most men (who could afford them) carried knives and swords, they couldn't slice through the walls of the homes of random strangers, or kill someone from a hundred yards away. The impact on our psyches has never even been considered, because it's never before been considered anything but a necessary evil.

Besides the obvious appeals to the idea we are all living in an age of anxiety, of nameless dreads and menaces that threaten to erupt at any time, one can also

see a contrary strain, in which many people seek meaning and fulfillment, once found in religion, and even a Romanesque religion of the State, in mythologically remote sources.

I myself, with a little help from my physically remote but auditorily near fellow AM-listening insomniacs, can concoct several plausible scenarios out of a synthesis of catastrophes and alienated elites, possibly including the control of cosmic super-waves seeding the magnetospheres of the sun and all its orbiting planets with genetic mutations that account for the still-mysterious punctuated equilibrium of major biological evolutionary changes. We have those who would have us look at ancient megaliths, the supposedly universal megalithic unit of measurement, and a use of whatever star groups are visible from certain predetermined places on earth as coded signals for when these fluctuations in normal cosmic ray radiation happen and what they mean for macro events, like floods and volcanoes, and micro events like fads, memes, or the madness of crowds. I could easily, was I motivated, resurrect the fastidious rationalists' favorite whipping boy, astrology, without any fear of "scientific" contradiction. Not to mention any and all religions and cults I might choose to adopt, even if only to be an obscurantist and a man from underground who

just doesn't like the looks of the Crystal Palace, or a Kierkegaard who decides making things easy for people is ironically a great disservice to them¹¹. These propositions are provable – or not – by the very same rules of evidence that “proves” evolution, climate change, the past reversal of earth's magnetic fields, the Big Bang, and so on.

Furthermore, I can add that, getting the figures from about the same place a lottery player gets his numbers, that the odds against me being right are 1000 to 1. And that still isn't zero.

What does one gain from going out on a limb, besides the exhilaration of innovation and even sheer contrariness, or whimsy, ala Emerson? Just an explanation much more elegant than all the other explanations stuck in the limbo between geocentric obtuseness and Copernican acclamation. What does it even mean to say economics is more “causal” than psychology, or history tells us more than sociology? Whose history? Interpreted just by the “winners?” Knowledge of that lazy type is no better than trivia, and inventing the wheel for the second time.

Even while our present elite tell us the winners write history and that history should be suspect, their most successful efforts are centered on trying to change the words permissible to use, and the sources

permissible to believe, as they rewrite the history we are living with fifty characters or a hundred words sandwiched like a sprig of parsley in the Dagwood sandwich of ads, porn, befriending and de-friending total strangers, blogs, trolling, etc.

An alien race seeking to control or influence us long-distance with cons, AI inter solar system stations, robot prophets or whatever, would probably first want to quantize us like any scientific problem or lab rat and seek to make our possible responses to any given stimuli reduced to a logarithmic table of probabilities.

As for the truly decisive evidence – how a consensus of influential people feels about it – the benevolent God, ostensibly a “spiritual” being inaccessible to us via our normal sensorimotor windows on the world, is far less believable, given the evidence, than a flawed but superior being or collection of beings, possibly even in conflict with each other and using our world as an arena for experimentation, entertainment, or even as pawns in a military or economic fight we can’t even comprehend except in our extreme moments of ecstasy or seeming madness.

Any religion more personal than Deism is unthinkable in our current western tradition, a tradition that began, revisionism aside, with the High Medieval or Renaissance period, especially, as far as the

intellectual class is concerned, with the undermining of the freshly minted Thomistic synthesis by nominalism. Of course this undermining had precursors in such diverse areas as Islamic Spain and the political structure of the Norman city-states that ranged at one time from Scandinavia, Ireland and the British Isles to Russia, Northern France, Sicily and southern Italy. This outburst of skepticism toward intellectual and religious authority of course had its own great precursors in the ancient Greece of both Athens and Alexandria, especially with the Neoplatonism formulated by Plotinus, and in Gnostic and other sectarian speculation such as we find in certain Middle Eastern cults such as the Essenes, in the ruins of whose dwellings were found the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Great Chain of Being, which was a popular modification of Neoplatonism, has been a bogymen for revisionists with an unclear idea of the problems they are addressing but with a clear (to them) political and pedagogical agenda. This so-called chain was seldom seen as purely linear – from up to down – since the bottom, hell or the abyss, contained beings, once angels, but now fallen angels or demons, which were still superior to human beings. Humanity had the important role of being in the middle, equidistant from the very high and the very small, which is also where

modern physics, especially quantum physics, finds us to be. As such, we were designated in Genesis to name the animals and maintain the original garden, and thus, as the Renaissance philosophers quoted the Greek Sophist Protagoras, “Man is the measure of all things.” It is man’s position in the middle that ensures his thinking, though not necessarily his pragma, that is his actions in pursuit of goals, including whatever technologies we invent to pursue those goals.

It is this deeply felt, arrogant perspective that has been exploited to create minds for which representations of reality, which are representations of representations, become a substitute reality, and not, like the original sensorimotor representation, an accommodation with or adaptation to the world represented.

The very pursuit of improving the technology of illusion through science has its obverse, the improvement of science through technology. Maybe we could call the science the conscious element and technology the unconscious or even genetic element informing and shaping it, since in the pre-Bell Labs era, many of the most significant advances, such as photography, were accidental byproducts of entirely unrelated experiments or even hobbies.

Among other works, two outstanding developments were Faraday's work with electricity, based on Volta's near-accidental creation of the storage battery, and the invention and application of photography at roughly the same time. Photography, that is the preservation of what can be seen with such instruments as microscopes and telescopes, and of course X-rays and MRIs, has been incalculable in its effects on scientific knowledge, but the photographic film itself, linked to magnetic tape for both movies and video, has shown us worlds we could only guess at before – speeding up or slowing down once mysterious processes as the flight of a bumblebee or hummingbird, or the true, as opposed to apocryphal and just-so, way that chimpanzees, lions and penguins live together socially. These records are if anything more permanent than the written word, and can be analyzed frame by frame in a functionally limitless way, both for the sake of knowledge and maybe more importantly as sources of delight and wonder, and evidence, seen with the eyes and assimilated by the heart, that the Jainists and Buddhists are correct that all life is sacred, or, at least, it is all the same, whether you see it as sacred and inviolable except under the most pressing emergencies, or exploitable as an endless supply of food, sadistic entertainment, and egotistic sporting.

Photography began as a mere novelty, scornfully criticized by the poet Baudelaire in his role as art critic as a mere interference with legitimate artistic endeavor. Baudelaire's unusual role, for him, as a cultural conservative was, like many of the conservative reactions to past innovations that people now smile about, quite accurate. What does it mean for the psyche of the artist, and his potentially global public, that with a click of a lever on a box, in less than a second, you can recreate a tumultuous sky or multifarious landscape that would take a master painter months or years to portray. One can usurp the contemplative, cognitive aspect of portraiture that was the very core of the masterpieces of Rembrandt, Velasquez and Goya, among many others.

This is labor-saving with a vengeance, changing forever in a couple of generations the social value of a human occupation going back to the stone age. The sweat and tears of signal members of our species was "wasted" on what are now mere period pieces for a Phd. thesis, or hedges against inflation for low-flow flushing toilet tycoons. And this of course is a perfect example of the transvaluation of values into only numerical, that is monetary form. Aesthetic considerations are now secondary or even tertiary to the meaning of a work of art: it's meaning is how much the

market will bear, what the winning number is when the auctioneer's gavel falls.

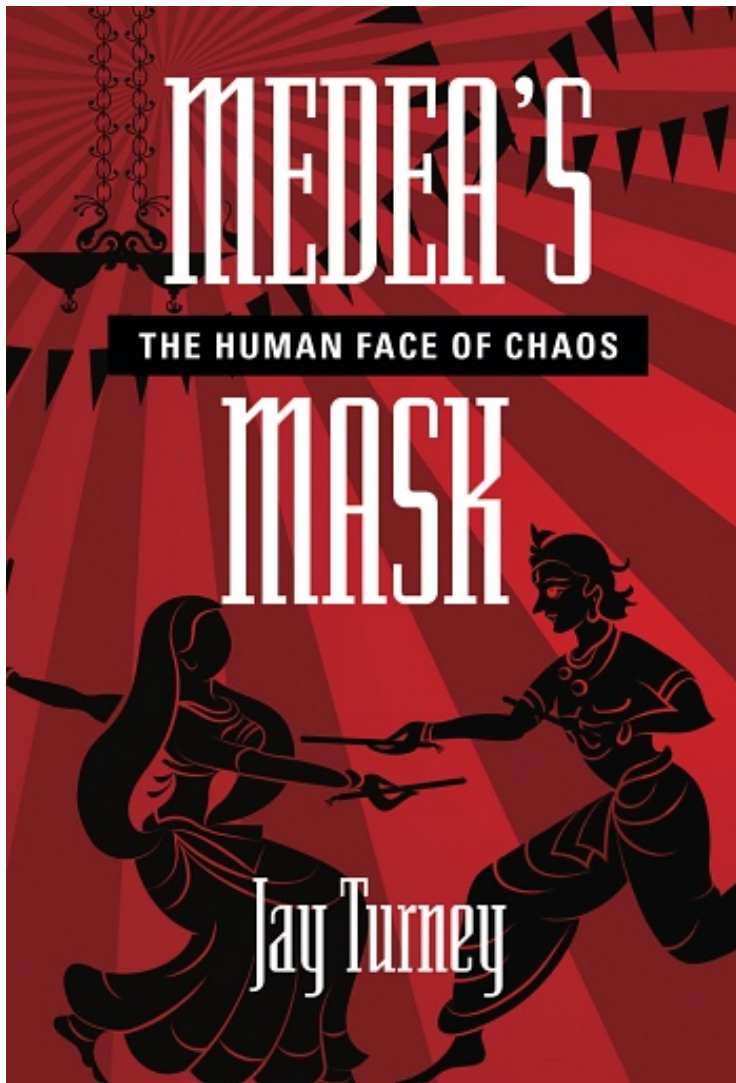
Yet here, the trade-off seems worth it. For me, the incredible worlds opened up by nature photography alone may be worth the decline of "representational" art. (In this case, photography at least supplies a partial consolation for its work of destruction, for we now can have cheap reproductions of anything ever considered to be a work of art.) Perhaps a higher, or surpassing aesthetic value can be found in films of what goes on for hours in a coral reef or a great river delta. For those who look for art everywhere, which was part of the response of the artists of dada and surrealism, cubism, impressionism and expressionism to photography, the aesthetic value of life, what Nietzsche called the only redeeming feature of life, the bottom line, the imperialism of the dollar bill, can only have a temporary hold. But the search for beauty and enlightenment is not a cake walk in this environment. And to some extent, pure aesthetics is pure science.

For we can at least simulate the perspectives of multiple species, which proves these perspectives exist, and means that it is arbitrary to give priority to the human perspective.

We can no longer pretend that by wiping out, exploiting, torturing and bullying every other species of life on earth, we are not committing unforgivable sins.

Our remote control, responsibility-deferred social and economic world allows us to deny guilt for what we have done to living beings with as much right to exist as we have – or maybe, today, more.

We can see many of these beautiful beings on the nature shows in another aspect if we just grab our remote controls. Click – and here is a heaping box of fast food. Let us look a little more closely at these sponsors of our aesthetic and culinary delights.



As our knowledge of the world grows, our knowledge of danger grows also. We need to add some more horsemen to the original Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse - climate change, mind control, even meteors. Yet we are conditioned to ignore this, to keep consuming, as if we can cover up the truth. This is the story of how the cover-up has failed.

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