



Like Any Gangster - Selected Writings 2006-2011 by Daniel J. McKeown

Second Edition

*July 2012*

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# Like Any Gangster Selected Writings 2006-2011

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by Daniel J. McKeown

<http://danieljmckeown.com>

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# Introduction



# Like Any Gangster: Selected Writings 2006-2011

Second (2nd) Edition [Pages PDF], July 2012

by Daniel J. McKeown DJMcloud/  
pacificpelican.us independent press

Lakewood, Ohio

1. This book is compiled partly from posts on my web sites including [pacificpelican.us](http://pacificpelican.us) and [sf3am.com](http://sf3am.com) and [djmcloud.com](http://djmcloud.com)

2. Thanks to **Jessica** for a few of the photos & more! Love you!
3. More books stuff: <http://djmcloud.danieljmckeown.com/blog/tag/books>

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## Introduction March 2012

Nothing I say in this introduction could shock you more than how much I was shocked when I read an introduction to a book by Nathaniel Hawthorne which revealed among other small truths that he had owed a paying job to the patronage of a political ally; and that furthermore he had lost such job immediately upon political succession to a different faction. Such literature provided to me at a young age a level of access to thought and truth that were simply more intellectually satisfying than the jingoistic celebrations and violent depravity on offer in the culture of the Reagan age. As I sometimes look back (perhaps unusually today) longer in history to beyond my birth in 1978 at the dawn of the personal computer age, Hawthorne liked to look back across the chasm of the Enlightenment to his

ancestors in the 17th Century. That era was one in which my ancestors in Ireland fought the hated Cromwell. Hibernia would never be truly broken by the demented Puritans (like the Romans), though England and strains of America have long carried their mission forward. I know the prototypical mind of the 21st Century will be a Chinese one, its consciousness formed by the complexity of the Middle Kingdom's linguistic ambiguity. I despair of The West mattering much culturally in coming decades as political and military machinations of greedy and ultimately doomed American and European interventionists give way to the natural weight of the Sino-African bloc. But for now as The West piles on excesses in a Sisiphyian carnival of goaded productivity (with disturbing undercurrents of wanton exploitation girded by sexual shame punctuated by cautious prurience), perhaps a truly profound shift in consciousness is possible

as the futility of an authoritarian technological revolution is evinced in which drinking water and food supplies are widely poisoned and the dubious eugenics-influenced lifestyle designs of the current age increasingly reveal themselves as hollow.

I don't know what kind of change to expect; all I'm saying is that the seven year period covered in this book saw me turn away from the pat answers offered by my extensive education and more toward my own fiercely independent intellect and, even more importantly, my intuition.

London was such a delightful town when I visited in 1999--the Millen- nium was approaching, and it's such a magnetic place. I can even overlook all those dual faucets if I think long enough about those Guinness Extra Cold after Guinness Extra Cold, clubbing in Leices- ter Square and reading in cafes in Covent Garden. Not a garbage can in sight. Fear of the Irish still in the air. Before getting on a train bound north at King's Cross for the last week in Edinburgh (I never would have left London if it hadn't been for the demands of the five week course with Michigan State, which fortunately included a visit to Dublin and Stonehenge as well), I managed to visit the Houses of Parliament with fellow students. As we lined up outside, I saw the statue of Cromwell. Taking a considerable drink, I spewed Lucozade on the ugly likeness.

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<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/lake-yellowstone/>

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<http://y.djmcloud.com/rgdYSZ>

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# An Emerging Dystopia



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## **Hunter S. Thompson, the economic crisis of 2008, and Bush's fascism**



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## ***Hunter S. Thompson***

**book review- Ancient Gonzo Wisdom:  
Interviews with Hunter S. Thompson**

edited by Anita Thompson  
Da Capo Press, 2009  
ISBN 978-0-306-81651-2

Published September 13, 2010

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/the-lords-of-karma/>

Hunter S. Thompson was a media personality from the days when he wrote about the Hell's Angels in the 1960s until his death in 2005.

Always a fan of talking with other journalists and promoting his books, Thompson gave fewer TV interviews as time went on—but he continued to talk to print reporters frequently enough that his late-period wife, Anita Thompson, was able to cull together a collection of interviews ranging from the 1960s to the 2000s. While not fundamentally different from the written words of Hunter S. Thompson, the interviews do reveal many different angles as they are written up in whatever style the interviewer had and not in Thompson's famously brooding and brilliant prose. And of course Thompson's words unsurprisingly tend to be less edited and less measured than in his writ-



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ing. Clever comments and colorful anecdotes are shared throughout. But it is easy to see a slow decline in the quality of the interviews as time passes and Thompson's considerable legend begins to overshadow whatever fresh stories might be discussed at the moment, and the questions get dumber, more backward-looking, and more predictable with time—and Thomp- son

steadily more irritated. Still, for fans of late 20th century history and especially for Thompson fanatics, this book is an important appendix to his writing.

This volume of the book includes an introduction by Christopher Hitchens, which I cannot report on because I haven't read a word of it. On to the book.

Due to Hunter S. Thompson's gift for the English language, short snippets of the book can paint surprisingly vivid images:

"So I don't agree with [Norman] Mailer that the psychopath could be an advance. I think it's sort of an inevitable state." (p. 61)

"If you act as weird as you are, something terrible is bound to happen to you, if you're as weird as I am." (p.87)

"There's something ominous about a totally shaved head." (p. 43)

Politics was an area that Thompson always followed closely, and some of his most caustic commentary is on public affairs:

“Q. Your theory on the JFK assassination is what?

A. That it was carried out by the Mob but organized and effectuated by J. Edgar Hoover.” (p. 233)

“You talk about losing battles and degrading the system, nobody has done more to discredit the idea that democracy can work and that decent people can be elected and run it than Richard Nixon.” (p. 105)

“Yes, popular opinion [about the George W. Bush administration] in this country has to be swung over to ‘the White House is wrong, these people are corporate thieves. They’ve been turned the American Dream into a chamber of looting.’” (p. 292)

“If you want to get out on the road there and say ‘I’m the candidate of the new politics,’ which he’s [McGovern has] done, you have to take some peculiar baggage with you.” (p. 29)

Many of Thompson’s opinions are interesting, and because this book spans a wide range of time and

many questioners it includes discussion of a wide scope of issues:

“I really think computers are only as smart as the person who programs it, and I’d have to program the damn thing myself in order for it to meet my needs.” (p. 180)

“By being embedded, it’s almost like being captured. You’re given access to whatever they want to give you access to, and they make you really grateful for it.” (p. 343)



“They seem [now in 1998] to be more completely brain- washed by mass media; more con- forming [than in 1958].” (p. 249)

“Drugs usually en- hance or strengthen my per- ceptions and reac- tions, for good or ill.” (p. 178)

So is there really any way to define Hunter S. Thomp- son? Well, he offers this thought in an interview with salon.com:

“Yeah, I consider myself a road man for the lords of karma.” (p. 318)

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## **book review- The Kitchen Readings: Untold Stories of Hunter S. Thompson**

by Michael Cleverly and Bob Braudis, 2008, Harper Perennial, ISBN 978-0-06-115928-2

Published April 29, 2008

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/it-must-be-quieter-now-in-the-roaring-fork-valley/>

The Kitchen Readings is a book about the middle aged and older Hunter Thompson, filled with anecdotes of the gunplay, explosions and excess partying that colored life at Owl Farm in Woody Creek, written by two of Thompson's friends from the Aspen area of Colorado, where he lived more or less from the late 1960s onward. Bob Braudis currently holds the post that Thompson famously ran for (barely losing) on the "Freak

Power" ticket in 1970—sheriff of the local Pitkin County. Cleverly is a former neighbor of Thompson's and an artist.

The book goes between Braudis's accounts of trying to keep Hunter in line with Cleverly's reflections on life as Hunter's neighbor. The focus is usually on amusing—though given the involvement of Thompson, often dangerous and deranged—incidents involving driving too fast, drinking too much, ordering too much food, taking too many drugs, taking too long to do drugs before doing stuff, using too much explosive and chasing too many women.

So if Hunter S. Thompson only lived into his late 60s, this book reminds once again how weak and debilitated the celebrated journalist had become in the early 21st century—and again, reminds us of how utterly devastating George W. Bush's 2004 win was to Thompson, and much of the country. Cleverly uses a drawn-out discussion of the "Gonzo" funeral paid for by Johnny Depp to reflect on his passing and what it meant. It sort of draws a dark cloud over the book, as none of the cocaine-fueled rages and drunken screw-ups

recounted earlier in the book are nearly as morose and undignified as the image of a Hollywood funeral filled with Washington types and out-of-town security. As the huge fist with a peyote button in it is described on page 259, "the monument was to be 153 feet high, a little taller than the statue of liberty."

"One has to stay current at all costs," as the book mentions on page 181 in the context of Thompson's habit of always having the TV on. Does Hunter's constant desire for action help toward understanding the apparent suicide that ended his life in 2005? Unable to stay current with his famous friends, still recovering from back surgery, arguing with his wife, dealing with unwanted visitors to his country home, ruing the new political order—but how does that really add up to much more than the usual adversity that someone like Thompson always seemed to face, or create? Friends, in this book, seem to recount their last visits as fairly normal.

Regardless of all that, the stories in the book mainly center around Thompson's kitchen, which served as a kind of head- quarters, and the stuff that happened in the community—like the time Thompson got his vehicle submerged in a flooded hay field, or the time he accidentally shot his assistant Deborah while trying to scare a bear away from his garbage dumpster, or the time he needed a friend to hunt a bobcat out of his peacock cage. Much of it is very funny, and the book has a laid back style and conspiratorial bent that make *The Kitchen Readings*, while not as brutal and as brilliant a depiction of Thompson as Ralph Steadman's *The Joke's Over*, definitely worth checking out. Here a few interesting passages by way of example:

"Hunter's short fuse was a thing of legend [p. 179]"

"Over the years to come, as his motor skills began to deteriorate, I began to worry about him on two wheels. [p. 226]"

"He raved to me that Juan only wanted his money, that Anita was depressed that she was the wife, nurse, housekeeper, editorial assistant and

future widow of an old and decrepit journalist who believed that he was soon to expire or require 24-7 care. [p. 232]"

"We arranged his firing position to pose no danger to the golfer or the yuppie mountain bikers from Arkansas, as he referred to them, pedaling along the road past Owl Farm. [p. 39]"

"Duke asked himself why someone would swipe a jug of vanilla extract from the Jerome kitchen when one could just as easily swipe booze from the bar? He didn't bother to pose this question to Hunter. Vanilla extract is 12 percent alcohol, but still... [p. 99]"

"Hunter loved to hear his writings read aloud. [p. 245]"

"Hunter was mistrustful of the 'establishment.' His rules were his own and often didn't quite dovetail with those of the people who ran things. [p. 69]"

Thompson's crusade for Lisl Auman—he thought that her conviction for "felony murder" was a miscarriage of justice and she was eventually granted some reprieve after his death [p. 195]—

provides the basis for one of the more serious chapters in the book.

But Thompson did have some other serious chapters in his life as well—the aspiration to be a great American novelist, then to invent a new kind of journalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, then to work (futilely) to usher in a new age of liberal freedom as that decade wore on. But as with many in his age range, the 80s took their toll on Hunter S. Thompson, and after that it was in large measure a matter of living large for a time on the legend—something that Thompson did in Colorado with aplomb, and which this book documents well.

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## **book review: The Joke's Over**

by Ralph Steadman, 2006, Harcourt Books; ISBN 0156032503

Published December 11, 2007

<http://blogs.sf3am.com/citynews/2007/12/11/the-decline-and-fall>

-of-the-gonzo-empire/

Fear and Loathing in AP European History Class,  
the Kentucky Derby from the artist's perspective,  
an aging legend who eats like a pig, making  
sense of an An American Genius, a Bitter End and  
throwing in the towel

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When Rolling Stone magazine re-published parts of Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas in the mid-90s, probably trying to revive interest in the old rag during one of its countless dips in popularity, I sat and read it in European history class, laughed my ass off, showed it to people sitting near me, and realized the modern resiliency and potential of the written word.

Hunter S. Thompson was the finest writer of his generation. After a considerable amount of reading between then and now, of that I feel sure. I can only aspire to be the finest one of my humbler, less literate Generation. But the greatness, ambition and determination of America that Thompson reflected and amplified seems to be a

wasting asset. How have things gone so wrong in this country, anyway?

That seems to be the chief question Ralph Steadman is asking in *The Joke's Over*. Recalling one of the last times he visited Thompson, Steadman says:

“We watched the great debate between Kerry and Bush on video tape and stared in horror at this feeble-minded twit trying to take on John Kerry. I don't know how anyone could vote for



such a man and many said they wouldn't, but as I have said before, many were lying. [p. 378]"

Steadman, who drew the illustrations for many of Hunter S. Thompson's writings, has written a book detailing his adventures with the leading proponent of "Gonzo journalism."

Certainly an important part of Thompson's success in creating a twisted version of the New Journalism from the ashes of the 1960s counterculture, Steadman sometimes doubts himself and also frequently portrays Hunter as a cold, mean and twisted, though often wounded and idealistic, icon.

It can be remarked that the real Hunter S. Thompson may have lost sight of his original ideals, but seeing the time Steadman knew him as an evolution ignores the changes the now-Hells Angels-hardened Thompson had already undergone from the idealistic old-school aspiring novelist that he saw himself as in the early 1960s, an era perhaps best captured by the novel *The Rum Diary*. But so much for all that, as Thompson would often write in his pieces. Ralph Steadman

captures a somewhat dark, certainly tragic and highly brilliant American genius as well as any observer might be thought capable of.

Steadman starts from the beginning, when he met Thompson for an assignment in 1970 at the Kentucky Derby. The resulting article and drawings for Scanlan's magazine, as well as their subsequent work for the America's Cup, were the experiences

that laid the groundwork for the words and drawings of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* in 1971, and are relayed in this book from Steadman's perspective—an enjoyable read, especially for those who have already read those pieces that Thompson wrote all those years ago.

Throughout the book, drawings that were made by Steadman during or about the events he writes about appear in the book, offering welcome companion images which, after all, are probably even better illustrations of what Steadman was thinking rather even than what Thompson was thinking. Several series of rare photographs are also reprinted in the volume.

Later Steadman talks about his time in San Francisco and dealings with the Rolling Stone magazine staff, then Washington D.C. during the Watergate era. Venturing out into the Rockies, he also captures a bit of the early days of Hunter's home life

out in Woody Creek, Colorado. Talking about a visit involving the filming of a 1977 movie about Thompson for the BBC, Mr. Steadman makes some of his most interesting points and observations about Hunter S. Thompson, including:

“That’s the other thing—Gonzo is controlled madness. It would use anything within its range to activate something. There’s not really anything sinister in it. I mean, I’d be very unhappy about some of the people I have met who would tote guns and, you know, you’d feel that they were doing it with a certain malevolence, which is certainly not the case with Hunter. [p. 141]“

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Moving into the 1980s, Steadman writes about the Hawaii marathon and his time on Kona with his family and Thompson and his girlfriend Laila,

including a diary that discusses marlin fishing, which formed the backdrop for *The Curse of Lono*. In one of his diaries, Steadman lets loose with what he thinks of the furthest west of the states:

“Hawaii is not trying to be the centre of the world. It has a cheapness I despise and a worthwhile cheapness. Cheapness is what we have all been striving for. Cheap like we are. Cheap style and cheap tricks. It is not worthwhile but it feels like life. [p. 221]“

A description of a fishing expedition gone wrong ends with this reflection:

“There was no shame in our Captain. Couldn't he just cut his losses and make for shore—save his crew—and lose his own face? However, the complexity of his seafaring mind was beyond understanding and he was not bending to wind or circumstance. [p. 219]“

Thereafter the question becomes—is that an adequate way of describing Hunter S. Thompson, especially from the 1980s on until his death in 2005? Is there symbolism in Thompson's un-

conventional ashes-scattering-through-pipes-near-Owl-Farm memorial service, which Steadman had sketched for Thompson

and seen him try to describe it to a fascinated funeral parlor manager in Los Angeles years before?

Perhaps Ralph Steadman uses the memorial service and its long planning as a coloring detail to darken the mood of the book, or perhaps he conveys a much better version of what people actually saw of Thompson rather than the man's own buoyant spirit as it came through in his own best writings? Though Thompson was quite open about being a "dope fiend," sometimes the level of drug and alcohol use (and the amount and severity of physical injuries later in life like broken bones) described by Steadman is somewhat shocking.

Steadman's account of their trip to Zaire in the 1970s to cover the Ali-Foreman fight includes lots of strange incidents, including Joe Frazier stealing his pen [p. 127], George Foreman telling Steadman that he'll go into the dough business after boxing, and Hunter selling off tickets to the

fight, along with a bunch of “African grass” to the frequent visitors to their shared room.

During the 80s, Thompson tried to keep him at a greater distance in terms of the Gonzo brand, according to Steadman. Periodic requests for help, often spiked with or followed by insults, seemed to be Hunter’s way of communicating to Ralph as the fax machine era of the 1980s rolled on into the 1990s. Over time their working relationship appears to have broken down at times, started and stopped, although Thompson and Steadman appear to have been friends at least through much of it.

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Though it’s hard to be completely sure that this was really much of a friendship, with Steadman saying things like this:

“When I began this book I thought it was going to be a journey of pleasure and warm memories, but as I write I feel more of the icy winds of rejection that were probably there from the beginning. [p. 144]“

Steadman witnessed the rather dysfunctional domestic environment Thompson tended to cultivate. Although his son Juan is discussed (mainly in the 1990s and later) and admiringly described, and his first wife Sandy comes off as tolerant and supportive when Steadman describes the scene at Woody Creek in the 1970s:

“They would never know the whole Hunter. Nobody ever did, though I believe that Juan and his mother Sandy fought his corner, nurtured him even, and protected his right to be lame. [p. 145]“

The marriage to Sandy didn't last. Later on the divorce drags on in the background and in the 1980s Sandy is out on her own, as this letter from Thompson attests to:

“Sandy has been touring for most of the year, & not even Juan has any idea what she plans to do when she gets back—which will happen just about the time I was planning to hit the wall in Kona. [p. 247]“

Some of Thompson's later girlfriends are mentioned, notably Nicole during a bizarre and

unproductive England visit and Anita toward the end. We'll probably hear more from some of them, especially his wife Anita who is cast by Steadman as a guardian of his legacy.

The later chapters of the book read a bit like a maudlin fan's diary, even though Steadman still casts a sharp, critical eye toward the aging icon, as an artist would I suppose. For example, having known him for over thirty years and having seen it over and over, Steadman still seemed to be shocked at "Hunter's filthy eating habits."

"Hunter was still mucking with his food, picking something up and putting it down again and then looking at the TV game. [p. 378]"

Still most of Thompson's foibles are forgiven on the basis that Thompson was, after all, American, up there in Colorado at the last frontier, and this perhaps appeared to endow him with super writing abilities along with super flaws from a foreigner's perspective. But whatever. Certainly the Welsh Mr. Steadman is also a fine writer, and his vast differences in habit and personality from Mr. Thompson must have been awkward but they certainly bring a different perspective than

Thompson's, a very valuable service indeed for those of us who have read more or less every sentence written by Thompson that they've been able to get their hands on. In the end, whether he's right or not,

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Steadman sees Thompson's death by apparent suicide as a symbol and result of the decline and fall of America's greatness. As he puts to a now-deceased Thompson in a final Memo -to- The Sports Desk:

"Those who grew to be a threat to your America continued to burgeon. You faced them and made your choice. The brutal contempt of the majority convinced you to let it be, throw in the towel and give up the ghost. [p. 386]"

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<http://y.djmcloud.com/A2lt0a>

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**book review: The Rum Diary**

by Hunter S. Thompson, 1998, ISBN-13:  
978-0-684-85647-6 Published October 4, 2006  
[http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/  
2006/10/330/00/](http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2006/10/330/00/)

Though Hunter S. Thompson went on to become known as the “Doctor of Gonzo Journalism” as his career went on, he had aspired to be a novelist in the high American style of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Henry Miller. While in Puerto Rico in the late 1950s and for years afterward (calumniating in publication in 1998, seven years before he died) Thompson worked on a novel that he sold the rights to in the 1960s in one of the contracts and deals that went with being a freelance writer. For various reasons it was never published (except in excerpts), and with whatever edits happened over the years (in a letter talking about the Rum Diary he pointed out that he might change the story from a perspective of greater maturity) the novel still comes pretty directly from the aspiring journalist who had come down to Puerto Rico for some sun after a year as a copyboy for Time magazine in New York fresh from a tour in the Air Force.

The Thompson of the novel (the protagonist, Paul Kemp) is an old-school American young man trying to make it in the postwar boom. Editing a newspaper story about why Puerto Ricans are leaving for New York, Kemp imagines a reporter asking him why he left home:

“I get the fear...can you use that? St. Louis Gives Young Men the Fear—not a bad headline, eh? [p. 60]”

The story centers on the time Kemp is employed at an English- language newspaper in San Juan. He associates with other ex- iles and experiences the dramatic ups and downs of island liv- ing. As he notes in the first chapter:

“There was no reason to feel pressure, but I felt it anyway—the pressure of hot air and passing time, an idle tension that builds up in places where men sweat twenty-four hours a day. [p.23]”

Kemp is a few years older than Thompson was while in Puerto Rico, and the question arises about how much the character Yeamon (who is from Kentucky, after all) is also based on the author himself:

“He [Yeamon] looked up. ‘You know—I’m a rebel, I took off— now where’s my reward?’

‘You fool,’ I [Kemp] said. ‘There is no reward and there never was.’

‘Jesus,’ he said. ‘That’s horrible.’ He raised the bottle to his lips and finished it off. ‘We’re just drunkards,’ he said, ‘helpless drunkards...’[p.109]”

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Yeamon has a girlfriend named Chenault that accompanies the two of them to a wild holiday in St. Thomas. At a house party they end up at, they lose track of her and end up confronting a hostile after-party situation and are beaten up and driven away.

They can’t even find her the next day, but then Chenault later returns to San Juan, but to Kemp’s place and not Yeamon’s, before leaving to go back to Connecticut.

Working on a tourist brochure to make extra money, Kemp meets an ex-Marine named Martin

who has gone native in a way he probably never could:

“Yeah, I grew up in Norfolk, but I don’t remember it much— seems too long ago.’ [p.130]”

Zimburger, a friend of Martin, reflects on how langosta don’t even have claws the way lobsters do:

“Old God sure was in a good mood when he made this place.’ [p.131]”

However, when Kemp runs into bland American tourists he can’t control his contempt:

“These people should be kept at home, I thought; lock them in the basement of some goddamn Elks Club and keep them paci- fied with erotic movies; if they want a vacation, show them a for-

eign art film; and if they still aren’t satisfied, send them into the wilderness and run them with vicious dogs. [p.96]”

Skepticism about being down there haunts Kemp, whether he is thinking about Europe or Mexico or questioning what his col- league Sanderson made of the island:

“He got very excited when he talked about all things happening in Puerto Rico, but I was never sure how much of his talk he believed. [p.49]”

Some of the things happening there for Kemp include a beating by cops after he and Yeamon and Sala fled a dispute over being able to get dinner at a bar, and then being lucky to be bailed out of the filthy, threatening prison.

Without having resolved the resisting arrest charges incurred in the incident they were arrested for, the already-fired Yeamon plunges further into trouble after the paper collapses by participating in a deadly attack on the paper’s former owner, Lotterman:

“I saw Lotterman’s face collapse with surprise, and he was standing straight as a wooden pole when Yeamon hit him in the eyes and knocked him about six feet. He staggered wildly for a moment, then collapsed on the grass, bleeding from his eyes and both ears. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a dark shape come hurtling across the garden and strike the group like

a cannonball. They all went down, but Donovan was first on his feet. He had a berserk grin on his face as he grabbed one man by the head and mashed him sideways against a tree. Yeamon dragged Lotterman out from under another man and began whacking him around the garden like a punching bag. [p.198]”

Kemp ends his telling of the novel soon after, safe in the knowledge of a flight “on the morning plane.” Reflecting to music on the patio of Al’s, Kemp reflects as the novel closes with Thompson’s salute to Scott Fitzgerald:

“Sounds of a San Juan night, drifting across the city through layers of humid air; sounds of life and movement; people getting ready and people giving up, the sound of hope and the sound of hanging on, and behind them all, the quiet, deadly ticking of

a thousand hungry clocks, the lonely sound of time passing in the long Caribbean night. [p.204]”



<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2008/367/0205203336/>

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## Section 2

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# The long-predicted housing disaster unfolds

by Daniel J. McKeown

**djmcloud.com**

## **The Economy Never Really Got Going Under Bush**

- 1. Government backed entities Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac stoked up the housing sector**
- 2. Growth in the value of housing massively outpaced income growth in the 20 years leading up to 2008, an obvious warning sign largely ignored in the leadup**
- 3. Deregulation under Bill Clinton had paved the way for dangerous mega-banks**
- 4. Republican George W. Bush built a record in line with predecessors in**

## **his party: the stock market performed poorly on his watch**

### **5. Bailouts were a greedy idea, badly administered**

The economy is almost totally based on physical resource exploitation. Innovation can be a multiplier, but it has been DESTROYED by patents.

Essentially, productivity as measured economically is a total illusion—a dark shadow: you probably create zero accrued value (as they measure it) at your job, if you have one.

Access to real value creation via resource exploitation is controlled, and while any smart person can innovate—“intellectual property” law is there to stop that.

An MBA is a great way to learn how controlled the American economic system really is (more than the Soviet Union was). Capitalism MY ASS.

<http://djmcloud.danieljmckeown.com/updates/>

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<http://y.djmccloud.com/zcvUFq>

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## **The long-predicted housing disaster unfolds**

Published March 17, 2008

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2008/03/411/46/>

This [article in the Telegraph](#) about the credit crunch that began last year (and has begun to [engulf](#) major investment banks and the U.S. Treasury) makes a note of the loss of confidence in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. For those of us who have been following this housing market bubble with the kind of acid skepticism that it deserves, finding out that we were right in believing that housing couldn't out-pace income indefinitely can only

bring so much clarity about what's next for the markets—none of it, probably, any good.

With that in mind, here is [what I wrote about Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac \[.doc file\]](#) in a grad school paper in 2004. I had to frame the issue in the terms of the business ethics course I was writing it for, but for what it's worth I was quite in a hurry then to pour cold water on these badly designed market inflation machines.

Like most scams, this housing credit disaster has unwound only when the market dipped. It should have been a sign that the end of the bubble was near when a Bear Stearns hedge fund [collapsed in June 2007](#)—clearly foreshadowing the near-

collapse and pending sellout to JP Morgan Chase for considera-

bly less than the firm's recent market capitalization that **has de-veloped** this month.

What is Bear Stearns at this point, anyway, but an enormous ill-managed hedge fund itself?

The fact that the Federal Reserve is involved in trying to help bail out Stearns is another embarrassment to and encroachment upon America's supposedly free markets. Why are those companies not on Wall Street expected to bear the brunt of their mistakes while those on Wall Street and in Greenwich, who have created a risk-management disaster, are to be bailed out? Maybe if there had been some semblance of regulation on hedge funds and other areas of the financial sector, none of this would have happened—but that wasn't encouraged in any substantive way by partisan hack charlatan Alan Greenspan, or his already low-rated successor.

When you hear people say, 'this might be a good time to buy a house, now that the market is down,' I'd let them know that **there's no hurry**. The

credit crunch that began in 2007 is likely to continue for a while.

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## Let Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac collapse

Published July 12, 2008

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/let-fannie-mae-and-freddie-mac-collapse/>

Well we see troubles in the credit market continuing. Now some bank based in Pasadena called IndyMac Bancorp, with about \$32 billion in assets under management, has collapsed and been taken over by the Feds. Like **I've said**, this mess will go on for a while. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, a couple of mortgage market investment firms created by the federal government, **appear to be near collapse** themselves. Now what used to be considered a fairly remote possibility—a bailout by the federal

gov- ernment—becomes more and more likely by the day. But why should these exchange-traded, supposedly private vehicles be given a cushion by taxpayers? They shouldn't. The Feds should take over Fannie and Freddie, if necessary—but after they are allowed to fail, just like in the case of IndyMac Bancorp. But would that create chaos in the mortgage market? Sure, but so what. If you don't like it, you must be a communist or something. This is the “creative destruction” of the marketplace, peo- ple. Now, if only there were a country with billions of dollars worth of housing underneath their sands.

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/podcast/2010/podcast-46-cactus-juice/05216/>

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## **Bush's punks get ready for a government takeover of the housing debt market**

Published September 7, 2008

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/fannie-mae-freddie-m>

[ac-bailout/](http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/fannie-mae-freddie-m)

Well now we're about to see a government bailout the likes of which Lee Iacocca could only have imagined. Indeed, we are seeing the triumph of high-stakes government control of America's economy.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, those bizarre government boondoggles **who again are being cited** for shaky accounting and **that I have criticized before**, are **about to be taken over** (temporarily, supposedly!!) by the federal government. Of course this represents the logical conclusion of their path—what else but a cashing-in of their “implicit government guarantee” given the moral hazards involved?

This situation represents a true summation of the moronic regime of George W. Bush—a high-handed fake capitalist, who learned long ago that those holding high corporate positions or government connections in modern America fail upward without regard to results—and so it is with the stupid Henry Paulson and the dim-witted Ben Bernanke, those creeps that Bush put in charge of the U. S. Treasury and the Federal Reserve respec-

tively, who are meeting now in preparation for announcing the massive government bailout of those collapsing GSE mortgage market meal tickets, Fannie and Freddie, which the **Chinese are fleeing** faster than the floodplain of the Three Gorges Dam.

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<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2007/91/1028043929/>

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## **Paul Krugman rejects Bush's bailout idea – so should you**

Published September 21, 2008

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2008/09/496/21/>

I implied a few weeks ago that the bailout of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac was just the beginning (my post was entitled "**Bush's punks get ready for a government takeover of the housing debt market**"), and now we are seeing what further plans the Bush regime has to help their Wall Street cronies—they are now looking for Congressional approval to stage a further **\$700 billion bailout of financial institutions**. Not a takeover of these troubled institutions, mind you—just an enormous taking off their hands of troubled assets.

Clearly this represents another noxious case of "**privatize the profit, socialize the debt**," letting the financial institutions retain control of their valuable assets while dumping the troubled or worthless

ones on taxpayers. Of course, any perceptive observer has long understood the current administration to have had tendencies toward communism, which is probably the best description of the type of system America is moving towards.

But beyond that, New York Times columnist Paul Krugman (the economist who warned the nation that Bush's proposed tax cuts in 2001 were a bad idea) has looked at the details of the \$700 billion proposal and doesn't like them. [Read his whole post](#) and let him explain why the proposal has "nothing that gives taxpayers a stake in the upside, nothing that ensures that the money is used to stabilize the system rather than reward the undeserving."



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<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/podcast/2010/podcast-50/09255/>

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## Section 3

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# War Mongers

**by Daniel J. McKeown**

**djmcloud.com**

## **War Mongers**

- 1. Hide your shameful crocodile tears  
you war- mongers**
- 2. Gonzales gone doesn't mean civil  
liberties are back**
- 3. How dangerous is Hillary Clinton?**
- 4. Scooter Libby commutation shows  
how culture of corruption continues**
- 5. So, Mr. Bush**



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<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/podcast/2007/pacificpelicanus-podcast-13-antiwar-edition/1020/>

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**Hide your shameful crocodile tears you war-mongers**

Published October 9, 2007

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2007/10/250/01/>

General George Casey, one of those “commanders on the ground” in Iraq, didn’t like the surge, so he was demoted.

And so then George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld brought in David Petraeus and sold the man as a new kind of leader, who conveniently enough backed escalation. I can understand why some people see him as a political hack.

All those crocodile tears over names he was called made you right wingers look pretty stupid, and weak, you know.

However the stupid debate in Congress over moveon.org’s ad ended up, it’s clear that as 2007 is the deadliest year yet for U.S. troops the “surge” is not working.

Now that “reconciliation” among Iraqi factions has been largely ruled out, it’s time for new leadership over the U.S. military in Iraq.

And America should take Britain's example and start withdraw- ing, now.

And for those of you who will continue to insist that the project of turning over Baghdad to Iranian agents is an ever-turning

tide about to sweep America to victory parades, stop pretending to care about decorum while selling a murderous war. It's inane.



<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2009/672/0707005505/>

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## **Commutation shows how culture of corruption continues**

Published July 4, 2007

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2007/07/101/29/>

While people are right to howl about the arrogance, corruption and unfairness that George W. Bush's commutation of Lewis Libby's sentence entailed, from a strategic standpoint this is another political embarrassment for Republicans, who have another terrible decision done by their leader that they will have to try to (pretend to) run away from in the next elections. (Well maybe not if the nominee is Fred Thompson, who after all lobbied for a pardon.)

There's no real limit to the brazen disdain for laws applying to them—so why not a pardon too?

Liberal blogs are voicing outrage and disdain. MSNBC anchor Keith Olberman made his

contempt for the president clear in his special comment, which concluded thusly:

‘Pressure, negotiate, impeach — get you, Mr. Bush, and Mr. Cheney, two men who are now perilous to our Democracy, away from its helm.

And for you, Mr. Bush, and for Mr. Cheney, there is a lesser task.

Display just that iota of patriotism which Richard Nixon showed, on August 9th, 1974.

Resign.’

While Bush may not resign or be impeached, and Scooter Libby may not do thirty months in federal prison as sentenced, the Re- publican party might see many more months than that out of power as the political fallout unfolds in favor of Democrats, even as remaining power increasingly slides away from the iso- lated, lame duck president. Better to show that the Republican corruption that voters tried to punish in 2006 continues on than send one man to prison for his lies, which were probably told in service of the president and vice

president. It's not personal, really, (unless you're, say, Joe Wilson), mainly it's political.

Glenn Greenwald puts it this way:

'That Lewis Libby has been protected by George Bush from the consequences of his crimes only highlights how corrupt and broken our political system is. It reveals nothing new. This is the natural, inevitable outgrowth of our rancid political culture, shaped and slavishly defended by our Beltway ruling class and our serious, sober opinion-making elite.'

So more votes against the Republican culture of corruption and the "Beltway ruling class" in 2008, right? That's one way to think about it.

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You need merely achieve a very low threshold indeed.

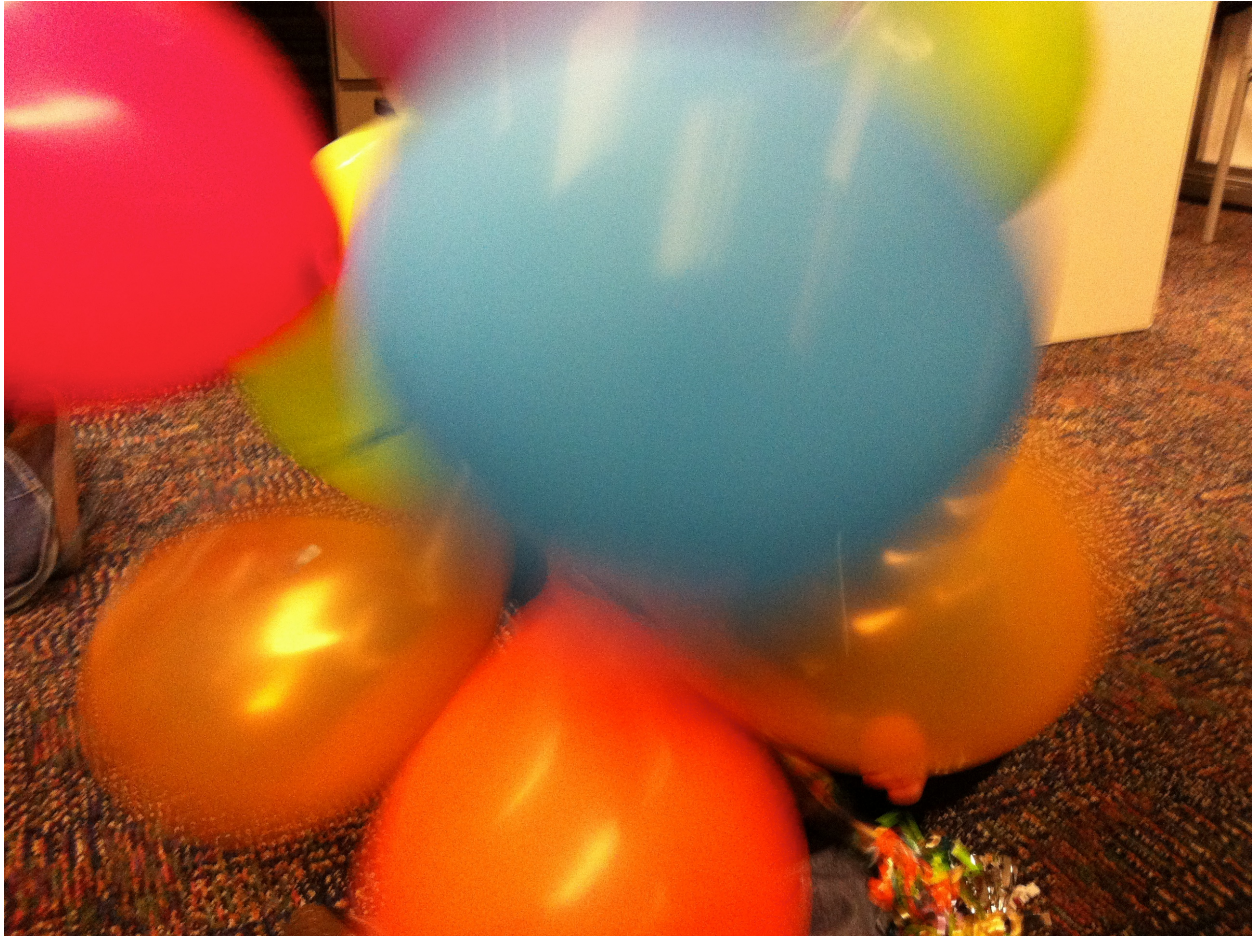
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Speaking of 2008, it looks like Barack Obama is leading in fund-raising for either party, and with an enormous base of donors. Might they not get

the anti-Hillary election that they want over at the RNC after all?

And if you're wondering why the debates are starting so early this time, why are you wondering that? Bush is finished politically, his followers are in shock and denial, and Obama looks ready to take advantage of the disillusionment.





<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2009/674/0707005604/>

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## **Gonzales gone doesn't mean civil liberties are back**

Published August 28, 2007

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2007/08/397/30/>

The US attorneys scandal and Alberto Gonzales were more than a side skirmish in larger political calculations, and his resignation is welcome and will lead to the end of the attorney general's bizarre version of the "American dream," but will probably not lead to restoration of American liberties.

This scandal was not about broad issues of separation of powers so much as defending senatorial privilege in a loosely defined system. Senators are territorial types—and they didn't like the open defiance and lying that Alberto Gonzales displayed at their hearings. Besides that, his boss George W. Bush had sought to take away the great privilege senators enjoy in their home states—the ability to consult on choice of U.S. attorneys—by using a new provision in a tyrannical law.

Why a majority of senators voted in favor of stripping themselves of this particular power in the "Patriot Act" reauthorization bill is a mystery only known inside the Hart Senate Office Building,

if there.

But that's all this was about. Now, for the most part, the power struggle is over and the various political parties and branches of governments can get back to colluding to deny ordinary Americans their civil liberties.

Congress just passed another absurd concession to the president in the recent "temporary" wiretapping bill. This appears a better indicator of where things are going politically—at least until the next election or for a while anyway.

No charges appear to have yet been filed for the lies Gonzales told, no impeachment proceedings have been called in the House. Just because he resigned doesn't mean that he didn't commit perjury. And liberals may hope for improvement in the DoJ now, but knowing the Bushies it will be another corrupt bastard so what does it matter anyway.

And what about Karl Rove and Harriet Myers?  
Will Congress let Bush get away with not having them testify?

Bush is extremely unpopular; he has claimed powers he simply does not have (to invalidate laws, to indefinitely imprison citizens without charge, to wiretap without a warrant, and so forth); and his administration has done a laughably bad job of leading the country.

Now is the time to open up a full-on political assault on the worst administration in the country's history, for the purposes of avoiding more harmful mistakes like an Iran invasion and punishing the lawless and stupid president to set a precedent.

But that's not likely to come from the Democrats, some of whom (like Hillary Clinton) are ready to collude with the Republican/media establishment once in power.

# How dangerous is Hillary Clinton?

Published August 2, 2007

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2007/08/144/36/>

Hillary Clinton might be the opponent that many conservatives claim they want to face in the general elections—but that might be true for reasons that are somewhat surprising.

Those clumsy “folks,” as he probably calls them, at the RNC— you know, what remains of the political operation of George W. Bush, that guy whose approval is less than 30%, that guy who never got any immigration “reform” bill or Social Security Bill or— remember the Orwellian [arghh, so much Orwellian stuff from these clowns--Clear Skies and all that] “ownership society” buzzword from the 2004 campaign? You get the idea. Those people seem to fairly salivate at the idea of Republican candi- date taking on Hillary.

But why should anyone listen to the spin from Bush’s people? Bush is finished politically and he was so busy with “war on my mind” that he has practically no major accomplishments to point to. I

think there might be some lonely, arid days out at Crawford after the power is gone. (He did get to sign off on quite a few tax cuts though—for his “base” he is actually a great president, and always will be.)

And will Bush ever travel internationally after his term ends (assuming he doesn't start adding lifetime rule to his other lawless assertions of executive power—Congress has done so little to check him so far, maybe they would accept that as well) when he will probably be indicted by the International Criminal Court as a war criminal?

Is that a bit too far? Well, no. For the great crime—invading Iraq based on falsehoods, the false charges about the WMD, the violation of Iraqi sovereignty—the UN would have to enforce its charter. As it is, the UN seems more interested in legitimizing the brutal, imperial occupation. So for the great crime Bush will likely not be indicted. But for some of the small crimes committed in ICC signatory nations, Bush could easily be held responsible. This would include the CIA “black sites” secret prisons in Poland and Romania (for which I would

seriously recommend debate in the European Parliament and the EC for both of their expulsion from the EU superstate, by the way) and the illegal kidnapping of an Islamic cleric in Italy, for which several American agents face trial in absentia in Italy.

So back to Hillary and why the Bush administration types like the idea of running against her. They love the idea of demonizing her the way they and the media did with Howard Dean and Tom Daschle (and by that I mean inflating both of those mediocrities to be leviathons of liberalism). Check out this old Sean Hannity interview with Dick Cheney from June 2005:

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‘HANNITY: Not just Howard Dean. I mean, Harry Reid, in front of school children, called the president of the United States of American a loser. Hillary Clinton said there’s never been in the history of this country an administration I believe more intent upon consolidating and abusing

power. What is going on in your mind, I mean, as you hear those this? The campaign was over in November.

CHENEY: I sounds to me like...

HANNITY: Seems to be — seems like campaign rhetoric, right?

CHENEY: Well, or beyond it. Maybe Hillary's spending too much time with Howard.

HANNITY: That's a good line. And Harry Reid.'

But as I was saying, the Hillary demonizers are only one group of right-wingers that want to see her run. Another group, the more surprising one, actually wants Hillary to be president because they seem to think that she will be just as much of a war-monger as any Republican candidate, and probably more so. Here's what Weekly Standard writer and Fox News analyst Fred Barnes said, talking about the Youtube debate this month:

'FOR HILLARY CLINTON, the presidency is not in the bag. Even winning the Democratic presidential nomination is considerably less than a sure thing. But of the 18 Democratic and Republican

presidential candidates, Clinton is the most likely to be

the next president. And she did nothing last night in the bizarre presidential debate in Charleston, South Carolina, to alter that.

Clinton managed to maintain at least the outward appearance of seriousness in a debate that included a taped question from someone dressed as a snowman, another from a sanctimonious Planned Parenthood official who asked if the candidates had talked to their kids about sex, and an especially silly one about whether the candidates would be willing to be paid the minimum wage as president. Most of them lied and said yes.'

Yes, here we go again with that "serious" thing. (Remember that old Kool Aid commercial?—"Now it's time to get serious—SE- RIOUSLY WACKY!!") And here's an eerily similar comment from another creep, New Republic writer Michael Crowley:

'But the one who stood out was Hillary. She shows really impressive poise and confidence,

and didn't lose her stride even in the face of offbeat questions about her gender and voter fatigue with the Clinton and Bush families. I also particularly liked her answer about nuclear power: She explained that nuclear has promise that is hard to tap for reasons of cost and waste—but that instead of writing it off (as John Edwards seemed to) we should redouble technological efforts to address those problems.'

These kind of people supporting Hillary is the one of best reasons yet to support Barack Obama.

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Hillary Clinton will say anything or do anything to win the Democratic nomination—even friends of the Clintons sometimes let slip occasional truths about their dishonesty—and after that watch out for a Joe Lieberman-style strategy, where she courts the right wing to win the general election.



<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2006/07/277/00/>

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## **So, Mr. Bush**

Published November 6, 2006

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2006/11/364/00/>

George W. Bush's presidency is on the verge of collapse, and going around without a tie is probably not enough to save it. Even the candidate to succeed his brother, Jeb Bush, is snub- bing him. As the AP via Yahoo News reports:

“On Monday, Bush jetted to a conservative corner of Florida’s Panhandle, about as far as he could get from the state’s three in-play House districts. To the White House’s embarrassment and irritation, Republican Charlie Crist, whom Bush came to help in his bid to succeed the president’s brother as governor, decided at the last minute to skip the chance to be by the presi- dent’s side.”

The Democrats have not always stood up to Mr. Bush nearly as much as they should have, but they have been demonized enough for being “obstructionist” by Republicans and “indecisive” by the media to make it clear that they present some sort of alternative for the authoritarian rule of George W. Bush and his radical regime. The power grab that began with the “authorization” to torture people and spy on citizens without warrants justified by memos issued by ideological fascist lawyers at the

Justice Department can come to an end with the election of a strong Democratic majority in the House and Senate.

The 2006 midterm elections offer the chance to start a change, some sort of change, from the war-mongering and war-profiteering Bush regime. And taking a majority of governorships can help lay the groundwork for a Democratic, non-Hillary Clinton candidate for president in 2008. Between now and then, the full range of possible crimes by the Bush administration, the CIA and their corporate associates should be investigated thoroughly by Congress.



<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2011/2060/0831181419/>

# **Systematic Failures**



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**Barack Obama fails to even try to lead a new**

**progressive era while California loses its way as the world is distracted**



**Section 1**

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# Sliding Into A New World Order

by Daniel J. McKeown

[djmcloud.com](http://djmcloud.com)

## California continues its slide

Published June 10, 2009

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/california-continues-its-slide/>

For a long time, no one seemed willing to call out the abysmal record and predictable failure of Arnold Schwarzenegger's governorship of California. Voted in on a wave of moronic, Bush-era fake-populist outrage against state deficits, Schwarzenegger came in with a lot of talk and no plan to fix the problem. It was obvious for a

long time, but few seemed to grasp the implications for the state. Now it is easy to blame the governor—he has been one of the worst in the state’s history—but the problems unfortunately go much deeper: California is seeing the results of Prop 13 and its bizarre direct democracy model where all decisions seem to go through the ballot box without the cooling and compromise of legislative deliberations. The state is facing proposals for massive cuts in programs including children’s health insurance, welfare, and state parks.

While the situation could be addressed by raising taxes, getting that through would be nearly impossible and it seems likely that California will see something like the unprecedented cuts that have been proposed.



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<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2008/386/0301124308/>

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**Good news: a warmonger fascist hates Obama**

Published February 28, 2008

<http://pacificpelican.us/diary/2008/01/406/09/>

In a book review, Pankaj Mishra **recounts** the hubris and idiocy of Woodrow Wilson and his quest to make the world “safe for democracy.” In this telling, we are informed that writers for the New Republic magazine were among his most prominent and important backers. Moving ahead to the 21st century, we are reminded in the review that the same magazine backed the fascist aggression against Iraq led by George W. Bush.

Writing for the New Republic today, and carrying on a moronic tradition, is Mr. Leon Wieseltier, the magazine’s literary editor and spinner of clever phrases.

It’s bad enough that not long ago Wieseltier was mentioned in this [sock-puppeted] boast from discredited blogger and proven liar Lee Siegel: “They hate him because they want to write like him but can’t. Maybe if they’d let themselves go and write truthfully, they’d get Leon Wieseltier to notice them too.”

Employing that scumbag was bad enough, and brings up real questions about his judgement. But Wieseltier’s recent rants about Barack Obama should bring even greater pause. Mr. Obama, we

are told, is simply too young mentally, too naive, a child selling “euphoria.”

Apparently since he doesn't favor war-mongering in his speeches, and phrases that Wieseltier enjoys like “Islamistan,” Obama does not possess, in Wieseltier's own words, “the hardness I seek.” (What man does? He won't say.)

But I will close by simply quoting what amounts to the key point of the article, which brings up the question in my mind of whether war-mongering is a side dish here and the main plate, just as in Wilson's day, is racism:

“There is almost no more commonplace trait of human existence (and of African American existence) than false hopes.”

This is vile language, nothing more than a call for a return to the divisions of the

past and a plea for fear of the future.

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/podcast/2009/the-buzzards-of-hinckley-reservation/0362/>



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## **Barack Obama has been a disappointment**

Published January 19, 2010

[http://blogs.sf3am.com/citynews/2010/01/19/  
barack-obama-dis  
appointment/](http://blogs.sf3am.com/citynews/2010/01/19/barack-obama-disappointment/)

Barack Obama might be crying about how he's perceived—and of course right-wingers are always going to greet any Democrat in the White House with attacks and lies. But his liberal critics are the ones who matter—he pretended he was one of them on the campaign trail. It's not a pleasant prospect for political idealism, but it is clearly, terribly true: Obama should be upset about how lousy of a job he has done in his first year in office.

I hung back, not saying much about Barack Obama last year for two reasons—first, he was newly in office and it was hard to know the true direction of his administration without at least a modicum of observation; and second, every time some conservative idiot like Glenn Beck or Jim Demint fanned the pointless right-wing rage against Obama, it reminded how much worse the world would be if some filthy Republican like John McCain were president.

But those rationales have run their course—the first expiring due to the new year, and the second largely evaporating in the face of Obama's collusion with the vile and moronic George W.

Bush on Haiti relief (yes the Haitian tragedy is awful, but do you really

want George Katrina Bush up there ranting about “shysters” while raising money for his idea of disaster relief?). To the powerful, it is all a game and working “across party lines” over epic foreign tragedies is arbitrarily fine, while pulling together to pass a bigger stimulus bill to put more Americans back to work is argued about and filibustered endlessly—or not even considered. Don’t give them the benefit of the doubt over their false distinctions.

And that goes for Mr. Obama. Elected on a wave of popular disenchantment with America’s crusty, broken, self-righteous and lobbyist-dominated political culture, Obama has turned into another monster to rebel against, and nothing better.

I will list five of the enormous failures of the Obama administration:

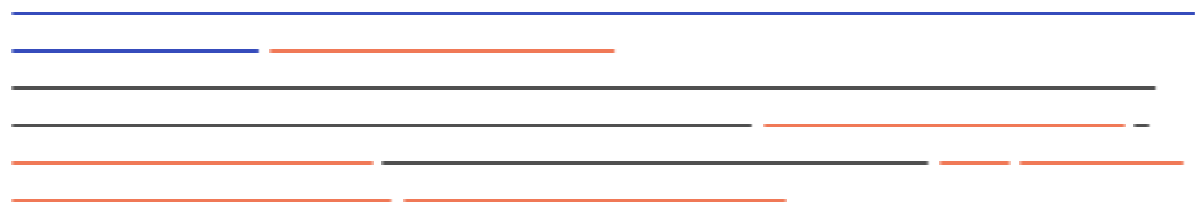
A crazy and downright evil **Afghanistan policy**.

The lack of follow-through on the campaign promise to repeal the pointless and morale-

undermining “Don’t ask, don’t tell” anti-gay policy in the military.

An economic policy driven by greedy Wall Street thugs **Tim Geithner** and **Lawrence Summers**.

A corrupt and inadequate attempt at health reform, including support for a deeply illiberal mandate for health insurance that Obama **campaigned against**.



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Obama’s **sneaky little attempt** to sneak fascism in by the back door by asking for powers of “preventive detention.”

These aren’t the only things Obama has done wrong—there are many more—and in fairness he has actually done a few things right like passing the stimulus bill and slowing down the assault by mineral extracting industries on America’s national parks and forests. But his overall stance has been

one hostile to the American people and their rights, and time for deference is over.

Barack Obama is better than Republicans, but still terribly vile.





<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/podcast/2009/fourth-of-july/0775/>

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## **Republicans need to be taken seriously again**

Published January 20, 2010

<http://blogs.sf3am.com/citynews/2010/01/20/republicans-need-to-be-take>

[n-seriously-again/](http://blogs.sf3am.com/citynews/2010/01/20/republicans-need-to-be-taken-seriously-again/)

The era of big-time dominance by the Democratic Party is over with Scott Brown's win last night in the race for Massachusetts senator. And it had

only gotten underway in 2008 (2006 at the earliest).

Scott Brown[shirt] is a total creep—even Glenn Beck took a shot at him for the shady stuff he said about his daughters. But that makes it even scarier—if he can win, who else from the Republican side can?

What happened? It's hard to say. Partly Barack Obama failed to live up to the promises he made to his liberal base, partly the Tea Party rebellion on the right helped stoke near-universal Republican obstructionism, which undermined the new administration's plans.

But whatever the reasons, the Republicans are a political force once again, and it now seems that the near future might be a closely fought battle on a much more even playing field than thought likely just a few weeks ago—they might be emerging from their post-Bush hangover sooner than expected.

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2009/934/1009001023/>

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**So what happened with that whole swine flu scare?**

Published February 1, 2010

<http://blogs.sf3am.com/citynews/2010/02/01/so-what-happened-with-that>

[-whole-swine-flu-scare/](#)

Well the last year was a good one financially for vaccine makers. Fear ran rampant (in the media), orders flowed in (for a vaccine not even proven to work), and then at some point a lot of people seemed to figure out this was a big waste of time and now the Walgreens on the corner advertises H1N1 shots on outdoor signs because they're having a hard time selling them.

For a while the health authorities tried to create a rush for vaccination by saying only certain groups could get the shots and falsely claiming there was a shortage. Many of them still recommend submitting to the H1N1 vaccination, citing deaths from the disease. But since fewer people seem to be dying of H1N1 than normal seasonal flu, it's hard to convince the non-stupid to waste their time with this scam.

I'm not a health expert, but last year's flu panic certainly seems like it will be put up there with the great over-hyped stories of all time, stoked by a greedy medical establishment and a moronic mainstream media.

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2007/204/1129005812/>



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## Section 2

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# Bread and Circuses

by Daniel J. McKeown

[djmcloud.com](http://djmcloud.com)

# **The Wire Season 5 review**

## **On GTA3 10th Anniversary Edition**

## **for iOS Google's ownership**

## **Jose Reyes: Mets Marlins shortstop**

# **The Wire Season 5 review**

Published September 16, 2008

<http://blogs.sf3am.com/citynews/2008/09/16/the-wire-season-5/>

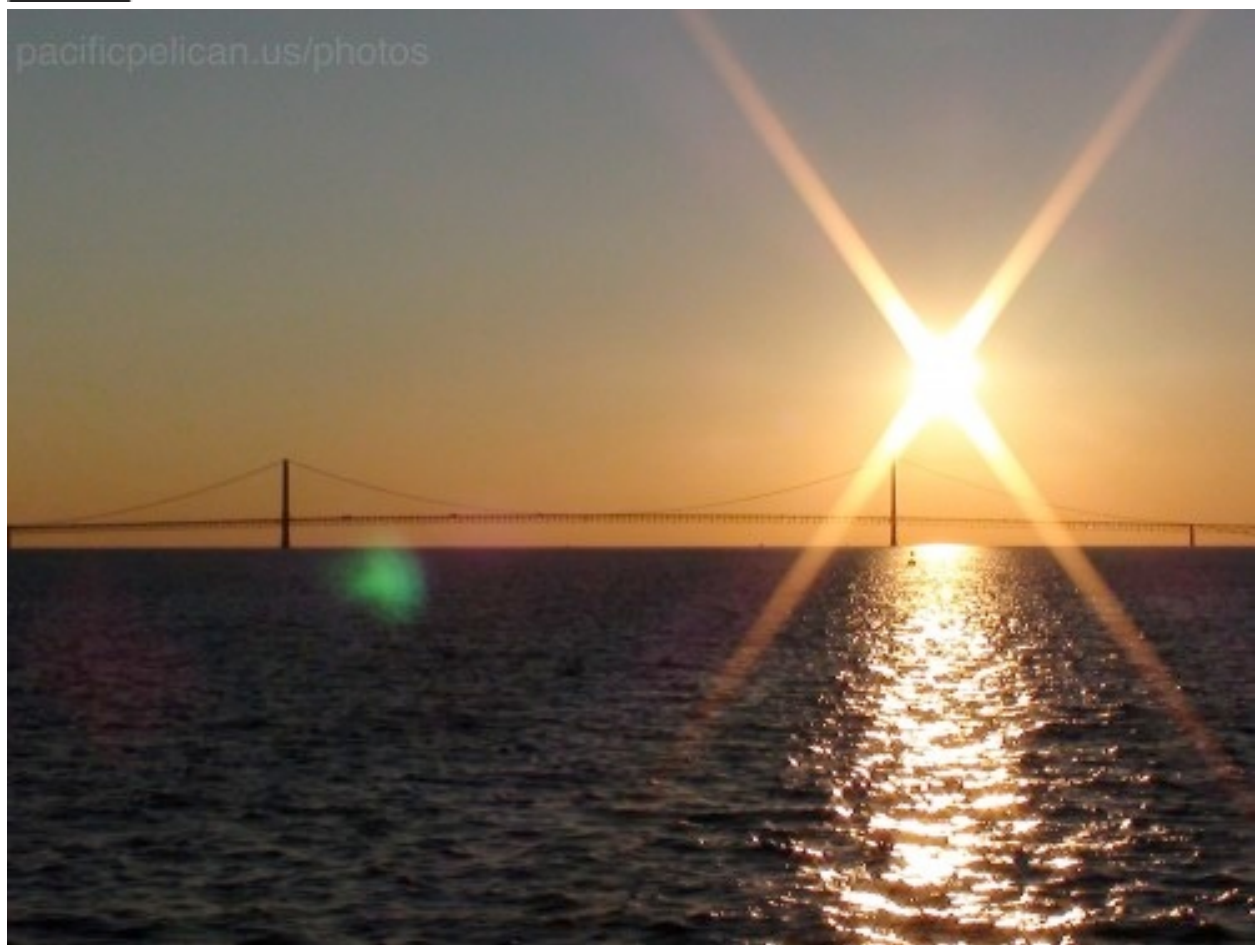
Marlo Stanfield is the central character in the fifth season of *The Wire*, the series from HBO that inspired enormous critical acclaim and a small, but rabid, legion of fans. Watching the DVDs for *The Wire* season 5, I realized that the newspaper “an- gle,” while filled with valid (and not veiled) criticisms of the Trib- une Company and modern media in general (and chilling in its icy portrait of a journalistic fabricator along the lines of Jayson Blair and Jack Kelley), is just one more story line that after all couldn't run too long as it started in the fifth and last season. Other seasons had concentrated on other industries (i.e. #1: street

drug trade; #2: corruption at the seaport; #3 shady deal- ings at city hall #4: the failing school system) and season five goes after the Pulitzer-chasing, profitable but down-sizing mod- ern reality of the American newspaper, but takes much of the time to move the overall plot forward.

That plot involves the continued rise of drug boss Marlo Stan- field, whose murderous lieutenants are taking over the corner drug trade across much of Baltimore. What stands out about Marlo is his ruthlessness and brutality. He represents the kind of rootless, modern killer that you might see walk off of an alarmist newspaper's op-ed page. But then, unlike in season

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<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2011/2074/0916203754/>

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four in which he rose, Marlo at the top is portrayed as emotional and sensitive—he loses his cool, in a way. Whether it’s appearing himself at Proposition Joe’s killing by his man Chris or him yelling at the jail about how he hadn’t heard from his people that Omar had been calling his name

out on the street (and this outburst occurs, remember, after he knows Omar is dead), Marlo is no longer the ice-cold and silent man on the rise as seen in his meeting with Stringer Bell. Marlo's methods of brutalization and plotting may have won in the end his turf war with the more cerebral Stringer by the end of season 4, but by late in 5 when Marlo dissolves the co-op, it's clear that he really doesn't know the next step himself. Like any gangster as successful, careers can come to an end suddenly, and often do.

Instead of having the rare reflective moment at the pigeon coup followed quickly by giving out brutal marching orders as in season four, the Marlo of season five has events closing in on him as his enemies from across the spectrum plot against him and his crew and he is forced onto his heels and tested severely in an end-game that defies easy prediction from the viewer.

In fact, when Marlo goes to the prison to meet Sergei from season two in his efforts to outmaneuver the co-op and ends up seeing Avon Barksdale, it's clear he's been outmaneuvered by Avon even as Avon is locked up. However, since

Avon has “nothing but love in his heart” for West Side fellows like Marlow, what could have been a major roadblock turns into a mere

\$100,000 tax by the what’s left of the Barksdale crew. But with that success, it’s clear sailing for Marlow—unless the police have a wire up on him.

With his enormous trail of murder, it’s clear that the detectives from *The Wire* like Freamon and McNulty are after him, breaking rules and violating police procedure along the way. Of course this intersects with the political plot line and how the mayor is cutting funds to the police to pay for the schools. Those plot lines are thankfully not overwhelming, and even the updates from last year’s kids are limited, so the action moves faster than one would expect—even faster, actually, than the denser season 4.

With even the detectives calling him out by name, Marlo is clearly the center of the story in the last season. The decline and fall of Omar is of course a corresponding plot line that cannot be forgotten. And perhaps the most fascinating character development from the season is the maturation and steady leadership of Lieutenant

Daniels, who develops from snippy career-ism to a strong voice of principle and moderation—until he’s fired as police commissioner, of course.

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**A rather strange aspect of Google** is the two-tier share system that ensures that mere investors are to be kept at bay lest they get in the way of Brin, Page and Schmidt’s plans. The company’s own 2005 10-K report notes:

“Our Class B common stock has ten votes per share and our Class A common stock has one vote per share. As of December 31, 2005 our founders, executive officers and directors (and their affiliates) together owned shares of Class A common stock and Class B common stock representing approximately 78% of the voting power of our outstanding capital stock. In particular, as of December 31, 2005, our two founders and our CEO, Larry, Sergey and Eric, controlled approximately 84% of our outstanding Class B common stock, representing approximately 69% of the voting power of our outstanding capital stock. Larry, Sergey and Eric

therefore have significant influence over management and affairs and over all matters requiring stockholder approval, including the election of directors and significant corporate transactions, such as a merger or other sale of our company or its assets, for the foreseeable future. In addition, because of this dual class structure, our founders, directors, executives and employees will continue to be able to control all matters submitted to our stockholders for approval even if they come to own less than 50% of the outstanding shares of our common stock. This concentrated control limits your ability to influence corporate matters and, as a result, *we may take actions that our stockholders do not view as beneficial.* As a re-

sult, the market price of our Class A common stock could be adversely affected.”

Has Google seen such enormous growth in share price that its future growth will be slow, as in the case of Microsoft, or will it continue to grow? Online advertising and search technology are industries that Google is easily number one in, while services like Google Earth, Gmail and

Google Video/YouTube do not seem like highly profitable businesses by themselves and it seems that enormous future growth, if it comes, will probably issue from those two key bases of ads and search technology.

[Published October 25, 2006]

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2006/10/353/00/>



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**'The World is Flat' is terribly, laughably bad**

(Book review: The World is Flat by Thomas L. Friedman, 2005, ISBN 0-374-29288-4) Published July 19, 2006 <http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2006/07/282/00/>

Reading Tom Friedman's book of mangled preaching about the world economy, it becomes clear before long that The World is Flat is like one long, terrible newspaper column whose premise is misguided and whose writer is a charlatan, a moron and an apologist for authoritarianism.

"Yes, China has had a good run for the past twenty-five years," Friedman states, "and it may make the transition from communism to a more pluralistic system without the wheels coming off. [p. 247]"

Does this transition include events like the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989? It certainly is included in the "good run" he speaks of.

It sometimes seems that Friedman, a New York Times columnist, thinks that America's economy would work a lot better if the country adopted strategies from Communism. He certainly finds a lot of things right with China's system, and enlists some of his friends to bolster his point. Here's Google board member John Doerr:

“You talk to the leadership of China, and they are all engineers, and they get what is going on immediately. The Americans don't, because they're all lawyers.’ [p. 280]”

Bill Gates met with President Hu of China recently, and in *The World is Flat* he's all about that Chinese way—even, or especially, the system of government:

“The Chinese have risk taking down, hard work down, education, and when you meet with Chinese politicians, they are all scientists and engineers. You can have a numeric discussion with them—you are never discussing `give me a one-liner to embarrass [my political rivals] with.` You are meeting with an intelligent bureaucracy.’ [p. 281]”

Friedman also offers his own parenthetical remark:

“For a Communist authoritarian system, China does a pretty good job of promoting people on merit. The Mandarin meritocratic culture here still runs very deep [p. 34].” ['authoritarian' corrected from 'authoritarianism' 7-22-2006]

As far as labor standards, Friedman aims to at least demonstrate his good will, if less than thorough investigation, on the matter. Talking about a place in India, he reports back:

“Although I am sure that there are call centers that are operated like sweatshops, 24/7 is not one of them. [p. 22]”

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Friedman makes a false claim about Salt Lake City, where members of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in reality make up about half the city’s population:

“So he based his home reservation system in Salt Lake City, where the vast majority of the women are Mormons... [p. 37]”

The book is filled with frequent nagging that people in America (presumably other than himself) need to study engineering and be fired at the drop of a hat.

A little outsourcing to Russia, and Friedman scrambles for the paranoid interpretation:

“Wait a minute: Didn’t we win the Cold War? If one of America’s premier technology companies feels compelled to meet its engineering needs by going to the broken-down former Soviet Union, where the only thing that seems to work is old-school math and science education, then we’ve got a quiet little crisis on our hands. [p. 274]”

Here Friedman presses the need for lots of firing-ability for companies (like they don’t have that now or something), using dubious reasoning to try to make a point that could either have been made better or didn’t need to be made at all:

“The easier it is to fire someone in a dying industry, the easier it is to hire someone in a rising industry that no one knew would exist five years earlier. [p. 246]”

Why didn’t Friedman focus on the Middle East, about which he claims to be an expert and has previously written books on? Could it have anything to do with his cheerleading for the Iraq War, which has obviously dented his credibility and given the “liberal hawk” label a bad name? When he finally takes a stab at the region, it doesn’t work out very well anyway. What would

his old friend, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, make of this patronizing propaganda?:

“The Arab-Muslim peoples have an incredibly rich cultural tradition and civilization, with long periods of success and innovation to draw on for inspiration and example for their young people. They have all the resources necessary for modernization in their own cultural terms, if they want to summon them. [p. 405]”

Apparently one element of modernizing the Middle East, according to Friedman, is keeping tabs on what’s happening on the village level—by flying unmanned drones over people:

“He explained that a U.S. Predator drone—a small pilotless aircraft with a high-power television camera—was flying over an Iraqi village, in the 24th MEU’s area of operation, and feeding real-time intelligence images back to his laptop and this flat screen. [p. 39]”

I’m not sure if Friedman thinks the Iraq invasion was done on “their own cultural terms,” or what that exactly is supposed to mean. Often, throughout the book, it is hard to understand what

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some his arguments are actually supposed to mean. In many cases the serial abuse of the concept described by the book title, “flat,” serves to mangle into nonsense what are otherwise banal or debatable points:

“All of this is going to have to be sorted out anew. The most common disease of the flat world is going to be multiple identity disorder, which is why, if nothing else, political scientists are going to have a field day with the flat world. Political science may turn out to be the biggest growth industry of all in this new era. [p. 201]”

If that is true, engineering majors should take note.

Sometimes the ill-defined jargon cascades into an avalanche of meaningless chatter:

“How does searching fit into the concept of collaboration? I call it ‘in-forming.’ In-forming is the individual’s personal analog to open-sourcing, outsourcing, insourcing, supply-chaining, and offshoring. [p. 153]”

Got it? Try this:

“I call my own version of this approach compassionate flatism. [p. 277]”

Friedman also goes into the two most predictable business school case studies, Wal-Mart and Dell, during the course of

the book. First an un-sourced (un-sourcing? Is that one of those new terms we need to remember?) “estimate” about Wal-Mart:

“Thanks to the efficiency of its supply chain alone, Wal-Mart’s cost of goods is estimated to be 5 to 10 percent less than that of most of its competitors. [p. 135]”

Then later, on page 414, Friedman shares a breathless, boring story about his Dell laptop and its demonstrably fine lineage.

After all that, it is hard to take Friedman seriously as an insight-ful commentator with anything interesting to say, especially con-sidering that he admits that he built the book out of an inexplicable concept and a confirmation bias:

“Unlike Columbus, I didn’t stop with India. After I got home, I de- cided to keep exploring the East for more signs that the world was flat. [p. 32]”

Many of Friedman’s comments look, a little more than a year af- ter publication, misguided or stupid. In this argument he seems not to realize that, rather inconveniently for his premise, India is indeed developing and testing ballistic missiles (although recent unsuccessful tests of missiles by India might even deflate some of Friedman’s hype of India’s scientific progress):

“But today, alas, there is no missile threat coming from India. [p. 278]”

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Here, Friedman discusses the price of oil, “the path to reform,” and the unrealistic construct of “energy independence”:

“If President Bush made energy independence his moon shot, in one fell swoop he would dry up revenue for terrorism, force Iran, Russia, Venezuela, and Saudi Arabia onto the path of reform—which they will never do with \$50-a-barrel

oil—s- trengthen the dollar, and improve his own standing in Europe by doing something huge to reduce global warming. [p. 283]”

So what does he think will happen with oil at over \$73 a barrel, now?

In the book, Tom Friedman’s attitude toward the rich and power- ful is very much like the “junior media advisor” of Colin Powell that he quotes:

“‘My friends were all impressed,’ she said. ‘Little me, and I’m talking to the secretary of state!’ [p. 213]”

As for the history part of the subtitle in *The World is Flat*, this segment offers part of the narrative:

“It wasn’t only Americans and Europeans who joined the people of the Soviet Empire in celebrating the fall of the wall—and claiming credit for it. Someone else was raising a glass—not of champagne but of thick Turkish coffee. His name was Osama bin Laden and he had a different narrative. [p. 55]”

Friedman is a guy who talks (in this book) about his favorite TV commercials. Is that who you want to tell you the “history” of the 21st century?



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## **On GTA3 10th Anniversary Edition for iOS**

Published December 17, 2011

<http://djmcloud.danieljmckeown.com/blog/2011/12/podcast-19-jessica-joins-m>

[e-to-discuss-gta-3-and-more/](#)

From the intro credits music to the crazy radio stations (“Jah,” “Head Radio”) to the eccentric, boxy and gently rising street grid, which is utterly mapped to the inner synapses of the greatest minds of my generation: it’s the game that ranks as very possibly the greatest video game of all time, starting in 2001 as a PlayStation 2 game and moving eventually to Xbox and PC before living middle age as “Liberty City Stories” on early at-

tempts to take such scale of games to mobile as on the PSP before now finally living a grand old age as the one that came first (before the wild Vice City, the brilliant San Andreas, and the imperfect but impeccably tuned GTA IV, before the transcendently good Red Dead Redemption) and laid out an amazingly large amount of the formula, fully formed, onto the public. We’re talking about the deadpan timbre of the satire in the game, the utter corruption of power, the undeniability of the wary protagonist, the complexity of the game’s

universe, and the weapons—oh the many weapons.

<http://y.djmcloud.com/whu4rF>







## **Jose Reyes: Mets Marlins shortstop**

Published June 17, 2010

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2010/1756/0617150623/>

## **Touchdown Spartans**

Published October 7, 2010

<http://blogs.sf3am.com/spartans/football/2010/10/touchdowns-for-msu-against-wisconsin/>

# Let's Take A Trip



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## The West--and House Music--is a way of life



### Section 1

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# The Birds Are Friendly

by Daniel J. McKeown

**djmcloud.com**

- 1. Jessica in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood**
- 2. The Rothbury drag strip**
- 3. Wordcamp 2007 – day 1 – morning session**
- 4. The birds of Bodega Bay**
- 5. The parakeets**

**Jessica in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood**

Published January 1, 2012

<http://blog.djmcloud.com/jessica-in-seattles-fremont-neighborhood>



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## **The Rothbury drag strip**

Published August 13, 2010

<http://blog.djmcloud.com/the-rothbury-drag-strip>

For years in the 1980s I would ride in the family station wagon up north from Chicago through Indiana and into Michigan until we were about halfway up Lake Michigan. At that point we would exit US-31 at Winston

Road as we closed in our vacation destination at Michago. As we drove over the highway and then turned onto a road that ran almost alongside it for half a mile, we would pass a deserted drag strip. Haunted by the good old boy racers in the old days (perhaps the 70s?), the track now sat silent.

Until about ten years ago. Now the course sees crowds and cars every Friday night. I've never been to a race yet but I've heard a few relatives talk about their experiences. It's the minor leagues of racing, no

different than a dusty track in Georgia or West Virginia, where young racers fly around the local track with an eye on the big break.

But what I don't really know is, what forces revived the Roth- bury drag strip, known today as the Winston Speedway?



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## **Wordcamp 2007 – day 1 – morning session**

Published July 21, 2007

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2007/07/126/44/>

A series of horrid shrieks emerged from the peanut gallery as the cry went up—”The Internet is down!!” Presenter Dan Kuykendall tried bravely to

joke about it—"of course the Internet is going to go down"—but the crowd assembled for WordCamp 2007 at the Swedish- American Hall was slowly giving over to fear and panic. What in the hell happened to the Internet?

Well it appears that some sort of depraved freak from off the street had busted in and wandered upstairs, and with crumbs from a scone snagged downstairs still rolling off his chin tried to rip apart the wiring tangle around the Cisco router in order to harvest its copper. I tried to sound the alarm but in the tussle was pushed into the table, and right after that the connections went down.

So fortunately no copper was stolen by the madman (only a scone or two) and as he turned to leave down the stairs I stuck a Word- Press sticker onto the back of his filthy Members Only jacket— so keep an eye out. Internet connection was restored after some time, although it was clear that the staffer talking on the phone about how to fix it was no router guru because he was still working on it for three minutes after the Internet had returned and only

stopped mess- ing with the decrepit old router  
when told to by an associate.



<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2007/07/132/51/>



## **The birds of Bodega Bay**

Published November 7, 2006

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/diary/2006/11/366/00/>

The birds at the pier at Bodega Bay, made famous for their starring role



Jessica and I have had pet birds since not long after we moved to Ohio in 2008. Pictured here is Dodger and Sparta.

<http://blogs.sf3am.com/parakeets>

in Hitchcock's *The Birds* (which was set in the northern California town) were friendly on 11/4/2006 when I took their picture.

## Section 2

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# House Music Is a Way Of Life

by Daniel J. McKeown

[djmccloud.com](http://djmccloud.com)

## Let's Take A Trip To House Music

<http://blogs.sf3am.com/neener/>

from Neener, my band with Jessica named after a sound our birds make

Published July 4, 2011 (as song lyrics for "Vinyl") Do you understand house music? House music is a way of life

House music is something that you feel Do you understand house music?

Do you just go the clubs and say  
'Oh I want to get a fuckin' Red Bull and vodka' Or

do you go there to hear the house music? Do you know the grimy DJ's name?



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## 11.11.2011 Notes

Previously Unpublished

Hey haven't got Saturday going to get it to the other we doing tonight you know what you talking about can you talking about that ticket

Strange data of inebriation lights of the dark board him of the Ohio 98 has weekend approaches in the late fall as drunken football fans prepare her

to supplying mentor maybe just anger we all  
would just Station next barbecue lost in

Some people say that there is a battery crisis for  
the iPhone 4S I wouldn't put my for S in the  
category of fast training phones but yet before is  
consistent and well what are we to say about  
those well I think it's symbolizes a larger battery  
drain of the American mind of the American and  
sense of justice and fair- ness as well the  
propaganda does even teacher quality does not  
solid out on property

Why the childish propaganda is foisted on stupid  
school stu- dents is under standard boat in a way  
given that the state runs its own schools for the  
most part however why this childish be- lief is  
moved into adulthood by so many Americans and  
time here in the middle of the missile in Ohio I do  
like some things about Cleveland but Lakewood is  
a shit at all

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/archives/cove-avenue-at-detroit-avenue/>



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## Twin Peaks

Published December 16, 2007

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2007/276/1216165246/>



## Golden Gate Park

Published November 29, 2007

<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2007/207/1129023547/>



Like Any Gangster - Selected Writings 2006-2011 by Daniel J. McKeown



Thumbs  
Up!

photo by me June 2012

This 2nd Editon is dedicated to my smart and beautiful wife Jes- sica, who inspires me. Check out her web site and our new al- bum, Neener 2.

#

sketch by Jessica February 2012



# Appendix



Like Any Gangster - Selected Writings 2006-2011 by Daniel J. McKeown

copyright May 2009 Jessica Dryden-Cook  
blogs.sf3am.com/parakeets





Sparta, Striker, Ava and Belle



[blogs.sf3am.com/parakeets](http://blogs.sf3am.com/parakeets)

## **Lousy Temp Jobs**



I went with Jessica to an event at the Happy Dog bar in the Gordon Square neighborhood where people discussed writing about Cleveland (along with many related and unrelated issues).

What ensued was an outpouring of dumb bile, pointless arguments, and playing past the whistle on issues that don't even matter anymore. One lady who writes for an insignificant magazines keeps spewing the neo-liberal sermons while an aspiring writer complains about her lousy temp jobs, one after another, in a city that she

moved back to but hasn't given her a fair shake. A dude comes in every once in a while with opinions on what amount of "boosterism" is appropriate. I think to myself that the city has collective low self esteem.\* Another writer says that the people of Cleveland are so out there that they have many stories. WOW!

Why is Cleveland an ancient, baroque, and decrepit city with writers so concerned about how much to puff about the place? How would I know?

\*The more I think about it Cleveland to me is really hardly a community unto itself so much as a national symbol and a frequent place to pass through on the way to somewhere, with a small tribal village at its core.

Lake Erie is a beautiful shallow little lake but ever since I heard about the power plant just east of downtown and the amount of chemicals it just dumps into the water--well I really wondered about the value of living so near Edgewater Park.

**Daniel J. McKeown**

**Lakewood, Ohio, USA**



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January 26, 2012

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<http://pacificarchives.sf3am.com/photos/2009/770/0924210225/>

## **Afterword to Like Any Gangster, 2nd Edition**

July 2012

Compiling this book created a question of scale: technology in the last decade has allowed intensive amounts of dry and indirect kinds of personal communication; the question for many people is how to modulate the levels of data being

received. Photos and movies from friends, family, coworkers, colleagues: people create a lot of visual data, text also right maybe not as much as in the Golden age of email a decade ago maybe SMS

and other trends have shortened the average message but then the average email length has probably gotten shorter also I wrote a handful of blog posts over the years and I don't know if I should send out links to them or promote them on Facebook or just do what I usually do putting links in my twitter feed to the blog. Other than just encapsulating some highlights of things I've written I also got to do some curation work on this stack of web content that I've created over the last several years; I wanted to put together a nice collection and I think that the evolution of the writing in a chronological way was put secondary to attempts to make the work a kind of a coherent book that could be read on its own. It is filled with links and references but I think that the selection of text and of course photos that I picked could work as a narrative that may not be entirely linear but does maybe have a certain arc to it that the reader could follow.

Occasionally for sport I'll check the web site of the Cleveland Plain Dealer and they always seem to have a widget in the side- bar of like every page about the commenter of the month or whatever. Whatever peculiar cross-reference on the scales of violent to self-mutilating and lonely to forgotten makes up the particular madness of the individual commenter typically dis- solves into predictable sloganeering somewhat disappointingly. How is it that the most mentally unstable among us [perfectly encapsulated by the newspaper web site commentariat] seem to converge into a few predictable views, not even at the level of arguments but instead at the level of wrongly assumed tru-

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isms providing the scaffolding for the wrongheaded assump- tions that in more capable minds would provide the raw material for disingenuous arguments. Look around you--it is true that many choose programmed stupidity but then many more are looking at the false choices provided by the perilously limited scope of

available information. Is this what is left of democratic choice: 'If this news network is lying to me, I will switch to a different cable channel.'? Because you know that the people who are looking to be informed are a small enough group but even those will toxify their mind with garbage news from NPR or "hard hitting" docu-dramas. You can choose to look for the truly independent content that is out there, or you can accept the "choice" offered by the mainstream. But this mainstream is increasingly worthless to discerning consumers for two reasons-- first the independent content which is increasingly widely available in music, writing or video; but second, the Hollywood content being created today is bad, and increasingly so. The great actors have had their day; the great directors like John Ford and Stanley Kubrick (and dare I say also Francis Ford Coppola) have directed all their great films. Today's popular artists are mostly lousy frauds. Production values and camera technology are rapidly narrowing the gap of what truly independent film producers can make on a technical level; music production has already

become all too inexpensive for the needs of the collapsing record industry.

When we seek a break from programmed "entertainment" designed mainly to perpetuate and indoctrinate for a system based on violence and intimidation,

where do we go? To other creative people, to really listen?

Are we too invested in the narrative of the 1% [or our own narrative] to start listening to the creativity of friends and neighbors? Can we really take the violence out of the machinery of desire in our culture?

How many heads does the multitudinous hydra think with? Can a rear-guard action against the enforcers of bland succeed? I look to the explosion of creativity and communication and to other writers; I hope to stay abreast of the new talents.



sketch by Jessica (2012)