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PART TWO
OF
FRANK RICH,
ARIANNA
HUFFINGTON,
& DWIGHT GARNER
ARE
LIARS, DECEIVERS,
AND TRAITORS

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PART ONE

1

Attentive readers may remember that this essay began in a curious way. That is, something in the manner of [Tristram Shandy](#), it came to an end without ever managing to reach its real subject, since an ancillary but important matter intervened and [took things over](#). I imagine that lovers of Sterne's great comic novel will likely [forgive me for that long digression](#), while those who either don't *know* the book or actually *dislike* it (there are some) probably won't have read this far anyway.

To help get us back on track, let me remind everyone that this essay's initial part took up the type of traitor who, first, claims to know things that he or she in fact *doesn't* know and who, second, is *not* a public figure with the special obligations of such but who, third, *is* an intellectual who blithely demonstrates that he or she is being untrue to the very tenets of logic that an intellectual, if an honest one, *ought* to adhere to.

Not to delay us, but to help provide a transition to our next steps, allow me to cite here the closing six paragraphs of the first part of "Frank Rich, Arianna Huffington, & Dwight Garner Are Liars, Deceivers, and Traitors."

And now at last, thanks in good measure to Plato (and Socrates), we've got at least *part* of an answer to one of our three toweringly important questions. For clarification, let me cite what these three questions are. The first is Paul Craig Roberts' question, "Do we have a moral conscience?" The second is mine, "Do we have any *brains*?" And the third is the question of *exactly what one is to do* in response to Mickey Z's appeal for *resistance* against American global crimes, his appeal for "serious, sustained action."

And what is that partial answer? It's this: Don't be like my old acquaintance. Don't be like the prominent Athenians Socrates interviewed in order to let *them* reveal that they in fact knew *nothing* about things that they *claimed* to know about: That they *weren't* wise in matters that they *believed* themselves to be wise in—and believed themselves all the more firmly so in direct proportion to the degree of flattery and officiousness shown them by their self-seeking followers and fawning underlings.

I'm shocked, as I admitted pages ago, by my friend's behavior. This shock comes partly from seeing *anyone* behave as she has, but it comes even more from seeing a purported *intellectual* behave in such a way.

What will happen to me as a result of my saying these things about my colleague? In Socrates' case, the penalty was death for having led the prominent Athenians to expose what was false in themselves. Socrates proposed regular free lunch at the city hall as "punishment" for what he'd done, since what he'd done was a good thing, but the angered prominent Athenians preferred death instead and put Socrates in prison and gave him the hemlock to drink.

I don't know whether my old intellectual acquaintance will advocate death for me, or, god knows, make an effort to bring it about. But I do know two things, and I know them very well. The first is that the general population of America, through behaving in ways similar to the way we've seen my colleague behave—through claiming or even *believing* that they know much about things that in truth they know nothing about—have brought the republic already near the door of death, and themselves along with it. Patriotism, for example, or citizenship.

Clearly, most Americans know *nothing whatsoever* about these things, although they behave with the absolute certainty and conviction of trained and true experts in them. But with every [Jose Padilla](#)¹ that's allowed, with every [Zacariaa Moussaoui](#) that's permitted, with every [Maher Arar](#), with every [Guantanamo prisoner](#), with every case of torture, with every [casualty](#) or fatality from [genocide](#) brought about through the use of [depleted uranium](#), with every permitted departure from the law of [Blackstone](#) and every embrace of the law of [Bentham](#)—with any and all such things as these, things that Americans in general accept or remain blind to and *fail to resist*, things that Americans ignore because they *think* they know what republican government is or what elections are, because they *think* they know what conspiracy is, because they *think* they know what *citizenship* is—with every such case of blindness or acceptance or neglect, America sinks only further into death; and with every such case of blindness or acceptance or neglect, Americans *themselves* sink only further in the same direction, being no longer republican citizens but nothing more than hollow men pacing blindly on the empty walks of death.

And the second thing I know and know very well is this: That what its ignorant and ruined citizens have allowed America to become is the most treacherous agent of ruin, death, destruction, and despair ever to have been known on the face of the earth.

2

Two major assertions by way of getting started with Part Two.

First, I find it unquestionable and undeniable that America is the most terrifying and dangerous force on earth today—a fact that, for the moment, remains true regardless of *what* people or *what* forces are actually in control of it, what their aims for it actually *are*, and whether they constitute a [“rogue” or a “deep” or a “shadow” or an “over” government](#).

And, second, I find it equally unquestionable and undeniable that the responsibility for this situation's existing lies equally with the *corrupters* and/or *usurpers* of America—those who have made the nation the conscienceless ruin it now is—and with the *people* of America, with *us*, the ones who have *failed to resist* the corrupting and usurpation both of ourselves and of the nation, a process that now shows every likelihood of having grown sufficiently advanced, in the

¹ [The jury, of course, had no idea of what was at stake. It was a patriotic jury that appeared in court with one row of jurors dressed in red, one in white, and one in blue \(Peter Whoriskey, *Washington Post*, Aug. 17, 2007\). It was a jury primed to be psychologically and emotionally manipulated by federal prosecutors desperate for a conviction for which there was little, if any, supporting evidence. For the jury, patriotism required that they strike a blow for America against terrorism. No member of this jury was going to return home to accusations of letting off a person who has been portrayed as a terrorist in the U.S. media for five years.](#)

manner of a disease, infection, or pathology, as to exterminate the republic once and for all *and*, most gravely, to endanger the future well-being of the entire world and of its people.

The “state” is out of control—out of the control certainly of Congress or of the people—and, as a result, we are all faced by extraordinarily real and present dangers. So truly great are these dangers—that the United States may well be transformed into a land of [martial law and mass incarceration](#) in order to be enjoyed solely by an oligarchic or plutocratic elite; that the world’s nations will be stripped of their sovereignty and [recombined](#) under [global rule](#); that population reduction through genocide will become a greater tool for such changes than it already is, whether through the [continued use](#) of [depleted uranium](#), the [corporatization of agriculture and deprivation of foodstuffs from “poor” nations](#), even the creation and control of [catastrophic weather](#) patterns and events—these dangers are so grave, so monumental, so overwhelming, so criminal, and so massive—not to mention so absolutely untouched by any retarding effect of conscience—that by and large they have proven far, far easier to keep secret, hidden, and unchallenged than lesser crimes, plots, and conspiracies might ever have been.

In America, at least, if not elsewhere in the world, it seems to have been relatively easy for their planners and perpetrators to keep the huge scale of all of these horrors, crimes, and atrocities, if not wholly invisible, then at least, as people say, well under the radar. Now more than at any time over the past six or seven decades, almost *everything* in the workings of daily life around us is driven by lies and by lies alone. These lies, among Americans, are generally swallowed whole, while those few elements of *truth* that may now and again slip through the veil of lies and into the public ken are either sloughed off as science fiction or ignored entirely.

Fear is undoubtedly a part of this absence of meaningful response to lies, one that helps explain the mass denial that followed 9/11, for example. The awe and terror produced by that false flag “attack,” or that premeditated act of deliberate mass murder, were, precisely as planned, sufficient to cause people to doubt or ignore their own *powers of observation and common sense*. Instead of trusting the obvious, they chose to deny with vehemence the transparently evident empirical truth that the attacks were planned and executed not by foreign “enemies” but by their *own* “leaders” and by whatever [shadow elements were working behind or within or above those leaders](#).

But fear is hardly the sole cause of the American predilection for clinging to falsehood as though it held the authority of truth. I myself—in a state of intense frustration at living in a country so dumbed down that publishing [even my own novels](#) had become demonstrably impossible—[wrote and published](#) an entire book with the thesis that for sixty years Americans had been shaped, modified, urged, and conditioned—mainly but not only by the mass media—not only to

prefer the false to the true in the way they *saw* important aspects of the world they live in but that, further, they have been brought to the point where they *defend* that preference for the false as they would at one time, [though no longer](#), have defended their Constitutional rights of speech, assembly, freedom from unwarranted search and seizure, and so on.

Today, the most zealously and commonly defended *right* in the United States is the right to accept and *to believe in* lies as though they were in fact truth. If you don't believe it, you might like to [get hold of](#) *A Nation Gone blind: America in an Age of Simplification and Deceit* and decide for yourself. You can read some of the book's few early reviews [here](#) or [here](#), and you can read a much more recent—and major—review of it [here](#).

My own argument about American blindness and ignorance may be more intricate than the arguments of certain others, but, still, it isn't essentially different in kind, and certainly it's no different from the others in the sense of emergency that accompanies it. In a piece called "[Reality](#)," dated July 5, 2008, Mark A. Goldman remarked that

Peak oil has been kept a corporate and government secret since [1956](#). We could have been planning for it all along had not a [cadre](#) of corporate and government power brokers diverted our public wealth into their self serving strategies.

A secret kept *for fifty-six years*—and one that has to do with husbandry of the very planet and its ability to sustain *life*? Well, keeping a secret like that is made possible, says Goldman, because

Americans, in general, seem averse to contemplating reality. Up until now it's been easy to get away with it, for as long as energy was cheap we were all free to pursue personal interests and put most everything else out of our minds. But soon reality is going to confront us at every turn. For some, it's already [happening](#).

Then there's David Michael Green's piece from March 28, 2008, on *Alternet*, called "[How Lethally Stupid Can One Country Be?](#)" What Green can't believe is that, by and large, Americans pay essentially no attention to the carnage and ruin of the "war" in Iraq. And he says why:

If the administration implemented the draft that is actually necessary to supply this war with adequate personnel, the public would end both the war and the careers of its sponsors, post haste. For the same reason, this is the first American war ever which has not only not been accompanied by a tax increase, but has in fact witnessed a tax cut. Likewise—to "preserve the dignity" of the dead, of course—you are no longer permitted to see photographs of flag-draped caskets returning to Dover Air Force Base. And the press are embedded with forces who are also responsible for their safety, which is just a fancy way of saying that they're so censored they make Pravda look good. It is, in short, quite easy for average Americans to get through their day, every day, without the war impacting their lives in any visible respect, and that is precisely what hundreds of millions of us are doing, week in and week out. All of this is courtesy of an

administration that couldn't run a governmental program to save its own life—but, boy, it sure as hell knows how to market stuff.

Veils, lies, deceit—and *marketing*, that greatest of all euphemisms for—well, for veils, lies, and deceit. But there's more to it even than that. Or at least Green declares his mystification that *in spite* of the veils, lies, deceit, and “marketing”—all of them being things that someone should have been able to see through—no one did see through them. In this case, Green has no real answer why:

It's simply incomprehensible. It's not so astonishing, of course, that a country could have a bad leader whose aims are nefarious on the occasions when they are competent enough to rise to that level of intentionality. Plenty of countries have managed that feat, especially when—as was the case with Bush—every sort of scam is employed to steal power, and then pure corruption and intimidation used to keep it. History is quite littered indeed with bimbos and petty criminals of this caliber. What is harder to explain is how the citizens of a country of such remarkable achievements in other domains, and with the capacity to choose, allow this to happen. And then stand by silently watching for eight years as the tragedy unfolds before their eyes.

And then stand by silently watching for eight years as the tragedy unfolds before their eyes.

Yes, *there* it is: The great question of the stupefied, catatonic, hypnotized, sensorially and ethically and politically and morally unresponsive, numb, immobilized American population. Much of it, doubtless, is the result of almost all of the people being lied to almost all of the time by almost every source of information available to them. Bill Moyers takes this position in a recent piece that asks, “[Is the Fourth Estate a Fifth Column?](#)” There's nothing complex in his treatment, which gives a rundown of the corporatizing and the bottom-lining of the “dominant media” and concludes that

Sadly, in many respects, the Fourth Estate has become the fifth column of democracy, colluding with the powers that be in a culture of deception that subverts the thing most necessary to freedom, and that is the truth.

Moyers concludes, in a typically Moyersian way—that is, in words you wish would come out in blood-curdling screams but that come out instead in quietly polite platitudes, however true—that “Democracy only works when ordinary people claim it as their own.” If you'd like, you can get another true-but-tedious glimpse of what's become of “ordinary people” by reading “[Ignorant America: Just How Stupid Are We?](#)” The piece is by Rich Shenkman, an excerpt from his new book, [Just How Stupid Are We? Facing the Truth about the American Voter](#). Not surprisingly, Shenkman suggests among other things that “Young people by many measures know less today than young people forty years ago” and that “Even though they are awash in news, Americans generally do not seem to absorb what it is that they are reading and hearing and watching.”

Such banalities, however hackneyed, trite, and tired they've become, are also unarguably and overwhelmingly true. Ah, the poor American *folk*. Ah, what dismal and hideous shape they are in. And yet, one must immediately add, ah, the *dangerous* American *folk*—this American *folk* that is unseeing of the obvious, that is unseeing of evil, that is unseeing of usurpation, malevolence, treason, exploitation, and criminality; that is unseeing of criminality against nations, against peoples, against peace, against international law, and against humanity itself. Ah, this American *folk* that has failed to resist the evil, ugly, treasonous, *plotted* transformation of America to the point where, not long ago, it was impossible for me to [write these words and not have them be true](#):

The 1930s and 1940s in many ways *have* been transformed into remote antiquity, the nostalgic stuff of film noir and one-piece bathing suits, a time when men's pants were almost as baggy as the ghetto-hipsters' blue jeans are now. But at the same time, we must all agree that such soft-headed swoon-thinking as this is a cultural, philosophic, and political disaster. Mickey Z's question—"[How much are you willing to endure before you take serious, sustained action?](#)"—is like a boomerang that swoops far out in front of you and then returns to whack you in the jaw: And as it knocks you cockeyed, it whispers to you, You idiot, can't you see that the late 1930's have come back again, that they're *now*, that they're *here*? And the boomerang is right. It's telling the simple but unbelievable truth: Mickey Z's question says, reveals, speaks, hammers home the brute fact that *America is now the enemy*, that *we* are now the Nazis, that *we*, every *one* of us living in America today, *we*, without excuse or escape, *that we are all Germans now*.

But *enough* of this hammering away at such ruins as are left of the American masses! Enough on the miserable exploitations of them that have taken place over the past sixty years, exploitations and warpings and diminutions of their minds, of their dignity, of their feelings, of their instincts, of their very abilities to perceive and to judge, of their *knowledge*.

Let's change the subject—or not the subject itself but the *focus*. Let's look not at the hundreds of millions of miserable Americans who have *followed blindly and unresistingly* as their nation has been turned not into the America of the 18th century or the 19th century or even the 20th century, but into the Germany of 1933-1945. But let's look instead at some of the managers and leaders who have also lived through that hideous metamorphosis. Let's look at some of the intellectuals and commentators and journalists who have *followed blindly and unresistingly* as their nation has been turned into a Madison Avenue-ized version of the Germany of 1933-1945. Let's look at a major newspaper, say, and a columnist or two, who have done the same—or worse.

Worse? Well, what we're about to see are examples of analysts, commentators, journalists, columnists, and editors who are one of two things, one of these being indeed far worse than ignorance. It is, as we'll see, impossible for such people—or for anyone—to be both.

First, it may be that these leaders or managers have done the equivalent of “following blindly and unresistingly” for the very reason that they really *are* ignorant of what has happened *in and to* their nation over the past seven to fifteen years; ignorant of those things that have brought about the changes in it and in its *nature, identity, purpose, and behavior* in the ways that these have indeed been brought about. Now, the question of whether such as these, who *are* ignorant in this way or these ways, are in fact fit or qualified to hold the jobs or positions they do hold is a question that, at least for the moment, we’ll put aside.

The second possibility is that people of the kind we’re now talking about are *not at all* ignorant either of the changes identified in the paragraph above *or* of the things that have brought those changes about or made it possible for them to *be* brought about. People of this kind, in other words, *do* know and *do* understand both the nature *and* the significance of the changes in and to their nation over the past fifteen or so years, just as they understand, also, many if not most of the *causes* of those changes.

Now, anyone who is both in the possession of such knowledge or understanding *and* is the holder of any job or position that makes him or her ethically responsible—in the manner of a physician, say—for the well-being of others, *specifically* for the well-being of his or her own patients, clients, readers, students, followers, or customers; any such person as this who *fails* to reveal, clarify, explain, chronicle, or broadcast to those who are dependent upon him or her everything relevant to his or her care for those dependents, but instead either *distorts* the knowledge he or she holds *or* hides and buries it altogether—any such person in a situation of this kind who does these things is either a liar or a hypocrite or both, and in either case is an ethical failure. Most important, he or she is also, inevitably, a traitor.

And that’s why this essay has the title it does.

PART TWO

1

A new and explicit boldness—a heavy-handedness that’s both shameless and unscrupulous—in spewing out the sheerest neocon propaganda has lately become a staple of much of the writing in the *New York Times*. Exactly how significant this phenomenon is, I can’t say for sure, but I know that to me it’s alarming and despicable, and I know also for a fact that it’s treasonable. As a writer, teacher, professionally trained literary person *and* practitioner, I can’t—*cannot*—imagine how *anyone* who is in possession of a working conscience, a thorough knowledge of cultural-political affairs, the least element of integrity, *and* of a functioning intellect could actually bring him- or herself to *write* the sort of

fraudulent, misleading, disinformational, propagandistic dreck that has become very nearly a daily and, I'm sorry to say, seemingly unnoticed element in the *Times*.

I see no reason not to start with the front-page piece of the *New York Times Book Review* for May 18, 2008. Written by Dwight Garner ("senior editor of the Book Review"), it's [a review of the Joseph O'Neill novel *Netherland*](#), run under the title "The Ashes."

Here is the opening paragraph:

There have been good novels about living in the post-9/11 world ([Ian McEwan's "Saturday"](#)), pretentious ones ([Don DeLillo's "Falling Man"](#)) and sentimental ones ([Jonathan Safran Foer's "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close"](#)). But sorting through the pile of so-called 9/11 novels is a sad exercise, one that grows more pointless by the day. They're all 9/11 novels now.

Before looking at exactly what the content of this abysmal paragraph of pre-fab-non-think actually is, I think some further quoting would be helpful. Here's paragraph number two:

It's impossible, though, to stop scanning the horizon for something else — the bracing, wide-screen, many-angled novel that will leave a larger, more definitive intellectual and moral footprint on the new age of terror.

So we're almost ready to begin. But, before we do, let's first get another matter out of the way—namely, the matter of what Garner thinks of *Netherland* as a *novel*. This isn't important so much as it is merely appropriate, since we're going to be talking about Garner, not *Netherland*, and about Garner's own hidden mind-messages, not his judgment of the novel. Partly as a clearing of the field, then, and—all but inevitably—partly in search of more hidden messages, let's hear what he does think of the book:

Joseph O'Neill's "Netherland" is not that novel. It's too urbane, too small-boned, too savvy to carry much Dreiserian sweep and swagger. But here's what "Netherland" surely is: the wittiest, angriest, most exacting and most desolate work of fiction we've yet had about life in New York and London after the World Trade Center fell.

Okay. Let's set aside the curious and questionable notion that "Dreiserian sweep and swagger" are the qualities needed to achieve whatever it is Garner is looking for. And, at the same time, let's accept his notion that *Netherland* is on the smallish ("small-boned," that's good)² side, whether it's true or not—as only those who have read the book will know.

2

Player: 'But who (ah, woe!) had seen the mobled queen—'

Hamlet: 'The mobled queen?'

Polonius: That's good. 'Mobled queen' is good.' (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 490-492)

And now, those matters being accounted for, let's start talking about Garner and what's on—and in—that mind of his.

As to his taste in novels, I can testify that he's bending over backwards with euphemism if not outright benevolence in calling *Falling Man* merely "pretentious," when the case against it (and against Frank Rich and the *Times Book Review*), as we'll see at a later time, is a powerful and serious one. DeLillo's is indeed a writers' workshop-level novel that fails to justify its own existence while at the same time groveling shamelessly in the service of establishment propaganda—all notwithstanding Rich's [front page rave](#) of the book, a long string of falsehoods making it sound like the century's highest achievement. As I said, we'll come to this subject later, though any who are more urgently interested in the relationship between honesty and Frank Rich might like to jump back to "[The Pernicious Hypocrisy of Frank Rich, Parts I and II.](#)"

Going back to Garner, I don't know whether or not Ian McEwan's *Saturday* really is "good," but I know that *Amsterdam* really is pretty bad. From what I know, and from the bits I've read, and heard read, Garner has chosen an accurate word for *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.

But none of these questions, really, has anything to do with what's truly important in Garner's paragraphs. *That* subject—the subject of Garner, member of the intellectual class, serving as propaganda lackey for the destroyers of the republic by working in their [Ministry of Truth](#)—*that* subject is contained right there in plain sight for those who can see it, while for those who can't, it's merely hidden behind the costume-shop veils of the journalese, "novels about living in the post-9/11 world."

What absolute nonsense Garner writes. Here's an offer: I defy *any* thinking, trained, experienced, perceptive, widely-read literary person on the surface of the globe to identify even *one* "good" novel written by an American that can genuinely be said to be "about living in the post 9/11 world." To the finder of such a book, I will give two free, signed copies of [A Nation Gone Blind](#) and a highly visible honorable mention on this web site.

With prizes like *that*, the hunt will be on immediately, I'm sure. A word or two of warning, however. I won't accept Steven Alten's *The Shell Game*, on the grounds that the book is entertainment, not novel (if you'd like a definition, you could [go here](#)), whatever its apparent "acceptance" of 9/11 truth. As for Mike Palecek's books, like [Iowa Terror](#)—well, they're politically open-eyed but as novels much too thin for winners.

But Alten and Palecek aren't really the point, and I don't want to continue making comments about them—these books aren't high art, these are inferior, blah, blah, blah—that will backfire on me and make everyone accuse me yet

again of being an elitist, a T. S. Eliot wannabe, a snob, someone out of touch with “the “people” and with “simple, real feelings,” and so on. There I’d be, stuck back inside *A Nation Gone Blind*, fighting all over again a three-hundred-page battle for the right to say simple things that are also true, like “this book is intellectually and emotionally meager,” or “this book is poor because it’s media-driven and generic,” without being crushed by outraged accusers of my being, again, anti-democratic, a snob, an elitist. (Here’s a nose-thumb to me and “elitism”: If anyone is still reading this essay, and if any of *those* few really does want two copies of *A Nation Gone Blind*, here, between you and me, is a clickable [hint](#).)

Now, then, back to our real subject: The craven, vacuous, servile mind of Dwight Garner, who is either (we’re not sure yet) a simple-minded idiot or a senior section-director in the Ministry of Truth—that is, a hard-working traitor.

The next Garnerian sentence up for analysis: “But sorting through the pile of so-called 9/11 novels is a sad exercise, one that grows more pointless by the day.”

“*Sad*”? Did I hear the word “*sad*”? God alone knows what the moths fluttering around inside Garner’s otherwise empty cranium may have meant to convey by sending out *that* word, but I’m afraid that god, if she alone really does know, pretty much has *got* to conclude that Garner actually intends to say—or, even worse, a matter calling for immediate medical care, actually *believes*—that 9/11 can be adequately, properly, and honestly described by the adjective “*sad*.”

May I ask whether Garner would agree, then, that “*sad*” is the best choice of adjective also, say, for the [Reichstag fire](#)? for the invasion of Poland by the Nazis, under a 9/11-style [false-flag op](#)? for the sinking, ditto, of the [battleship Maine](#)? for [Treblinka](#)?³

To use the word “*sad*” for *any* of these is an absurdity. It misses the measure of *all* of them—historical, ethical, moral, humane—by margins almost too great even to name. So 9/11 is “*sad*”? The very *notion* suggests an ignorance—or a willingness to lie—so extreme as to go past exoneration. It goes past even the puerile. It falls in the ranks of the vile. It is *putrid*.

The amount that’s *missing* in Garner’s take on the matters at hand is beyond overwhelming: He is *so* great a diminisher, *so* great a minimizer, both of the *realities* of 9/11—what it *is*, what it *was*, what it *stands* for, what it has *caused*—and of the *significance* of it: He is, let me continue, *so* great a minimizer of these things, *so* great an ommitter of them, that it goes *beyond* the overwhelming, *beyond* the forgivable, and reaches right, straight, directly to the criminal.

³ Also see “[The Great Crime of 9/11: What’s Got To Be Done About It If The Republic Is To Be Purged, Made Healthy, and Kept From Becoming Forever Fascist America](#)”

If he *really* is this simple-minded, he ought to work for Disney or the like, not for the *Times*. He ought to go off and make silly little movies about cute talking robots collecting garbage on a depleted and lifeless Earth. Or perhaps he should go and be an “English” prof, like I was for forty years, and do what he can for the [poor American students](#) whom he’s doing *nothing* for now, with his infantilizing and entertainment-izing of the most vitally, toweringly—*crushingly*—important aspects of what the nature of existence *is* in America today, what that existence *means*, what it can possibly lead to, and—[the only worthwhile subject of any real novelist](#)—what the truth is of the experience of being alive *inside* of that existence. At least as an “English” prof for the [poor American students](#), he might be able to help them get their subjects and verbs to agree, or their tenses to stay consistent. At least that would be *positive* work, adding *to* something, as opposed to the *negative* work he’s doing at the “*Times*,” work that can do nothing except lead to the *taking away* of things—like, say, the taking away of the republic itself, the taking away of the Constitutional rights of its citizens, the taking away of a state of freedom as opposed to one of fascism, the taking away of the ability to see and perceive and value the *truth* as opposed to being conditioned into a blindness to it, a blindness that will be putatively rewarded, while *sight* will be punished. Has Mr. Garner never even read Orwell? I’ll send him a list for his summer reading. Fat chance he’ll pay any attention to it.

As if—as *if*—we had, even at this point in already long essay, *begun* to look either at the true depth or true breadth of the depravity, lies, fraud, disinformation, anti-truth-telling, and, not least, pap-feeding of establishment falsehoods into weak and vulnerable minds that appears to be the business—wittingly or unwittingly, we don’t yet know—of editors, columnists, and writers at the *New York Times*.

But one can bear only so much in one take, and so this particular step in the misadventures of doing something so simple as *reading the newspaper* will soon draw to an end.

Soon. But not yet.

Did you notice?—but of course you did—Garner’s remarkable statement, after his astonishing use of the word “sad,” that “sorting through the pile of so-called 9/11 novels” is an “exercise. . . that grows more pointless by the day.”

Pointless? But pointless *why*? There might well be—there *is*—a true reason why it’s “pointless.” But Garner misses that real reason by an entire 180 degrees—and then gives as his *own* reason what may be one of the most enragingly banal of all enragingly banal statements. It’s this: “They’re all 9/11 novels now.”

And there we're given a glimpse of the true emptiness within Garner—or of the absolute ruthlessness of the witting operative in the Ministry of Truth at his most sinister work.

The statement that “They're all 9/11 novels now” is nonsense. The truth is *precisely the opposite* of what Garner says: The awful and ruinous and deadening fact is that *None of them are 9/11 novels now*.

What Garner *really* means—wittingly or not, we still don't know—is that sticking 9/11 one way or another, whatever way you can, into your publishable (definition: “[generic; empty; tame; establishment-friendly](#)”) novel is a dime-a-dozen thing to do. *Everybody* does it. It's no longer any mark of distinction to a “novel” that it include 9/11 as a part of its apparatus, whether in foreground or background, whether as plot-releaser or as meet-cute device, as oozingly ominous faux-Conradian “theme” (à la DeLillo), or as something heard of distantly from another side of the world.

We're in the grip of a mass, corporate-sanctioned, corporate-sponsored, corporate-fed, corporate-gratified, corporate-rewarded know-nothingism and idiocy (practice it this way, if you like: “Garner-sanctioned, Garner-sponsored, Garner-fed, Garner-gratified, Garner-rewarded”). We're in a situation where all the “best” and all the “published” novelists have, long since but *doubly so* in the aftermath of 9/11, either deliberately or in their sheer and marketable ignorance, abandoned not only as being useless but as being worse, as *being in the way of getting published*, all of the vital and true elements and aims and qualities that characterized and informed the genre of the modern novel when it really *did* achieve and express and embody *significance*: The novel, that is, from Joyce to Woolf, Ford to Conrad, Lawrence to Forster, Faulkner to Hemingway, Beckett to Waugh.

American literature is dead because American [thought-feeling](#) is dead, and the Garnero-corpo-milito-governmento powers are doing and will do everything it/they possibly can to *keep* it dead—to keep *everything* that has to do with *true individual intellectual existence and perception* in all of America as completely dead as dead can be kept.

Just *look*—look, for example, at the very *language* that Garner chooses, blithely and placidly content with (or is he merely *deaf to?*) its damning and deceitful, its *disinforming* metaphors of pure mass-think and now-treasonable propaganda. You think I exaggerate. Well, let's have a look. Here's Garner declaring himself to be waiting for the Great American 9/11 novel:

It's impossible, though, to stop scanning the horizon for something else—the bracing, wide-screen, many-angled novel that will leave a larger, more definitive intellectual and moral footprint on the new age of terror.

And are you as appalled and angry as I am? No? You're lucky, then—and maybe also you're not a novelist. How about a simple cliché-check? Let's "scan the horizon," shall we? And shall we have some *real* literary talk? Hey, let's use words like "bracing, wide-screen, many-angled novel" to get at the unique and definitive nature of what the genre of the novel *really is*: And, in Garner-land, the novel is not only itself a cliché, but it's a *derivative* one, coming into existence not just by imitating *movies* but imitating *crappy* movies: The "bracing" (whatever that means) and "wide-screen" (*there's* an obvious junk-metaphor) kind, the "many-angled" (no idea) and "larger" (yes, bigger is *always* better in America) kind of TV-on-the-page (or movie-on-the-page) book that all the publishers in Garnerland most love ("[generic; empty; tame; establishment-friendly](#)").

No wonder American literature today is cobbled together by a bunch of *tribalists* of centrist-polite ignorance, pseudo-writers encouraged by pseudo-critics whose pseudo-ideas lead the tribalists to think that the greatest of novels are overblown movies splashed onto the page—tribalists who would never, *ever* be caught *dead* actually reading a perceptive, individual-voiced, clear-thinking, [vitaly important literary essay like this one](#). And for damn good reason: The simple truth of this one-man-one-mind essay written by David Cogswell, a *non-citizen* of Garnerland, puts every single one of the tribalists of central ignorance right straight out of business as being phony frauds of any *serious* literature at all.

[Read it and see.](#)

And so for the moment we end, having sipped once again at the dead brine of a dead literature, written by dead authors, urged into being by dead critics. The next sufficiently great contender in this contest of the non-beings, Garner sings, will be that trumpeted-one who "will leave a larger, more definitive intellectual and moral footprint on the new age of terror."

Holy *shit*, thinks me, did you hear what the deadman just *said*? I guess an "intellectual and moral footprint" is sort of like a carbon footprint, oddly, since with carbon footprints, it's the smaller the better, while *here* the deadman is looking for *big, big, big!* But let it go. The *true* death being spoken in the deadman's words comes through when he talks with such uplift and eagerness and anticipation about the great new *field* of potential material for deadnovelists, "*the new age of terror*"!

Ah, *yes! yes! Yes, I said, yes!* [The New Age of Terror!](#) It's far, far greater than the New Age of the Enlightenment, or the New Jerusalem, or the New Frontier! It's *wonderful!* It's *full* of promise and challenge for all the American deadwriters of the American deadfuture! And while *Netherland* is pretty much a small-boned and wimpy contender, it will just have to do for now, being

the wittiest, angriest, most exacting and most desolate work of fiction we've yet had about life in New York and London after the World Trade Center fell.

Fell? In Garnerland, much as in [Oceania](#), you see, having huge buildings spectacularly demolished by your own government and by *agents* of your own government means that what happened is that those buildings “fell.” In Garnerland, they “fell,” but in the small, tiny, under populated country of Trueland, in the land, that is, of those still capable of *depending*—and being courageous enough *to depend*—on their *own powers of observation and common sense*, the buildings were *demolished* or brought down, “[pulled](#),” or *caused* to collapse. And all of that effort was expended for *what*? Well, it was expended for the Disney-esque and cartoonish fabricating of what didn’t exist before and [still doesn’t exist](#) (except in the minds of deadmen or witting traitors), the *Great New Age of Terror* that will make such *great* business for *all* the “defense” industries, will allow for the [killing of the republic and the stripping away of its people’s rights and freedoms](#), *plus—happy, happy be all those in Garnerland!*—creating a vast deadland that will be built on lies that will in turn be swallowed *as truth*, most *especially* by the deadcritics and deadeditors who will sing the praises of the non-truth, the death-truth, and raise hymns of praise for that lucky, lucky deadwriter or deadnovelist who can write a deadbook that will “leave a larger, more definitive intellectual and moral footprint on the new age of terror” than *any other deadman!*

It’s *brilliant*, it’s *beautiful*, it’s *wonderful!* It’s *full* of promise, but it’s *more* full of death, *more* full of emptiness, *more* full of deadmen, *more* full of deadsociety, *more* full of deadliterature, *more* full of deadthink, and *much, much, much* more full of treason coming from just about *every* source of deadauthority that you can either name or imagine.

In tiny little Trueland, on the other hand, people are still capable of reading [real books](#) instead of the ersatz, generic, lie-filled, fraudulent, insignificant, establishment-friendly, treasonable books that they’re urged to read by the highest authorities in all of Garnerland, books by those deadwriters who tell, and re-tell, and then tell again the biggest of all possible lies, earning the highest praises from Garnercommittees, being listed on prestigious Garnerlists, and, above all, over and over proving themselves to be [generic; empty; tame; establishment-friendly](#), and *dedicatedly* treasonous in their *love* of Garnerland and their *hatred* of that conspiracy-filled little dump of a place that’s filled with nothing but “[nut-cases](#),” Trueland.

With mind-cancer and soul-cancer and perception-cancer so virulent and overwhelmingly destructive as this, alive and sucking the blood and fiber and tissue out of *the very center* of the nation’s literary, intellectual, and aesthetic life, how long can that nation *conceivably* endure, even in its present, dead, condition?

The question is moot, I suppose, [the place being dead already](#), as Jason Miller brilliantly and impassionedly shows us.

Who the devil was Winston *Churchill*? Damned if I know. I do know, though, that in the Garner States today, it's much, much better *not* to know than it is *to* know almost anything. *Much* safer. Just ask Garner himself. *He'll* tell you. And I also know something else. I know that *never before* in the history of this nation and I suspect of any other has so great a lie been foisted so successfully on so many by so few.

There's far worse to come, but it will have to wait until next time. God help us all.

—Eric Larsen
—July 26, 2008