

From freebarrettbrown.org:

“Barrett Brown is an American activist, author, and freelance writer/journalist. His work has appeared in the Guardian, Vanity Fair, Huffington Post, Businessweek, True/Slant, Skeptical Inquirer and many other outlets. He is the founder of Project PM, a distributed think-tank which researches and reports on matters related to the intelligence contracting industry.

“Having previously been raided by the FBI on March 6, 2012 and not arrested or charged, on September 12, 2012 Barrett Brown was again raided and this time arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation while he was online participating in a Tynychat session. He was subsequently denied bail and detained without charge and adequate medical treatment for over two weeks while in the custody of US Marshals. In the first week of October 2012, he was finally indicted on three counts, related to alleged activities or postings on popular websites such as Twitter and YouTube.

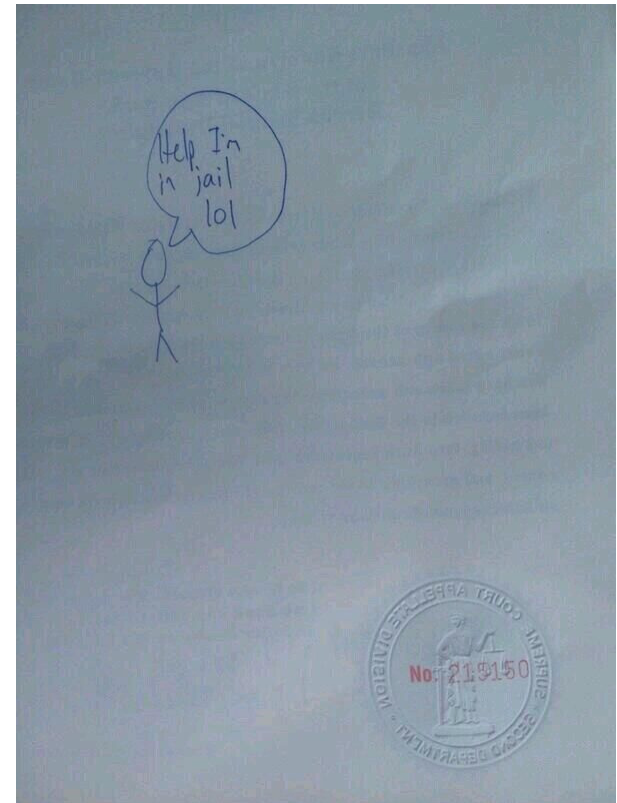
“On December 4, 2012 Barrett was indicted by a federal grand jury on twelve additional counts related to data from the Stratfor breach. Despite his lack of direct involvement in the operation and stated opposition to it, he faces these charges simply for allegedly pasting a hyperlink online. On January 23rd, 2013 he was indicted a third time on two more counts, relating to the March 2012 FBI raid(s) on his apartment and his mother’s house.

“After some of the worst charges were dropped, Barrett entered a guilty plea to 3 counts for which he now faces 8.5 years max in prison. He is currently detained in Seagoville, TX while awaiting sentencing, which will occur on August 18th, 2014.”

This volume contains four articles selected from the eponymous column for Dallas alt-weekly rag D Magazine. The entire series can be found at frontburner.dmagazine.com/author/barrettbrown

You can contribute to Brown’s defense fund and learn more about the case at freebarrettbrown.org

The Barrett Brown Review of Arts and Letters and Jail



July 2014



The Spy Who Misspelled Me

June 4, 2014

Two horrifying finds from the jail library: a volume by Glenn Beck entitled *Being George Washington*, plus *Stories I Only Tell My Friends*, which, I swear to God, appears to be the autobiography of Rob Lowe.

Someone sent me a copy of *No Place to Hide*, Glenn Greenwald's new book on Snowden and the NSA/Five Eyes revelations. I've already said my piece on this matter in an op-ed for *The Guardian*, the gist of which was basically "I told you so," except somehow stretched out to 800 words and interspersed with gratuitous attacks on my various personal enemies. But I hadn't yet seen the actual leaked PowerPoint briefing slides for each particular program, many of which are reproduced in the book. Taken as a whole, they paint a disturbing picture of an extra-legal international surveillance regime drawing upon the near-unlimited financial resources and coercive prerogatives of five major Western governments but which is nonetheless apparently incapable of producing a PowerPoint presentation that doesn't look like a piece of shit.

Consider first the tutorial slide produced by the U.K.'s GCHQ spy agency in which agents are instructed as to how they might obtain private photographs from the Facebook accounts of potential subversives. The diagram starts with a poorly rendered smiley face labeled "Target," from which we are then directed by way of a little arrow to the next step, labeled with a dash of technojargon and visually signified in this case by what seems to be the result of an emotionally disturbed person's attempt to draw a cloud. Next we are guided to the GCHQ's own rather low-concept logo — from which one gathers that the agency originally intended to disguise itself as a mid-20th-century Brooklyn pawn shop — and then on to another icon, this one being for the relevant in-house privacy violation program and which is so ugly that I choose not to even attempt to describe it. From there we are led arrow-wise to yet another image labeled "Profile image of target," which signifies the individual whose privacy is to be imposed upon by unaccountable Britishers in the name of their German-blooded queen (and which is represented, inexplicably, by the promotional logo for the original *Godfather* film), and then finally to the last icon, a duplicate of the original smiley face, which is this time labeled "Analyst," the "Analyst" being, one supposes, the ultimate end-user for whom all online content is now truly intended.

Perhaps it isn't terribly surprising that today's British spies lack an aesthetic sense; it was just a few years ago that the world made the mistake of allowing Londoners to design their very own Olympic logo, the release of which proved

"Sorry?"

"I said, Tell 'em I don't recognize the authority of they court."

"Oh, okay!" said the staff member, who had merely been having trouble understanding Inmate D's bizarre, semi-rural gangsta accent. He began to write: "I don't recognize ... the authority ..."

"Of they court."

"Of their court."

"Yeah."

"Okay, got it!"

The staff member left. Inmate D turned to me and said: "I got that shit from Saddam Hussein. That's what he told 'em when he was being tried for war crimes."

An hour later, Inmate D was back at the door grill, this time shouting some questionable legal advice to the guy in the cell across the hall who was going before a judge the next day: "Man, tell that bitch to suck yo dick!"

A couple of hours after that, he came over to me and said, apropos of nothing: "You know what was a good book, was that *Picture of Dorian Gray*."

Looking back on what I've written here, I see that rather than describe SHU life as I set out to do, I have instead merely given an account of things that Inmate D has said and done. I wish I could promise that this won't happen in the next column as well, but I can't.

Bible Verse of the Day: Leviticus 20:15

"If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and lies with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them."

las. Like Jesus, he has a beard, is 33 years old, and sometimes finds himself in trouble with the law. Unlike Jesus, he is a radical Islamist militant with a series of state and federal armed robbery and weapons convictions dating back to his teenage years (although he explains in his defense that the armed robbery was pulled off when he was just 17 and smoking a great deal of PCP). He embraced Islam during one of the first of 10 years worth of stints in the Texas state prison system. Across his back runs an impossibly complicated tattoo mural depicting some sort of Apocalyptic scene interspersed with images of his favorite brands of firearms and further adorned, in handsome Arabic script, with a motto translating to “Death Rain Upon My Enemies.” Directly under his heart, he bears the logo of Smith & Wesson.

I actually knew D back in the jail unit where I played chess with him on occasion and once borrowed his copy of a book by Gaddafi on how to establish a perfect democratic system. (It’s called *The Green Book*, in case you happen to be tasked with establishing a perfect democratic system and would like some advice from Gaddafi on how to do so.) I also lived in the cell next to his for a couple of months, during which I came to understand that he was fond of loudly chanting rap lyrics late in the evening. More surprisingly, he also had a taste for Phil Collins, although his own rendition of that song that goes “I can feel it coming in the air tonight ...” made use of far more obscene and threatening language than I recall being present in the original.

(Before this column descends into further madness, let me just take a moment to assure the Reader that I am not making this person up; he is a real-live human being. I hasten to make this clear as we are quickly approaching a phase in which I might be reasonably suspected of generating not just fiction, but actual magical realism. Be advised that I do not write fiction and in fact have no talent for such things, whereas if I were capable of concocting someone like D, I would have already won the fucking Booker Prize five times over.)

On our second day in the SHU, a staff member came by to deliver paperwork to D, detailing the various alleged infractions that had sent him there. One sheet alleged that “Inmate Lackey was given an order to place his hands back on the wall during the control of the semi-disturbance. Inmate Lackey responded in an aggressive tone, ‘I ain’t going to do all that. Fuck no. If you going to lock me up then lock me up.’ Inmate Lackey continued to keep his hands at waist level.” Inmate D was charged, not unreasonably, with “Refusing an Order” and “Insolence Towards Staff.”

Inmate D was allowed to read over the infraction documents through the door grill. Then the staff member asked if he had any preliminary comments for the disciplinary committee.

“Tell `em I don’t recognize the authority of they court.”

that the Anglo-Saxon race suffers from hereditary colorblindness, among other things. But one expects better from America, where the design and sale of logos replaced manufacturing as the nation’s chief economic driver long ago. Back in 2003, for instance, when the Pentagon unveiled its new Total Information Awareness division, you could tell that a great deal of care had gone into the logo, which depicted the Eye of the Pyramid from the Great Seal shooting forth a sort of Kabalistic omniscience ray that consumed the whole planet, all adorned with a Latin tag translating to “Knowledge is Power.” It was sleek. It was sinister. And, coupled with the announcement that the agency would be headed by Admiral Poindexter, a man best known for his involvement in a Reagan-era criminal scheme to subvert the Constitution, it was a refreshingly honest expression of the military-industrial complex’s profound contempt for the American citizenry. One also has to admire the restraint and good taste they showed in not simply making the logo an extended middle finger.

Things seem to have gone downhill since then. One NSA slide details a program called BLARNEY by which the agency pressures such U.S. corporate vassals as AT&T into assisting with the illicit surveillance of their customers. Seeing this for the first time, I had a flash of inspiration. The reader may recall how the ACLU kept trying to sue the NSA for the bulk warrantless wiretapping of American citizens, including presumably those American citizens who work for the ACLU, but the courts wouldn’t grant them standing to launch the suit since all of that was classified and thus couldn’t be revealed in court. What the ACLU needs to do now is track down whoever it is whose homemade St. Patrick’s Day block party invitations the NSA ripped off to get this BLARNEY logo and have them sue for copyright infringement.

Meanwhile, some sick son of a bitch is apparently running around the NSA offices telling people that project slide headlines treated with both italics and the underline function take on a particular air of gravitas.

It’s a fine thing that I spent much of 2011 and 2012 researching the cyber-industrial complex and its various government-affiliated intelligence contractors; otherwise I would have been unprepared for the extraordinary violence against accepted English grammar and usage on display in these slides, each of which constitutes its own self-contained nightmare realm of surreal capitalization choices and wildly inconsistent punctuation. If, as they say, the U.S. and U.K. are two countries divided by a common language, then the NSA and the GCHQ are two agencies united by a common inability to figure out where the fuck it is that an apostrophe goes. Here, see how far you can make it into the following “sentence” from a report on the British program Thieving Magpie before you rip out your eyes and swallow them whole:

“If they use data, we can also recover email address’s, Facebook Ids, Skype addresses etc”

Set aside for a moment the fumbling with “etc” and “Facebook Ids” (but what of LinkedIn Superegos? Was this a — wait for it — Freudian slip?). I’ve always wondered what goes on inside the head of someone like this when he finds himself confronted with the no doubt alarming task of writing English prose and suddenly realizes that it will soon become necessary to deploy a plural noun. What is it that makes such a person panic and start reaching for the punctuation marks? What’s truly remarkable in this instance is how, not five words after rendering the plural of “address” as “address’s,” this particular fellow suddenly changes his mind and decides, correctly, that the word he’s looking for is actually “addresses.” This is rather ominous; it’s almost as if these “Analysts” are capable of learning, like those intelligent sharks from the film *Deep Blue Sea*. In all seriousness, though, it’s more likely that this person sincerely believes both forms to be correct, and that “e-mail address’s” actually follows different rules than does “Skype addresses,” all in accordance with whatever quantum grammar it is that we’re dealing with here. Here’s one more gem from the same presentation: “At least British Airways are restricting the service to data and SMS only.”

If this sort of thing is going on behind closed doors in the Land of Chaucer and Disraeli, simply imagine what top-secret textual tragedies must be occurring each and every day here in the Land of Koontz and Palin. Will anyone be amazed to learn at this point that the NSA/SIGINT National Intelligence Officer for Science and Technology operates under the novel theory that a contraction requires a gap to be inserted after the apostrophe, and that we are thus treated in the space of a mere two slides to such incredible specimens as “you’ re,” “doesn’ t,” “let’ s,” and “what’ s”? Nor does this “well trained scientist and hacker,” as he describes himself in the introduction to his presentation, seem to suspect the existence of any such thing as a hyphen. It’s a shame he can’t hack his way into the *Chicago Manual of Style*, but I suppose the FBI can snag him a copy next time they raid a journalist.

Of course, it’s been obvious for nearly a century now that the English-speaking world was on course to fall under the sway of some sort of amoral and quasi-literate technician caste, but it’s still jarring to actually see such a thing in action.

Bible Verse of the Day: Song of Solomon 4:5

“Your two breasts are like two fawns
twins of a gazelle
that graze among the lilies”

A Visit to the Hole

July 1, 2014

I’m afraid I’m now being kept in the Seagoville federal prison Special Housing Unit, or SHU, known more informally as “segregation” and even more informally as “the hole.” Several of my fellow jail unit inmates and I were brought here in the wake of a June 17 incident that the Department of Justice is billing as a “semi-disturbance” for which we are to be investigated and perhaps punished — though not necessarily in that order. One awaits one’s disciplinary hearing in the hole, and if one is found guilty, one is sentenced to ... the hole. More than a week after being confined, I’ve yet to even be charged with an infraction.

I’ll go into further detail about the circumstances at some later date, when I’m free, so to speak, to talk about it, as it’s really a remarkable story. For now I shall, in my benevolence, let you in on what it’s like to live in a tiny cell for 23 hours a day. That way, you’ll be prepared in case you, too, ever find yourself implicated in a “semi-disturbance” or a “quasi-disruption” or even a “pseudo-riot.”

There are holes, and then there are holes. I spent a few days in the SHU back in 2012, during my stay at the federal prison compound in Fort Worth — not for any perceived misconduct but because there were no beds available in the jail unit. (My friend Gregg Housh, Hacker to the Stars, spent 30 days in the SHU some years back for the same reason.) It pains me to have to report that this particular hole is far inferior. Like much of the Seagoville prison compound, this building dates back to the days when the site served as a World War II internment camp for people found guilty of being German-Americans. The mid-20th century was less than a Golden Age in the annals of humane detainment of civilians; the people of Texas, meanwhile, have only rarely been denounced for the excessively cushy treatment administered to those who fall into their clutches. And the building was clearly intended to house punishment cells, presumably for the bad Germans who got caught writing incomprehensible oracular philosophy about things-in-themselves and the *Weltgeist* and all that (in which case I hope they were punished very severely indeed). Thus it was that I was not terribly astounded to learn, for instance, that these cells have no air-conditioning, which certainly promises to make things interesting come July, or that one does not receive one’s prescribed medication for several days after arriving, which makes things interesting from the get-go. And the cell at Fort Worth, used to house a single inmate, was considerably larger than this one, which is used to house two. This brings me to the subject of my cellmate, who makes things the most interesting of all.

“D,” as he is known, is a red-headed white male who hails from Grand Prairie or Waxahachie or Mesquite or one of the other tribal zones that surround Dal-

typing up his own lesson plans because his part-time secretary is off in the afternoons. On a totally unrelated note, the name “Daniel Ellsberg” does not seem to appear in the book, probably due to some sort of editorial oversight.

My main complaint with *The White House Years*, aside from the frankly incredible bullshit I just quoted, is the presence of Henry Cabot Lodge, who shows up in several capacities, most notably as Ambassador to Saigon. I have nothing against Lodge, who I’m sure is a fine public servant, but for some reason I’ve always been under the vague impression that he is actually a mid-19th-century senator. Clearly I’m mistaken in this, for here he is in the 1970s at the peak of his working life, but no matter how often I read about him shuttling off to Paris to negotiate some minor point with Le Duc Tho, I simply cannot shake my original conviction that I’ve also seen him conferring in Brookline with Daniel Webster. Then I begin to suspect that perhaps he has done both of these things — that Henry Cabot Lodge is in fact a sort of St. Germain figure who cannot die, or perhaps even some extra-dimensional entity who travels through time at will and who has decided to champion the cause of our republic in service to his own etheric agenda, incomprehensible as it may be to our human linear thinking. One evokes this minor deity, I suppose, simply by saying his name with due reverence. I see Nixon, for instance, in the Oval Office, very much at the end of his rope. Desperately he voices the age-old incantation passed down from president to president: “HENRY CABOT LODGE!” Before the last syllable is even spoken, he is simply THERE, standing entirely motionless in a pose of ice-cold competence. The problem is explained to him — simply a matter of habit, as of course he knew all that was to come before the bodies were cold at Valley Forge. “Leave it to me,” says this fixer bound by neither space nor time, and then 11 pages later we have a textile export agreement with the Japanese that both sides can live with. Needless to say this is all very distracting.

John Kiriakou, the former CIA employee who is now serving time on charges related to his exposure of the agency’s torture program, is being systematically harassed by prison officials in retaliation for the column he’s been writing on his experiences while incarcerated. Please help to spread the word by visiting defendjohnk.com and sharing this information with news outlets and activist organizations.

Bible Verse of the Day: Deuteronomy 22:17

“When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your god gives them unto your hand and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire to take her to be your wife, and you bring her home to your house, she shall shave her head and pare her nails.”

Secrets of the Illuminati, or, Yay, Cookies!

January 31, 2014

At the end of 1990, the U.S. federal prison system held about 65,000 inmates. At the end of 2010, it held 210,000. During the same period, the total number of state inmates increased by less than half that rate. One could conclude from this one of two things: either the Department of Justice has been doing something right, or it has been doing something wrong.

As it turns out, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder himself conceded last year that it was the latter, going on to announce new sentencing policies intended to ease those numbers back a bit over the next few years. This is an especially reasonable move in light of the fact that most of the people who receive prison sentences in federal courts aren’t actually criminals in the traditional sense. That is, very few of them are guilty of tying maidens to train tracks or hitting businessmen over the head with blackjacks and mugging them in brick alleyways or anything of that nature; such traditional villains tend to end up getting charged instead by the various states, which have laws on the books to cover outright criminality of the sort that actually entails victims. Rather, the great majority of those locked up in federal custody have been arrested for doing things that would be perfectly legal if the United States really operated under a free market rather than the neo-mercantilist crazy quilt that has been bequeathed to us by, let us say, history.

At the three different holding facilities in which I’ve been collectively cooling my heels lately, the majority of my fellow inmates have been Mexican laborers who are guilty of nothing more than moving from one place where their productivity as measured in real dollars was low to another place where their output was higher, all in accordance with the natural osmosis of the market. In some cases, the “Mexicans” in question were actually raised in the United States from infancy, speak English better than they do Spanish, and are otherwise indistinguishable from the large mass of American Hispanics. But merely by living in the country in which they have spent almost their entire lives, they are subject to arrest and expulsion to Mexico, a country with which they are essentially unfamiliar. If they return to the United States — and of course they do, for here are their families and their lives — they are subject to arrest and federal incarceration for “re-entry.” Many of the “Mexicans” I’ve met are on their third or fourth such charge, with each successive “crime” carrying more and more prison time. Naturally, all of this is done at great expense to the same American public that has allowed this state of affairs to come about to begin with — which is to say

that at least some degree of justice is achieved, if only by accident.

Of course, such cases as these are somewhat over-represented down here in the Southwest, where so many Mexicans still inexplicably insist on treading ground that the United States rightfully stole from their country whole generations ago. Nationwide, a slight majority of federal inmates are in for selling drugs. I don't know what arguments for decriminalization I could possibly voice that aren't already known by heart to every reasonably bright eighth-grader at this point. Instead I will simply note that if everyone who violated state or federal laws by possessing or selling drugs were to be caught and prosecuted for these crimes, tens of millions of American citizens would be in prison and tens of millions more would be on supervised release. Thus it is that the survival of our nation above the level of a neo-Stalinist gulag zone is entirely dependent on our laws not actually being enforced.

All in all, it is a peculiarly American system that we have created, this constitutional police state.

But who are these "federal inmates," as they are termed, whom our very Eric Holders now admit have been largely over-sentenced in years past? To follow is a sampling of those with whom I lived in close quarters for a year at the over-crowded lockup in Mansfield, Texas, before being moved to my present location at Seagoville.

Black, as he liked to be called, was a big black guy who lived in my eight-man cell and spent much of his time engaged in elaborate exercises while singing along to rap songs on his radio headset. Insomuch as that he was often out of breath, he would only sing snippets of these, such that I would have to try to work out the particular themes, structure, and subject matter of each song based on these rather occult and half-mumbled fragments. To wit:

"Huff, puff, mumble mumble mumble runneth over, Holy Grail!"

or

"Make you feel... huff, puff... some type of way!"

I gather that these tunes were very popular, as he sang along to each of them several times a day, even when he was going to sleep:

"Got some... bad bitches with me... too... ZZZZZZ"

Mexican Guy Who Looked Like a Mexican Version of George Stephanopoulos was a Mexican guy who looked like a Mexican version of George Stephanopoulos. I never caught his real name.

Ray Romano was a white guy who looked and talked almost exactly like the comedian and sitcom star Ray Romano. We were all kind of relieved when he made bond and left.

in the outside world, I learned that Kissinger was more likely referring to Helms' criminal conviction around the time when White House Years was being written for misleading Congress over CIA activities overseas (for which he received no jail time, naturally). Whatever it was, the bottom line is apparently that Helms "deserved better" than to be subject to "allegations" of having committed some of the crimes against the public of which he was shown to be guilty, although Kissinger does not explain why this should be the case; I assume the reason is classified on grounds of national security.

Indeed, interference by mere congressmen into such things as the CIA is a sore spot with Kissinger, who is still upset that the Senate had the nerve to investigate the agency's involvement in the 1973 overthrow of Chile's President Allende. Bizarrely, he tries to claim that the mere act of criticizing its policies left the CIA with no choice but to conduct even worse illicit activities abroad: "Paradoxically, American intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries has multiplied and become less discriminating since the covert operations of the CIA have come under attack. The earlier 'Cold War' period of CIA activities observed certain limits: Its criteria were foreign policy and national security dangers to the United States, of which there were not that many." Kissinger makes no effort to enlighten us on how opposition to the CIA's illicit conduct has somehow caused it to drop its prior sense of restraint, which is just as well since this claim is nonsense.

The democratically elected government of Iran that was overthrown in 1953 with the active participation of the CIA, for instance, was obviously not any sort of "national security" threat to the United States, unless Kissinger defines U.S. national security as requiring that former colonies of the British Empire refrain from taking back the natural resources that its former masters seized from them, as happened in Iran to prompt the CIA to intervene (something it presumably did more in sadness than in anger). Come to think of it, Kissinger may in fact define U.S. national security in such a way, in which case I suppose I owe him an apology. Wait, what just happened?

Kissinger is especially hilarious on the subject of the domestic Vietnam debate. "There was no civility or grace from the antiwar leaders; they mercilessly persecuted those they regarded as culpable." In support of this, Kissinger points out, in apparent seriousness, the following instances of merciless persecution: "Walter Rostow was not reappointed to his professorship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. ... William Bundy's appointment as editor at Foreign Affairs was greeted by howls of protest. Dean Rusk ... could find no position for months until his alma mater, the University of Georgia, appointed him to a professorship and gave him a part-time secretary." And yet even today, there is no Architects of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington to commemorate these fallen (or at least un-reappointed) heroes. I suggest a statue of a man nobly

This is rather poetic for a German. And one has little choice but to respect someone so thoroughly ruthless that he will deploy two semicolons within a single sentence. Quibble with his methods, but here is a man that gets results.

Not all of the book's gems are provided by Kissinger himself. Here's a bit of folksy wisdom from Lyndon Johnson:

"Read the columnists," he said, "and if they call a member of your staff thoughtful, dedicated, or any other friendly adjective, fire him immediately. He is your leaker."

As much as I enjoyed this magisterial treatise on U.S. foreign policy in the Age of Spiro Agnew, it was nonetheless disturbing to read under my particular, limited circumstances. Not having access to the internet by which I might readily check Kissinger's claims against the historical record, and my own knowledge of the era being limited largely to the fact that Jefferson Airplane had not yet evolved (suddenly and Pokemon-like) into Jefferson Starship, I felt myself at the mercy of Kissinger, whose famous advocacy of realpolitik and secret bombings and such things would presumably also entail a not-entirely-thorough commitment to the truth on such occasions as when U.S. national security might be better served by lies, which I gather is often the case. This was not much of a problem during my similarly incarcerated reading last year of *Born Again*, by Kissinger's fellow Nixon Administration ne'er-do-well Chuck Colson, a book I reviewed or at least made fun of for *Vice*. Being a reliably mediocre fellow, Colson's attempts to conceal the truth are usually on the order of "Whatever you do, don't look over there!" Ah, but Kissinger is very much the Final Boss of the Obscurantist Establishment.

To catch out such a man as Kissinger, you must wait for him to venture out of his impenetrable Fortress of Rhetorical Competence. This he will do whenever he sees that some other powerful U.S. official is being made to answer for his illegal conduct by the citizenry or its elected representatives. On page 38, for instance, Kissinger throws out a few glowing words about CIA Director Richard Helms and then adds, cryptically even for him, "He deserved better than the accusations that marred the close of his public career after 30 years of such distinguished service." One can't help but detect that something is amiss here when Kissinger feels compelled to denounce certain "allegations" but cannot bring himself to even hint at what these might consist of. Presumably he is not constrained by space considerations, this being, after all, a 1,500-page tome in which 11 pages are given over to a round of talks with the Japanese on textile exports.

In this instance it might help to know that Helms was discovered to have instituted a thoroughly illegal domestic surveillance program, CHAOS, by which to keep tabs on dissent. Luckily I happen to be a malcontent and thus also something of a walking encyclopedia of illegal government activities, vintage and otherwise, or I wouldn't have known this off-hand. But after checking with a friend

Trucker, as he was called due to having been caught with an 18-wheeler filled with low-grade marijuana, was a Puerto Rican who spent most of the day watching TV and drinking coffee. For a time, I was the only white guy in our 24-man tank, and on random occasions when a random white person would appear on the TV, Trucker would point to the screen and say, "Brown, it's you!" It didn't have to be anyone who looked like me, either; it could be Wolf Blitzer or Regis or whoever. One time I was actually on TV after a court appearance, but Trucker didn't say anything.

Flamboyant Gay White Guy came in one day on some sort of drug charge. When we received our brown bag lunches that day, he looked inside his, saw that there were cookies, and exclaimed, "Yay, cookies!"

Tio was an avuncular, potbellied Mexican who was in on a cocaine distribution charge. At least once a day, Tio would confront me with his thumb and forefinger both extended to form a "pistol" and thereby "hold me at gunpoint" until I raised my hands into the air in surrender, at which point he would nod knowingly and place his invisible gun back in the invisible holster he wore at his side. This went on for months until, one day, I responded by pulling TWO invisible pistols out of the invisible holsters I had begun pretending to wear for this very purpose, at which point he raised his own hands in submission. When you're locked up in the midst of the federal system's non-violent pseudo-criminals, every day is a make-believe struggle just to survive.

There's a good deal of what one might term "conspiracy literature" floating around the various jail units I've frequented. Rather than dealing with actual and now-verified conspiracies of the sort one really ought to know something about — the FBI's COINTELPRO, the CIA's CHAOS and MKUltra and Mockingbird and (my personal favorite) Gladio — these books tend to dwell almost entirely on nonsense, assigning a great deal of the globe's secret goings-on to the defunct Illuminati organization that once frightened police inspectors in 18th-century Bavaria but which never accomplished anything of note and which likely fizzled out a few years after its founding. This is unfortunate from an educational standpoint, but for my purposes it's rather fortunate indeed, as I'm something of an aficionado of bad Illuminati tracts, and I've found a couple of choice specimens. Here's an especially ripe passage from one entitled *Illuminati: Fact or Fiction*, written from a fundamentalist Christian perspective:

"The Illuminati may have the entire truth, or they may have a piece of it and think they have it as a whole, like a blind man who grabs an elephant's tale [sic] and thinks that it is an elephant, not knowing he is only holding a small part of an elephant and cannot begin to imagine what an elephant really is, based on the small part that he is holding in his hand."

I was surprised and a little disappointed when this sentence finally ended; by its own internal logic, there was really no reason why it ought not to have gone on forever. But moreso than the inimitable style in which it is written, what I most appreciated about the book is the section in which the author casts a skeptical eye upon some of the nation's potentially less credible expositors of Illuminati theory:

“While it is certainly possible that Schnoebelen was a Satanist and high-level Freemason, or even a member of the Illuminati, one has to see his claims of becoming a vampire as completely 100% fraudulent, and his claims of having sex with a fallen angel as highly suspicious and unlikely.”

Having read the passage in question, I am in a position to confirm that it is indeed suspicious.

Bible Verse of the Day: Deuteronomy 23:1

“No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.”

Enter the Kissinger!

March 11, 2014

Not long ago I requested and received White House Years, Henry Kissinger's 1,500-page account of his stint in the Nixon Administration, the Ford Administration being covered in a later and no doubt less edifying volume. I was so excited that I wanted to share a bit of my joy with my cellmate, Tom. Tom is a bank robber who has the words “Game Over” tattooed on his knuckles, which is to say by implication that at some point in his life he happened to glance at his knuckles, noticed that the words “Game Over” were not to be found on them, and said to himself, “I'd better get that rectified.” When I was first assigned to his cell, I noticed that he was in possession of something called The Anger Management Workbook, which is rather a cliché thing for one's new cellmate to have lying around. I like to think that before he came upon this textual remedy, he spent a great deal of his time pummeling people to death while shouting, “Game Over!”

“Tom,” I asked him now, “Would you like me to read to you from Henry Kissinger's memoirs in Henry Kissinger's voice?”

“No.”

“How do you know you don't unless you've tried it?”

“I just know.”

I operate under the assumption that people don't know what's good for them until I show them, so I began to read out loud. “In a deep sense Nelson Rockefeller suffered from the hereditary disability of very wealthy men in an egalitarian society,” I croaked Teutonically. “He wanted assurance that he had transcended what was inherently ambiguous: that his career was due to merit and not wealth, that he had earned it by achievement and not acquired it by inheritance.”

Tom got up and left. You can tell what a hard case this guy is, unmoved as he was by Nelson Rockefeller's central anxiety. I continued to read out loud for a few minutes. Then it occurred to me that this might summon an evil spirit, so I stopped.

Whether you consider him a war criminal or you're a war criminal yourself, there are any number of reasons to read White House Years. Regardless of whatever else he may be, Kissinger is certainly a sure hand at characterization:

Nixon's fear of rebuffs caused him to make proposals in such elliptical ways that it was often difficult to tell what he was driving at, whether in fact he was suggesting anything specific at all. After frequent contact I came to understand his subtle circumlocutions better; I learned that to Nixon words were like billiard balls; what mattered was not the initial impact but the carom.