

Review

Subterranean homeland blues: Mark Crispin Miller's 'Cruel and Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order'

By Adam Engel

Online Journal Contributing Writer

September 24, 2004—While it is possible that no man in America knows the mind of George Bush better than Mark Crispin Miller, it is probable that no man in America knows the mind of George Bush less than George Bush.

Hence, Miller's new book, "[Cruel and Unusual](#)" is not about the cipher known as George Bush per se, but as Freud's case studies ("The Rat man," "Dora") used particular individuals living in early 20th century Vienna to expound upon general pathologies they exhibited, Miller exhibits George Bush & Co as exemplars of the sickness that has overtaken early 21st century America. Individuals live their mortal days and disappear, but lunacy endures.

"Cruel and Unusual" is a brilliantly researched and executed "case study" of the afflictions we experience via the character of one George Bush and his cabal of super rich, corporatist, ultra-right wing fundamentalist Christians, or "Christo-Fascists." ("Christo-Fascism;" Cruel and Unusual—CU—pg 280)

" . . . the compulsive lying of the right, like the peculiar sadism pervading rightist rhetoric, also has a pathological dimension, which finally constitutes the common ground of the rightist factions now in power through Bush & Co. Outside the murky precincts of the psyche, or the soul, there is no tidy explanation for the acid, sanctimonious perverseness of Ann Coulter or Sean Hannity or Michael Savage. This or that extremist ideology alone is but a carrier or a symptom of the disease, not the disease itself." (Cruel and Unusual—"CU"—pg 282).

That this cabal, which Miller calls "Bush & Co," but I will, in the spirit of liberty, condense further, for this article, to "BushCo," is venal, murderous, corrupt beyond Spiro Agnew's wildest dreams, and ruthless enough to bear comparisons with the politico-thugs surrounding Hitler, Stalin, Mao and others of their ilk is known by many (outside the U.S. at least) and, if unknown, easily verifiable by even a cursory glance at the public record (as it exists, usually outside the closed system that was once the open society known as the U.S.) of any given month of activity since September 11, 2001. That the so-called "Bush administration" is not only illegitimate, receiving its authority not from the people of the United States, but five judges who reneged on their sworn allegiance to uphold the Constitution for the benefit of this particular sect of the Republican Party, but openly treasonous in both action and intent is the implied result of Miller's study.

America is sick, just as Germany was sick under Nazism, and Russia was sick under Stalinism and any other nation or people thus afflicted with fanatical rulers, a corrupted legislative body and a compliant press were sick and need of strong medicine administered by the people themselves (if possible), or a superior outside force.

Hitler's Germany smacked into history like a frog flung—splat!—against a wall. So seems to be the course of the American Republic, if it still is a republic. That it was once a republic of sorts is probably what makes it seem somehow "different" and difficult to imagine as a theocratic, corporatist police state. "This is America," we deluded Americans say. "Not any more," suggests Miller.

By presenting misdeed after misdeed, lie after lie, recorded (but not by the hapless mainstream American media) perversity after perversity, Miller makes his case clear and compelling for all who are willing to see reality through eyes unclouded by BushCo's PR juggernaut. The sycophantic corporate media makes it seem as if BushCo's fictions, their doublethink newspeak lies lies lies, are hard "scoops" dug up by zealous investigative reporters. This is no longer "just politics" any more than "Triumph of the Will" was "just a documentary."

This is life or death, for the Republic and for the thousands, perhaps millions of "evildoers" BushCo haven't yet punished for being born non-white, non-Republican, non-Christian, non-wealthy, and hence "evil" in the eyes of god, as interpreted by BushCo and the larger "movement" that put them into power, that shoved them into our lives, that created the state of emergency, paranoia, and predatory violence that is the present day U.S. (CU, pp 280-282)

Those who do not understand the pathology that, as national pathologies tend to do, found expression in a "movement" known as "Christian Reconstructionism"(CU, pg 259) and an instrument of power, BushCo, and take it seriously as the life-threatening illness that it is, are courting the kind of disaster the Germans courted, and ultimately seduced, under the Third Reich.

We must become adults suggests Miller, and face hard facts, and understand that the United States is not the creation of god for the benefit of Humanity, but a state created by a particular group of humans ("The Framers") at a particular time in history (post-Enlightenment) and codified in a by no means infallible set of laws known as The U.S. Constitution. To bury our heads in the sand, or worse, to allow ourselves the luxury of believing the imagined, Disneyfied vision of America, Daniel Boone and all, for a day, a week, a month longer, is to allow our "great freedoms" to be completely revoked by the machinations of a few mad men and women. Mad as hatters and mean as whipped dogs.

"Equal and exact Justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none; the support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies; the preservation of the General Government in all its constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad." (from Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, 1801, as cited in CU, pg 9)

The Framers, born into the Enlightenment, attempted to create a government that would avoid all the evils of European monarchies, theocracies and tyrannies that preceded them, grant the individual freedom from constraints of enforced religion and the prying fingers and eyes of government, so long as he didn't harm others while pursuing his life, liberty and happiness. They did not trust standing armies, hence the provision for citizens to arm themselves in "well-regulated" militias in order to, if necessary, nip an incipient dictatorship in the bud. They didn't seem to care what you did in your bedroom so long as it didn't involve forcing others to do your or anyone else's bidding. Of course they harbored fatal contradictions: subservient women, slavery, genocide. In light of these contradictions we must look to the basic principals of the Constitution, not the document as it existed in 1789, but the spirit of the framers, a seed of liberty with potential to grow, even as the original framers were privileged white men who benefited from the massacre of the natives, subjugation of women, enslavement of Africans. Perhaps to avoid excusing them, yet understand them as men of their time, we might call them "evolutionaries," not revolutionaries. In this spirit was the possibility of liberty, if not yet the realization.

Men like Jefferson and Madison were civic minded and convinced of the necessity of continuous intellectual growth for all citizens. In order for a Republic to remain free and enlightened, and consequently, grow with time (and perhaps evolve toward true, universal liberty), an educated citizenry is a must. Hence, freedom of speech, freedom of the press.

Freedom of speech did not mean a corporation's right to buy op-ed columns in The New York Times, corporate use of money as "expression," or mainstream radio's flatulent hate-rhetoric, but a free press that would keep the citizenry abreast of all that was going on in government, the nation and the world.

Even the checks and balances built into the three-branch system of government was not enough if the people were ignorant of what government was doing, and consequently, uninvolved in the work of government, like the passive consumers of today, who, awakened by the events of 9/11 and eager to *do something* civic-minded, BushCo urged to “shop.” (“The Unknown First Amendment,” CU pg 57)

That Jefferson, Madison, et al, if brought to life, would not find the current U.S. Remotely like the one they founded would surprise no one; what might surprise many is that they probably would not be able to distinguish between the domestic government and foreign policy of Germany, 1936, and the technologized, digitized upgrade that is the United States, 2004. Fascism 2.0.

How would The Framers react to the knowledge that we not only allowed the national catastrophe that occurred on September 11, 2001, to remain uninvestigated, but passively watched the executive branch prevent Congress from such an investigation (CU, pp 35-41) while using the incident, with the help of a compliant media, as a premise to attack two foreign nations (CU, pp 60-66) and deny citizens the liberties guaranteed under the Bill of Rights? Such examples of unrestrained authoritarian power in action would have struck the Framers of the Constitution (and like-minded "sons of liberty" of the day, such as Tom Paine, who would watch the French Revolution fail in part because of the unaccountability of demagogues such as Robespierre, Marat, Danton, etc.) as mass cowardice, denial, apathy—or maybe just a big, sick joke. Then again, it should strike us as a sick joke, for that is indeed what it is. A sick, very sick, joke. Unfortunately the joke's on us. And the people of Afghanistan. And the people of Iraq. And the U.S. servicemen, many of them National Guard, fighting alongside mercenaries working for private companies—for better pay and benefits than “our” GIs. (CU, pp 157-160)

Speaking of GIs, Miller makes it clear that "supporting our troops" seems to be okay with BushCo, so long as it's relegated to waving flags and saying meaningful, original heart-felt slogans, such as "I support our troops." But when it comes to actual pay raises for combat duty, families at home, extended medical coverage—often necessitated by doing soldierly things like getting your legs blown off or spinal chord severed by burning steel—BushCo draws the line. (BushCo treatment of GIs, CU pp 157-160)

There's a popular lounge/hang-out in Washington, DC, Called “Capitol Hill,” whose clientele consists of cowering Democrats who “legislated” in favor of the invasion of Iraq lest they look soft on Islam, and Hawkish Republicans, who generally favor any invasion, so long as the other side can't fight back (the Iraqis seemed to be of this sort, but have thus far killed at least 1,000 GIs and maimed several thousand others). The regulars at “Capitol Hill” voted to support “our” troops with real money and benefits, but BushCo balked.

“Bush likes to say the opposite: 'They must have the best pay, the best equipment and the best possible training!' he told a cheering audience in Milwaukee on October 3, 2003. In fact, our troops have been supremely stiffed on all three counts. While handing Halliburton billions, the regime has taken every opportunity to slash the modest income of our military personnel.” (CU, pg 257)

After all, Uncle Sam already provided these “kids” with guns, uniforms, MREs—where do you draw the line?

“On November 11, 2003, the Army Times threw down the gauntlet. The Pentagon was closing at least nineteen commissaries, and considering the sale or closure of fifty-eight schools on fourteen U.S. Military bases. 'The two initiatives are the latest in a string of actions by the Bush administration to cut or hold down growth in pay and benefits, including basic pay, combat pay, health-care benefits and the death gratuity paid to survivors of troops who die on active duty.' ”(CU, pg 157)

Clinton, and the “Anti-Clinton”

Bill Clinton committed some very real sins while in office: he bombed The Sudan; he bombed Iraq sporadically, specifically the coordinated attack of Operation Desert Fox in 1998; he bombed Serbia; in addition to the usual duties of CEO of America such as embargoes against “rogue states” Iraq and Cuba, (but strangely not Israel, China or Russia); crackdowns on protesters in Seattle and elsewhere; NAFTA;

favoring Transnational Corporations over U.S. workers (Arkansas was, after all, a "right to work" state); the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, precursor to the USA PATRIOT ACT; V-chips and other civil liberties-shredding sleights-of-hand etc.

But none of this seemed to bother the Republicans a whole lot. It didn't bother them because in many ways Clinton was far more "Republican" than he was "Democrat." But what really sent them over the top, sent them on insane prosecution binges with tax-payer dollars, and talk show fests of rhetorical frenzy, was the non-existent "scandal" of Whitewater, in which the Clintons actually lost money and were actually scammed themselves, (CU, pp 169-170) and the fact that the "Clinton" of their fears (as opposed to the Clinton whose domestic policies mirrored many of their own) couldn't (or worse, wouldn't) keep the presidential penis in his pants or Hillary's bed.

Miller points out the sheer hypocrisy, Puritanism and self-loathing projection that is the modus operandi of the perverts, gamblers, drug-addicts and general sinners who are now running the country or, like Rush "The Pill" Limbaugh, cheering from the press box. What with Bill "Black Jack" Bennett's gambling addiction and the sexcapades of so many Republican moral scolds, (CU, pg 289) and of course Limbaugh's drug habit (but they were legal drugs, if not always legally prescribed, so he was really no more of a drug addict than, say, Nixon's special Deputy DEA Enforcer, Elvis) you'd think if there were substances these folks would be keen on banning they would be stones, rocks, anything that can be picked up and thrown at their innumerable glass houses.

The chicken hawks, unlike Bill Clinton, did not protest the war in Vietnam, but actively supported it. They supported the war so long as it was being fought by other people, far, far away. This alone would be enough, if I were one of these bird-mutts, to make me hide under a rock.

"In case after case, Clinton's most dogged detractors stood exposed as having done themselves what they deplored in others," Miller writes (CU, pg 234).

But the inability to mind their own damn business is a crucial component to the pathology, Miller points out. Again, it wasn't Bill Clinton that they spent eight years and tens of millions of taxpayer dollars hounding, but "Bill Clinton," the bugbear of their warped perceptions, the Nasty Daddy of their twisted dreams.

Everything that they believed Clinton *would do*, BushCo *actually did*, writes Miller (emphasis mine—AE). Their Waco and Ruby Ridge-inspired paranoia of Jack-booted thugs trampling their civil liberties came to fruition in the administration of George Bush II. From the Office of Homeland Security to the USA PATRIOT Act and the greatest expansion of government surveillance "rights" versus individual privacy and liberty in U.S. history, the police state is alive and well.

Bill and Hillary Clinton embody everything these people hate about the sixties, as if "The Sixties" were one big orgy of sex, drugs and rock and roll. As if African Americans didn't get hurt or killed marching for basic civil rights and in the race riots of Watts, Detroit and other cities; as if an 18-year old without money or family connections didn't face a monstrous decision: to go or not to go to Vietnam. To go meant participating in an illegal, immoral slaughter of a foreign people in their own country, a people who were not taking American invasion lightly, but were fighting back, hard, sending 50,000 GIs home in body bags. To refuse to go meant becoming an outlaw, a fugitive, leaving the country or living in perpetual fear of arrest.

Bill Clinton did not dodge the draft. He protested the war and did everything he could to legally avoid participating in the criminal act of fighting an imperial war. He had a temporary "out," the Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, which he earned through hard work and intelligence. Bush, Cheney (who had more important things to do than fight in the war he ardently supported) and dozens of their ilk within the regime, supported sending other people to kill and be killed in a war that had nothing to do with defending the peace and prosperity of the United States. Bush, like his fellow bookworm, former Veep Dan Quayle, used family connections to "serve" in the National Guard. No one knows for sure just who he was serving, for he went AWOL for a good portion of his tour. Like all things related to BushCo, much of the record is

not available for public scrutiny, though both Kerry in 2004 and McCain in 2000 made their service records available. (CU, pp 141-149)

Miller is not judging these chicken hawks for failing to do Johnson and Nixon's bidding in Vietnam, merely pointing to the dreadful hypocrisy of the chicken hawks: support for the murder of millions of Southeast Asians via air, land and sea invasion that also resulted in the deaths of 50,000 Americans and the shattering of countless minds and bodies, yet hide in the stacks of a university library, or a Texas air base, or under Mommy's bed, anywhere to avoid fighting this war yourself.

One book that came to mind as I read "Cruel and Unusual" was Euripides' play, "The Bacchae," written 400 years before the birth of Dubya's "favorite philosopher" (who he apparently misread and misinterpreted as egregiously as any Nazi bumbling through Nietzsche).

Pentheus, the "beardless" king of Thebes has it in for the charming boyish god, Dionysus, who is the symbol of all Pentheus allegedly disdains—androgyny, liberation of female sexuality, wine, dancing, music, in short, the "Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n Roll" of ancient Greece, their anti-war (with Sparta) "sixties" counterculture, or all that some particularly naive Republicans associate with the era, never mind civil rights, opposition to an unjust, illegal war, women, gays and others finding the voice to speak out against repression. Like Ken Starr, Pentheus will spare no expense to prevent the misdemeanor of people having a good time. He ends up drunk and in drag, literally torn apart by the women he believed should be in the kitchen or wherever they were supposed to be, providing for men's pleasure, rather than their own.

And the Chorus in our American Tragedy, urging us on to yet more folly, to perhaps bring this nightmare foisted upon the American people to the Bushite Apocalyptic conclusion? The Media. Bush's willing executioners.

Miller's analysis of the corporate media's attack on Scot Ritter for calling for weapons inspections before war (he was right: no WMD)(CU pg 68-80); G. Gordon Liddy, Watergate felon-turned "respected commentator," gushing like a 14-year-old Beatle maniac after her first fainting fit about the way Bush strutted in aviator garb, with the "right stuff" aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln and the apparent meatiness of the presidential reproductive package (CU pp 150-155); the false "rescue" of Jessica Lynch; the marginalization or simple evasion of any meaningful dissent, was as surrealistically slanted as the pro-Bush coverage of election 2000 (with then GE CEO and de facto media mogul Jack Welsh urging his staff of "professionals" to tow the line in favor of their man George). Such a biased chorus would have been hooted off the Athens stage.

Miller details the colossal failure of the corporate-owned media to provide anything but BushCo PR and pro-administration "infotainment." The media have become the Great Enabler of the delusional anti-minds that mind America's beeswax and, consequently, the world's. For what is America now, but the great world bully, strutting across the international theater of the absurd as Bush strutted, *in uniform* (something Washington, Grant, Jackson, Eisenhower, who made their names as generals long before taking the oath of civilian office, had never dared) across the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln under a banner that read, "Mission Accomplished," in May of 2003, well before the American death count reached 1,000 and the Iraqi civilian death count reached . . . well, who cares about *them*.

Treason, Treason, Treason

The stated purpose of the Fundamentalist Right, according to Miller, quoting them in their own words, is subversion of the constitutionally mandated, secular Republic of the United States of America.

"The radical collapse of all distinction between church and state, and the promotion of an angry 'Christianity' as the USA's official state religion, have grown increasingly apparent as the Bush regime has turned more grandiose and reckless after 9/11. That revolutionary program has gradually come into view despite the press's failure to expose it, and despite the random efforts of the White House to conceal it," writes Miller. "A cursory survey of Bush/Cheney's foreign and domestic innovations will make clear that

this regime has, from the start, been hard at work transforming the United States into a theocratic system, and globally, at the gradual creation of a nominally Christian New World Order.” (CU, pg 265)

They, the wealthy, fundamentalist, hypocritical, chicken hawks who scream for (non-white, non-Christian) blood, who viewed "Clinton" as a "subversive" are, in keeping with the pathology that projects all the fears and foibles of the Self onto the Other, attempting to (and by any standard of measurement, succeeding) subvert the Constitutional Republic of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, et al, into a corporate sponsored theocracy with the ultimate goal of exchanging The Bible for the Constitution they, the ones who bought, bullied, lied, and cheated their way to public office, have “sworn” to uphold.

“Although the president [sic] made quite a show of mounting no rhetorical attack on Islam and Muslims in the dark days after 9/11, as if to reassure the world that the United States was not intent on waging a religious war, that tolerant pose was shortly overwhelmed, those words of peace obliterated, by much graphic counter evidence. The United States was obviously mounting a ‘Crusade’—as Bush himself so tactlessly announced on September 16, 2001,” writes Miller (CU, pg 265)

Many small to moderate steps have been taken since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, including the corporate friendly globalization of Bill Clinton and his Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which morphed so seamlessly into the PATRIOT Act(s). But the first Great Leap occurred with the cancellation of the 2000 presidential election by the five seditious members of the Supreme Court, who reneged on their sworn oaths to uphold the Constitution by giving the presidency to George Bush. No recount. No "states rights" (though the Florida Supreme Court ordered a recount). No legitimate reason other than that the possibility that Al Gore's victory might somehow hurt George Bush.

The legislative branch of federal government (with the exception of the Congressional Black Caucus) participated in this treason by acceding to the Supreme Court's decision, when they could have intervened; by giving this illegitimate president unprecedented war powers and a fat war chest; by allowing this rogue administration to postpone and ultimately deny a rigorous investigation into the events of September 11, 2001; by passing the USA PATRIOT Act without having so much as read it; by allowing the destruction of two sovereign nations (Afghanistan and Iraq) on faulty premises and innuendo. There were no Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, as Scott Ritter and countless other experts throughout the world attested; there was no connection between Iraq and al Qaeda on 9/11.

The media are . . . well, we all know what the media are: the public relations arm of the White House and at times, the Supreme Court and Congress.

“American democracy is threatened by no mere cabal of scheming oilmen or titanic business cronies, slyly playing on peoples' fears. There is such a cabal, of course, but this one is compelled by fear as well as greed, is generally persuaded by the lies it sells to the rest of us, and will not stop at pursuing its own demons until everybody else is dead. Until the people rise to reckon with it—reasserting the ideals, and honoring the laws, that gave this nation its extraordinary promise—the apocalyptic movement now in power will trample us and all the world, flattening the earth in ever larger circles, like a mad elephant in hot pursuit of its own tail,” writes Miller. (CU, pg 249)

The so-called Executive branch has been so remiss in even the most basic duty of upholding the law and investigating the greatest single attack to occur on U.S. Soil in the history of the Republic, that one wonders if they've been remiss at all. So long as the events of 9/11 remain undisclosed, kept out of the spotlight of an investigation that is accountable to the public, any explanation is possible. Thus, “conspiracy theories” will abound, yet no one will be able to definitively refute any of them. Meanwhile, individuals who are inclined to believe the “official story,” lacking the concrete evidence a real inquiry might provide, will continue to be plagued by a voice of doubt. It may be a tiny voice, one they shrug off with the depressing headlines of the Morning Corporate News as they start out on their day, but it will be there, poking, prodding, like a child who received an unsatisfactory answer to a simple question: “What if the unimaginable is imaginable? What if the Regime is preventing a real investigation, hiding the full truth, for a damn good reason, one that has a whole lot less to do with protecting 'national security' than their own increasingly firm grip on power?”

Quite a tidy, and useful, state of siege under which to keep the rational American mind, thereby preventing it from asking other painful questions that might lead to equally painful conclusions.

For a more complete and detailed list of high crimes and misdemeanors, many of them perhaps impeachable offenses, I refer you to the book, "Cruel and Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order," by Mark Crispin Miller.

I believe every American of high school age and above should read this book. But beware. Everything you've ever read about the Nazis under Hitler, the Soviets under Stalin, the Chinese under Mao, the French under Napoleon, about any tyranny that has ever oppressed people of the past or present is happening here now, on your dime, your body bag, your conscience.

Why don't we know what really happened on 9/11? Why has there been no official investigation, in public, live, on camera? What have we let them do to our country?

Finally, in light of Miller's analysis of these projections of the Self's deepest and darkest fears onto the Other, those words Bush spoke on September 16, 2001 are clear and understandable. It is not "they" who are jealous of "our freedoms," rather, it is BushCo who are jealous of "their freedoms," the freedoms of the Saddams and bin Ladens of the world to do whatever they wanted to whomever they wanted, without restraint of Congress, a Supreme Court, a free press, or any of the other messy trappings of a Republic. But they're taking care of all that. Pretty soon BushCo might have all the freedoms they jealously coveted to do whatever they damn well please.

Adam Engel lives and works in the New York area. He can be reached at bartleby.samsa@verizon.net.