

Psych Ward USA

by John Davis via jess - Counterpunch *Sunday, Oct 8 2017, 12:00am*

international / prose / post

It started at the end of the fifteenth century. A cohort of brutal, sociopathic Europeans, fresh from the torture rooms of the Spanish Inquisition, and later from duty in the religious wars, arrived on American shores to kick butt. By 1610, they and their successors, by steel sword, axe, knife, and pike, biological pathogens and very occasionally by blunderbuss, had killed fifty million largely stone-age indigenous people. In the northern temperate zone of this vast continent, some of those mass murderers became the founding patients of the Psych Ward; others followed, less blood thirsty perhaps, but they too quickly adopted the deadly imperial ethos established by those first conquerors. This is the institution in which we Americans now find ourselves immured.



Today, we continue to condone, as we whimper in our cells, condos or McMansions, institutional killing at an industrial scale. We continue to countenance the training of thousands of killers (otherwise known as 'our boys') in 'boot camps' where their sensitivities towards evisceration and ensanguining are blunted, and many thousands more men and women who directly support them logistically, nutritionally and medically. We continue to revere the executives who command them and who themselves train in elite colleges where they are taught the fine arts of chemical, ballistic, incendiary and steel-edged death. They are taught both the mastery of their death cadres and of elaborate technical methods for the destruction of transportation networks, food production, water supplies, shelter and culture; some may graduate with minors in wreaking political mayhem, plundering and the practice of torture and mind control.

From 1610, a year now marked in honor of the fact that native cultures had been destroyed to the point where vast acreages of temperate and tropical forests had replaced their seasonally burnt hunting and gathering fields and thus established the benchmark for the global encapsulation of CO₂, behavior within the Psych Ward changed little. The patients' mission to destroy lives, settlements, agriculture, self-sufficient cultures and their ecosystems remained in place - rationalized by their desire for treasure and the satiation of their blood lust.

At the end of the century, as their psychoses began to metastasize, the patients turned in on themselves and murdered, by hanging, twenty women who spoke against the Ward's ethos and established themselves as people of peace, or who embraced their sexuality or who declared their

independence from the domineering men who exemplified the prevailing, and much honored, sicknesses of the mind.

Although partly peopled by those in search of the freedom to worship their monotheistic deity, increasingly, the population of the Ward transferred their religious allegiance to the Market, where the bounties reaped from the spilling of blood were traded one against the other in a downwardly spiraling death frenzy of exploitation. Nothing remained sacred except the Market. Man and beast, ecosystems and mineral deposits were sacrificed to this deity's ceaseless demands for more, ever more, of everything.

In the eighteenth century, this 'everything' began to include the trafficking of Africans stolen from their homes, families and cultures and shipped to the burgeoning plantation economies of the Ward. In a vicious triangular trade between Britain, Africa and America - from whence flowed mostly the drug crops of sugar and tobacco - those that survived the Middle Passage slaved for their enslavers and bred new slaves for their master's sexual and economic gratification; from Europe came the fine goods that fell into the maw of the Ward's omnivorous Market. The by then ritualized killing of natives and the stealing of their lands continued through the years in desultory fashion.

Towards the end of the century there was occasion for more bloodletting as the Ward patients rose up against their imperial master, the dotty King of England, to demand full control in their worship of the Market and so gain revolutionary freedoms in the practice of new liturgies in service to their God. A further skirmish at the beginning of the nineteenth century confirmed in the patients the dark desire to press on in the annihilation of the indigenous people and to fully occupy what they had come to imagine as their God-given, rightful swathe of temperate North America. Cotton shortly became the economic driver of this blood-thirsty expansion.

Europe outlawed the slave trade in 1807, and the Ward was forced to rely on their own production of enslaved Africans. They bent to their task with a will, shipping coffles of shackled slaves south and west to tend the new fields of cotton - now the world's most valuable commodity. There they were forged by what Edward Baptist calls the whipping machine into an army of scourged bodies, a cotton-picking industrial machine of ferocious efficiency. For six or more decades, this machine produced the great wealth of the Ward that enabled it to create the world's second industrial revolution; its sickest patients becoming some of the richest people in the world.

Even now, the red stripes of the Ward flag evoke the bloody striations of the whipped slave's back and the box of stars in its corner the miss-firing synapses of the black man's brain, beaten about the head by the overseer's cudgel for missing his ever-growing quota of picked cotton.

African Americans were finally emancipated in the first war in which automatic weapons played a significant part, and in which over 600,000 patients lost their lives. In time, the freed slaves adopted the arts and culture of death and they too became patients of the Ward. Because of the color of their skin, many were at first hung by the neck from trees on the slightest pretext, but over time the many were more mercifully, but equally unjustly, quarantined in the vast infrastructures of incarceration that have since become a vital part of the Ward's culture.

Towards the end of the 1800's, the generals mandated the destruction of the Buffalo because it served as life-support for those few remaining Native warriors and their families who stayed outside of the Ward - their extirpation promising in return, the rich breadbasket of the Prairies. The beasts were piled high on the plains, machine-gunned to death with only the tongues removed from the carcasses, as demanded of the fickle marketplace.

Meanwhile, civilian patients shot millions of passenger pigeons out of the sky and out of their roosts in a vast butchery that resulted in a tiny fraction of the birds reaching market and ending up on a patient's table, whilst ensuring the extinction of this once ubiquitous bird. This was a time, against a background of great technological progress, of the railroad and telegraph, of oil wells and mechanized mining, when the endemic psychosis of the Ward sunk deeper and deeper into the land and forever blighted its indigenous people, its flora, fauna, and earthen crust.

It is redundant to list the wars of empire in which, over the last century and a half, the Ward has participated. The dead are numberless. The technologies of death are ever more efficient and they are spread ever more carelessly beyond the Ward to release the toxic spores of its psychoses.

As unregulated patients, outside of the organized death squads, we are permitted to possess weapons which are, it seems, necessary implements for the expression of our primal, psychotic urges. Remarkably, for the most part, we don't just kill each other; but within the Ward, guns claim the lives of over 30,000 patients a year, many are children, most are suicides. Gun violence is the dark cloacal river that runs through the Ward and expels the waste of our deepest mental disturbances.

Last week a patient killed almost sixty people and injured five hundred more as he fired automatic weapons into a crowd of country music fans dancing in an arena below his hotel window. It was much remarked upon by the Ward media. We were instructed by our leaders to pray for the loved ones of the patients who had died.

I deeply regret their deaths: but it was just another night in the Psych Ward.

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