

# READINGS

[Essay]

## AD NAUSEAM

By Tim Hwang, from *Subprime Attention Crisis*, published last month by FSGO x Logic.

Though we've mostly forgotten this now, the idea that the internet would give rise to some of the largest and most profitable businesses in the world was not at all obvious in its early days. As late as 1996, Viacom's CEO, Ed Horowitz, remarked dismissively that "the internet has yet to fulfill its promise of commercial success. Why? Because there is no business model."

In the two decades since, the answer to the question of how to make boatloads of money on the internet has been, resoundingly, advertising. At its core, advertising is a marketplace for attention. When your eyes skim over an advertisement as you scroll through your news feed or read an article, your attention has been sold by the platform and bought by the advertiser. This process has been automated and streamlined in ways that we often fail to appreciate. Machines dominate advertising on the web.

The method known in the industry as programmatic advertising leverages software to automate the buying and selling of advertising

inventory. This ecosystem has transformed products and services that weren't previously monetized in this way. And major scientific breakthroughs, such as recent advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning, have largely been made possible by a small handful of corporations that derive the majority of their wealth from this new automated market.

Why does this matter? It is responsible for a colossal portion of the money that drives the internet. And shifts in the marketplace for attention would have major consequences not only for the economy but for our self-expression, our identities, and our democracy.

In *Seeing Like a State*, James C. Scott explores what he terms "legibility." To administrate at scale, governments and large bureaucracies need to be able to see the world clearly. To set up a system of taxation, for instance, it is necessary to create a system of fixed identities so that the government can track which people have paid their taxes. Establishing a legible system of fixed identities may require cultural changes such as introducing the concept of last names to populations that previously did not use them. In other words, governments must shape the world in order to carry out their administration of it.

Social media is no different. The need to create a liquid market of human attention influences the architecture of the web. Social

interactions between people are mediated by structured tags such as “like” and “favorite” because these render sentiment easy to measure. We’ve lived for so long in an online social universe built for advertising that it is difficult to imagine what an alternative might look like.

Consider for a moment a social-media platform that we’ll call Super Social Media 3000 (SSM 3000), a bizarre opposite of the advertising-legible versions we use every day. It consists of a single page on which everyone interacts and where everyone sees the same thing. Rather than having structured text boxes, users manually draw shapes and words with their cursors. There are no user profiles, and you do not need to be logged in to use it.

This is an advertising nightmare. Users’ contributions are all jumbled in an unrecognizable

mess. The system logs no relevant demographic information. In contrast to the discrete, measurable likes on a Facebook post, a given section of SSM 3000 provides advertisers with only a difficult-to-interpret doodle.

SSM 3000 would assuredly be a social experience. Users would interact with one another, and they would likely make friends and even build communities. But it would be light-years away from what we currently understand as social media. It would lack the features that advertising has encouraged and helped to mold. By and large, we don’t have platforms like SSM 3000 because the broad range of expression that the internet might otherwise enable has been limited to ways of connecting that are consistent with the financial demands of advertising. The free-form scribbles of SSM 3000 are financially unsustainable compared with the shallow paradigm of likes, retweets, and short comments. In this sense, advertising is complicit in restricting the grammar of social interaction online.

The programmatic advertising model does more than simply enforce a certain kind of product design. We have been taught how to interact with other people online by platforms built to buy and sell our attention. One wonders whether that will constrain the social possibilities of the future. At first glance, it might seem that no one would want to use SSM 3000: the anonymity and lack of clear individual spaces might degrade into a digital wall of bathroom graffiti in a few hours (or less). But that presumed deterioration says less about fundamental human nature than it says about how we have learned to interact online. Our approach thus far has assumed the features of an advertising-driven internet.

There is, therefore, a strong ethical imperative to hope for the collapse of the attention economy.

**S**o how might that happen?

The advertising industry has long struggled with a simply stated but complex question: Does advertising work? In other words, how does one really know that the messages being broadcast actually influence the browsers, readers, and listeners out in the world? Traditionally, this struggle has been summed up by a pithy adage often attributed to John Wanamaker, an early advertising pioneer: “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don’t know which half.”

Today, a complicated ecosystem of data brokers, cookies, and surveillance allows advertising to be precisely targeted. But while consumer behavior is exposed in fine detail, the wealth of tracking data doesn’t help advertisers deter-

[Complaint]

## MOTHER KNOWS BEST

*From a lawsuit filed by Devin Nunes, a U.S. representative from California, against the Twitter user Devin Nunes’ Mom, whose identity is unknown. Nunes has denied the claims made by Devin Nunes’ Mom. The suit was dismissed in July.*

**D**efendant Devin Nunes’ Mom is a person who maintained an account on Twitter. In her endless barrage of tweets, Devin Nunes’ Mom attacked every aspect of Nunes’s character, honesty, integrity, ethics, and fitness. Devin Nunes’ Mom stated that Nunes had turned out worse than Jacob Wohl; stated that Nunes would probably join the Proud Boys “if it weren’t for that unfortunate ‘no masturbating’ rule”; called Nunes a “presidential fluffer and swamp rat”; stated that Nunes brought “shame” to his family; called Nunes a “treasonous shitbag”; accused Nunes of being part of the president’s “taint” team; accused Nunes of being a “lying piece of shit”; stated that Nunes was an “unscrupulous, craven, backstabbing charlatan and traitor”; and stated that Nunes has “herp-face.” In order to protect his reputation, Nunes requests that the court suspend Devin Nunes’ Mom. Trial by jury is demanded.



*The Handshake*, a painting by Peter Uka, whose work was on view last month at Galerie Voss, in Düsseldorf, Germany.

mine a fair going price for reaching a particular kind of person.

This degree of opacity in the marketplace creates a smoke screen behind which an economic situation can deteriorate significantly without broader market awareness. And there are strong indicators that the real value of on-line ads is steadily decreasing.

Advertising relies on attention: it is not the attention itself. All an advertiser purchases is the right to display its content on a web page.

When a demand-side platform is programmed to seek out opportunities to reach a demographic such as “males aged eighteen to twenty-four living in the United States,” it tells us whom the advertising will ideally reach, but not whether the people who actually see the ad will be persuaded, or even interested.

This divergence between the asset being bought—ad inventory—and the asset underlying it that defines its value—attention—parallels what happened to collateralized debt





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"Midwest Materials," a photograph by Julie Blackmon, whose work was on view last month at Robert Mann Gallery, in New York City.

obligations during the 2007–08 crisis. CDOs were, in effect, bundles of mortgages. Financial institutions packaged mortgages of differing risk and sold the stream of payments coming from these loans as a single asset. But the CDOs were not the mortgages themselves, and each CDO contained bundles of mortgages from different homeowners in different places. One CDO might contain high-quality home mortgages that would reliably pay out over the entire lifetime of the loan, and a seemingly identical CDO might be filled with high-risk mortgages likely to default. In financial parlance, both CDOs and online advertising inventory are derivatives—they derive their value from an underlying asset. CDOs draw their value

from the mortgages they contain; online ad inventory draws its value from the attention it represents.

In the same way that we might peel open a CDO to learn which types of mortgages it contains, we can peel open an ad and assess the quality of the attention it captures. When we do this, two problems become apparent. First, the value of the attention packaged by online advertising is declining. Industry data clearly indicates that online advertising is increasingly ignored—or actively resisted—by the public at large. Second, the attention ads do receive is increasingly garbage—the product of a massive, fraudulent economy of click farms designed to extract money from advertisers. In short, as



many in the industry certainly know, the bottom is falling out even as prices are pushed higher and higher.

Eventually, the bubble will pop. And there is good reason to think that this will happen sooner than we expect.

[X-File]

## DEEP SPACE 19

*From "Origin of new emergent Coronavirus and Candida fungal diseases—Terrestrial or cosmic?" by Edward J. Steele, et al., which was published in July by Advances in Genetics. Claims that certain pathogens have extraterrestrial origins have been largely rejected by the scientific community as baseless.*

We have previously argued that the sudden emergence of new circulating viruses could be linked to cosmic events related to the well-known eleven-year sunspot cycle. Earth's magnetosphere is modulated by a solar wind that controls the flow of incoming charged particles. During periods of minimal sunspots, a general weakening of the magnetic field occurs. This is accompanied by an increase in the flux of Galactic Cosmic Rays (GCRs) and charged interstellar and interplanetary dust particles. We have been at the lowest minimum for well over a century.

The emotion surrounding the COVID-19 epidemic is unparalleled, and it is the origin of this emergent virus that has raised the most angst. Analyzing all reliable genetic, epidemiological, geophysical, and astrophysical data leads to the hypothesis that COVID-19 arrived via meteorite, presumably a relatively fragile and loose carbonaceous meteorite, that struck northeast China on October 11, 2019.

If a fragment of a fragile carbonaceous meteorite entered the mesosphere and stratosphere at a high speed of 30 km/s, its outer envelope, carrying trillions of viruses, bacteria, and other primary source cells (for the cosmic replication of the COVID-19 virus), may have been dispersed in the mesosphere, stratosphere, and troposphere. A reasonable assumption is that the fireball that struck 2,000 km north of Wuhan may have been part of a wide tube of debris, the bulk of which was deposited in the stratosphere. That it exploded over China is due only to the vagaries of chance.

[Profile]

## BLEAT HOUSE

*By Matthew Hongoltz-Hetling, from A Libertarian Walks into a Bear, which was published in September by PublicAffairs.*

When Chris Weathersbee, then in his sixties, moved onto the property in Corinth, Vermont, in 1999, it had just three goats.

He began to think of the twenty-nine-acre farm as a goat sanctuary, one that would operate in accordance with his Buddhist beliefs. He started taking in stray Nubians and cashmères; because he thought it inhumane to isolate, castrate, or slaughter his bleating wards, they were free to breed with one another, a freedom of which the goats took full advantage.

Within four years, the property was home to 252 goats, and Weathersbee—by then widely known in the community as Goat Man—was devoting most of his days to their care.

[Poem]

## PERSON

*By Blanca Varela, from Rough Song, a collection of poetry, which was published last month by The Song Cave. Varela (1926–2009) was a Peruvian poet and the first woman to win the Federico García Lorca International Poetry Prize. Translated from the Spanish by Carlos Lara.*

the dear animal  
whose bones are a remembrance  
a signal in the air  
never having shadow nor place  
from the head of a pin  
I thought

he was a slight glint  
the grain of the earth upon the grain  
of the earth  
the self-eclipse

the dear animal  
whose passing is endless  
it leaves me spinning

By the summer of 2004, Goat Man had become completely overwhelmed by his charges. The previous winter, he had been concerned about his newborn goats' ability to survive an unusually intense cold snap. So he moved the babies into the house. Ditto their nursing mothers. Ditto the oldest goats. Ditto the sick and the frail. In all,

this extended goat slumber party included seventy goats, all allowed to stay inside the house until the cold passed.

But, as witnesses would later describe, when the winter did let up, Goat Man did not evict the animals. Goats milled aimlessly around the house, in and out of the kitchen, up and down the stairs.

[Property]

## PENAL ESTATE

*From a listing posted on August 12 by House of Brokers Realty, Inc., for a home in Fayette, Missouri.*

203 EAST MORRISON STREET



\$350,000

Extremely unique opportunity!! Extensive renovation in 2005 (supposedly \$1.5 million) captures modern high-end finishes with traditional architecture and character. This home is 2,465 sq. ft. with three levels of living area, two bedrooms, 1.5 bathrooms, high-end finishes throughout. Appears to have been totally rewired, replumbed, and new HVAC system installed. AND THE BEST PART: connected to the home is a 2,500 sq. ft. legitimate jail with nine cells, a booking room, and a half bath. The cell-door lock throws appear to be operational. The possibilities are amazing with this property.



Chickens foraged on the counter. In the living room, a goat stood on a wing chair overlooking a sleeping bag on the floor, where Goat Man reportedly slept while restless goats stepped on him all night. During this time, Goat Man had allowed layers of hay and shit to accumulate on the floor to such a degree that one's head nearly bumped the ceiling.

If the house looked like a horror-movie trailer, the barn was the full-length feature. It was as if some elder Cthulhu-like god had been handed a wooden, barn-size bowl of sacrificial chèvre and cast it down, disgusted at the enormous mass of shit and dead goats mixed in with the living.

When a visitor described the number of goat corpses she'd seen, she was diplomatic: "He was trying, you know," she said. "He had a problem."

Soon, authorities began suggesting that if Goat Man didn't care for the animals properly they would be seized.

"I said, 'I will resist you by every means at my disposal,'" Goat Man told *Goat World* magazine. "If the sheriff comes, you'll have to shoot me."

The final straw came a couple of weeks before Christmas in 2004, when someone—possibly an irate neighbor—shot one of the goats in the face and left the body in Goat Man's front yard.

Days later, Goat Man, who was by then facing animal-cruelty charges, loaded up his small car with as many goats as it would carry and fled. He apparently went to Ohio and started the whole goat cycle over, because the following year he fled the state under similar circumstances, leaving the authorities to discover 220 live goats and 80 dead goats in his wake.

Police, following a trail of dead goats that spanned four states, finally caught up with Goat Man in West Virginia. When he was arrested, he had sixteen goats in his possession (including one in the freezer). Stripped of his goats, he disappeared.

[Offense]

## WHINE ON YOU CRAZY DIAMOND

*From remarks made in July by Russ Diamond, a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.*

I feel that I must personally respond to the incidents of hate and intolerance that have

been directed at me on social media. While these individuals may think they are simply expressing their displeasure with me, they are in fact hurting thousands of unmasked Pennsylvanians. Your actions perpetuate discrimination against unmasked individuals like myself.

One month ago, the Department of Health promulgated a mask policy that specifically included exemptions for medical conditions. But unmasked individuals are still being denied access to public accommodations in places not honoring those exemptions. The most vulnerable among us continue to suffer, including unmasked individuals of color, unmasked youth and seniors, and unmasked immigrants. We have not made progress unless we have all made progress. It is in this space that these acts of intolerance live and where we need to continue to work against discrimination.

To the perpetrators of these actions, if your apologies are sincerely given, then I accept. But an apology is the beginning, not the end of the conversation. I call on you, and all Pennsylvanians, to work toward a spirit of acceptance and welcoming of unmasked individuals. We all need to foster that spirit and celebrate the wonderful diversity of our commonwealth. To all unmasked young people, it is okay to be you. It is okay to stand up for your rights and your freedoms. I have no room in my heart for hatred, and frankly I do not have time for intolerance.

[Blurbs]

## BLUE LIVES BATTER

*From descriptions of police violence filmed in the United States between May 29 and June 7. Compiled by ProPublica.*

A protester holds up her phone. The officer pepper-sprays her twice, directly in the face.

An officer shoots at a reporter and cameraman who are broadcasting live.

Officers tackle a man being interviewed by the press.

An officer in the passenger seat of a patrol car opens the door while the car is moving, hitting a protester standing in the bicycle lane.

An officer rides his bicycle up to a protester, then pulls him into a headlock and drags him to the ground.

An officer shoves a protester standing on a sidewalk in front of a moving patrol vehicle.

An officer drives into a crowd of protesters.  
 An officer tramples a protester with a horse.  
 An officer pushes a person toward an open flame.  
 An officer pushes a protester down a set of stairs.  
 Officers shoot a teenage protester in the head with a beanbag round.  
 An officer shoots a man in the groin while he holds his hands in the air.  
 An officer removes a protester's mask and then pepper-sprays him in the face.  
 Officers patrolling a neighborhood yell at a woman standing on her porch to go back inside before firing paint rounds at her home and yelling, "Light 'em up."  
 Officers open fire on a group carrying an injured protester.  
 An officer pepper-sprays a person through an open window.  
 Officers use pepper spray and pull people out of an elevator in their apartment complex. "We live here," one of them yells repeatedly.

[Adaptation]

## EYES ON THE PRIZE



From a study published in *Communications Biology* in August by researchers at the University of New South Wales and the Botswana Predator Conservation Trust. Scientists believe eyelike body patterns evolved to either intimidate predators or draw them to attack non-vital areas of the body. The markings appear on non-mammals, such as cobras, but they are not known to occur on any mammals. As in the photograph above, taken by Cameron Radford, researchers painted eyes on the backsides of cattle in Africa and measured whether the markings had any effect in preventing attacks from lions and leopards. They found that cows with eyes painted on them were 1.8 percent less likely to be killed.

[Dissent]

## GARDEN-VARIETY RACISM

*From the dissenting opinion of Bernette Johnson, the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, issued in July in response to the court's decision to decline to review the case of Fair Wayne Bryant, a black man who was sentenced to life in prison for theft.*

Mr. Bryant's sentence is sanctioned under the habitual offender law because of his four prior convictions. His first conviction was attempted armed robbery in 1979, for which he was sentenced to ten years of hard labor. He has had no more violent convictions. He was subsequently convicted of possession of stolen things in 1987; attempted forgery of a \$150 check in 1989; and simple burglary of an inhabited dwelling. Each of these crimes was an effort to steal something. Such petty theft is frequently driven by the ravages of poverty or addiction, often both.

In the years following Reconstruction, Southern states criminalized recently emancipated African-American citizens by introducing extreme sentences for petty theft associated with poverty. These measures enabled Southern states to continue using forced labor (as punishment) by African Americans even after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Known in some places as Pig Laws, they replaced the Black Codes that were prevalent after the Civil War ended. Pig Laws were largely designed to re-enslave African Americans. They targeted actions such as stealing cattle and swine by lowering the threshold for what constituted a crime and increasing the punishment. These laws remained on the books for decades. And this case demonstrates their modern manifestation: harsh habitual offender laws that permit a life sentence for a Black man convicted of property crimes.

This man's sentence serves no legitimate penal purpose. Mr. Bryant was sentenced to life in prison for unsuccessfully attempting to make off with somebody else's hedge clippers. Since his conviction in 1997, Mr. Bryant's incarceration has cost Louisiana taxpayers approximately \$518,667. Arrested at thirty-eight, Mr. Bryant has already spent nearly twenty-three



years in prison and is now over sixty years old. If he lives another twenty years, Louisiana taxpayers will have paid almost one million dollars to punish Mr. Bryant for his failed effort to steal a set of hedge clippers.

[Grievances]

## GRAVE CONCERNS

*From complaints received by the American Battle Monuments Commission between 2014 and 2019 that were acquired by GovernmentAttic.org through a Freedom of Information Act request. The commission manages twenty-six American military cemeteries and thirty federal memorials, most of which are overseas.*

The cemetery was closed  
The cemetery was guarded by a British private security firm  
The cemetery no longer allows American veterans to fold the flags, which are now folded by French staffers  
An engraving on a monument reads LOOD HOW YOUNG THEY WERE  
The cemetery did not notify us of ongoing construction  
The cemetery used a blue tarp instead of a green tarp to cover missing grass  
The cemetery had moss and algae growing in its gutters  
The cemetery had standing water, which attracts mosquitoes carrying dengue  
The cemetery is located south of a local cemetery that does not embalm the dead and buries them in wooden caskets, putting the cemetery at risk of contamination  
An employee at the cemetery slammed doors and shuffled papers in the chapel during a military funeral  
An employee at the cemetery asked me whether I was a redneck and whether I had a Confederate flag  
The cemetery's superintendent renovated his residence so that it obstructed the view from our garden and threatened to remove our hedge  
The cemetery's spokesman spends too much time on social media and not enough assisting widows of the deceased  
The president spends too much money on state dinners and not enough on preserving our flower fund  
The flower-ordering service does not accept PayPal

The cemetery did not fulfill four requests for flowers from Senator Lindsey Graham's constituents, preventing them from organizing photo shoots

[Fiction]

## FATA MORGANA

*By Wolfgang Koeppen, from Pigeons on the Grass, a novel, which was published last month by New Directions. Koeppen (1906–96) was a German novelist who was awarded the Büchner Prize in 1962. Translated from the German by Michael Hofmann.*

He had marriage on his mind. The sky-blue limousine drew up in front of the tenement where Carla lived. Washington had bought flowers, yellow flowers. As he climbed out of the limousine, the sun broke through the cloudy sky.

[Drawing]

## FUZZY MATH

8



*From a study published this summer by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in which researchers asked a sixty-year-old man who has category-specific metamorphopsia—which has rendered him unable to perceive, describe, or copy the Arabic digits 2 through 9—to reproduce what he observed when he was shown the image of an orange number 8, depicted here in the upper left corner.*



© THE ARTIST

"Palmistry in the Shadows" and "Liminal Reflections," photographs by Devin Yalkin, from the series *Alone Together*, which is on view at the Photo Vogue Festival, in Milan.

The light bounced off the metalwork of the limousine and made the flowers burst into sulfurous blossom. Washington sensed he was being watched from the windows of the tenement. The little people who lived in many clusters, in every room three or four people, every room a cage, a zoo was more accommodating, the little people pressed up against the patched and starched curtains and jostled one another. "He's bringing her flowers. See that. He ought to be—" From some complex or other, it upset them to see Washington bringing flowers into the house. Washington himself came in for relatively little attention; he was just a man, albeit a black man. What came in for attention were the flowers; they counted the number of parcels he was carrying, and the car was eyed with bitterness. In Germany, a car like that cost more than a little house. It cost more than the little house in the suburbs that people yearned for all their lives. The sky-blue limousine parked outside the door was a provocation.

A couple of old women had registered complaints about what was going on in the third-floor apartment. Frau Welz must have contacts with the police. The police refused to get involved, *cancer on democracy*. Besides, the old women would have had cause to regret any intervention from the police. The police would have robbed them of the principal drama in their lives.

Washington walked up the stairs: jungles surrounded him. Behind every door they stood listening. But the times were not favorable, the times didn't allow the herd to throw themselves upon the alien creature that had forced its way into their territory. Frau Welz opened the door. She was coarse-haired, fat, baggy-assed, dirty. In her eyes, though, Washington was a tame animal: maybe not exactly a cow, but a goat. "She's not home," she said, and made to take the packages from him. He said, "Oh, that's too bad." He said it in the mild, distant way of blacks talking to whites, but his



voice had an undertone of tension and impatience. He wanted to be rid of the woman. He loathed her. He walked down the gloomy corridor to Carla's room. From some of the doors he was eyed by the girls, who took soldiers back to Frau Welz's.

Washington suffered from where they had to live. But he was unable to do anything about it. Carla couldn't find them any other room. She said, "I can't get anywhere else with you." Carla suffered from it as well, but less than Washington, whom she was forever assuring of her suffering, how unworthy all this was for her, which really meant how much she was abasing herself for him, how low she had to stoop, and he always had to try and make up for it with more love, more presents, more sacrifices, and it helped but only a little. Carla despised and cursed Frau Welz and the girls, but when she was alone and bored, when Washington was at work in the barracks, she would fraternize with the girls, invite them round, gossip with them, girl talk, whore talk, or she would sit in Frau Welz's kitchen, drink cups of acorn coffee from the pot that was always bubbling on the stove top, and tell Frau Welz (who would go on to tell the neighbors) anything she wanted to know. The girls in the corridor liked to show Washington what they had; they would pull open their pinafore dresses, adjust their garters, brush clouds of scent from their dyed hair. There was a competition among the girls to see which of them could get Washington into bed. The girls didn't understand Washington. They couldn't get it into their heads that he wasn't a john. Washington was born for a happy family life, but unhappy chances had thrown him off his path and into this apartment, to the jungle and the swamp.

Washington hoped he might find a message from Carla in the living room. He thought Carla would be back soon. Maybe she had gone to get her hair done. He looked on the dressing table for a note that would say where she had gone. On the dressing table were bottles of nail varnish, face lotion, pots of cream, and boxes of powder. There were photographs jammed inside the frame of the mirror. One of them showed Carla's disappeared husband, who was now on his way to his official death, his being declared missing presumed dead, and the taking off of the bond that tied him and Carla together in this world till-death-do-you-part. He was in field-gray uniform. His chest had on it the swastika against which Washington had gone to battle.

Washington looked at the man placidly. Placidly he took in the swastika on the man's chest. The swastika had become meaningless.

Maybe the racist emblem had never meant anything to the man. Maybe Washington hadn't really been fighting against that. Maybe they'd both been cheated. He didn't hate the man. The man didn't unsettle him. He wasn't jealous of his predecessor. Occasionally, he would feel a little envious of him, for being done with everything. It was a dark feeling; Washington would repress it.

Next to her husband was Carla in her bridal outfit and white veil. She was eighteen when she married. Twelve years ago now. In those years the world that Carla and her husband had thought they would live in long and securely had collapsed. Of course, that world hadn't been the world of her parents anyway. Carla had been pregnant when she had gone to the registry office, and the white veil in the photograph was a lie, or not really a lie, because no one was or could have been taken in by it, because the white veil was just a piece of ornamentation, and became a painful source of ridicule when taken as an indication of an unbroken hymen, and it was by no means frivolous to think

[Threat]

## MILITIA INTENT

*From a speech delivered by Darryl Daniels, the sheriff of Clay County, Florida. A video of the speech was posted on the department's Facebook page in June.*

**H**ey, folks. Me and the men and women of the Clay County Sheriff's Office just want to weigh in on what we're seeing play out in the mainstream media in this country. Look, folks, don't fall victim to this conversation that law enforcement is the enemy. If you think for one second that we will bend our backs for you, then you're sadly mistaken. God is raising up men and women just like the folks you see standing behind me. So you can threaten all you want. You'll have something waiting on you that you don't want. The second that you step out from up under the protection of the Constitution, we will be waiting and we will give you everything you want—all the pain. If we can't handle you, you know what I'll do? I'll make special deputies of every gun owner in this county. I'll deputize them. You've been warned.

like that, because the times were if anything inclined to mock the idea that the bridegroom, the public celebration and compact over, would fling himself upon his bride, on his white sacrificial lamb, to find that idea shameless and frivolous, and yet marriage was de rigueur, the official and orderly business of matrimony, the blessing from the state, all for the sake of the children, the children who were to be born into the state, and were even solicited, *visit beautiful Germany*, and Carla and her husband, then just married, believed in a Reich to whom one could and should give children, trustingly, dutifully, and responsibly, *children: true wealth of the nation, marriage loans for young couples*.

Another picture, of larger format than the others, showed himself, Washington Price: he

was in his baseball uniform, with the white cap, bat, and fielding mitt. His expression was grave and dignified. For a while he stared stupidly at the photographs. Where was Carla?

What was he doing here? He saw himself in the mirror, with his flowers and packages. It was funny, him standing in this room with the family snaps, the toiletries, and the mirror. For a moment, Washington was overcome by the feeling that his life was absurd. He reeled in front of his reflection. From one of the girls' rooms he could hear a radio playing music. The American station was playing the sad and majestic Ellington tune "Negro Heaven." Washington felt like crying. As he listened to the music, a song of home from a whore's room in an alien land (and what land wasn't alien to him?), he felt the whole ugliness of existence. Earth was no heaven. Least of all a Negro heaven. But straightaway his courage set off in pursuit of a new *fata morgana*, he got the idea that before long there would be a new picture stuck in this frame, the picture of a little brown baby, the baby that he and Carla were going to bring into the world.

He stepped into the kitchen, into Frau Welz's kitchen, to the bubbling cauldrons, a witch in swaths of smoke, steam, and fumes, and she gave him to understand that she knew exactly where Carla was, he should set his mind at rest, there was something the matter with Carla, something had cropped up, he would understand, sometimes if people loved each other they got a little careless, she knew all about that, she probably didn't look as though she did, but she knew about these things, and the girls here, they all knew, yes, the thing with Carla, it wasn't too bad (he didn't understand, he, Washington, didn't understand, didn't understand this German witch's spells, an evil woman, what was she saying? what was the matter with Carla? why didn't she say she was at the hairdresser's, at the cinema? why these riddles? so many bad words), it really wasn't bad, as she had such a good doctor, and had always been careful to look after the doctor even during the bad times, "I always said to Carla, Carla, I said, it's too much, but Carla always wanted to take him the best of everything, well, now we know what it's good for, Carla always giving him the best," there was absolutely no need to worry, "Dr. Frahm, Washington, Dr. Frahm will take care of it." That he understood. He understood the name, Dr. Frahm. What was the matter? Was Carla sick? Washington got a fright. Or had she gone to the doctor on account of the baby? But that couldn't be, that couldn't be. She couldn't do that, that of all things she couldn't, she mustn't do—

[Complaints]

## GOBBLE WITHOUT A CAUSE

*From news reports of behaviors by wild turkeys  
across the United States between 2015 and 2019.*

Tearing up gardens  
Breaking off tree branches  
Chasing dogs  
Blocking traffic by gathering into a group and  
marching in circles around a dead cat  
Flying into the windshields of moving vehicles  
Attacking postal workers  
Chasing police officers  
Tackling pedestrians  
Chasing octogenarians at a nursing home  
Pecking the backs of a pregnant woman's legs  
and forcing her into oncoming traffic  
Chasing children disembarking school buses  
Ripping down power lines  
Gathering on rooftops  
Ripping shingles off a roof  
Jumping off a roof and diving through the  
kitchen window of an adjacent home  
Knocking on doors  
Ripping apart screen doors  
Breaking the window of a village hall  
Breaking into a house and staring into a mirror  
Smashing through a fifth-floor office window,  
walking across the room, smashing through  
another window, and then falling to its death  
in the parking lot below





*Portrait of My Anxiety*, a painting by Margaret Curtis, whose work was on view in August at Tracey Morgan Gallery, in Asheville, North Carolina.