

(2022 August 16) Tom Dispatch - On the Decline and Fall of Everything Including Me

For most of my career (careen might be a better description) as an environmental activist, I was recognized (when at all) not as one of those gloomy doomsayers, nor, on the other hand, as a tree-hugger, bomb-thrower, greenwasher or navel-gazing bliss-ninny. Rather, people told me they saw me as a realist, insistent on seeing and talking about things as they are, telling it like it is- or at least as I saw it and then advocating for realistic solutions based on those identified factual conditions.

These days, looking at the facts, it's much harder not to be a messenger of doom. As Tom Englehardt notes in the piece linked here, the facts don't support rosy outlooks but (as noted in the Guardian piece he cites, point rather to what some scientists are now calling the Climate Endgame.

Now, like Tom, in my own declining years (three-four years older than him) it's more than disappointing to see the world in what appears to be even sharper than ours, to see the military-industrial-financial-corporate-political imbroglio repeating on the world stage not so much as farce (though it certainly has its absurd dark comedy sides) as a train wreck of epic proportions.

While I've tried to console myself with the self-blaming commonplace that old men turn into grumps who always see the world worse than it was, going to hell in a handbasket; and while I've had enough experience with self-delusion, hallucination and the like to believe that the parallel tracks of personal and global demise, the end of days congruent with the end of my own, could be just projections of my deteriorating psyche; I don't think so. There's just too much mass insanity out there that's way beyond my capacity to have dreamed up.

The Q-Anon fantasies, for instance, and an host of other wacko conspiracy theories, people so desperate for meaning they turn chance propinquities, similarities and coincidences into nefarious relations and purposive identities. The increasingly strident prayers for otherworldly rescue and relief. Gun-nuts in the streets and nuke-nuts in Congress, born-again accusers in the clinics and enforcers in the courts. The congenital drive for acquisition and individual self-importance of Americanism in general metastasized into unprecedented levels of greed widespread among our financial moguls and sharks, blind to the environmental disaster around them and their contribution to it.

Englehardt brings up the decay at the top at the end of the Roman Empire, but I see too the violent mess at the lower rungs; the mass shootings, brutal white supremacy, the intra-cidal circle-shooting, gang warfare and turf-battles for ever-diminishing pieces of the pie among more or less disenfranchised demographics; the acute cognitive dissonances of those trained to act against their own interest, so downtrodden and manipulated as to believe with absolutely no proof that elections are stolen and narcissistic grifter billionaires will be their saviors.

<https://tomdispatch.com/the-decline-and-fall-of-everything-including-me/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/01/climate-endgame-risk-human-extinction-scientists-global-heating-catastrophe>