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Patrick O'BRIEN

ABSTRACT

The years since the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in America have been a time of heightened anxiety for many Americans. The increased sense of vulnerability, the slow progress of two overseas wars, and very serious economic instability have combined to make this period a challenging one for Americans. As a result, novels that conceive of a catastrophic collapse of society have gained attention. This essay is the third part in a series that examines such novels. The work under consideration is former Navy SEAL Matthew Bracken's *Enemies Foreign and Domestic* (2003).¹

*"... [T]he American way of life is heading rapidly toward the edge of a cliff — if we haven't already gone over it."*²

*"I just don't know what's happening in this country any more. I feel like a war's coming."*³

*"Conspiracy theories [have] played major roles in [American] conflicts . . . They are not simply a colorful historical byway. They are at the country's core."*⁴

"The widespread belief in some kind of apocalypse is the defining cultural phenomenon of our time . . ."

*"The apocalypse . . . has always been the hobgoblin of the conspiratorial mind . . ."*⁵

*"It was a paranoid time. In America, it is always a paranoid time."*⁶

Introduction

Mild September days on the east coast of America will long be associated with the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C. Another such shocking September attack came when a sniper

fired multiple live rounds into an upper deck of a Maryland football stadium while 80,000 fans were cheering on their favorite teams. A fan shot in the temple. Another in the face. Others in the neck, shoulder, arm or chest. Noticing the commotion, the stadium video director focused on the activity and showed it on the fifty-foot-tall screens at the stadium, offering all 80,000 fans a view of a woman vainly trying to stanch the flow of blood from her dying husband's face. Police marksmen in black scanned the stands for signs of the shooter, further alerting fans to an unfolding tragedy. The result was that mob psychology took over and hordes of screaming people rushed in unison toward the exit tunnels. Hundreds of bodies pushed against those unlucky enough to be seated by the safety railings. "The rails bent outward as the human avalanche gathered momentum, and then they buckled and victims began to tumble over. The falling victims were still holding tightly onto those above, pulling them over as well, and the solid cascade began. Dozens and then hundreds of linked victims fell past the VIP sky boxes, thudding down on the unfortunate fans packed into the lower stands ninety feet below."

In a surprisingly short time, a police helicopter had located the sniper in a building under construction a thousand yards from the stadium. Finding the shooter, a SWAT sniper aboard the helicopter put a single bullet through the murderer's brain, killing him instantly. He was quickly identified as a white male military veteran, often homeless, and in possession of "white supremacist hate literature." As it turned out, the white man was a patsy set up to take the blame for the massacre, while two government employees embedded in a federal agency had perpetrated the attack in order to give the government an excuse to limit the right of Americans to bear arms. This set off a powerful reaction among American patriots who wanted to rein in a wayward government. A revolution almost resulted.

At least this is how author Matthew Bracken imagines a government-sponsored false flag attack on its own citizens.⁷

Bracken's Books

In what has turned out to be a trilogy,⁸ Bracken offers a glimpse of what America might look like in the near future should the government head use unconstitutional power over the people. In three very different settings, Bracken envisions the central government violating the rights of its citizens and weaves tales of resistance from fictionalized patriots. In *Enemies Foreign and Domestic* (2003, 2005), the action takes place in and around Washington, D.C. and posits a rogue unit of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) that does the bidding of a duped American President. *Domestic Enemies: The Reconquista* (2006) moves

to the American Southwest, then to San Diego, to tell the tale of a corrupt American government that plans to cede the entire Southwest to Mexicans as part of a hoped for “Atzlan.” Finally, *Foreign Enemies and Traitors: The Greater Depression and Civil War 2* (2011) spins a chilling story of a rump federal government at war with regions of its own country, with most action taking place in Tennessee.

As will be discussed below, Bracken fears that America increasingly resembles a police state, and he would like to warn his fellow Americans about this peril through the use of fiction. All three novels are heavily political, written with the clear aim of getting Americans to wake up to the dangers Bracken believes he sees. In their dystopian perspectives and anti-government prose, they fit in well with other books in the post-collapse genre of the early part of twenty-first century America, novels such as James Wesley, Rawles’ *Patriots: A Novel of Survival in the Coming Collapse* (1990–2009) and its sequel, *Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse* (2011); and James Howard Kunstler’s *World Made By Hand* (2008), all three of which were explored in the first two essays of this series.⁹

The Story

As related above, *Enemies Foreign and Domestic* (hereafter, abbreviated as *Enemies*; all page numeration in parentheses refer to this text) is premised around the existence of a secret government “death squad” that perpetrates false flag attacks on American citizens in an attempt to start a civil war between government forces that wish to maintain order through the limiting of arms in private hands and those Americans who resist such government intentions. The first false flag attack is the one described above — the massacre of football fans inside a packed stadium outside Washington, D.C. The two government agents responsible for the attack are initially rogue agents, acting without permission from higher authorities. The brains behind this attack, Wally Malvone, reasons that he can manipulate public opinion through predicting mass media reactions to the Stadium Massacre. This, in turn, will bring political pressure on his superiors to respond to what they believe is genuine domestic terror. The President, “Edward Gilmore,” feels the FBI and other agencies are too slow and bureaucratic to evolve a punishing response to the “terrorists,” so he turns to rogue agent Wally Malvone of the ATF to deal with the attackers in a domestic “dirty war” that is hidden from official channels and from the people.

As Malvone had hoped, some Americans do respond to new gun control laws and checks on personal freedom in violent ways, and the desired escalation in fighting between pro-Second Amendment patriots and government forces proceeds. Interwoven into this political

narrative is a blossoming love story between two innocent bystanders whose lives are tragically touched by the growing violence. The bulk of *Enemies*, however, is taken up with describing the back-and-forth battles between the two sides. In the final battle, one side is victorious, allowing Bracken, perhaps, a chance to motivate Constitution-loving Americans reading his book to take a strong position on real-world developments.

The Discussion

What we are concerned with most is the political imagination Bracken employs and, critically, how it mirrors many of the real-world events in our time as well as the pessimistic take so many Americans seem to have with respect to the American government and the condition of America more generally. Why, for instance, does Bracken heavily employ the concept of government-fostered false flag operations? Clearly, we can draw a useful parallel between the football stadium massacre and the terror attacks of 9/11, though Bracken is never explicit about this. Further, once the President in *Enemies* secretly funds and supports the illegal activities of the new ATF division, Bracken does make explicit his belief that this kind of behavior against American citizens is either now taking place or soon will. He is not alone in such thinking, of course, as a cottage industry of sorts has sprung up to argue that such false flag operations are in fact occurring, particularly with respect to government efforts to curb private gun ownership, something that a good proportion of Americans feels is unconstitutional. The following sections will flesh out the parallels between Bracken's fictive government attacks and what many Americans today feel are actual false flag operations. Beginning with Bracken's own online beliefs about America in recent years, the essay will next turn to doubts about the American government's official version of the attacks of September 11, 2001. I will then explore the issue of gun control in the novel and in modern America, and finally, try to parse Bracken's view of the role of race in his story and his view toward Muslims.

Bracken's Biography and Beliefs

Matthew Bracken was born in Maryland in 1957, earned a degree in Russian Studies at the University of Virginia, and served as a U.S. Navy SEAL. Like his protagonist in *Enemies*, Brad Fallon, Bracken is a devotee of ocean sailing.¹⁰ His political beliefs are starkly stated on his website. In his short description called "What the books are about, and why I wrote them" — a manifesto of sorts — he provides the background for the characters he creates and the plots he spins:

I began writing *Enemies Foreign And Domestic* in 2000, after too many years of watching our constitutional republic morphing into a police state. These novels, based upon nearly a half century of carefully studying historical patterns, are my attempt to shine a light forward in time. My goal is to warn my compatriots that we are inescapably losing our freedom, one ratchet-click at a time.

The Muslim terror attacks on 9-11 kicked the process into high gear. But instead of new laws targeting our actual enemies — radical Islamists bent on the global spread of their Sharia Law nightmare — the new police powers were aimed equally at all Americans. Projecting forward, the inevitable outcome will be to turn the United States into a dictatorship — the USSA, if you will.

The federal government, under the rubric of fighting a generalized terror threat, has for many years been providing local police departments with high-grade military weapons, equipment and training. The quid-pro-quo for this federal largesse is unquestioning local cooperation with federal law enforcement agencies, turning thousands of local police SWAT teams into force multipliers for burgeoning federal police power. In the name of fighting a murky and undefined “war on terror,” we have allowed the creation of a militarized national police force, something which our Founding Fathers explicitly warned us against and tried their best to prevent.

During the same period, our debt-based economy has nearly reached the bitter end of the fiat-currency road. It is only a matter of time until America experiences an economic crisis on the level of what is currently taking place in Greece, or even far worse. If and when federal entitlements, food stamp payments, housing allotments and all the rest are curtailed, I believe our major urban areas will explode in riots beyond anything America experienced in the 1960s. This will cause a breakdown in the national distribution of food, fuel and other commodities necessary to sustain life. At that point, some form of martial law will be put into effect, and our newly-militarized national police forces, along with active-duty military units, will be called upon to “restore order.” In so doing, the last nails will be hammered into the coffin containing our legacy of American freedom.

Obviously, I don't desire to see this happen, but if such an outcome is preordained, I want at least to shine a beacon into the future. My goal is to provide my readers with some possible alternatives that will be less horrible than the worst-case scenarios, which otherwise shall be arrived at by chance and happenstance.

This is why I prefer to write what I call semi-dystopian novels, set in the near future. The post-apocalyptic genre has been beaten to death, and life in the rubble at a bare survival level provides few practical lessons. To me, the slide is more instructive than the post-collapse period. The often-repeated historical process of economic collapse and the loss of freedom is what interests me the most, and that is why I am driven to write these novels. I hope that you enjoy them, and that you gain some insights which might prove of value during the tumultuous years ahead.¹¹

Apparently a man of his word, Bracken in his three novels never waivers from these stated beliefs.

9/11

With the exception of the Kennedy assassination, few events in modern American history have stoked beliefs in a violent government conspiracy than the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. The American government's version of those attacks is readily available, so only a brief recap will be proffered here. Nineteen Arab Muslim terrorists — part of Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda — successfully hijacked four U.S. domestic airliners and flew three of them into prominent buildings in New York and outside Washington, D.C. American Airlines Flight 11 was flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center, while United Airlines Flight 175 was crashed into the South Tower. These crashes soon caused these two massive towers to collapse, and later in the day the forty-seven story Building 7 also collapsed. Adjacent buildings also sustained varying amounts of damage.

Meanwhile, American Airlines Flight 77 was steered toward Washington and crashed into the western side of the Pentagon. The fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93, crashed into a field near the small town of Shanksville, Pennsylvania when passengers overpowered the hijackers in an attempt to retake control of the airplane. In total, nearly three thousand people were killed in the attacks, including a large number of New York firemen. In response, American forces invaded Afghanistan in order to capture bin Laden, and in March 2003 Iraq was also invaded. These wars have yet to come to a conclusion, though it was reported by the U.S. government that on May 2, 2011 a team of Navy SEALs had killed bin Laden.

American views of this official version are accepted by roughly half of the American population, but those with doubts ranging from slight to strong are considerable, as polls have confirmed. For instance, the respected organization Zogby International has conducted three large polls asking American citizens what they believe with respect to 9/11 reporting. In August 2004 a poll found that “49 percent of New York City residents and 41 percent of New York state citizens believe individuals within the U.S. government ‘knew in advance that attacks were planned on or around September 11, 2001, and that they consciously failed to act.’” In May 2006 1,200 adults throughout America were asked questions such as:

“Some people believe that the US government and its 9/11 Commission concealed or refused to investigate critical evidence that contradicts their official explanation of the September 11th attacks, saying there has been a cover-up. Others say that the 9/11 Commission was a bi-partisan group of honest and well-respected people and that there is no reason they would want to cover-up anything. Who are you more likely to agree with?”

- Responses: 48% No Cover-up / 42% Cover-up / 10% Not sure

“World Trade Center Building 7 is the 47-story skyscraper that was not hit by any planes during the September 11th attacks, but still totally collapsed later the same day. This collapse was not investigated by the 9/11 Commission. Are you aware of this skyscraper’s collapse, and if so do you believe that the Commission should have also investigated it? Or do you believe that the Commission was right to only investigate the collapse of the buildings which were directly hit by airplanes?”

- Responses: 43% Not Aware / 38% Aware - should have investigated it / 14% Aware - right not to investigate it / 5% Not Sure

“Some people say that so many unanswered questions about 9/11 remain that Congress or an International Tribunal should re-investigate the attacks, including whether any US government officials consciously allowed or helped facilitate their success. Other people say the 9/11 attacks were thoroughly investigated and that any speculation about US government involvement is nonsense. Who are you more likely to agree with?”

- Responses: 47% Attacks were thoroughly investigated / 45% Reinvestigate the attacks / 8% Not Sure

Another poll, this one done by Scripps Howard/Ohio University, found that 36 percent of Americans believed that “federal officials either participated in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon or took no action to stop them ‘because they wanted the United States to go to war in the Middle East.’” *Time* magazine’s response to this result was: “Thirty-six percent adds up to a lot of people. This is not a fringe phenomenon. It is a mainstream political reality.”¹² An August 2007 poll found that 51 percent of Americans wanted the United States Congress to probe President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney regarding the September 11 attacks, while more than 30 percent of those polled believed the men should be immediately impeached.¹³ A recent *Slate Magazine* story (November 20, 2013) notes that Americans were offered three theories about 9/11, beginning with the official story. Sixty-nine percent believed that. The second was that “certain elements in the US government knew the attacks were coming but consciously let them proceed,” which garnered 26 percent of those polled, while the remaining five percent agreed with the statement: “Certain US government elements actively planned or assisted some aspects of the attacks.” When asked different versions of these questions, such as “Congress should investigate the executive branch’s conduct” because so many Americans believe the administration has not been truthful about foreknowledge of the attacks, “a 51 percent

majority agreed.”¹⁴

Newsweek magazine has regularly asked American citizens about their beliefs in 9/11 claims. For instance, they asked: “Do you think Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq was directly involved in planning, financing, or carrying out the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001?” Responses were:

- September 2003 responses: 47% Yes, 37% No, 16% not sure.
- January 2004 responses: 49% Yes, 39% No, 12% not sure.
- September 2004 responses: 42% Yes, 44% No, 14% not sure.
- October 2004 responses: 36% Yes, 51% No, 13% not sure.
- June 2007 responses: 41% Yes, 50% No, 9% not sure.¹⁵

While it appears that a larger percentage of Americans believe the official version than doubt it, many people simply did not seem to know much about the facts of 9/11, such as the 43 percent who were unaware of Building 7’s collapse despite not being struck by an airliner. Conversely, of the seemingly small percentage that believe a faction of the government was actively involved in planning and executing the 9/11 attacks, many are manifestly well versed in knowledge about events of that day. As a general movement, the most useful name to date for this group is the “9/11 Truth Movement,” and among its adherents are a large number of professionals such as professors, engineers and architects using labels such as “Scholars for 9/11 Truth” and “Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth,” respectively.

One of the leading spokesmen of the movement is retired professor David Ray Griffin, who has published and spoken extensively on problems with the official version of the 9/11 attacks. In *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11* (2004), for example, he methodically critiques the official 9/11 narrative in chapters such as “Flights 11 and 175: How Could the Hijackers’ Missions Have Succeeded?”, “Flight 77: Was It Really the Aircraft that Struck the Pentagon?”, “Did US Officials Have Advance Information about 9/11?”, and “Is Complicity by US Officials the Best Explanation?” He writes that his questions are “disturbing” because they suggest that the official account is, in essence, “a big lie.”¹⁶ In this book he meticulously examines arguments for and against the reasons for the collapse of three World Trade Center skyscrapers, for the “success” of the hijackers, for official incompetence, etc. In subsequent years, as more information has come out, and as Griffin has honed his arguments, his story has tightened and made the official account seem less plausible.

Among such subsequent books is *9/11 and American Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out*

(2006, with Peter Dale Scott), where the authors are in agreement with Bracken's fictionalized contention that government-sponsored false flag operations have resulted in a drastic reduction in the civil liberties of Americans. Griffin and Scott add that because 9/11 was the rationale for invading Afghanistan and Iraq, "the discovery that the official narrative about 9/11 was a lie would be a discovery of first importance." The entire book is a brief composed of contributors' accounts that aim to show the official account is, in fact, a lie,¹⁷ with the two author-editors reaching the conclusion that "the official account of 9/11 is false and this false account has been used to support an agenda that had been worked out in advance — the further extension of the American empire, most immediately into Afghanistan and Iraq."¹⁸

Griffin is a serious scholar, having been Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at the Claremont School of Theology in California for thirty-one years and is currently a co-director of the Center for Process Studies there. With respect to the above book, *9/11 and American Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out*, all eleven contributors were highly respected members of mainstream organizations before taking public stances against the government story on 9/11. For instance, nine of them were professors at reputable universities, one was long employed by Underwriters Laboratory, another was a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force, and ten of them possessed the Ph.D.¹⁹ Such prominence is not rare in the 9/11 Truth Movement, as Griffin emphasizes elsewhere, noting, for example, that Andreas von Bülow, the former state secretary in the German Federal Ministry of Defense and a former member of the German parliament, "where he served on the intelligence committee," believes the official 9/11 story to be false. Joining von Bülow is Italy's Giulietto Chiesa, a member of the European Parliament's Committee on Security and Defense, who called the official narrative "entirely false." Fellow Italian Francesco Cossiga, who was both Italy's president and prime minister, blamed the attacks on the CIA, while Japan's Yukihiro Fujita, a member of the House of Councillors, publicly questioned key aspects of the 9/11 story.²⁰

In *Intellectuals Speak Out*, the writer of chapter two, Karen Kwiatkowski, was a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force and was working at the Pentagon the morning of the attack. She witnessed nothing that resembled an airliner strike into the building. "There was a dearth of visible debris on the relatively unmarked lawn, where I stood only minutes after the impact. . . . I saw nothing of any significance at the point of impact — no airplane metal or cargo debris was blowing on the lawn in front of the damaged building." Like other witnesses, she saw "a rather small hole, no larger than 20 feet in diameter." A Boeing 757 is significantly larger. Reciting a litany of official claims she

finds incredible, she concludes that “this entire story is so unrealistic that even the most talented and creative novelist would never attempt to advance such a plot.”²¹

Since contributing this chapter, Kwiatkowski has been blogging at the popular libertarian site LewRockwell.com, and appears to have become more strident in her critique of U. S. power, writing that:

today, most Americans understand that their government tracks them and spies upon them. Travel across this beautiful land has been made more expensive, as fuel and food costs have skyrocketed. The new and wholly un-American Department of Homeland Security has settled in for the long war, apparently against the American people and American traditions of liberty.... Today, we live at the will and by the grace of a dystopian and grasping government. There is not an exceptional amount of time left before this government collapses, but before it does, we the people will suffer far more than we have suffered to date. Banking collapses, mortgage fraud at the highest levels, government bailouts, currency printing, and inflation in food and energy are just a foretaste of the future, led by the same Washington public-private cartel we have suffered for decades.²²

Meanwhile, David Ray Griffin composed another book about 9/11 in 2006, *Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11: A Call to Reflection and Action*, the first half of which seeks to prove false flag aspects of 9/11, including a useful survey of previous false flag operations in history, particularly those committed by U.S. forces. He finds, for instance, CIA involvement in Italian politics that resulted in scores of deaths from staged bombings. In 1980, a bomb at the Bologna railway station killed eight-five and injured two hundred more. While these attacks were blamed on left-wing forces, particularly Communists, Italian police came to believe it was actually “extreme right-wing” members who played the central role. Indeed, one such member confessed, stating, “You had to attack civilians, the people, women, children, innocent people. . . . The reason was . . . to force these people, the Italian public, to turn to the State to ask for greater security. This is the political logic that lies behind all the massacres and the bombings.”²³ While many of the instances of state-sponsored false flag operations were abroad, Griffin also describes “Operation Northwoods,” a Pentagon plan to stage terror campaigns in Miami or even Washington and blame it on Cuba.²⁴ Thus, Griffin argues, it is not unthinkable at upper levels that innocent Americans could be killed by elements of their own government.

Turning next to the destruction of the Twin Towers, Griffin dismisses as an “outrageous theory” the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s [FEMA] report that concluded that

“The structural damage sustained by each tower from the impact, combined with the ensuing fire, resulted in the total collapse of each building.” Nonsense, Griffin replies. If FEMA is going to use what is essentially a fire theory, the response is that “fire has never caused large steel-frame buildings to collapse — never, whether *before* 9/11, or *after* 9/11, or anywhere in the world *on* 9/11 except allegedly New York City — *never*” (italics in the original). Citing extensive studies on the properties of steel, Griffin asserts that “a fire would need to be very hot, very big, and very long-lasting. But the fires in the towers did not have even one of these characteristics, let alone all three.”²⁵

The second half, reflecting the book’s title, is “A Christian Critique of 9/11 and American Imperialism.” Here Griffin explores the ideologies that may have created the atmosphere allowing ideas about an attack such as 9/11 to percolate, coalesce, and be carried out. Various think tanks, Griffin notes, had over the years prior to 9/11 crafted plans for American global domination. Highly theoretical, this section adds supportive evidence showing Matthew Bracken’s ideas in *Enemies* are not flights of pure fantasy. For instance, a paper co-authored by Philip Zelikow, who later became director of the 9/11 Commission Report, imagined a ferocious terror attack on America. Paralleling Bracken’s thesis that false flag attacks would prompt the American people to accept restrictions on their liberties, Zelikow wrote that in the event of a catastrophic attack on America, “The United States might respond with draconian measures, scaling back civil liberties, allowing wider surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects, and use of deadly force.”²⁶ This is precisely the risk Bracken sees and translates into prose in his novels.

In probably his best book on 9/11, *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, The Cover-Up, and the Exposé* (2008), Griffin updates his information and buttresses arguments from the original *New Pearl Harbor*. This book came well after the Bush Administration had released *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (2004) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) report, *Final Report on the Collapse of the World Trade Center Towers* (2005). Citing highly reputable scientists and architects, Griffin avers that NIST’s theory about the collapses is “*physically impossible*” (emphasis in original).²⁷ A key element that Griffin espouses is the evidence for explosives pre-placed in all three collapsed buildings. Citing the cumulative scientific findings that the buildings were demolished rather than destroyed by aircraft strikes, Griffin labels it “an explosion of evidence for explosions.” Referencing the collapse of World Trade Center 7 and what eminent professionals have to say, Griffin collects and shares their studied opinions on what happened that day, statements

such as: “In my opinion, the building WTC 7 was, with great probability, professionally demolished”; “Obviously it was the result of controlled demolition”; and “They simply blew up columns, and the rest caved in afterwards. . . . This is controlled demolition. . . . Absolutely, it’s been imploded. This was a hired job. Experts did this.” Summing up this chapter on what happened to the World Trade Center, Griffin writes that “The conclusion that they were all destroyed by explosives is now beyond reasonable doubt.”²⁸

In *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited*, Griffin dedicates two chapters to the issue of in-flight calls from the four planes that were hijacked on 9/11. The official version claimed that Barbara Olson, wife of Theodore — the solicitor general for the Department of Justice — was aboard Flight 77 and called her husband from the hijacked aircraft. This and other alleged calls were critical to the unfolding of the 9/11 account because they identified the hijackers with Middle Eastern men, thus starting the narrative of 9/11 as an attack on America by nineteen Muslim terrorists. A key question Griffin addresses is the type of phone used. In Olson’s case, he claimed both that it was his wife’s cell phone and that it was the airplane phone. Griffin alleges that in 2001, neither scenario would have been possible because cell phone technology at the time did not allow for high-altitude connections, and because, quite simply, American Airlines did not have passenger-seat phones on their 757s. No phones, no phone call.

To sum up, in both the 9/11 attacks and the fictional Stadium Massacre, roughly three thousand people lost their lives. The research of Griffin et al. points to a conspiracy where nineteen Arab terrorists were not responsible for hijacking and crashing four jetliners. Bracken’s *Enemies* envisions a false flag operation done by rogue agents and only later growing into a large government conspiracy to kill innocent civilians and curb civil liberties, particularly that enshrined in the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms. For decades, the U.S. government has sought ways to moderate or restrain that right, as discussed next.

Gun Control

To address the action in *Enemies* and how it relates to issues of gun control, further fleshing out of the plot is needed. Recall that initially it is rogue agent Wally Malvone (along with one assistant, George Hammet) who engineers the Stadium Massacre. President Gilmore is taken in by the ruse and, righteous anger rising, decides to take on the Second Amendment. Addressing the nation live from his desk in the Oval Office, Gilmore intones that the massacre “was an act of sheer malice.” It was made possible, he announces, “only because of a peculiar sickness in our American culture. Today’s tragic event resulted from

our inexplicable national love affair with firearms and weapons of war, like the assault rifle which was used today to mow down our friends and neighbors.” He then declares that he will ask Congress to heavily restrict ownership of various kinds of rifles (10–11).

Bracken next introduces fictional U.S. Senator Jack Schuleman, a Democrat representing Connecticut. Schuleman co-sponsors the Schuleman-Montaine Firearms Safety Act, which will make illegal the possession of some types of rifles. Further, Schuleman is Jewish and evokes this identity to justify his support of the bill. Excoriating those “paranoid fanatics who harbor a secret hatred for their own democratically elected government,” he says that “As a Jew and the descendent of Holocaust survivors” he finds repugnant any suggestion that the current American government shares anything in common with the Nazi regime (which had also taken away many forms of firearms).²⁹ Putting geography, ethnicity and attitudes toward gun ownership together, it is reasonable to argue that Bracken has based Schuleman on Charles “Chuck” Schumer, the Democratic senior Senator from New York. As Schumer’s website announces, he is in the fore of restricting gun ownership in America, taking the following positions:

- Enforce gun laws on national security grounds. (Dec 2003)
- Renew assault weapons ban - no legitimate use for them. (Nov 2003)
- Penalize cross-state gun traffickers. (Sep 2003)
- Cutting record-keeping limits fosters gun sale fraud & abuse. (Jun 2001)
- Voted YES on banning high-capacity magazines of over 10 bullets. (Apr 2013)
- Voted NO on allowing firearms in checked baggage on Amtrak trains. (Apr 2009)
- Voted NO on prohibiting foreign & UN aid that restricts US gun ownership. (Sep 2007)
- Voted NO on prohibiting lawsuits against gun manufacturers. (Jul 2005)
- Voted NO on banning lawsuits against gun manufacturers for gun violence. (Mar 2004)
- Voted YES on background checks at gun shows. (May 1999)
- Voted NO on more penalties for gun & drug violations. (May 1999)
- Voted NO on loosening license & background checks at gun shows. (May 1999)
- Close the Gun Show Loophole; restrict show sales. (May 2009)
- Ban large-capacity ammunition. (Jan 2013)³⁰

In the novel, the Schuleman-Montaine Firearms Safety Act passes with a veto-proof majority, and now Americans are legally compelled to turn in “assault” rifles within days. Penalties for failure to do so are harsh: Five years in federal prison, with no parole, for each rifle not turned in. To aid in prompt collection of rifles, a reward of \$10,000 is given to

anyone identifying violators. Further, “the FBI and ATF are very good at finding out exactly who does own these rifles, just from computerized sales records and ammunition purchases and so on” (20).

Later in the novel, as atrocities increase, President Gilmore demands more vigorous false flag operations from Malvone’s units, and Malvone is happy to comply, as detailed below. Why does Bracken imagine that the government would do such things? Has he been influenced by the likes of Alex Jones and other radio and television talk show hosts who entertain and propagate such ideas? Is there a wider culture sharing such beliefs? Did Bracken’s own experience as a SEAL contribute to his wariness about his own government? The parallels to Jones’ positions are uncanny. A prominent espouser of theories on government suppression of gun ownership, Jones’ oft-stated claims nicely parallel the beliefs of many of the “patriots” in *Enemies*.

Alex Jones and Gun Control, etc.

Radio and television talk show host Alex Jones is a major presence in the post-mainstream media age, with Wikipedia noting that Jones’ audience exceeds two million people and that “As of September 2013, his YouTube channel had received more than 300 million views.”³¹ To show how closely Jones’ emphasis on government-instigated false flags attacks meant to curb citizens’ liberties, including their right to bear arms, meshes with Bracken’s concerns about the same topic, on the January 17, 2014 Alex Jones Show (which aired just as this essay was being finished and was chosen randomly), Jones claimed that global elites are targeting “empowered individuals that need to be eliminated,” so elites will stage a false flag attack, which could be a dirty nuclear bomb, or nerve agents at a professional football game.³² Numerous times he referred to a story he had posted on his site about “a prominent think tank based in Washington DC,” where Harlan K. Ullman warned that an “extraordinary crisis” is necessary to save the “‘new world order,’ which is under threat of being derailed by non-state actors like Edward Snowden.” Ullman concluded that non-state actors and empowered individuals must be “eliminated” in order to preserve the new world order.³³

Related to this, Jones discussed the ideas of Zbigniew Brzezinski, co-founder with David Rockefeller of the Trilateral Commission and United States National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981. Jones played a recording of a two-year-old speech given by Brzezinski, which runs:

[The] major world powers, new and old, also face a novel reality: while the lethality of their military might is greater than ever, their capacity to impose control over the politically awakened masses of the world is at a historic low. To put it bluntly: in earlier times, it was easier to control one million people than to physically kill one million people; today, it is infinitely easier to kill one million people than to control one million people.³⁴

Jones noted that a recent book by Brzezinski makes the same claim and identifies who and what needs to be targeted: “the patriot movement worldwide — of just people that want to be free — are the enemy.”³⁵ The stakes, Jones claims, are high because, in his view, the New World Order is failing and without a “megacrisis,” the globalists will lose, which is why Jones is predicting just such a crisis. Again, this parallels Bracken’s fictional football stadium shooting. (Incidentally, a caller to the show on this day also mentioned his fear that there would be a false flag attack on an NFL stadium.) Just as in Bracken’s *Enemies*, Jones theorizes that such attacks are meant to keep power over the people by stampeding the people into begging for greater central power and protection. On the show Jones described what he sees as a globalist “continuity of government” plan — really a coup d’état — that would use “the threat of terrorism as a pretext to take our liberties.” Again, the similarity to Bracken’s thesis is hard to mistake.

To show how common and consistent Jones’ emphasis on this theme is, particularly the part about disarming patriotic Americans, a Google search (Jan. 13, 2014) for “alex jones gun control” turns up an impossible four-and-a-half million hits. To repeat, Jones believes governments have engaged in false flag operations attributed to lone shooters in the hope that popular sentiment will turn against private gun ownership. As evidence of Jones’ commitment to gun control issues, recent stories on his print website, Infowars.com, have been “Obama Proposes Executive Orders for Backdoor Gun Confiscation” and “Gun Confiscation — The New World Order’s New Year’s Resolution.” In the latter article, we find that Infowars prides itself on its reporting efforts, noting, “As Infowars has furiously documented, numerous federal, state and local law enforcement agencies have divulged they are being trained to confiscate Americans’ firearms.”³⁶

Sadly, there have indeed been abundant instances of mass murders of innocents in America in recent years, as InfoWars discusses. For instance, when an alienated Korean student killed thirty-two people at Virginia Polytechnic Institute on April 16, 2007, a headline on InfoWars ran:

Virginia School Shooting: Another Government Black-Op?

Early details suggest Columbine-style set-up to justify mass gun control, VA Tech has “blood on their hands,” banned concealed carry, disarming victims

In the body of the article, authors Paul Joseph Watson & Steve Watson write that this “could very well be another government black-op that will be used as justification for more gun control and turning our schools into prisons, festooned with armed guards, surveillance cameras and biometric scanning to gain entry.”³⁷

The Columbine they refer to is the April 20, 1999 shootings that occurred at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, Colorado. Two students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, murdered twelve classmates and one teacher, then killed themselves. Views on the Columbine killings vary. In his 2002 documentary *Bowling for Columbine*, for instance, director Michael Moore explored the wider social causes of such an unprecedented attack. Many others, however, took an approach more similar to what Alex Jones and his staff did, questioning the facts surrounding the case. Non-InfoWars site that also challenge the official version are everywhere, with claims such as this: “The Columbine Massacre was the First Full Scale Multi jurisdictional Exercise. Before the Department of Homeland security was even a thought in the minds of those who manipulate you perception of reality there was Columbine. . . . We see here just like all the other staged events the use of a script and actors to fulfill the roles you believe to be students and teachers.”³⁸

Such a skeptical response by Americans had become increasingly common in the aftermath of mass shootings or other terror attacks, beginning with the early 1993 government siege of the Branch Davidian compound outside Waco, Texas, ending in the deaths of agents and nearly eighty Dividians. Serious doubts about what led to the destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in the Oklahoma City bombing were also quickly and persistently raised when that terror attack occurred on the second anniversary of Waco. As seen above, a massive set of responses questioning the official version of 9/11 has turned into a “truth movement,” but for guns and the issue of the Second Amendment, the year 2012 was critical, beginning with the July 20th shooting inside an Aurora, Colorado, movie theater which was showing a midnight viewing of the Batman film *The Dark Knight Rises*.

A dozen were killed and seventy others injured before police arrested lone gunman James Holmes, to which an InfoWars writer immediately responded: “Colorado Batman shooting shows obvious signs of being staged.” According to the writer, “this sudden violent rampage was completely out of character for James Holmes, who was described as ‘shy.’” Further,

he writes, "There is already conjecture that James Holmes may have been involved in mind-altering neuroscience research and ended up becoming involved at a depth he never anticipated. His actions clearly show a strange detachment from reality, indicating he was not in his right mind. That can only typically be accomplished through drugs, hypnosis or trauma (and sometimes all three)." Why, the writers asks, would he murder innocent people in cold blood, then, when arrested without resistance, admit that his dwelling was booby-trapped with explosives? Why, also, did Holmes have so much exotic military gear, as shown from a CBS quote: "One rifle, two handguns, a knife, a bullet proof vest, a ballistic helmet, a gas device, a gas mask, military SWAT clothing and unidentified explosives were also found in Holmes' car, a law enforcement source told CBS News. Oates said Holmes wore a gas mask, a ballistic helmet and vest as well as leg, groin and throat protectors during the shooting." Writer Mike Adams concludes that "this guy was equipped with exotic gear by someone with connections to military equipment. SWAT clothing, explosives, complex booby-traps... c'mon, this isn't a 'lone gunman.' This is somebody who was selected for a mission, given equipment to carry it out, then somehow brainwashed into getting it done."³⁹

Another posting to one of Jones' sites is a story by Janardan Andrews drawing parallels between the Batman shooting and one sixteen years earlier in Australia.⁴⁰ In that case, police claim that Martin Bryant was solely responsible for the shootings carried out in Port Arthur, Tasmania on April 28, 1996. Those shootings which took thirty-five lives led to "the subsequent evisceration of Australian gun ownership rights thereafter." Andrews notes that "elements of these dubious circumstances tend to chillingly parallel similar terror related events in recent history, which strongly indicate a pattern of governmental participation," going on to list what the problems are with the Tasmania shootings:

1. Dearth of skills: Bryant had an extremely low IQ and lacked the training and skills to execute nineteen people in twenty seconds with single head-shots.
2. Multiple Gunmen Reported and Witness Statements that Bryant was not the shooter.
3. Drugged Appearance: Bryant appeared drugged when he was apprehended "which was confirmed by video footage of Martin leaving the building, 'stumbling along like a dazed drunk.'"
4. Running a Drill: As in the 9/11 case and the 7/7/2005 London bombing, drills simulating the actual attacks were in progress.⁴¹

Andrews further argues that Bryant "never had any DNA or ballistic evidence linking him to the crime, and is supposed to have confessed under torture after denying allegations for

many weeks whilst in hospital.” The conclusion about the Port Arthur shootings is that “This incident is clearly becoming a precursor for a campaign to restrict gun ownership in the United States.”⁴²

Sandy Hook

The second mass shooting in 2012 occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in the town of Newton, Connecticut. Allegedly, 20-year-old Adam Lanza killed twenty children and six adults. Earlier in the day, he had killed his mother. After the massacre, he killed himself. Alex Jones was in the lead questioning official versions of the story. Posted on his site, for instance, is “Special Report: Why People Think Sandy Hook is A Hoax,” which notes that “The general public is becoming more distrusting of media, institutions, government. So it should not come as a surprise that citizen journalists around the world are analyzing the official Sandy Hook story to see if it can stand on it’s [sic] own. Many are finding that the story has many holes, some tell tale signs we have seen before, lack of security footage, change in weapons, sequestering media.”⁴³ Another article posted to InfoWars is “Sandy Hook AR-15 hoax? Still no school surveillance footage ...” One reason that the author proffers for the lack of posted videos is that “They are busy doctoring the video footage to insert an AR-15 into the video frame by frame. The technology to do this has existed for many years as we all saw with the movie *Forrest Gump*, where actor Tom Hanks was shown shaking the hand of JFK.” Another is that “The video footage has been seized by the government and ‘archived’ along with the footage of the missile that struck the Pentagon during the 9/11 attacks. Where is all that video footage? It was all seized and completely hidden from public view.”⁴⁴

Again, just about anything can be found on the vast World Wide Web, so it remains a question how useful most sites actually are. Still, to demonstrate that there is extensive doubts about the official story surrounding the Sandy Hook shootings, let us look at one more example. The “Veterans Today” website recently (Jan. 7, 2014) featured an article “Top Ten Reasons: Sandy Hook was an Elaborate Hoax,” which claims that “Both the gun industry and the already immense and rapidly growing ‘security industry’ have also benefitted from the Sandy Hook ‘shooting,’ as we, the citizens of the United States, lose more of our Constitutional rights.” The article then goes on to question larger aspects of homeland security and its intersection with Sandy Hook:

The emergence of the Department of Homeland Security as a major threat to

democracy cannot go without comment. Even though a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Intelligence released a report on 3 October 2012 establishing the virtual non-existence of domestic terrorist threats, DHS has acquired more than 2 billion rounds of .40 calibre hollow-point ammunition. Sandy Hook appears to be part of a complex and evolving scenario, beginning with 9/11, to establish an enhanced Police State. Whether or not it succeeds depends on public awareness and political action.⁴⁵

Such concerns echo those of Alex Jones and writers for InfoWars. But what might one make of the Alex Jones phenomenon more generally? Is he merely our own day's Phineas Taylor Barnum? After all, he hawks all manner of products on his shows, such as liquid "Fluoride Shield," "Super Male Vitality" and "Patriotic Blend 100% Organic Coffee." Clearly, however, there are more facets to Jones than just commercialism. One aspect of his approach is the millennialism undergirding his railings against the New World Order or fluoridation, for example. While not satisfying every definition of millennialism, it does share with other examples the fact that it deals with this world (rather than a heavenly world), which, in a sense, makes it political "because it arises from the perception of political evil — the abuse of power — which it seeks to remedy."⁴⁶ Jesse Walker may provide the best background for the Jones phenomenon in his chapter "Operation Mindfuck" where he introduces the idea of "the ironic style of American conspiricism." Indeed, some of the theories espoused by Jones and guests on his show (one may think of David Ickes) suggest that Jones does not genuinely believe some of what he is peddling, fitting into a category Walker provides — "dystopian writers have exaggerated social trends they dislike, forging those artful distortions into satires."⁴⁷ (221)

Walker contrasts this with "fusion paranoia" in which fusionists (and Jones certainly fuses media — radio, television, Internet — as well as genres of conspiracy theories) are "dead serious" about their claims. Except when they are not. Walker examines past American conspiracy theorists who found it "fairly easy to switch from one mode to the other . . . With the 'conspiracy' category in place, an earnest interest in conspiracies could turn ironic, or vice versa."⁴⁸ Thus we have "the prankster," a common figure from the last 1950s onward, including some who spoofed UFO stories (Gray Barker's *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, for instance). One magazine "never label [ed] an article as either satire or journalism, in order not to deprive you the pleasure of discerning for yourself whether it's actually true or metaphorically true."⁴⁹ This seems about right when considering the fare on display on Jones' various media.

Walker goes one further, offering a philosophical approach used by some conspiracists: “guerrilla ontology.” Their approach here is to mix various elements of truth and fiction so that the reader must ask “How much of this is real and how much is a put-on?” Guerrilla ontology and the ironic style thrived. In the beginning of the 1980s, for instance, two authors formed a “church” whose faith was belief in conspiracy. Here is a passage from their writing that Walker features:

They aren't *readying* us for takeover, THAT'S already HAPPENED. **ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT IS HERE.** It just isn't *obvious* yet. But any day now the media will have people not only prepared for the realization, but *welcoming* it. One World Government is 'hip' . . .

Sounds like kook-talk, huh? That's because they're always one jump *ahead* of you. **THEY ENGINEERED THE SPREAD OF CRAZY CONSPIRACY THEORIES,** because even though many of the theories are *true*, they *still sound crazy*: the Rockefeller Conspiracy, the C.F.R., The Round Table, the Bilderbergers, the JFK 'cleanup,' **ALL OF IT.**

(And what does it mean that the authors of the above *and* Alex Jones are all from Texas, the state in which Kennedy was killed?)

Back to Bracken

How do these themes play out in Bracken's *Enemies Foreign and Domestic*? Also, does Bracken exhibit any of the “ironic style” that might be part of Jones' approach? The latter question is easy to answer: Bracken appears “dead serious” in his fiction, both in *Enemies* and the following two novels. Per his webpage, he has concrete political views and aims to advance them through his prose. Even so, there is still strong correlation between Bracken's themes and those of Jones (and others). Two of these, as we have seen, are government efforts to control citizens through purportedly unconstitutional means, and the other is a subset of that — the fear of gun control, which we now examine.

The Government's War on the People in *Enemies*

Recall that *Enemies* begins with the football stadium tragedy. Bracken next segues to the introduction of the book's protagonist, Brad Fallon. Thirty years old, six feet tall and the possessor of “beautiful blue eyes,” bachelor Brad is preparing for a long solo cruise to the Bahamas and the Caribbean on his newly refurbished sailboat. His introduction is necessary to take us to the other main character, Ranya Bardiwell, the only child of Christian Lebanese

immigrants to America. Her father is the owner of a gun store. Soon, Brad, Ranya and her father will come together in a tragic coincidence.

This tragedy is caused by Malvone and a lower ranking member of his unit, Bob Bullard (a name to remember in the subsequent novels). A political appointee, Malvone has managed to create a special “dirty outfit for dirty jobs” within the ATF, but this wayward unit has little official support, which is why Malvone puts his next plan into action. He has stadium helper George Hammet wire a bomb to the Jeep of a former Green Beret who, unfortunately is taking his son on an errand to illegally hide many of his rifles. Malvone wants to use this incident to blame the dead man for being part of a large right-wing anti-government conspiracy, one that will demand a strong government response. The bomb will be detonated early while the man and his son are still in transit, and the cover story will be that he accidentally blew himself up — “kaboom too soon,” as the book has it (65).

Other agents from this unit are on equally murderous missions. Three squads are tasked with burning down eleven gun shops in Virginia, which they do, killing some of the store owners in the process. The media spin will be that “the attacks across Tidewater Virginia were a result of fed-up local citizens on an anti-gun vigilante rampage” (106). Sadly for Ranya, one of the gun stores attacked is her father’s, and he is shot down in cold blood when he exits his house and heads for his burning store. The family dog is also killed, and because Brad hears the explosions caused by burning ammunition, he drives to the scene and soon volunteers to bury the dead dog. As for Ranya’s father, in addition to being shot dead, his body is burned far beyond recognition, and because her mother died some years earlier, Ranya is now without any family at all.

Having grown up around guns her whole life, Ranya is both proficient in their use and knowledgeable about all facets of shooting. She puts this knowledge to use the night she returns home to the burned gun store and house, and discovers the her father’s murderers were federal agents, as proved by the spent cartridges she finds on the ground. “Ten millimeter with these marks on the brass and the dent on the top means the ‘FBI Special Edition’ MP-5. A night scope on top, and a sound suppressor. I’m guessing subsonic loads, for no sonic crack. It was the feds all the way” (82).

This discovery gives Ranya a motive for bloody revenge, and it also elicits discussions about what government forces may be willing to do to American citizens. Joined at the crime scene by old family friend Phil Carson, Ranya introduces him to Fallon. Both men now know about federal involvement in the eleven arson attacks plus murders, so they exchange views on the government, with Carson allowing that “a war’s coming. I can feel

it,” a sentiment with which Brad can agree: “America . . . it went off the tracks a long time ago. I can’t fix it, and I’m getting out while I can” (83). Carson then explains his belief that another civil war is coming to America, and this time it will be the government against the people, or, as Ranya puts it, the “sheeple” who have been dumbed down by the public schools. Carson also takes the position that the government is using the “war on terror” to take away citizens’ constitutional rights. “[W]ell I’m just about finished taking orders. There’s some lines that won’t be crossed, and one might be coming next Tuesday at twelve noon!” (referring to the deadline to hand in guns — 85).

After Carson leaves, Brad shares his own views, views that are tempting to take as Bracken’s own:

“America really is two countries today. One half still loves freedom, and the other half’s already socialist, even if they don’t call it that. The free half is keeping them from going all the way to having the kind of socialist government they want, but they can’t quite shove us out of the way while we’ve got so many guns. I think that’s what all this is about: once they’ve got our guns, they’ll just pass all their damn socialist laws. They’ll just increase our taxes until we’re like Sweden, and if we don’t like it, tough shit. Anybody that fights back will get a free ride to a special camp for problem children. That’s where it’s all heading, and that’s why I’m leaving now, before I need to get permission to go.” (86)

Of course Brad will never leave, not when duty, a run-in with a federal agent, and a growing relationship with Ranya hold him back. Of course, both Brad and Ranya disbelieve the media spin about the stadium shooting, since, as Brad says, “anybody with a three-digit IQ knows that. I think it was all done on purpose, it was a set-up. To get the herd stampeding” toward the embracement of gun control. For Ranya, this issue continues to be painfully personal, as the Attorney General of Virginia uses the Stadium Massacre to bolster his own political fortunes by vilifying the alleged “militia” behind the attack. Though her father had been a patriotic citizen and had been brazenly murdered by federal agents, Attorney General Eric Sanderson has called her father an enemy of the people. Not to worry, because Ranya will have her revenge.

As a result of her research, she finds that Sanderson will be playing golf at the Greenspring Country Club, accompanied by bodyguards. (Earlier, U.S. Senator Geraldine Randolph had been assassinated because, as her assassin saw it, she had supported any legislation which would deny Americans freedom, most recently by supporting the “Universal Surveillance Act.”) Sitting across a small lake from the fifth hole of the golf course, Ranya

eventually spies Sanderson on the tee. She “slowly exhaled while putting light pressure on the Champion’s trigger with the pad on the end of her right index finger. The thin black crosshairs danced ever so slightly in rhythm with her pulse as they quartered the top of Sanderson’s head, while he stared straight down at his waiting golf ball. Sanderson was as motionless as a marble statue at the moment that the Tennyson Champion spat out its muffled shot.” Sanderson’s head exploded “as his cranial vault failed to contain the over-pressure from the supersonic shockwaves” (225–6).

By now President Gilmore is both frantic and furious. Still believing the Stadium Massacre to be the work of a militia, Gilmore is convinced that all the violence is tied to right wingers who love their guns. Malvone’s plan to create a feedback loop with Second Amendment patriots attack government forces, followed by increasing government crack-downs, is working. Creating the specter of a murderous militia — the Blackwater Rod and Gun Club — of which the stadium patsy was a member, Malvone is able to secure and employ more lethal forces for his dirty jobs group, including a plan to implicate Mark Denton, a fifty-seven-year-old corporate lawyer who was also a member of the harmless Rod and Gun Club. As seen above, Malvone had set up Denton as a terrorist and can sell it that way when the rigged bomb on his Jeep explodes on the highway. The President, all of the mass media, and much of the public accept it as such.

Patriotic Payback

Denton, it transpires, was a retired Special Forces officer in Vietnam, and the veterans who worked with him knew he would never become an anti-government terrorist, let alone a “fumbling” militia terrorist. One man who knew Denton was African American Ben Mitchell, a twenty-five-year veteran of the military, who knew in his heart that it had been a set-up that had killed Denton and his son, so Mitchell vows to act. This was the final straw for Mitchell, the last in a long list of grievances Mitchell had against “his” country:

Ever since the early 1990s, Ben had been watching the militarization of American police forces with growing dismay. Increasingly, young Special Forces officers were doing their minimum time in the Army, and then getting out and going directly into the FBI and other federal agencies’ special operations teams. SF enlisted men, without college degrees, were getting out in droves and joining local police department SWAT teams. It was the same thing with the Army Rangers, and he also heard from his Navy buddies that young SEALs were frequently serving one hitch and then going on to law enforcement SWAT teams, where they could still enjoy ‘the action,’ . . . A civilian SWAT team operator got to kick down doors and shoot guns

for a living, and then go home and sleep in his own bed with his own woman in his own town. (132-3)

Mitchell decides to send a statement to the federal government, one in the form of a “transportation slowdown.” Using forty pounds of pilfered C-4 explosive he kept on hand for a rainy day, Mitchell devises a plan that will get the President to listen to him. Given the training in demolitions he had received in the military, Mitchell successfully brings down “the entire 165 foot long span” in the middle of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, a main component of the Washington Beltway, and traffic is massively disrupted. Due to extensive surveillance cameras, however, Mitchell’s truck is soon identified and an FBI team quickly assembled, but fortunately for Mitchell, a friend inside the FBI alerts him and he opts to go out shooting — plus he successfully rigs his house to take out the SWAT team, resulting in the deaths of numerous agents.

This, though, merely feeds into the President’s and mainstream press’s conviction that the nation is under attack by militias. President Gilmore prepares to act more forcefully, and does so by activating Wally Malone’s plan for a black ops team inside the ATF. The rogue agent now has his generously funded dirty jobs team, and their first mission is to frame one Burgess Edmonds, also a member of the Blackwater Rod and Gun Club, as “leader and financial kingpin of a shadowy right-wing terrorist organization loosely hidden behind the cover of a ‘hunting club’ in southeastern Virginia, an organization which was primarily responsible for the past weeks’ acts of domestic terrorism” (263). Toward that end, the team kidnaps Edmonds, murders his wife and two children, then burns their stately mansion to the ground. With government insiders feeding disinformation to a compliant press, many American are convinced a right-wing terror campaign is in fact underway.

Not everyone, however. Bracken includes members of Internet groups who, like other characters we have seen, do not believe the government’s stories. They see events as “part of a planned effort to disarm all Americans, prior to a crackdown on civil liberties and constitutional rights, all in the name of fighting the ever-expanding ‘war on terror.’” Such a scenario with respect to the loss of civil liberties comes soon enough in the form of a newly-instituted highway checkpoint system, manned by regular police, FBI agents, and military troops. In no time, a mixture of tempers and confusion results in a bloodbath. For reasons unknown to people in waiting cars, someone has released pepper spray into a car containing a couple and their daughters. Reacting to this, a sailor in civilian clothes comes to their aid, but police release a police dog on him. Seeing more than enough, an eighty-

three-year-old veteran of the war against the Nazis takes his .45 and shoots some of the ATF agents, and the scene at the checkpoint soon spins out of control, allowing Bracken to make ideological points, as well as comment on the state of immigration laws:

By this point the soccer mom in the forest-green Ford Excursion SUV two cars behind the Cadillac had seen and heard too much, and finally her stunned brain somehow reconnected to her frozen limbs. She switched the ignition back on and in one fluid motion turned the wheel sharply to the left, threw the shifter into drive, and stomped hard on the gas pedal. Her giant SUV clipped the Toyota in front of her, spinning it sideways, ran straight over two National Guardsmen, crossed the exit ramp and headed down the brushy slope towards Hoffler Boulevard bouncing and picking up speed with every yard. The soccer mom's mind was operating in an unfamiliar emergency crisis mode; she was on automatic heading for the safety of her three car garage like a crazed doe fleeing before a forest fire.

Down at the bottom of the ramp Private Hector Ramirez was still standing on the middle bolster seat of the Humvee, leaning back against the ring cut through the roof when everything went crazy up at the line of cars. When the shooting broke out, he had reflexively leaned forward and shouldered into his M-60 machine gun, sighting up the road, but could make no sense out of the "lucha libre," or free-for-all fight.

Hours before, Private Ramirez had been content to accept the duty in the Humvee with the machine gun. For one thing, he remembered how to load and fire the M-60 from his active duty Army time, unlike most of his squad. But mainly he knew he had been given the machine gun duty because his English was very bad, muy malo. Terrible in fact, lo peor, the worst. Sgt. DuBois didn't want him searching the cars with the policias and dealing with the public because he could not understand rapid southern dialect English; and he could not communicate well in English in any case.

Private Ramirez' lack of English skill was understandable. After all, he had walked across the frontera Mexicana in central Arizona for the third and final time only a few years before. Then by the grace of all the saints, he had been granted 'amnistia' along with millions of his countrymen living in El Norte. A little later a cousin warned him that the amnistia might be taken away, but that there was a program where if he joined the gringo army, he would be guaranteed full gringo citizenship in only two years, and then he could bring up his mother and the rest of his family. And in fact, that is exactly what happened.

Gracias a Dios he had been given the answers to the tests before the Army boot camp, or he would have been rejected. But Ramirez more than made up for his lack of Ingles with an abundance of enthusiasm, always shouting "Sir Yes Sir!" in boot camp the loudest, whether he understood the question or not. His uniform was always perfect, he always had the fastest times on the runs, and his Sargentos had put him in front of the Compania to carry the flag. Army boot camp had been a

high point of Hector Ramirez' short life!

So he'd spent the day leaning against the hole in the roof of the humvee, sitting, standing and trying to stay awake, until all hell had suddenly and without warning broken loose, with people screaming, dogs barking, and now guns firing!

Hector yanked back on the cocking handle of his machine gun and got ready to fire, but was unable to find a target: all he saw were policias y soldados. Anyway, his orders were to just make a show, a demonstration he thought they had said, to be the "blocking force." Ramirez understood "fuerza bloquear." It meant that he must keep anyone from escaping from the checkpoint. He understood that mission well enough! This was something he had grown up seeing routinely as a small boy on the roads back in Chiapas. But today, although he had 200 cartuchos of ammunition in the green steel box next to his M-60, he had never expected to fire even one bullet of it!

Suddenly an enormous dark green truck roared out from the line of cars behind all the fighting and shooting, and drove straight over two of the members of Ramirez' esquadra, smashing them! Then it drove faster and faster down the hill directly towards him! And he was the blocking force, to prevent the escape of the terrorist!

He sighted directly at the onrushing windshield and fired a prolonged burst, causing the truck's windows to explode. The truck veered back toward the highway ramp, and it was still trying to escape as far as Ramirez could tell, so he followed it with his machine gun's front sight, firing continuously until it crashed into a police car at the bottom of the line! But when Hector took his finger away from the trigger, the maldita machine gun continued to fire without a pause, as if it had a mind of its own, so he raised the barrel to fire safely up over the hill.

A hundred yards away, halfway up the exit ramp, Sergeant Ashante DuBois of the Virginia National Guard was crouching behind the trunk of the cream colored Cadillac, while down the hill Ramirez raked the line of cars with 7.62 caliber machine gun fire. The rounds snapped as they passed; with every fourth shot a red tracer flashed by. Then the windows in the Cadillac blew out, showering her with a thousand tiny glass fragments. The Mexican had obviously gone totally insane with panic!

Sergeant DuBois knew that it was up to her to protect the civilians still hiding in their cars the only way she knew how. She laid her M-16 rifle along the left rear trunk of the Caddy, pulled back the charging handle to chamber a round, aimed carefully at Ramirez and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. Sergeant DuBois turned the rifle on its side and looked at the selector switch, turned it to "semi," and began to pepper Ramirez with fire as more 7.62mm tracer rounds cracked past her up the hillside and over the highway behind them. (308-310)⁵⁰

This passage is worth citing at length because it can be seen as the turning point in the novel, when a clandestine government war on gun owners becomes a matter of life and death for

all American citizens due to the collapse of normal Constitutional rights, paranoia all around, and the odds that things will sometimes simply go wrong. Dystopia has arrived.

Bracken spends the next two-hundred-and-fifty pages spinning more drama, but the essential political issues have been covered. In the end, Brad, Ranya, Phil Carson and other patriots kidnap crooked agent Wally Malvone, but one agent, Bob Bullard, escapes detection and is able to shoot Malvone to prevent him from talking. Unfortunately, Brad is also shot during the operation and dies during the escape; Ranya would be utterly alone but she flees to South America with Carson. Back in Washington, President Gilmore is being pressured to ease the ban on assault rifles because attacks on federal officials have increased, and also because the government now knows that Malvone did it: "One of their own did the massacre, just to get the gun bans passed, just to start a civil war" (565).

The action has played itself out in Bracken's *Enemies Foreign and Domestic* but it leaves one with the feeling that loose ends remain. Bob Bullard, for example, is alive and not under suspicion for killing Malvone, a development that is of great importance in the next two Bracken novels. Further, as terrible as the events of *Enemies* are, the subsequent novels are far more horrific, more loaded with dystopian images of an America Bracken fears is coming to pass.

Before moving to more theoretical issues related to a dystopian novel such as *Enemies*, I will briefly address a subtle undercurrent in Bracken's writing. At various points, Bracken alludes to the race of those targeted by government forces, beginning with patsy Jimmy Shifflett. When police raided his trailer after killing him, they found an "arsenal" of five rifles and shotguns (even though Shifflett was indigent) and "white supremacist hate literature," which was planted by federal agents (8). Bob Bullard contributed more when he shot up a black Islamic mosque and scattered leaflets reading "Niggers Back to Africa" to make it look like local militias were not only violent, but racist as well (130).

Bracken has found some evidence that his fears are being confirmed, as he indicates in two short pieces of fiction he published in 2012 in response to a story in the quasi-official military venue *Small Wars Journal*. The title, "Full Spectrum Operations in the Homeland: A Vision of the Future," indicates operations against Americans from the red states, i.e., white Americans. The authors imagine a situation in which "reactionaries," with the support of local police and politicians up to the governor, take over a "strategically positioned town." Said reactionaries generate hatred of "nonwhites and immigrants" and are supported by "tea party" members, (who are overwhelmingly white), as well as "militias, racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, anti-immigrant associations such as the

Minutemen, and other right-wing groups.”⁵¹ Bracken finds this unacceptable and shows how actual government “full spectrum operations” should be met, again, by turning to fiction. The first essay is “What I Saw At The Coup,”⁵² and the second is “When The Music Stops — How Our Cities May Explode In Violence.”⁵³ Essentially, he offers differing versions of the “patriot” reactions to restrictions on liberties that we see in *Enemies*.

The “Full Spectrum Operations” scenario is not the first government publication to envision rebellion from largely white populations, either. As mentioned in a footnote earlier in this series, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s April 2009 “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment” “warns against the possibility of violence by unnamed ‘right-wing extremists’ concerned about illegal immigration, increasing federal power, restrictions on firearms, abortion and the loss of U.S. sovereignty and singles out returning war veterans as particular threats.” The report notes that “the return of military veterans facing significant challenges reintegrating into their communities could lead to the potential emergence of terrorist groups or lone wolf extremists capable of carrying out violent attacks. . . . Returning veterans possess combat skills and experience that are attractive to right-wing extremists,” it says. “DHS/I&A is concerned that right-wing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize veterans in order to boost their violent capacities.” It is almost an axiom that in the American case, “right-wing extremists” and those animated by fears of restrictions on guns are white, so Bracken has real evidence to draw upon.⁵⁴

The topic of government suspicions of select segments of the white population and police militarization are worrisome ones, with, once again, Alex Jones emphasizing them greatly. With respect to the latter category of police militarization, John Payne, writing recently in *The American Conservative*, reviewed a book about it, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces*, by Radley Balko (PublicAffairs, 2013). The opening part of Payne’s article reads:

On July 15, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) sent 13 law-enforcement officers to execute a paramilitary raid on a no-kill animal shelter in Kenosha. The crime? The shelter was harboring a fawn that had been abandoned by its mother and named Giggles by shelter volunteers. The shelter intended to turn the animal over to a wildlife reserve the next day, but that was not good enough for the DNR. Wisconsin law forbids the possession of wildlife, so DNR sent the heavily armed team to capture and euthanize Giggles.

Eleven days later and less than 100 miles away, staff at a nursing home in the

Chicago suburb of Park Forest called paramedics after 95-year-old World War II veteran John Wrana, suffering from a delusional episode, refused medical treatment. The paramedics in turn called the police, which further agitated Wrana, who threatened them with his cane and a knife. The police responded by shooting Wrana with stun guns and bean bags fired from a shotgun. Wrana died from internal bleeding shortly thereafter.

Payne further notes how the book paints a frightening picture of growing militarization, with 50,000 SWAT raids a year now occurring in America. While in 1975 only major cities had SWAT teams, totaling five hundred, by 2005 “approximately 80 percent of towns with a population between 25,000 and 50,000 people employed their own SWAT team. Even seemingly innocuous federal bureaucracies such as the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission had created their own tactical teams.”⁵⁵ Thus Bracken’s fiction has precedent for creating the scenarios it does. When Brad says the government is “trying to frame up white ‘militias’ as the next big terrorist threat,” many Americans reading the novel may well make a connection to some of the information just noted.

Three other minor references to race appear in *Enemies*. As we have seen, retired soldier and bridge saboteur Ben Mitchell is black and is a heroically patriotic actor in the book. On the other hand, the soldier at the roadblock, Hector Ramirez, is dimwitted and has a poor grasp of English. If there is any racial animus emanating from Bracken’s prose, however, it would best apply to his discussion of Arab Muslims. For example, when positive character Phil Carson complains about how ATF agent Hammet treated the people in Mr. Bardiwell’s gun store, Carson yells, “We’ve got Muslim terrorists running around loose, but all you can think about is taking away regular people’s guns. Now why is that?” (45). Soon after, he says to Bardiwell, “Muslims are running around shooting people and blowing themselves up, and the feds pick right now to disarm honest Americans” (47). Even Bardiwell’s character has a negative connection to Arab Muslims. The Bardiwells were originally from Lebanon, and daughter Ranya tells Brad that “nobody’s suffered under the Muslims more than the Christians in Lebanon. That’s why my parents moved to America in the first place... But the government’s still stuck in the PC mode, it’s still in denial. They’re afraid to come out and say what we all know: a hell of a lot of Muslims are just plain crazy” (105).

Of course, this could be just a stylistic device employed by Bracken, but once again, his own posting confirms that this is how he really feels about Muslims. In fact, his stated

beliefs about Muslims exceed that of any character in the novel, as he calls Muslim arranged marriage “child rape,” and believes Muslims poison girls for “daring to learn.” He even calls Muhammad “an evil false prophet” and concludes by stating, “I will not submit, and I will never surrender to a barbaric death cult masquerading as a religion.”⁵⁶

What Does It All Mean?

First, as with *Patriots* (Rawles) and *World Made By Hand* (Kunstler), *Enemies* is not technically apocalyptic because the world is not destroyed and end times do not ensue. The term *apocalypse* is familiar to readers of the Book of Revelation, and as authors Mathew Barrett Gross and Mel Gilles tell us, the Greek word *apocalypse* — “the lifting of the veil” — is less appropriate than the term *apokalupsis eschaton* — “the revelation of knowledge at the end of times.” In common use, however, Americans understand the term to be an assumption “that the end of our way of life . . . is imminent.”⁵⁷ In *Patriots* this is certainly the case in that civilized life in America has collapsed; it is more so the case in *World Made By Hand* because civilization has not only collapsed, but American cities have been destroyed by nuclear weapons. In comparison, *Enemies* is the least apocalyptic of the three novels because infringements on the Constitution and a relatively small number of deaths in the United States are the only results of false flag attacks. By and large, life goes on as normal, with electricity, television and driving (relatively) freely continuing as usual. Still, one reading Bracken’s book in 2003 could imagine a further unravelling of modern life in America in years to come, and in fact that is what Bracken goes on to imagine in his subsequent two novels, with the latter, *Foreign Enemies and Traitors*, describing an apocalyptic destruction of the United States, complete with devastated cities and rampant cannibalism.

In further comparison to *Patriots* and *World Made By Hand*, *Enemies* (and, by extension the following two novels) looks not only at apocalypse come to America, but one caused by conspiracy. This intertwining of apocalypse and conspiracy actually has a long history in America, as discussed by numerous scholars. Stephen O’Leary, for example, writing in 1994, attempts to situate such apocalyptic discourse with respect to the nearing turn of the millennium. O’Leary’s approach relies on *rhetoric*, as his “foundational assumption is that the discourse of apocalypticism and millennialism can usefully be viewed as rhetoric” (3). Such a word needs defining, however, which O’Leary does:

As understood by its most astute interpreters from Aristotle to Kenneth Burke, rhetoric is a social practice of “public, persuasive, constitutive, and socially con-

stituted utterance”; it is a discipline located at the intersection of aesthetics, politics, and ethics; it is a method of inquiry whose object is to discover how audiences are moved or persuaded through the interplay of style, form, content, and context in texts both spoken and written. Throughout this book, then, I have employed the term *rhetoric* in this expanded sense, to refer to the texts of persuasive discourse and to the method of investigating such texts, while the related term *rhetor* is used to denote authors or orators self-consciously engaged in the task of public persuasion.⁵⁸

I cannot think of a more apt description of the writers I consider in this series, “Not Normal Times: Post-Collapse Apocalyptic Novels.” Thus far, we have seen that Rawles, Kunstler and Bracken all intend for their novels to be instructive; most certainly they are “engaged in the task of public persuasion.” Their rhetoric is important.

Returning to the history of apocalyptic thinking in America, Jesse Walker, in his book *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory*, shows how central conspiracy thinking has been in America:

Pundits tend to write off political paranoia as a feature of the fringe, a disorder that occasionally flares up until the sober center can put out the flames. They’re wrong. The fear of conspiracies has been a potent force across the political spectrum, from the colonial era to the present, in the establishment as well as at the extremes. Conspiracy theories played major roles in conflicts from the Indian wars of the seventeenth century to the labor battles of the Gilded Age, from the Civil War to the Cold War, from the American Revolution to the War on Terror. They have flourished not just in times of great division but in eras of relative comity. They have been popular not just with dissenters and nonconformists but with individuals and institutions at the center of power. They are not simply a colorful historical byway. They are at the country’s core.⁵⁹

Washington and other founding fathers, for example, believed in a conspiracy launched from Britain to remove the liberty Americans found so much to their liking. As Washington wrote, “a regular Systematick Plan” may well turn Americans into “tame, & abject Slaves, as the Blacks we Rule over with such arbitrary Sway.” Jefferson echoed this fear, noting that “a series of oppressions, begun at a distinguished period and pursued unalterably through every change of [British] ministers” was reducing Americans to subjects without liberty. In his mind, America faced “a deliberate and systematic plan of reducing us to slavery.”⁶⁰

O’Leary then brings us to the post-Revolutionary period, when, beginning in the 1820s, preachers sought to improve individuals and society in a way more optimistic than before. “The prospect of a millennial perfection to be establish through the Christianization of

society by voluntary human endeavor reinforced and sustained evangelical revivals.”⁶¹ Others, however, dissented. Farmer William Miller, for example, believed that “the millennium would not be preceded by a gradual reform of the world’s institutions but by catastrophic destruction of all earthly kingdoms.” As O’Leary shows, Miller’s influence was substantial, but when the predicted date of Christ’s return (1843–1844) came and the world remained undestroyed, the movement collapsed in bitter disappointment.⁶²

As tensions between North and South increased prior to and during the Civil War, millennial predictions were overshadowed by conspiracy thinking, with Northern Republicans railing against the Southern “Slave Power” that may well enslave whites as well as blacks, and Democrats seeing “a systematic plot to erase the country’s liberties.” When the U.S. Military interfered with elections in Maryland and Kentucky, the *Chicago Times* thundered, “What is the purpose of this? . . . Let your readers contemplate in those states the despotism to which all the states are hastening.”⁶³

Walker also shows how British colonists’ views of Indians as “devils in the wilderness” transmuted over the decades into fears of other outsiders. Thus the quote he uses from Michael Rogin: “The series of Red scares that have swept the country since the 1870s have roots in the original red scares.”⁶⁴ Americans saw this when feverish nationalism during WWI lead to the post-war Red Scare epitomized by the Palmer Raids in which the U.S. Government sought to deport Left wing and Bolshevik activists. Similarly, after WWII, there was much hysteria about the presence of Communist cadres in American government and in Hollywood. In 1962, conspiracy theory swirled around the assassination of President Kennedy. A decade later, in the aftermath of anti-war demonstrations, the rise of the Black Panthers, etc., came Watergate. Walker argues that this was a pivotal era for conspiracy thinking in America. The FBI’s COINTELPRO campaigns and clandestine military forays into Cambodia and Laos had already unnerved millions of Americans, but with Nixon’s attempts to cover up the Watergate break-in, record numbers of Americans lost faith in their government. (“America’s faith is drowning beneath that cesspool — Watergate.”⁶⁵)

Little surprise, then, that America was next treated to a Hollywood phenomenon called “the 1970s conspiracy thriller.” Alan Pakula’s *Klute* (1971) but especially *The Parallax View* (1974) are representative of this trend to see conspiracy in high places. In 1976, he completed his informal trilogy with *All the President’s Men*, a dramatization of the Watergate affair. Many other conspiracy films are also sprinkled throughout the decade — *Three Days of the Condor*, *Executive Action*, *Scorpio*, *The Conversation*, *Capricorn One*, *Winter Kills*, *Night Moves*, and *The Domino Principle* being representative.⁶⁶

Conspiracy suspicions may have been thick in the air but apocalyptic thinking was far from banished during this decade, as best exemplified by the wild success of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970). "The influence of *The Late Great Planet Earth* was immense," write Gross and Gilles, with the *New York Times* calling it the "no. 1 non-fiction seller of the decade." Lindsey saw events of the time as signaling Christ's return and the "rapture" of his faithful into heaven. (By bringing this concept to the American masses, the way was paved for the hugely successful "Left Behind" series, written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins.) In tightly argued academic prose (Oxford University Press), Stephen O'Leary over seventy-nine small-print pages parses the meaning and rhetoric of *The Late Great Planet Earth*. That book, plus his subsequent *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*, led O'Leary to write that "Hal Lindsey's apocalyptic predictions found an audience of millions. . . . Lindsey's adroit manipulation of the public's fear of nuclear war and other potential modern catastrophes, coupled with his skillful management of his audiences's temporal expectations, provides a partial explanation of his success. Indeed," O'Leary continues, "it does not seem farfetched to credit Lindsey with helping to inspire the political triumphs of American fundamentalism in the early 1980s."⁶⁷

While no discernible apocalypse transpired in the 1970s or 1980s, one in miniature occurred in 1993 when federal agents from the ATF raided the Branch Davidian compound outside Waco, Texas, leaving four agents and six Branch Dividians mortally wounded. An FBI siege ensued, culminating in an attack by the FBI that left seventy-six Davidians — men, women and children — dead, many burned to death. Writing in 1994, just after Waco, O'Leary was prophetic when he wrote of the importance of one aspect of the Waco tragedy: "the apocalyptic drama as media spectacle."⁶⁸ Anticipating the rise of further messiahs as the turn of the millennial approached, he could hardly have had any idea that less than two years after the start of the new millennium a far greater apocalyptic drama as media spectacle would occur: September 11, 2001. It has become the defining event of our age.

The Present: The End of the World?

Three of the scholarly works used in this essay were written in the last two years and thus have the opportunity to use over ten years of perspective to sort out what 9/11 has come to mean to Americans, what the wars signify, and how the Recession of 2008 has affected people. On the whole, the mood they have found is one of doubt, uncertainty, even fear. Their very titles reflect this: *What the Rise of Apocalyptic Thinking Tells Us About America*, *The United States of Paranoia*, and *Conspiracy Theory in America*. The introduction in the

book by Gross and Gilles captures the mood:

As the twenty-first century enters its tween years, we are faced with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of scenarios for how the world might end. Evangelical Christians find signs of the end times in the worsening news from the Middle East. Economists, wounded investors, and the legions of the unemployed continue to ponder whether a nation that once fueled its growth on easy credit and a speculative housing boom will ever recover from the economic collapse that arrived when the free money dried up and the mortgages came due. . . . [S]cientists speculate about when and how — not if — our unabated addiction to fossil fuels will bring about widespread climate change. Biologists tell us that whole ecological systems are collapsing, that we are literally watching the world disappear before our eyes, that we are living through the greatest mass extinction event since the dinosaurs. . . . From gushing oil wells in the Gulf of Mexico to nuclear disaster in Japan, from the war on terror to the skyrocketing national debt, everywhere we look there's a horseman — dressed as a warrior, ecologist, economist, or preacher — to herald that the end is near.⁶⁹

Add to that the contested Presidential election of 2000, SARS, Hurricane Katrina and Peak Oil and the recipe for disaster is complete. In short, the sense that the end is near has been growing rapidly since the year 2000. It almost appears as if we are fast headed toward the barren wasteland of Cormac McCarthy's 2006 book *The Road*. Or, as Gross and Gilles phrase it, "[W]e're heading rapidly toward the edge of a cliff — if we haven't already gone over it."⁷⁰

As I have begun to demonstrate, a similar mood is reflected in some of the popular fiction of the post-9/11 world. Societal collapse, nuclear bombs dropped on American cities, death squads operating at the behest of the President — these themes are everywhere. Meanwhile, I have only scratched the surface of the collection of such novels and doubt I will ever be able to keep up with new ones yet to appear. One thing is certain, though: this series, "Not Normal Times," shares the same attributes of one of the above books, namely that it is "an exploration of our transformative time and place and of what it means to live in a culture that is overwhelmingly consumed by the belief that the end — however we imagine it — is nearly here."⁷¹ Time will tell if this is mere paranoia or if there are good reasons to fear.

Notes

1. San Diego: Steelcutter Publishing, 4th ed. August 2005.
2. Mathew Barrett Gross and Mel Gilles, *The Last Myth: What the Rise of Apocalyptic Thinking Tells Us About America* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2012), 10.

3. Bracken, *Enemies*, 47.
4. Jesse Walker, *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 8–9.
5. Gross and Gilles, *The Last Myth*, 12.
6. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 8.
7. Bracken, *Enemies*, 2 & 8.
8. The subsequent novels are *Domestic Enemies: The Reconquista* (Orange Park, FL: Steelcutter Publishing, 2006) and *Foreign Enemies and Traitors: The Greater Depression and Civil War 2* (Orange Park, FL: Steelcutter Publishing, 2011).
9. Rawles' works were considered in my essay "Not Normal Times: Post-Collapse Apocalyptic Novels (Part One)," while I discussed Kunstler's novel in the second part of the same series. See *Journal of Hokkai Gakuen University*, No. 152 (June 2012) and No. 154 (December 2012), respectively.
10. On his blog at <http://www.enemiesforeignanddomestic.com/index.php?page=author>, his self-description reads in full:

Matt Bracken was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1957 and graduated from the University of Virginia in 1979 with a degree in Russian Studies. He was commissioned in the US Navy through the NROTC program at UVA, and then graduated from Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training class 105 in Coronado California. He served on east coast UDT and SEAL teams, taking a Naval Special Warfare detachment to Beirut in 1983. Mr. Bracken left active duty after Lebanon, upon completion of his obligated military service, but he remained in an active reserve status through the remainder of the 1980s. Since then he has lived in Florida, Virginia, South Carolina, Guam and California. In 1993 Mr. Bracken finished building a 48-foot steel sailing cutter of his own design, on which he has done extensive ocean cruising, including a solo voyage 9,000 miles from Panama to Guam and two Panama Canal transits. Matt is a self-described *freedomista* who loves ocean sailing for the pure freedom it often permits. He is a constitutionalist who believes in the original intent of the founding fathers of our country. He lives with his family in North Florida and longs for the wide blue ocean (accessed Jan. 26, 2014).
11. <http://www.enemiesforeignanddomestic.com/index.php?page=books> (accessed Dec. 27, 2013).
12. Cited in David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, The Cover-Up, and the Exposé* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), x.
13. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20081217161036/http://www.zogby.com/search/ReadNews.dbm?ID=855>; <http://web.archive.org/web/20101119164520/http://www.zogby.com/features/features.cfm?ID=231>; and <http://web.archive.org/web/20080918153848/http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=1354> respectively for these figures.
14. http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/human_nature/2013/11/conspiracy_theory_polls_on_jfk_ufos_and_9_11_most_americans_are_skeptics.html (accessed Jan. 24, 2014).
15. <http://web.archive.org/web/20070830012411/http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19375611/site/newsweek/> (accessed Jan. 11, 2014).
16. David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2004), xx.
17. David Ray Griffin and Peter Dale Scott, eds., *9/11 and American Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out, Vol. 1* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006), vii. Volume 2 appeared later the same year. See Kevin Barrett, John Cobb, and Sandra Lubarsky, eds., *9/11 & American Empire:*

- Christians, Jews, and Muslims Speak Out Vol. 2* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006).
18. Griffin, *9/11 and American Empire*, viii.
 19. Griffin, *9/11 and American Empire*, viii.
 20. Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor*, xix, 255-6. Griffin also provides the names and positions of highly placed people in the technology field who doubt the 9/11 narrative. See xviii-xix. This list is greatly expanded in his 2011 book *9/11 Ten Years Later: When State Crimes Against Democracy Succeed* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press), 55-61, 222-226. A typical example of a prominent scholar speaking out is Lynn Margulis, who was awarded the National Medal of Science for her work as a biologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Among her statements are:

Whoever is responsible for bringing to grisly fruition this new false-flag operation, which has been used to justify the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as unprecedented assaults on research, education, and civil liberties, must be perversely proud of their efficient handiwork. Certainly, 19 young Arab men and a man in a cave 7,000 miles away, no matter the level of their anger, could not have masterminded and carried out 9/11: the most effective television commercial in the history of Western civilization. I suggest that those of us aware and concerned demand that the glaringly erroneous official account of 9/11 be dismissed as a fraud and a new, thorough, and impartial investigation be undertaken. . . .

Because . . . the steel columns were selectively melted in a brilliantly-timed controlled demolition, [t]wo 110-story buildings (towers 1 & 2), plus one 47-floor building (WTC 7), were induced to collapse at gravitationally accelerated rates in an operation planned and carried out by insiders. The apparent hijacking of airliners and the crashing of them into the Twin Towers were intrinsic parts of the operation, which together provided a basis for claiming that the buildings were brought down by Muslim terrorists. The buildings' steel columns, which would have provided irrefutable physical evidence of the use of explosives, were quickly removed from the scene of the crime. (See <http://www.ae911truth.org/en/news-section/41-articles/590-dr-lynn-margulis-1938-2011-a-beacon-of-light-for-911-truth.html>, accessed Jan. 14, 2014).

21. Griffin, *9/11 and American Empire*, 28-30.
22. <http://archive.lewrockwell.com/kwiatkowski/kwiatkowski275.html> (accessed Jan. 24, 2014).
23. David Ray Griffin, *Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11: A Call to Reflection and Action* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 11.
24. Griffin, *Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11*, 15.
25. Griffin, *Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11*, 35-6. In the 9/11 Commission Report, they did not even address the collapse of Building 7 (49). In a later book, Griffin mocks FEMA for its own admission that it has no idea why Building 7 collapsed, admitting that their "best hypothesis" had "only a low probability of occurrence." Griffin translates this into non-scientific prose to mean "It wouldn't happen in a million years" (*9/11 Ten Years Later*, 84).
26. Griffin, *Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11*, 98.
27. Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited*. Over the years, other books I have read that doubt the official version of 9/11 events are: Thierry Meyssan, *9/11: The Big Lie: The Pentagon Plane Crash that Never Happened* (London: Carnot Publishing Ltd., 2002); Albert D. Pastore, *Stranger Than Fiction: An Independent Investigation of the True Culprits Behind 9-11* (Tempe, Arizona: Dandelion Books, 2003); Webster Griffin Tarpley *9/11 Synthetic Terror: Made in the USA* (Joshua Tree, CA: Progressive Press, 2005-11); Victor Thorn, *9-11 Evil: Israel's Central Role in*

the September 11, 2001 Terroist Attacks (State College, PA: Sisyphus Press, 2006); Mark H. Gaffney, *The 9/11 Mystery Plane and the Vanishing of America* (Walterville, OR: Trine Day LLC, 2008); and Christopher Bollyn, *Solving 9/11: The Deception That Changed the World* (self-published, 2012).

28. Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited*, 12-57. Lance deHaven-Smith, in *Conspiracy Theory in America* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2013), also casts doubts on the official version of 9/11. See, in particular, pages 137, 151-58 & 219. DeHaven-Smith has also introduced the idea of "State Crime Against Democracy," or SCAD, which is "a name for the *type of wrong-doing about which the conspiracy-theory label discourages us from speaking*" (9). He devotes the entirety of chapter five to this idea.
29. This connection is made explicit on page 42 when attention is given to a poster in a gun store. On it is written, "After Hitler was elected Chancellor in 1933, the Nazis used existing German gun registrtrion lists to disarm the Jews. The rest is history." Bracken balances this evidence of Americans in favor of gun control with a small scene where a father and son team, Michael and Joel Friedman, print 5,000 leaflets which read, in part: WHEN GUNS ARE OUTLAWED ONLY GOVERNMENTS AND CRIMINALS HAVE GUNS. (There is a picture of a "doomed Jew and the smiling Nazis," below which reads: "DURING THE 20TH CENTRUY, OVER 100 MILLION CIVILIANS WERE KILLED BY THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS, MORE THAN IN ALL 20TH CENTURY WARS COMBINED. IN EACH CASE, EXTERMINATION FOLLOWED GUN CONFISCATION . . . NEVER AGAIN!" (pages 155 & 160-62). Somehow, in preparation for dropping the leaflets, Joel Friedman is shot by a police sniper as he nears the Washington Monument while flying a motorized parachute. He is killed and his parachute gets stuck against a wall of the Capitol, where Friedman's body swings in the wind, smearing the white wall with blood. The real-world counterpart for such Jews is the group "Jews Against Gun Control," founded by Arron Zelman in 1986.

Finally, there is one more fictional depiction of a Jew against gun ownership. In Ted Daniels *A Doomsday Reader*, chapter six is devoted to white nationalist William Pierce's classic novel *The Turner Diaries*. Daniels reprints this passage in which a white patriot says:

We have finally acted! How long we will be able to continue defying the System, no one knows. Maybe it will all end tomorrow, but we must not think about that. Now that we have begun, we must continue with the plan we have been developing so carefully ever since the Gun Raids two years ago.

What a blow that was to us! And how it shamed us! All that brave talk by patriots, "The government will never take my guns away," and then nothing but meek submission when it happened.

On the other hand, maybe we should be heartened by the fact that there were still so many of us who had guns then, nearly 18 months after the Cohen Act had outlawed all private ownership of firearms in the United States. It was only because so many of us defied the law and hid our weapons instead of turning them in that the government wasn't able to act more harshly against us after the Gun Raids.

I'll never forget that terrible day: November 9, 1989. They knocked on my door at five in the morning. I was completely unsuspecting as I got up to see who it was.

I opened the door, and four Negroes came pushing into the apartment before I could stop them. One was carrying a baseball bat, and two had long kitchen knives thrust into their belts. The one with the bat shoved me back into a corner and stood guard over me with his bat raised

in a threatening position while the other three began ransacking my apartment.

My first thought was that they were robbers. Robberies of this sort had become all too common since the Cohen Act, with groups of Blacks forcing their way into White homes to rob and rape, knowing that even if their victims had guns they probably would not dare use them.

Then the one who was guarding me flashed some kind of card and informed me that he and his accomplices were “special deputies” for the Northern Virginia Human Relations Council. They were searching for firearms, he said. (*A Doomsday Reader: Prophets, Predictors, and Hucksters of Salvation* [New York: New York University Press, 1999], 113-14).

30. http://www.ontheissues.org/senate/charles_schumer.htm#Gun_Control. See here for fuller descriptions: http://www.ontheissues.org/Domestic/Charles_Schumer_Gun_Control.htm (both accessed Dec. 27, 2013).
31. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Jones_\(radio_host\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Jones_(radio_host)) (accessed Jan. 18, 2014).
32. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvYL2a6uy44> (accessed Jan. 18, 2014).
33. <http://www.infowars.com/think-tank-extraordinary-crisis-needed-to-preserve-new-world-order/> (accessed Jan. 18, 2014).
34. <http://prisonplanet.com/brzezinskis-feared-global-awakening-has-arrived.html> (accessed Jan. 18, 2014).
35. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).
36. See <http://www.infowars.com/obama-proposes-executive-orders-for-backdoor-gun-confiscation/> and <http://www.infowars.com/gun-confiscation-the-new-world-orders-new-years-resolution/>, respectively (accessed Jan. 13, 2014).
37. http://www.infowars.com/articles/us/va_tech_massacre_another_gov_black_op.htm (accessed Jan. 26, 2014).
38. <http://wellaware1.com/columbine.shtml> (accessed Jan. 19, 2014).
39. <http://www.infowars.com/colorado-batman-shooting-shows-obvious-signs-of-being-staged/> (accessed Jan. 26, 2014).
40. <http://planet.infowars.com/politics/batman-gun-grab-the-port-arthur-massacre-parallels> (accessed Jan. 26, 2014).
41. Webster Griffin Tarpley, in *9/11 Synthetic Terror*, discusses in chapter IX the forty-six drills run on 9/11. With respect to the London bombings, Peter Power of Visor Consultants claimed in interviews on BBC Radio 5 Live and ITV that he was part of a crisis management simulation drill in the City of London, which was “based on simultaneous bombs going off precisely at the railway stations where it happened this morning” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7_July_2005_London_bombings, accessed Jan. 26, 2014). A writer for Alex Jones’ Prison Planet also explains the strange admission by Power. See <http://www.prisonplanet.com/articles/july2005/130705powerresponds.htm> (accessed Jan. 26, 2014).
42. <http://planet.infowars.com/politics/batman-gun-grab-the-port-arthur-massacre-parallels> (accessed Jan. 26, 2014). The Port Arthur case has attracted significant attention for the inconsistencies reported about it. First, there is evidence that prior to the attack, Australian officials had planned for something similar to happen. For instance, New South Wales Premier Barry Unsworth said it would take a massacre in Tasmania to implement strict gun laws, and *The Australian Newspaper* featured a report on April 29, 1996, that one Rowland Brown, the Gun Coalition’s Tasmanian coordinator, had warned that absent strict new gun-law rules, a massacre was likely.

Other anomalies that critics of the official version point to are the alleged fact that a rare morgue truck capable of handling twenty-two corpses happened to be available at the time of the shootings. Senior staff members from Port Arthur was away at a work seminar, while local police were at the opposite end of the peninsula, drawn there by a hoax. Meanwhile, the Hobart Hospital led a trauma seminar that ended at the time the shootings began. Finally, a World Press Convention was taking place in Hobart on April 30th, “so there were plenty of reporters on hand” (http://southeastasianews.org/portarthur/conspiracy_fact.html). Another site questions how Martin Bryant, who had an IQ of about sixty-six and who was left-handed could have successfully killed so many so fast with shots fired from the right hip. Bryant had no discernible shooting experience or military training (<http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread73227/pg1>, accessed Jan. 26, 2014).

Wikipedia, on its “The Port Arthur massacre and its consequences” page, notes how the massacre “transformed gun control legislation in Australia” and led to a gun buy-back scheme that “purchased and destroyed more than 631,000 firearms, mostly semi-auto .22 rimfires, semi-automatic shotguns and pump-action shotguns. Only Victoria provided a breakdown of types destroyed, and in that state less than 3% were military style semi-automatic rifles.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun_politics_in_Australia#The_Port_Arthur_massacre_and_its_consequences, accessed Jan. 19, 2014).

43. <http://www.infowars.com/why-people-think-sandy-hook-is-a-hoax/>.
44. <http://www.infowars.com/sandy-hook-ar-15-hoax-still-no-school-surveillance-footage-released/> (accessed Jan. 26, 2014).
45. <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2014/01/07/top-ten-reasons-sandy-hook-was-an-elaborate-hoax/> (accessed Jan. 24, 2014).
46. *Ted Daniels, A Doomsday Reader*, 9. I had hoped for more explication of hucksters in this book, but the subtitle does not deliver. Nowhere could I find instances of discussion about hucksters, and the authors whose work Daniels features do not come across as such. Do we normally think of Marx, Hitler, or William Pierce as hucksters? Walker’s *The United States of Paranoia* is more useful for considering Jones, in part because it was written over a dozen years after Daniels’ book and can thus capture the growth in conspiracy thinking in those years, better capturing the content of Jones’ show and websites.
47. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 221.
48. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 222.
49. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 227. In the 1960s, a good example was Paul Krassner’s article “The Parts That Were Left Out of the Kennedy Books,” which fed popular suspicion about the Kennedy assassination and married it to dislike of Johnson. Walker has a bit of fun with this when he writes, “The article went on to discribe the president’s [Kennedy’s] infidelities . . . and then it grew steadily less reliable, concluding with a scene of Lyndon Baines sticking his Johnson in the president’s neck wound.” Many readers were fooled (228). *Report from Iron Mountain on the Possibility and Desirability of Peace*, a book published the same year — 1967 — conjured a secret cabal that decided that “permanent peace was a bad idea.” Even after the hoax was exposed, many continued to believe it (230).
50. The mixed single and double quotation marks are directly from the text, as are the spacing and bold letters.
51. Kevin Benson and Jennifer Weber, “Full Spectrum Operations in the Homeland: A Vision of the Future,” *Small Wars Journal*, July 25, 2012. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/full->

- spectrum-operations-in-the-homeland-a-“vision”of-the-future (accessed January 21, 2014).
52. <http://westernrifleshooters.wordpress.com/2012/09/11/what-i-saw-at-the-coup/> (accessed Jan. 21, 2014).
53. <http://westernrifleshooters.wordpress.com/2012/09/03/bracken-when-the-music-stops-how-americas-cities-may-explode-in-violence/> (accessed Jan. 21, 2014).
54. “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment” (<http://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/rightwing.pdf>, accessed Jan. 26, 2014).
55. John Payne, “How Police Became a Standing Army,” *The American Conservative*, January 2, 2014. (<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/how-police-became-a-standing-army/>, accessed Jan. 20, 2014).
56. Bracken’s posting is titled “I will not submit. I will never surrender.” Here is his credo, which appears in this form in an orange box with a large image of actor Mel Gibson as freedom lover William Wallace:

I will not submit. I will never surrender.

I will never surrender Da Vinci, Newton and Einstein, for Allahu Akbar, and flying passenger planes into office buildings.

I will never surrender Michelangelo, Vermeer and Rembrandt, for Allahu Akbar, and forced female genital mutilation.

I will never surrender Descartes, Locke and Jefferson, for Allahu Akbar, and beheading apostates of conscience.

I will never surrender Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, for Allahu Akbar, and child rape called “arranged marriage.”

I will never surrender Shakespeare, Byron, and Shelley, for Allahu Akbar, and stoning rape victims to death for “adultery.”

I will never surrender Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway, for Allahu Akbar, and poisoning schoolgirls for daring to learn.

I will never surrender the sacred freedom of speech, for Allahu Akbar, and laws that forbid telling the truth about an evil false prophet.

Voltaire said, “To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize.” I will not be ruled over by the followers of a Seventh Century desert pirate, rapist and mass-murderer.

Randall [six] Wallace said, “They may take our lives, but they can never take our freedom.” Would that our leaders were so brave, or as dedicated to human liberty. But even without them, I will not submit, and I will never surrender to a barbaric death cult masquerading as a religion.

Matt Bracken Florida 9-29-2012 (<http://westernrifleshooters.wordpress.com/2012/10/01/bracken-i-will-not-submit-i-will-never-surrender/>, accessed Jan. 25, 2014).

57. Gross and Gilles, *The Last Myth*, 13-14.
58. Stephen D. O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4.
59. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 8-9.
60. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 110-111. In earlier chapters, Walker describes the various conspiracies early American settlers ascribed to surrounding Indian tribes. Obviously, given the warfare involved, there *were* actual conspiracies in many cases. A corollary fear

was that Indians were conspiring with outside groups of whites such as the French or Catholics to attack British settlers. He also describes "conspiracies" involving witches and the devil, the most famous of which were addressed during the Salem witch trials of 1692-93.

61. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 95.
62. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 100-110.
63. Walker, 132. Walker gives more concrete examples of alleged Southern conspiracies to assassinate Northern leaders on pages 4-8.
64. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 23.
65. Quoted in Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 157.
66. Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 172-78. He could well have added *Chinatown*, *Marathon Man*, *The Boys from Brazil*, and *The China Syndrome*.
67. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 179.
68. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 227.
69. Gross and Gilles, *The Last Myth*, 9-10.
70. Gross and Gilles, *The Last Myth*, 9-11.
71. Gross and Gilles, *The Last Myth*, 16.