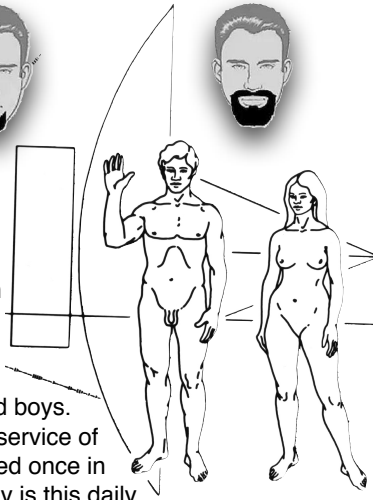


Misdirection, Illusion & Distraction



In the midst of our constitutional crises, a small blip charted- A Backlash by Manly Men over the messaging of Proctor & Gamble's Gillette division. That icon of shaving technology produced a video that intended to engage their core market- Men around issues of toxic male behavior in the #MeToo era. The video, with fast-cut vignettes and voice over, cleverly admonishes men to **good, thoughtful, sensitive, even vulnerable behavior**, and to model this behavior to other men, and boys.

That's all good and well- Well, despite the obvious background that this is all in the service of marketing products designed to scrape hair off faces. As a male who has only shaved once in my life, and then only on a dare, this is something I have never fully understood, why is this daily ritual embraced or tolerated as normal or required? It is amusing to consider all the time lost on this fashion ritual, and motivations that drive the varied affectations of style, that then must be maintained. **To shave, or not to shave?**

NASA's Pioneer program in the early 70's famously included a welcome message from Earth addressed to any being that may encounter the deep space probes. Designed by Carl Sagan's wife Linda as a friendly greeting, the generic couple is depicted, arbitrarily, and misleadingly, as completely smooth shaven- save for head hair- despite the global diversity of natural growth and color variation, as culturally normative short and straight haired male and straight long haired female- Ironically, since that time, shaving pubic hair is a fashion trend. But for Pioneer's purposes, puritan prudence prevailed- even the smallest, accurate indication of a pudendal cleft was disallowed for extraterrestrial view.

Promotional Marketing designed to build brand loyalty sometimes backfires, like the **Earth Day** driven corporate green washing movement- that found **British Petroleum** brashly branded as **BEYOND PETROLEUM** losing all credence when their offshore rig exploded, and pumped 130 million gallons of crude into the Gulf of Mexico. A hairy disaster.

In the Gillette's case, a soft cry of outrage was heard: 'Why should men **whimpify** themselves to appease **political correctness?**' causing a social media phenomenon. With photographs of flushed razors (no doubt a catastrophic blow to future flushing of man sized dumps) **Gillette was dissed**- As men decried the audacity- How dare *their* brand condemn their manly prerogative of macho posturing? their beliefs that *boys will be boys, and they don't cry*. Condemn their good natured predatory coupling behavior?! As it turns out, this was no real movement, just a blip, that was amplified by pop media, then shared unto '**viral-ness**.' Really a non-event, though doubtlessly giving Gillette's PR crew pause, it was no more meaningful than the fashion world announcing that '**Beards are no longer cool**.' Perhaps a backlash caused by the trend of the '**Lumber-sexual?**' Urban men who express themselves with coifed short hair, full beards and the countryfied accoutrement of jeans, boots, & plaid. Was this in turn a response to the polar opposite- A fashion conscious **effete 'Metro-sexual'** as not manly enough? While the warrior **Alexander the Great** favored clean shaven faces, stone busts of thoughtful & revered philosophers of that era are always easily identified by their beards. As Fresh faced **Mark Zuckerberg** observed astutely, in the movie **The Social Network: "fashion is never finished."**

Mr. King Gillette pioneered the safety razor at the turn of the 20th century- as a **better, safer way to shave**, and it heralded a new model of marketing- **proprietary consumables**. Forged steel blades that could last a lifetime were replaced with an inexpensive razor handle that conveniently needed a constant supply of new blades- At one point, these were presented as gifts to high school grads as a welcoming right-of-passage to manhood. Blade dependence.

The innovation made King a king of commerce, and father of a new standard of profitability- **Planned obsolescence**. Barbers too were sacrificed on the altar of factory driven profit where durability or skill was no longer the measure.

We are Binary beings- two eyes, two arms, two legs, two ears, two hemispheres of the brain, maybe this explains why we seem to default to seeing things as **black or white, wrong or right- only this, or that, smooth or hairy**. But in the analog world there are shades and tints- subtlety and nuance. And like the myriad of beard styles adopted by men, there is a wider spectrum of political and economic systems between the archetypes of **Capitalism**, and **Communism**.

Miami Vice's stubble faced Don Johnson defined a generation of carefully crafted *casual style*, in an era that any '*deviant*' political or economic behavior was not tolerated. The ongoing U.S. meddling in South and Central America has always been a black and white equation: **Do they serve our interest, or their own? Are they buying or selling?**

Those presidential sashes and medals adopted by Latin America leaders offend our fashion sense, must be **Dictators!**

The U.S. is now rallying the world to wax a new **Evil Mustache** in a country already on the ropes, with no Ref in sight. **Venezuela** is in the news, but good luck learning about the intricacies of policy and behavior that can improve the lives of millions there. Any sense of the realities of the country's evolving constitutional system, or the actual desires of the people who still support the ideals of the Bolivarian revolution is absent. Ask for directions? That is so un-manly. Belligerent fomenting of chaotic change, with no real solutions advanced beyond social disruption can only lead to **pushing, that turns into shoving - and that - is oh-so MACHO. HU-RAH!**

- **Joshua Golden**

THE WALL? There is no There, There

I'm a licensed structural and civil engineer with a MS in structural engineering, and over a decade of experience on high-performance projects, and particularly of cleaning up design disasters where the factors weren't properly accounted for, and I'm an adjunct professor of structural analysis and design. I have previously been deposed as an expert witness in matters regarding proper construction of walls and the various factors associated therein. I am literally a court-accepted expert on walls.

Structurally and civil engineering-wise, the border wall is not a feasible project. Trump did not hire engineers to design the thing. He solicited bids from contractors, not engineers. This means it's not been designed by professionals. It's a disaster of numerous types waiting to happen. What disasters? Off the top of my head:

It will mess with our ability to drain land in flash flooding. Anything impeding the ability of water to get where it needs to go (doesn't matter if there are holes in the wall or whatever) is going to dramatically increase the risk of flooding.

Messes with all kind of stuff ecologically. For all other projects, we have to do an Environmental Site Assessment, which is arduous. They're either planning to circumvent all this, or they haven't accounted for it yet, because that's part of the design process, and this thing hasn't been designed. The prototypes they came up with are nearly impossible to build or don't actually do the job. It does not account for rework, complexities beyond the



prototype design, factors to prevent flood and environmental hazard creation, engineering redesign. The contractors will hit the government with near CONSTANT change orders. "Cost overrun" will be the name of the game. It will not be completed in Trump's lifetime.

I'm a structural forensicist, which means I'm called in when things go wrong. This is a project that WILL go wrong. When projects go wrong, the original estimates are just *obliterated*. And when that happens, good luck getting it fixed, because there aren't that many forensicists out there to right the ship, particularly not that are willing to work on a border wall project— a large quotient of us are immigrants, and besides, we can't afford to bid on jobs that are this political. We're small firms, and we're already busy, and we don't gamble our reputations on political footballs. So you'd end up with a revolving door of contractors making a giant, uncoordinated muddle of things, and it'd generally be a mess. Good money after bad.

The Government Accounting Office agrees with me.

And- It won't be effective. I could, right now, purchase a 32 foot extension ladder and weld a cheap custom saddle for the top of the proposed wall so that I can get over it. I don't know who they talked to about the wall design and its efficacy, but it sure as heck wasn't anybody with any engineering imagination.

This is a ridiculous idea that will never be successfully executed and, as such, would be a monumental waste of money.

- **Amy Patrick** Find her on facebook

The Way Home

In this place joy is our birthright.
We don't need to kneel all night
on the closed stones, paying our way
with tears. Come to the clear light.
The wild irises stand on the slopes
each one holding her breath. We can fly
arms open, empty handed, into this story
where the stars catch in your hair
& banners are haven, glory, heart's rest.
Nothing else to remember.

- *Kathy Epling*



"Poetry isn't a profession, it's a way of life.
It's an empty basket,
you put your life into it
and make something out of that."

- *Mary Oliver*
1935 - 2019

Beware of false knowledge;
it is more dangerous than ignorance.
- *George Bernard Shaw*



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