

**August 23, 2007**

**The Power of (Right Wing) Myth**

**Filed under: [Bush Administration](#), [conservatism](#) — maha @ 11:05 am**

**Regarding [Bush's Vietnam speech](#) and other manglings of history — [Glenn Greenwald](#) wrote last week:**

**On a different note, is the curriculum for history classes in some American states restricted to learning about Hitler and the Nazis and 1938 and Hitler and Germany? It must be, because there are many right-wing fanatics whose entire understanding of the world is reduced in every instance to that sole historical event — as though the world began in 1937, ended in 1945, and we just re-live that moment in time over and over and over:**

**Love war? You are Churchill, a noble warrior. Oppose war? You're Chamberlain, a vile appeaser. And everyone else is Hitler. That, more or less, composes the full scope of "thought" among this strain on the right.**

**These words gave me an epiphany: The key to understanding right-wing rhetoric can be found in an episode of the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.**

**In "[Darmok](#)" (originally aired 1991) the crew of the Enterprise encounters the Tamarians, a people with an incomprehensible language. "We come in peace," say the Enterprise crew. "Darmok and Jalad at Tenagra," reply the Tamarians. "Temba, his arms wide." The Next Generationers are baffled.**

**But then Captain Picard and Dathon the Tamarian have an adventure together battling an invisible beast, and during this adventure Picard has a "Helen Keller at the water pump" moment and realizes that Tamarians speak in metaphors taken from stories. For example, "Darmok and Jalad at Tenagra" refers to two enemies, Darmok and Jalad, who became allies at Tenagra. As a phrase, it means "Let's put aside our differences and be friends." So after much suspense and drama and the death of the unfortunate Dathon, by the end of the episode Picard knows enough Tamarian to say, "Bye. It's been real."**

**When I saw this episode I wondered how a people who speak only in metaphors could develop technology. I imagined them trying to fix plumbing, saying "Toona and the floods of Wippawop" to mean "who's got the basin wrench?" It seems cumbersome. But let's worry about that some other time. The point I want to make here is that when righties talk about history, they are not talking about what actually happened in the past. Instead, they are evoking historical persons**

and events as archetype and allegory.

Thus, when they speak of Winston Churchill, they are not speaking of the real Winston Churchill. They are speaking of what Winston Churchill represents in their minds, which is the stubborn refusal to back down from a fight. In fact, the real [Winston Churchill wrote a letter to Prime Minister David Lloyd George in 1922](#) advising him that British troops should abandon Iraq.

I think we should now put definitely, not only to Feisal but to the Constituent Assembly, the position that unless they beg us to stay and to stay on our own terms in regard to efficient control, we shall actually evacuate before the close of the financial year. I would put this issue in the most brutal way, and if they are not prepared to urge us to stay and to co-operate in every manner I would actually clear out. That at any rate would be a solution. ... At present we are paying eight millions a year for the privilege of living on an ungrateful volcano out of which we are in no circumstances to get anything worth having.

But instead of actually studying the life and words of Churchill for understanding, righties simply evoke the man as an archetype of bulldog, never-give-up tenacity. I've read that Bush keeps a bust of Churchill in the oval office, for inspiration. And perhaps there's something like tantric identity yoga going on here; Bush imagines himself to *be* the great Churchill, the wrathful dakini of Stubbornness.

Very likely righties associate Churchill with his [great oratory](#) of World War II and know little else about him. They don't stop to consider that in his "blood, sweat, and tears" speech Churchill was talking about a major military power capable of raining bombs on London (and, in fact, preparing to do so). Hitler's Germany and today's Iraq are in no way equivalent — except in the minds of righties, for whom "Hitler" has become the Demon Enemy whose spirit infests the bodies of all enemies, whoever they are and whatever their capabilities and intentions.

By the same token, Neville Chamberlain is the archetype of cowardly appeasement. Righties may know little else about the man except that he "appeased" Hitler — not an uncommon practice among right wingers of the 1930s, who considered Hitler and Mussolini to be swell guys who hated communism as much as they did.

In fact, former White House correspondent [Lynne Olson argued](#) awhile back that Bush was a lot more like the real Chamberlain than the real Churchill:

Like Bush, and unlike Churchill, Chamberlain came to office with

almost no understanding of foreign affairs or experience in dealing with international leaders. None the less, he was convinced that he alone could bring Hitler and Mussolini to heel. He surrounded himself with like-minded advisers, and refused to heed anyone who told him otherwise. In the months leading up to war, Chamberlain and his men saw little need to build a strong coalition of European allies to confront Nazi Germany - ignoring appeals from Churchill and others to fashion a “grand alliance”.

Unlike Bush and Chamberlain, Churchill was never in favour of his country going it alone. Throughout the 1930s, while urging Britain to rearm, he strongly supported using the League of Nations - the forerunner of the United Nations - to provide smaller countries with one-for-all and all-for-one security. After the league failed to stop fascism’s march, Churchill was adamant that Britain must form a true partnership with France and even reach agreement with the despised Soviet Union, neither of which Chamberlain was willing to do.

Like Bush, Chamberlain laid claim to unprecedented executive authority, evading the checks and balances supposed to constrain the office of prime minister. He scorned dissenting views, inside and outside government. When Chamberlain arranged his face-to-face meetings with Hitler in 1938 that ended in the catastrophic Munich conference, he did so without consulting his cabinet. He also bypassed the House of Commons, leading Harold Macmillan, a future Tory prime minister and then an anti-appeasement MP, to complain that Chamberlain was treating parliament “like a Reichstag, to meet only to hear the orations and to register the decrees of the government”.

Olson goes on in this vein for a while — really, there are a *number* of startling parallels between Bush and Chamberlain, so do read the whole thing. About a year ago [Keith Olbermann also made some Bush-Chamberlain comparisons](#) on Countdown.

In the rightie mind, any attempt to avoid war is “appeasement.” In his new book *A Tragic Legacy*, Glenn Greenwald writes (p. 177) that when Ronald Reagan signed the [INF treaty](#) with the Soviet Union in 1988, rightie editorialists everywhere evoked Neville Chamberlain and accused Reagan of “appeasement.” Earlier, in 1984, Newt Gingrich scorned Reagan’s *rapprochement* with Gorbachev as “the most dangerous summit for the West since Adolph Hitler met with Chamberlain in 1938 at Munich.”

Got that? All “enemies” are Hitler (whatever you think of Gorbachev, he’s

hardly Hitler). **So much as *meeting* with “enemies” is Chamberlain and Hitler at Munich.** So how do we deal with nations whose interests don't harmonize with ours? Rightie *mythos* leaves us with no option but war.

Speaking of Reagan — this past January, conservative **Ron Dreher spoke on NPR** about why he became a Republican:

**My first real political memory came in 1979. It was listening to Jimmy Carter tell the nation about the failed hostage rescue mission. I hated him for that. I hated him for the whole Iran mess, shaming America before our enemies with weakness and incompetence.**

**When Ronald Reagan was elected president the next year, I stayed up late to hear his victory speech. America was saved. I was 13 years old, and I was a Reaganite from that moment on.**

**My generation came of age politically under Reagan. To me, he was strong and confident. Democrats were weak and depressed. Like so many other Gen-X'ers, I disliked people I thought of as hippies, those blame America first liberals so hung up on Vietnam. They surrendered to the communists back then, just like they want to do that. Republicans were winners, Democrats defeatists. What more did you need to know?**

**The point of Dreher's essay is that the Iraq War caused him to realize, suddenly and painfully, that the dirty bleeping hippies (whose spirits infest the dark nightmares of righties, who still fear them, even though I haven't spotted a live one since about 1974) had *reasons* to be opposed to the Vietnam War. This, apparently, had never dawned on him before. Dreher seems to have believed that hippies oppose war for the same reason swallows return to Capistrano — it's just the nature of the beast.**

**I call today's righties the “Reagan generation” because so many of them are Gen-X'ers whose first memories of politics and national events involved Carter and Reagan. They weren't so much taught politics as *imprinted* with the Reagan mythos. For them, all Democrats are Jimmy Carter, an archetype of wimpy passivity. Reagan represents confidence, action, sunniness. The two of them together represent opposing forces that tell the entire story of American politics. Nothing more needs to be understood or thought through. Democrats bad, Republicans good, end of argument.**

**The actual persons Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan are/were far more complicated than the Carter and Reagan archetypes, of course, and they both have/had their virtues and flaws. Today's righties have forgotten the “Reagan and Gorbachev sign the INF treaty” story, and it has passed out of rightie**

mythos. They also persistently overlook Reagan's raising of taxes after he lowered them and his quick skedaddle out of Lebanon after the Marine barracks tragedy. What's important to them is not what Reagan actually did as President, but what he represents emotionally and mythically.

In fact, the mythical Carter/Reagan dichotomy — Carter as murky, depressed, weak, passive and Reagan as clear, sunny, strong, and active — is exactly the **yin/yang dichotomy**. I could write a whole 'nother post on gender politics and the many associations of liberalism with femininity and conservatism with masculinity, **never mind reality**. In fact, **I did write that post** awhile back. But for now, I just want to point to this as another layer of the right-wing subconscious and postulate that men with gender insecurity are more likely to lean right than left.

So yesterday, after years of denying historical comparisons between Iraq and Vietnam, President Bush delivered a speech comparing Iraq to Vietnam. To which much of America responded, *WTF?* Today America's newspapers are peppered with **complaints** from **historians** that Bush's speech distorted the facts of the Vietnam War. But of course; *what actually happened during and after the war was not the point*. He was speaking to those still inclined to support the war, and to them, Vietnam represents national disgrace. It also represents allowing the forces of darkness to scamper unhindered over the land. When Bush spoke of "killing fields," for example, rightie listeners could relate. There was a **movie** about that, after all, never mind that the killing fields of Cambodia didn't happen because America *withdrew* from Vietnam, but *because we were bleeping there*.

"It is undoubtedly true that America's failure in Vietnam led to catastrophic consequences in the region, especially in Cambodia," said David C. Hendrickson, a specialist on the history of American foreign policy at Colorado College in Colorado Springs.

"But there are a couple of further points that need weighing," he added. "One is that the Khmer Rouge would never have come to power in the absence of the war in Vietnam — this dark force arose out of the circumstances of the war, was in a deep sense created by the war. The same thing has happened in the Middle East today. Foreign occupation of Iraq has created far more terrorists than it has deterred."

Ah, but let us not bother with facts. Facts are for wonks and women. Real men, heroic men, listen to their hearts, or perhaps something else located along the lower part of the brain stem. We need not fear actual consequences of our actions. Our quest is to re-enter the heart of darkness and slay the demon

therein, even though he is probably us. And if we fail, the failure will not be ours, but will be the Democratic Party's. Win/win.

We lefties sometimes persist in trying to reason with righties. I've given up, mind you, but there are those who still try. But I say this is futile. As with the encounter between the *Enterprise* and the Tamarians, we don't understand each others words. "We want what's best for America," we say. "Chamberlain and Hitler at Munich!" they cry. "Sam Waterson and John Malkovich in Phnom Penh! FDR at Yalta!" Perhaps they would listen to us if we convinced them we were channeling the spirit of John Wayne at Iwo Jima.

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## Spotlight

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1. As I recall that TNG episode, the alien captain ends up dead, killed by the monster because Picard didn't know the metaphorical way to shout "Look out behind you!!"

Sadly, it's our troops and thousands of Iraqis who are ending up dead because we didn't know how to communicate "invading would be a really, really stupid idea" in the mythic metaphor of the Right. (Actually, given my limited understanding of the 'language', I'm not sure it is actually even possible to express the concept of a war being a bad idea. I think any attempt ends up coming out as 'Chamberlain, his arms wide.')

By choosing which interpretations to give their metaphors, rather than acknowledging historical fact, they gain the full power of a delusional system - freedom from reality, and reinforcement of their prejudices, allowing them to act with utter confidence and ruthlessness. Or, as the Tamarians might say "Bush and Cheney in the White House."

*Comment by [biggerbox](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 1:02 pm*

2. Great Post.

I agree. I think this whole country views reality through a filter of movies, urban myths and legends as opposed to what actually happened or is happening.

That's why we have presidential debates where we have so called journalist asking so called leaders what they would do if they were Keifer Sutherland in "24."

*Comment by John W — August 23, 2007 @ 1:14 pm*

3. maha said (about “righties” thinking) “Real men... listen to ... perhaps something else located along the lower part of the brain stem.”

Yes, indeed, maha, MUCH lower and to the front. Wussie, girly-men surrender-monkey lefty-liberal men like myself tend to listen higher up, in the reason and rational region. Ya know, I just hate myself for this. Why, oh why, do I listen to my brain and not my bone? Simple:

Because if there is one thing I know I cannot trust, it’s my “manhood”. If there’s one thing I know I can trust, it’s reason and critical thinking.

*Comment by Forrest — August 23, 2007 @ 1:19 pm*

4. And then there is the whole MIA Rambo thing.

*Comment by spinoza — August 23, 2007 @ 1:20 pm*

5. Brilliant! Very well written, with good flow, fascinating analogies, and an interested new model for the often perplexing thing called conservative “thought.”

My wife studies Japanese literature, much of which revolves around “The Tale of Genji” the world’s first written novel (first circulate in print, as opposed to verbally, around 800 AD). Another Japanese art form is the haiku, several forms of ultra-short poems. Because the haiku are so short, they need clever ways of cramming as much information as possible into a few brief sound bites. By cultural consensus, most classical Japanese haiku do this by repeating phrases lifted from the famous tale of Genji. Readers recognize the repeated phrase, and insert the associated images and emotions. Thus, a tiny poem carries much larger nuances of meaning, association, feeling, and mood.

As you can see, this is a fairly interesting parallel to your “Darmok” analogy. In the case of Japanese haiku, the situation evolved through artists attempting to squeeze meaning into a tiny form.

In the case of both advertising and TV news sound bites, the promoter is also in the position of squeezing maximum information into a tiny form. In retrospect, it is hardly surprising that they came to use the same techniques employed in the haiku form.

Here then, is the question: Does the over-reliance of the metaphorical reference stem from the popularity of the media? Or is it an endemic

weakness to that type of thought, which merely found an ideal biome in the environment of sound bite news?

Thank you for the fascinating article.

*Comment by Jay Parks — August 23, 2007 @ 1:20 pm*

6. Great article. I've noticed this pattern myself, but you pieced it all together wonderfully and clearly.

*Comment by Bryan — August 23, 2007 @ 1:25 pm*

7. I agree. Brilliant. I wish more people had the opportunity to consider your thoughts.

*Comment by Mike McPhillips — August 23, 2007 @ 1:31 pm*

8. When Bush ran in '00 I asked his supporters how they could support the guy. He didn't sound like a conservative to me. In fact, except for the crap about Jesus and tax cuts, he said things that sounded alot like Clinton. As time went on, of course, his real views came out, but in the meantime he spoke not of anti choice, but Dred Scott. He spoke not of tax cuts, but of John Kennedy. It was all some kind of code that I didn't get.

An even wierder part of this, and you touch on it, is that if you know a lot about say Churchill, or Kennedy, or Dred Scott, or Cambodia, the analogies make no sense but it would take an hour to explain why its a stupid analogy and the people who need to hear it won't listen anyway. Its all emotion and no thought.

*Comment by drip — August 23, 2007 @ 1:33 pm*

9. I've got to take issue with your Generation X crack, because, you know, I was under the impression that a lot of you "dirty bleeping hippies" crossed the bleeping line to vote for Regan. I was four at the time. What was your excuse? What many young leftists like myself despise about our notional hippie forbears (speaking of symbols rather than substance), is that their idealism was just a rebellious pose to be shucked when no longer fashionable.

Just as the right uses the ludicrously broad brush of WWII to paint every conflict black and white, so too do leftists often tar two generations of their own children as a bunch of deluded slobs. Young people need work- it's no secret that getting an 18 year old to the polling station often requires a damn draft. But for those of us in the baby trough, the unreflective nostalgia of our forbears for WWII, Viet Nam, or the Regan Era all rings false. False and

**gross.**

*Comment by Will — August 23, 2007 @ 1:37 pm*

10. **Cultural life in this country has been turned into a La-La Land of symbolic language and images and that lack real content but are powerful-sounding. To some degree or another, all of us inhabit this world of symbols and illusions. But to those without real critical thinking skills (which includes, but is not limited to, the far-right) this is the totality of their reality. Read *Deer Hunting With Jesus* by Joe Bageant, particularly the chapter “Republicans By Default” to see just how pervasive and interlocked this system of propaganda and myth is (and thanks to Maha for recommending this book).**

**The thing about righties, though, is unlike most in the U.S. they actually have strong feelings about politics and “national destiny”, which is a dangerous mix for those who can’t distinguish between thought and emotions, nor between myth and reality. It’s bad enough that most people in this country just amble along in a television-brainwashed stupor—these guys are capable of doing serious dirty work for those who wish to make this country a military dictatorship.**

**Their completely twisted (and childishly oversimplified) view of Churchill and Chamberlain just epitomizes how wrong their view of world events is. As Maha points out, most of their ilk thought Hitler was just swell, and viciously opposed U.S. intervention in Europe against the Fascists. They were on the wrong side of history then, and they’re on the wrong side of history now.**

*Comment by My name is url — August 23, 2007 @ 1:39 pm*

11. **Very interesting post! I think the thing we humans crave most is quick judgements, and the sound bite delivers on that. Even those of us on the left express ideas in terms of simplistic (and therefore inherently incomplete or untrue) metaphors.**

**That’s why a blue dress with stains on it will get more attention than an S&L scandal. One is a simple, vivid symbol for sex, the other is a complex issue demanding thought and attention.**

**And now, we look forward to the day when Bush is “Mirab, his sails unfurled” from the White House.**

*Comment by Lisa — August 23, 2007 @ 1:44 pm*

12. ***I was four at the time. What was your excuse?***

In 1980 I was 29 and voted for Carter. I make no excuses for that.

You have my meaning backward. I did not intend to say that all Gen Xers supported Reagan. Rather, my point was that a disproportionate number of today's righties are Gen-Xers who first noticed politics in the Carter/Reagan years. I stand by that, too.

*Comment by maha — August 23, 2007 @ 1:47 pm*

13. I recommend a recent book—In Command of History: Churchill Writing and Fighting the Second World War. I'd tell you about it but my head is like a sieve these days. Or in Tamarian: Gipper, 1986.

*Comment by sniffheim — August 23, 2007 @ 1:50 pm*

14. That was a particularly memorable 'Star Trek: The Next Generation' episode. Under the heading of utterly trivial, however, it's 'Tanagra', as per the town near Thebes and the not-so-famous ancient Greek battle, not 'Tenegra'. 😊

It's a shame you've given up trying to talk to those with the opposite political views, as this means you're left talking only to those people who agree with you... somewhat harder to promote change.

Still, leave the diplomacy to the diplomats I suppose...

Best wishes!

*Comment by Chris — August 23, 2007 @ 1:53 pm*

15. *It's a shame you've given up trying to talk to those with the opposite political views*

I will speak with anyone capable of rational discussion, whatever their political orientation. This, however, leaves out all hard-core righties. One occasionally finds a "soft" rightie who is willing to engage in actual conversation, but it's rare.

*Comment by maha — August 23, 2007 @ 1:58 pm*

16. Great article! That SNG episode was when the writing for the whole Star Trek "Enterprise"(pun intended) was nearing its zenith.

I seem to remember a lot of writing about how Reagan sometimes couldn't remember whether he was in a movie or in real life. I suppose that may have been the onset of the Alzheimer's, but it was sure indicative of the neocon

mindset.

*Comment by [Proud American Liberal](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 2:02 pm*

17. Of course...The righties HAVE to play the myth card. That truth stuff doesn't work so good for them. Besides, the myth is so much more useful..it works on everything...

As for "talking" to most righties, you'll never get too far, as they have a myth for that too...known as the "other" , or as "those people who hate America and are stabbing us in the back".

The most I expect to accomplish is to attack all their intellectual dishonesty, and to pull them into a legitimate debate.....which usually doesn't last too long, as it becomes obvious real quick that their philosophy is a house of lies....

*Comment by [Hugh G. Rection](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 2:18 pm*

18. This is perceptive, brilliant, and needs to be seen by many more people. I somehow missed that particular episode of TNG, and I was a real Trekkie back then. *Make it so, Number 1.*

[I touched on a piece of this](#), the role of emotion in political speech, by mentioning Drew Westen's book, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* - but your insights take this to a whole 'nother level. Great work.

I was going to add that in addition to mythologizing the past, righties live in this past, but I think lefties are often guilty of this as well, just not as much. I'm tempted to say the critical distinction is between those who apply critical thinking versus those who don't, but even this doesn't fully capture it.

Righties selectively remember the past and use it for emotional comfort, and so their thoughts and words are about this emotional context, not about what really happened. Their preference for this mythical past over the real-world present means they can never see the present as it really is. We lefties are guilty of this too, but we at least regard this as a danger and a bias to avoid; the right instead believes in the certainty and righteousness of their illusions, fully going along with their seductiveness.

*Comment by [moonbat](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 2:21 pm*

19. aw, crap - screwed up the anchor tag (#17)...

*Comment by moonbat — August 23, 2007 @ 2:23 pm*

20. moonbat — in my capacity as Comments Queen I fixed the anchor tag. 😊

*Comment by maha — August 23, 2007 @ 2:25 pm*

21. As a card-carrying member of Generation X, I thought I would weigh in on this...

My first political memory was the 1980 presidential election. I had just started kindergarten and was aware that an election was happening (probably from television). I asked my mom who she was voting for. Carter, she told me. So I said, “then he’s going to win?” “No, Reagan probably will.” I was so disillusioned.

Nevertheless, by the time I was old enough to have opinions about politics and world issues, I was pretty solidly liberal/Democrat and have been since. Hell, even in junior high school I used to rip a born-again Christian friend of mine apart on things like abortion, evolution, and school prayer.

I don’t know exactly how I absorbed all the political opinions I did during the 80’s, but I always knew that the right-wing and conservatives in general were full of crap. Further, practically all my friends did too (save for that one guy, who later actually did come around in a big way). An anti-authoritarian generational ethos was just pervasive. We all mocked televangelists, abortion nuts, and (the first) George Bush. And I’m from a fairly conservative part of the country, too.

*Comment by My name is url — August 23, 2007 @ 2:27 pm*

22. Very nicely put, Maha. Conservatives really like the *image* of a strong leader, and often ignore facts and history. Giuliani talks really tough but his policies would be disastrous. Thompson plays folksy and “jes folks” when he’s lead a pampered life (as did Reagan and the present Bush). The GOP need their strong daddy figure. Churchill was also quite the bigot in his earlier years, and after the war he was the wrong leader for Britain and they tossed him out. That’s not to discount what he did during WWII, but the need for hero worship is acutely strong among authoritarians, most of whom are Republicans (not surprisingly). While I’ve seen many writers touch on these themes, your post captures them very nicely and clearly (and it’s timely!). And the Hitler of the day is...

*Comment by Batocchio — August 23, 2007 @ 2:35 pm*

23. One of my few favorite Star Trek episodes.

**Now you've done it. I've been saying I should go out and buy George Lakoff's "Metaphors We Live By". Now I will. Great post!**

*Comment by [phastphil](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 2:38 pm*

**24. I truly think this is one of the best articles I have ever read on my computer screen.**

**And LOL funny.**

**Seriously, keep up the good work.**

*Comment by [bastard\\_amber](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 2:39 pm*

**25. Insightful post. The false dichotomy supported by mythic historical archetypes tied to mythic historical events is in virtually every 30%er rant when you look for it.**

*Comment by [Jack H.](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 2:48 pm*

**26. I whole heartily agree with this post. A couple years ago i was trying to comprehend how it was conservatives could so easily dismiss facts and reason for blind faith in all that the Bushies have been doing, and it dawned on me that conservatives are hot and bothered over male authoritarian archetypes who never express any doubt.**

**As well symbolic male role models, preferable wearing hats, Fireman, Police officer, Army man etc..**

*Comment by [Dave](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 2:49 pm*

**27. You write "But instead of actually studying the life and words of Churchill for understanding, righties simply evoke the man as an archetype of bulldog, never-give-up tenacity. "**

**Regarding the "studying of words" aspect, righties and our MSM talking heads seem to rarely consider the meaning of words. If something sounds reasonable, they no longer look for meaning, instead just accepting the new phraseology. For instance, I recall that as all the supposed justifications for the Iraq invasion were rapidly proving to be false (WMD and ties to OBL), the media talking heads and pundits started to refer to the war as a "war of choice." But, what does "war of choice mean"...what reasonable inferences may be drawn? If it was indeed a choice, doesn't that mean it did not need to be waged? Doesn't that mean that Iraq posed no imminent threat to our**

**national security? And, if it did not need to be waged and we were not immediately threatened (instead choosing to do it), how is a “war of choice” not a war of aggression?**

*Comment by RT Firefly — August 23, 2007 @ 2:51 pm*

**28. What an excellent post. Crooks and Liars linked me here, and I found the article quite brilliant. I think I’ll subscribe to the RSS.**

*Comment by Dr Zaius — August 23, 2007 @ 2:54 pm*

**29. Excellent post and genuinely original insight.**

**I say, “Sokath, his eyes uncovered”.**

*Comment by eric — August 23, 2007 @ 3:02 pm*

**30. Thank you. I hate to admit it but you just SOFTENED my opinion of the righties. I gave up trying to find a justification for their warped view besides personal greed; that is I thought they didn’t actually believe their own BS since it had no logic to it, but espoused that stuff to justify their need to be in charge. Now I see that at least there is most likely a (childish, ignorant) reason for their beliefs.**

*Comment by JohnJ — August 23, 2007 @ 3:14 pm*

**31. But all human language is metaphor. Some terms’ components are very far removed from their tangible referents, but the links remain. Open an etymological dictionary, and ‘unpack’ a few words to see what I mean. Our problems arise when: we confuse our metaphors with reality; we disconnect them from reality losing sense of what they actually imply; or, worst of all, we coin them out of our phantasies of what we want to be real.**

**Metaphor is a powerful tool. Through it complicated ideas and emotions can be related with the sparest of allusions. However, rigorous critical examination of their use is required lest internal delusion lead to acceptance of external illusion.**

*Comment by pluky — August 23, 2007 @ 3:15 pm*

**32. This is just a \*stunningly\* great post. I just had to delurk to tell you how brilliant I think it is.**

**aimai**

*Comment by aimai — August 23, 2007 @ 3:16 pm*

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*Wash. Times* again falsely claimed Clinton said "the surge is clearly 'working' "

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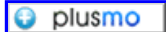
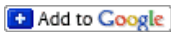


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