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(GEORGE CARLIN, ARTHUR MILLER and ISIS.)

I am intrigued by the prescient artist.

I came across the late George Carlin's essay on "Capital Punishment"* in which, to satisfy the savage, blood-lust needs of today's public, Carlin argued for public executions on TV. With commercials. Then, understanding the public's need to constantly up the anti and push the violence envelope, Carlin (somehow, hilariously) added public beheadings, crucifixions, and burnings at the stake. I don't know when the essay was written (the performance riff was uploaded on YouTube in 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDO6HV6xTml>, but there are references in the piece to pre-2001 twin-towers tragedy and Jeffrey Dahmer, that place it decades before ISIS began using world TV for their beheadings and burnings alive.

. . .Arthur Miller's last play, "Resurrection Blues" (2004) — a satire — which I've just read — is set in an unnamed Latin American country and built around a planned crucifixion of a rebel, rumored to be the 2nd coming of Christ; in the play the commercial rights for the crucifixion have already been sold to an American TV company for 25 million dollars. ". . .Good God, Henri, with that kind of money I could put the police into decent shoes. . .we could maybe have our own airlines and send all our prostitutes to the dentist."

Years before (1992), Miller had written an op-ed piece for the New York Times, "Get It Right: Privatize Executions" **in which he satirically argued that a great deal of revenue could be raised by having public executions in New York's Shea Stadium. Miller, of course, was a more conservative and less anarchic artist than Carlin, and so, built his satiric piece around the old fashioned electric chair.

Carlin moves into the absurd, zany, hands-on, high-tech refinements like a miniaturized atomic device suppository: “Shove it up a guy’s ass! Preparation H-Bomb! Talk about fallout.” Miller matches Carlin in his own way, detailing the kind of commercials that will be used at the televised crucifixion: “They are talking underarm deodorants, Felix. . . They’re talking athletes foot, Felix. . . sour stomach, constipation, anal itch. . . I’m sure they would figure it would take him five hours to die, so they could load it up. — runny stool, falling hair, gum disease, crotch itch, dry skin, oily skin, nasal blockage, diapers for grownups. . . impotence. . . Is there a hole in the human anatomy we don’t make a dollar on? I figure ear wax, red eye, bad breath. . .” Carlin also added to his list of disparate and crowd-winning executions, the old fashioned boiling-alive-in-oil spectacle that could satisfy a world-wide audience. It remains to be seen how prescient Carlin turns out to be about that.

Both Miller and Carlin, in each piece, had set their sights on the America of their day and could not have anticipated the rise of ISIS on the world stage. Still, in their work and — I think — in their profound (comic) despair, Carlin and Miller would not have been surprised at the ISIS public executions of today, with millions of the viral onlookers, shaking their heads in horror, but peeking through the closed fingers covering their eyes. After all, the content in Miller’s 1995 op ed piece, “Let’s Privatize Congress” does seem to have presaged a Republican-run Congress that already has become a corporate-owned subsidiary; and his guess, in that same essay, that the Supreme Court will also be corporatized, is just about achieved.

It’s just a matter of time before ISAS finds a sponsor — or sponsors — and rakes in the viral commercial loot. Then Miller and Carlin can “high five” each other in their graves.

(* *“Brain Droppings—An Orgy of George,”* Hyperion, NY, 1997)

(***“Echoes Down The Corridor,”* The Collected Essays of Arthur Miller. Penguin Press. NY. 2000)

