

# Donald Trump and the Hero Complex

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*The GOP comedy circuit has been filled of late by a few punches delivered by Donald Trump, who has decided that dumping on his fellow Republicans is one sure way to land in the Oval Office.*

Arizona Senator John McCain found himself on the receiving end of some bluster after suggesting that Trump had “fired up the crazies” with his supposedly 5,000 strong anti-immigration rally in Phoenix.<sup>[1]</sup> This stood to reason, not least of all because McCain considers himself to be one of the sober ones in the GOP. And that, at times, is an adventurous assertion. “We have,” he told the *New Yorker* with regret, “a very extreme element within our Republican Party.”

Trump certainly attempted to beef his show with political fodder, not least of all with the father of a man killed by an undocumented immigrant, because obviously, a documented one might have been more homely, more in tune with local values. Pity Jamiel Shaw Sr. but also the Trump entertainment complex that makes short work of its stand-ins.

The porous US-Mexico border features heavily in the Trump manual of campaigning, though underlying that resentment is a bubbling envy at enterprise and industry. Trump, in other words, is on the hunt for heroes – apart from himself as the blindingly obvious choice. His seemingly venal vitriol against Mexico is one tinged with agitated admiration. Yes, those crossing the border might be adept “criminals” and compulsive “rapists” pinching jobs and deflowering US innocents, but he also loves “the Mexican people. I love their spirit I respect Mexico as their country. Their leaders are much sharper and smarter than ours.”<sup>[2]</sup> They too, have the dream, and dangerously wish to live it.

This is a theme that Trump is obsessed by, a form of cerebral Darwinism in action. The US is losing pace; the others are catching up. The brain boxes are not to be found at the top of the fast withering American tree, but in the party offices of the Chinese Communist Party, where they chuckle at American ineptitude and geriatric bumbling. “They have geniuses and we have people who don’t have a clue. We have stupid leaders” (CNN, Jul 11).

This is prescient, largely because he represents that same credo of wealth appropriation, the plundering pig always in clover pretending that thrift, rather than debt, powers his persona. Success is based purely on the weight of the wallet and the number of “assets” that supposedly gives the American dream padding. It is the code of a modern, if less able, robber baron. One has to steal to win.

Which bring us to that rather quirky manipulation of the hero cult which seems to matter so much in The Donald’s universe. Unhappy is the land that needs a hero, suggests Bertolt

Brecht's man of misfortune, Galileo. McCain does not qualify for the American pantheon of awe inspiring war heroes because, according to Trump at the Family Leadership Summit held on Saturday, "I like people who weren't captured, O.K.? I hate to tell you." [3]

As for Trump's own illustrious record, keeping away from the bloodshed seemed to have been a matter of firm commitment. All in all, the record of evasion and escape is impressive, though these were not justified with a sophisticated critique of war. Amy Davidson gives us the list. He had four student draft deferments, two while at Fordham, and two after transferring to the University of Pennsylvania, piggy backing on family contacts. [4] The fifth was a medical deferment on the fanciful ground of "bone spurs". By sheer dumb luck, he escaped the 1969 draft lottery as the number of inductees required had already been called.

This is the Trump recipe: luck, overworked family contacts, America's grand sinecures that do away with any notion of the pioneer spirit; the art, not of the deal, but of evasion, escape and profit. And, of course, entertainment.

The entertainment feature of the Trump campaign is both symptom and system. The entire presidential race has become a long Hollywood mastication sluiced with endless pots of finance. It is prohibitive, it is consumerist, and it has mastered the formula of political alienation. Invariably, it has also emptied out the war hero message. Trump, for that reason, seems a gruesomely appropriate fit.

The Huffington Post's Ryan Grim and Danny Shea, in confining "The Donald" to sop stories on "the Kardashians and The Bachelorette," miss the point. [5] The circus that is unfolding is becoming the diseased story of the election, notably from the perspective of the GOP, whose other contenders desperately hope that Trump trips into oblivion.

While it is hard to believe he won't disappear as another short historical entry into the book of presidential contenders, he will continue to lay waste to the Republican trail, lopping off a few limbs in the process. The GOP is set for the big squeeze, as if it wasn't happening already.

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## Notes

[1]

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/john-mccain-has-a-few-things-to-say-about-donald-trump>

[2] <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/11/politics/donald-trump-phoenix-rally/>

[3] [http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/trump-to-g-o-p-youre-fired?mbid=social\\_twitter](http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/trump-to-g-o-p-youre-fired?mbid=social_twitter)

[4]

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/amy-davidson/trump-and-the-art-of-the-war-hero?intcid=mod-most-popular>

[5]

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/a-note-about-our-coverage-of-donald-trumps-campaign\\_55a8fc9ce4b0896514d0fd66?ncid=tweetInkushpmg0000016&section=politic](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/a-note-about-our-coverage-of-donald-trumps-campaign_55a8fc9ce4b0896514d0fd66?ncid=tweetInkushpmg0000016&section=politic)

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