rush of citizens who fear the consequences of living with freedom.

As Mencken foresaw there is no need to "differentiate too pedantically between two forms of democracy" (74); then, because the differences between the two are semantic; now, because our democracy is in decline. Unwarranted phone taps, library record scandals, and the Patriot Act are all part of the same downward trend. Democracy suffers during any war and we are a militaristic tribe. The Alien and Sedition Acts, Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus, the internment of Japanese-Americans; all happened during war and all severely damaged what used to be democracy.

Democracy didn't disappear of its own accord. Instead, it was taken from Mencken's Democratic Man by modern Solitary Man. Democracy is a double-edged sword and Solitary Man can't abide the danger. Yet, Solitary Man, having never been in the world lacks the means to affect permanent change. And this is how he comes to select from those screamers, those with the loudest voice, to lead him. These loudest few, these politicians, grab hold of a single idea and blow it out of proportion. They see only the benefits and never the risks of these thoughts. They don't consider risks because they have no need to. Popular support can be won on merely the virtues of a plan; pragmatism is a weakness.

While they are loud and popular and easily elected these screamer-politicians are not particularly capable of legislation. The Solitary Man lacks the patience necessary to choose a wise and quiet voice from the crowd to elevate to high office. Instead, the Solitary Man and the politicians he elects rely on the plagiarized work of others to make laws. These others are the lobbyists and special interests. Lobbyists are happy not to receive credit and prefer to take advantage of loopholes and exceptions that they have written into the laws. This is more valuable to them than a citation. It seems that still "our laws are invented... by frauds and fanatics, and put upon the statute books by poltroons and scoundrels" (Mencken, 105).

Likewise the modern process of lawmaking "favours the man who is without [honourable motives], and it puts heavy burdens upon the man who has them"(Mencken, 110). Of course, no longer is it honorable to help other people. These days those motives are considered foolish. The honor of Solitary Man demands that every act be self-serving. As a result every person becomes a faction unto themselves. And so we are lucky to not live in a democracy, for "a pure democracy... can admit of no cure for the mischief of factions" (Madison, 203). The cure found by the Solitary State is ignorance. Unwilling to listen to arguments opposing their view, politicians vote on matters with their minds fixed, Thus is Solitary Man served by the self-serving Solitary State.

Solitude and Liberty

Unlike the townsmen of Thoreau, Solitary Man has scaled or broken through the wall barring his path to freedom (Thoreau, 489). Emerging on the other side

imprisoned, yet safe, the Solitary Man feels free from fear and danger, for he fears the danger strangers represent to his individualism. The prison occupied by Solitary Man is one of his own construct. He lives in the temple of individualism - cookie-cutter subdivision house filled to the brim with knick-knacks gathered over the course of a lifetime. Solitary Man spends much time in the commute driving his tank-like Sport Utility Vehicle so that he can distance himself from the outside world.

The will-to-peace, "the peace of a trusty in a well-managed penitentiary" thrives in Solitary Man (Mencken, 118). Solitary Man becomes perturbed when this peace is infringed upon (Ollie) and has established organizations to lessen "human-generated, undesirable and unhealthy sound [which] unduly burdens the soundscape" (Welcome to Peace and Quiet). No longer do an individual's rights end at the tip of their fist, but instead extend to the walls of Solitary Man's cage, or even to the boundary line of his property.

From this peace comes tranquility. And, through the reflections of his solitary life, Solitary Man stumbles to the revelation that he must spread the gospel of his way of living so that the benefits of a solitary lifestyle might be enjoyed by all. This regime takes on moral qualities and becomes something worthy of worship; the be all and end all of human existence. Now being a moral code and standard of living Solitary Man takes it upon himself to ensure that everyone else's solitude is consistent with his own.

This causes Solitary Man to clash with other Solitary Men and a police force becomes necessary to enforce peace between neighbors. If every Puritan and democrat were a lawyer, then Solitary Man aspires to be judge, jury, and executioner of his solitary state(Mencken, 133). Herein lays the contradiction of Solitary Man for his solitude has no value to him unless he can lord it over others. Others find no value in the life of Solitary Man for they have their own state of aloneness to tend to. A hierarchy comes into existence, for if two things are different one must be better than the other.

This interaction becomes the corruption of Solitary Man, and, while tolerable, it causes Solitary Man to become self-loathing. The corruption of Solitary mans causes him to fall prey to any politician offering redemption. Corruption in the politicians is accepted as long as they can validate and promote Solitary Man's solitude. These politicians are celebrated for their corruption if they can secure a victory for Solitary Man's ideology (New Louisiana Purchase). Indeed, Solitary Man is more than willing to tolerate tyranny if only tyrants validate his way of life.

Coda

So, where does this leave us and what is the future condition of this country? It is not for me to hazard a guess. It is entirely possible that the downward trend of