

The Byzantine Pineapple (Part 1) with Corporation X

Bill Poje

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The essays in The Byzantine Pineapple (Part 1) with Corporation X blaze their own path as they work to persuade others of their unique worldview.

Bill Poje's idiosyncratic *The Byzantine Pineapple (Part 1) with Corporation X* presents outside-the-box ideas about politics and entertainment.

Divided into two treatises—one regarding federal government operations, particularly related to budgeting, and the other an argument for adapting Poje's previous book into a movie that draws on the examples of recent, high-grossing films—the book advances a quirky point of view about institutions it sees as in need of radical innovation.

It's a self-assured if off-kilter book that stakes out positions on federal borrowing, a flat tax, and Hollywood financing. The book's two parts share a distinct perspective and common sensibility, if they otherwise don't share a thematic connection. Little holds the pieces together beyond the narrator's conviction that he knows better than the establishment.

Cynical and antiauthoritarian, the book challenges "lies" from institutions like the media, government, lobbyists, academics, and "unionists." It depicts regular people as "asleep in the matrix" and subject to larger forces outside their control. The political section makes a case to independents that neither ideological side works and purports to apply a systems analysis approach to solve socioeconomic, legal, and political problems like hunger.

Both essays are peppered with pop culture allusions to movies like *The Matrix*, *Blade*, and *Resident Evil*, if these connections are sometimes scattershot. A rambling rumination on the remake of *Ben-Hur* cites a Wikipedia page, undermining the more general sense that this is a well-researched work. More authoritative references, including to Paul Krugman and the *Wall Street Journal*, are also included.

The essays run too long and come to include rambling ruminations on topics such as why particular movies did not resonate with modern audiences; the central arguments are returned to in a roundabout way that runs through repetitions and hypotheticals. The book is prone to self-promotion that stretches credulity. A "10-year, \$6 billion sales plan" for adapting Poje's novel to film is thorough and includes garish graphics; it ultimately seems better suited to a pitch meeting than to a book intended for public consumption.

Florid prose makes use of odd figurative language, including with the central metaphor of how people are separated from institutions "by the outer defense mechanisms of the pineapple." The book's literary conceits contrast with its more businesslike passages. Its extensive itemizations call to mind PowerPoint presentations, and even through comprehensive breakdowns, its knowledge sometimes feels abstract.

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JOSEPH S. PETE (March 29, 2019)

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