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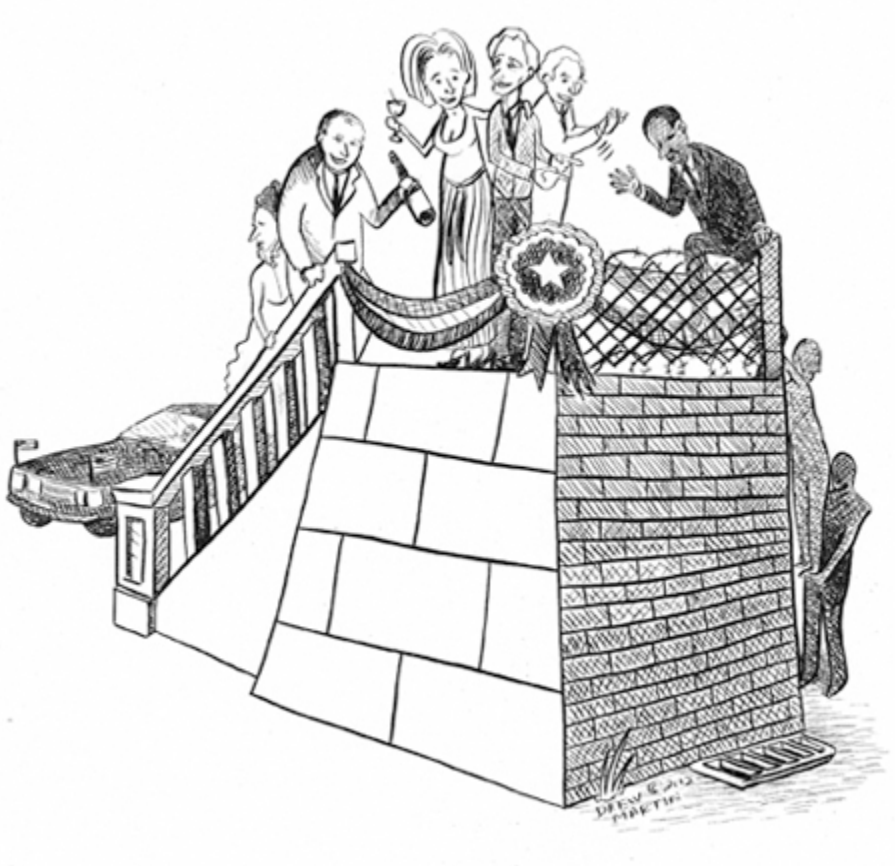

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Marcuse’s and Fromm’s Correspondence with the Socialist Feminist Raya Dunayevskaya: A New Window on Critical Theory

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During the years 1954 to 1978, the Marxist-Humanist and feminist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya corresponded separately but intensively with two noted members of the Frankfurt School, Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm. The correspondence covered dialectical social theory, socialist humanism, the structure and contradictions of modern capitalism, and feminism and revolution. As a whole, these exchanges illustrate the deeply Marxist and humanist concerns of all three of these thinkers. The correspondence also highlights their significant differences as they discussed the degree to which the ideas of Marx and Hegel could continue to underpin an analysis of capitalist modernity and its forces of opposition.

Marcuse and Fromm were the only two members of the Frankfurt School who engaged in dialogue with Dunayevskaya, a lifelong revolutionary thinker and activist. A self-educated movement intellectual without any university training, Dunayevskaya was born in Ukraine and grew up in the Maxwell Street Jewish ghetto, later torn down and replaced by the University of Illinois at Chicago. Prior to her correspondence with Marcuse, which began in 1954, Dunayevskaya had served as a secretary to Trotsky in Mexico. She was known as a critic from the left of the USSR, and had worked closely with the noted Afro-Caribbean Marxist C.L.R. James. During the period of her most intensive correspondence with Marcuse, she completed her first book, *Marxism and Freedom* (1958), a study of Marxism from a humanistic standpoint in which her first English translations of Marx’s *1844 Manuscripts* and of Lenin’s Philosophical Notebooks on Hegel appeared as the appendix. Marcuse contributed the preface to this book, in which, while agreeing with Dunayevskaya’s dialectical and humanist reading of Marx, he argues against her interpretation of the modern working class as a site of resistance based upon rank and file and Black workers. In this preface, he articulates perhaps for the first time in published form, his one-dimensionality thesis concerning the modern working class.

Despite their differences, which erupted in an acrimonious debate over Freud and radical change in 1955, both Marcuse and Fromm generally supported the radical movements of the 1960s, from which their erstwhile Frankfurt School colleagues Horkheimer and Adorno recoiled. The extensive correspondence of both Marcuse and Fromm with Dunayevskaya, who certainly saw the transcendence of domination and alienation as a concrete historical

possibility in the postwar capitalist order, is also suggestive of some important affinities between these two Frankfurt School thinkers, and of differences with the less politically radical version of the Frankfurt School that had been re-established in the 1950s in Germany under the direction of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Moreover, on a more theoretical level, it should be noted that Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* were central to the major published work of Marcuse, Fromm, and Dunayevskaya, something that could not be said of Adorno or Horkheimer.

In the period before Dunayevskaya and Marcuse began to correspond in 1954, Marcuse was known to U.S. intellectuals mainly as the author of *Reason and Revolution* (1941), a pioneering study of Hegel from a critical Marxist standpoint that also contained the first serious discussion in English of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*. But in 1955 he became more widely known for his radically liberatory interpretation of Freud in *Eros and Civilization*, which he was completing as their correspondence began.

Dunayevskaya initiated the correspondence with Marcuse with a letter of December 7, 1954, at a time when her break with C. L. R. James was already in the offing. At this time, Dunayevskaya no longer had among her own colleagues a real philosophical interlocutor. From Marcuse's side, although the correspondence surely did not loom as large on his intellectual agenda, it should be noted that with Horkheimer and Adorno back in Germany and McCarthyism raging, he too was more isolated, at least in terms of others with whom to engage in serious dialogues on Hegel or on Marxist theory. During the early and most fruitful years of their correspondence, 1955-60, Marcuse was to be sure somewhat interested, as was Dunayevskaya primarily, in dialogue about dialectics, but by 1960 he was also raising issues with her like the sociology of work and more broadly, the new features of postwar U.S. capitalist society.

Despite some differences over the dialectic, especially concerning the relevance to a critique of modern capitalism of Hegel's concept of absolute negativity, their correspondence in this period was based on strong intellectual affinities as well as differences. These affinities are illustrated by Marcuse's remark upon reading some draft material for Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*: "Your ideas are a real oasis in the desert of Marxist thought" (letter of December 2, 1955). In a letter of May 3, 1956, Dunayevskaya also expressed enthusiasm over their correspondence: "You have no idea how your encouraging words help me proceed with my work. As you no doubt know, my entry into the 'intellectual world' was thru very unorthodox ways and you are the first not to make me feel like a fish out of water."

Dunayevskaya also commented briefly on *Eros and Civilization* during this period: "Your original contribution lies in your extraction of 'Eros' from being in a field by itself and placing it within the historical context of Western civilization.… You thereby illuminated the field of psychoanalysis" (letter of September 6, 1956). She also hinted that she found Marcuse's critique of Fromm convincing, commissioning a very positive review of *Eros and Civilization* in *News & Letters*, the Detroit-based paper she had founded in 1955.

Marcuse's new preface to the 1960 edition of *Reason and Revolution*, "A Note on the Dialectic," also showed another point of difference. In that preface, he wrote: "I believe that it is the idea of Reason itself which is the undialectical element in Hegel's philosophy…. It may even be justifiable, logically as well as historically, to define Reason in terms which include slavery, the Inquisition, child labor, concentration camps, gas chambers, and nuclear preparedness." Dunayevskaya, who appears to have first read this preface some years later, came to believe that it represented a major shift from the earlier perspective of 1941, when Marcuse had extolled dialectical reason and freedom as a bulwark against fascism, as shown in the book's very title, *Reason and Revolution*. The original 1941 text is filled with lines like these: "The revolution requires the maturity of many forces, but the greatest among them is the subjective force, namely the revolutionary class itself. The realization of freedom requires the free rationality of those who achieve it."

Marcuse's new perspective on dialectics of 1960 may have been connected to the Nietzschean approach of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), which itself marked a turn away from the Hegelian Marxism of the prewar Frankfurt School.

Another element of difference that emerged between Dunayevskaya and Marcuse can be seen in Dunayevskaya's review of Marcuse's *Soviet Marxism* in 1961, which accusing him of uncritical stance toward the USSR. This came after an acrimonious exchange of letters over Cuba, where Marcuse held that Dunayevskaya's critiques of Castro's Cuba had State Department overtones, something that outraged Dunayevskaya.

But before their correspondence cooled in 1961, some very interesting dialogue took place over the U.S. working class. Marcuse's letter to Dunayevskaya of August 8, 1960 asked for her response to his work on what was to become his best-known book, *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), an aspect of the correspondence that Douglas Kellner was the first to discuss. Writing of his "new book with the tentative title *Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*," Marcuse poses "a question of a changing…more affirmative attitude of the laborer not only to the system as a whole but even to the organization of work in the more highly organized plants." Marcuse asks for Dunayevskaya's "considered evaluation" of this issue in the U.S., as well as references to "American literature on this pro and con."

Dunayevskaya's response to Marcuse's request — in a letter of August 16 –included a description of the current issue of *News & Letters*, particularly a section entitled "Workers Battle Automation," which contained articles with "workers speaking for themselves on the conditions of labor and alleged high standard of living." Dunayevskaya also carried out a sharp critique of recent writings by Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, and other liberal sociologists on labor, automation, class, and community.

Dunayevskaya also indicated that her own views differed "very radically" from those of Marcuse on these issues. She directs Marcuse's attention to a debate between two of her worker activist colleagues concerning automation. One of them, Angela Terrano, had been quoted in *Marxism and Freedom* to the effect that work in a new society would have to be

"something completely new, not just work to get money to buy food and things…It will have to be completely tied up with life." Terrano rejected automation altogether as a heightened form of alienated labor. Charles Denby, the editor of *News & Letters* and the author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, held that workers' control of production and a shorter work-day, in the context of the abolition of capitalism, would be needed to realize the potentials of automation. In light of this, Dunayevskaya questions whether Marcuse, with his evocation of "the transformation of the laboring classes," had not "fallen into the trap of viewing Marxian socialism as if it were a distributive philosophy."

Marcuse's response, in a letter of August 24, 1960, includes explicit reference to a convergence of "interests" between capitalists and workers in "advanced industrial society." He writes that "genuine automation" (instead of the current restricted, partial mode), which would "explode" the capitalist system, was being "held back by the capitalists as well as the workers." They did so on different grounds: for the capitalists, "decline in the rate of profit, need for sweeping government controls, etc.; on the part of the workers, technological unemployment." He concludes: "Re Angela T.: you should really tell her about all that humanization of labor, its connection with life, etc. — that this is possible only through complete automation, because such humanization is correctly relegated by Marx to the realm of freedom beyond the realm of necessity, i.e., beyond the entire realm of socially necessary labor in the material production. Total de-humanization of the latter is the prerequisite."

Dunayevskaya's next letter characterizes the leading liberal sociologists as "mechanical materialists" in the tradition of the Bolshevik theoretician Nikolai Bukharin, and she connects her critiques of automation and empirical sociology to him. She attacks Bukharin's self-avowed mechanical materialism, something she links to Lenin's characterization of Bukharin in his will as a gifted Marxist theoretician, albeit one who had failed to grasp the dialectic. In attacking Bukharin's classic text, *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* (1921), a work later prefaced by Lipset, Dunayevskaya wrote:

"In place of self-activity, Bukharin, as all good determinists, looks for states of equilibrium; 'laws' of development, uniformity…. Even as today's Soviet as well as American sciences, Bukharin keeps using categories of a lower order, particularly mathematical categories which preclude self-movement."

This represented a parallel to the Frankfurt School's critique of positivism within sociology, but with origins in Lenin and Trotskyism rather than Lukacs. It had emerged from the radical edge of the American Trotskyist tradition, as seen in the writings of the "Johnson-Forest Tendency, " led by C.L.R. James, Dunayevskaya, and Grace Lee Boggs. During the 1940s, as part of a never-completed joint work on dialectics, they had contrasted Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks to what they saw as Bukharin's undialectical and mechanical materialism.

I would like to mention more briefly some of the major themes of the Dunayevskaya-Fromm correspondence, which began in 1959 with a letter from Fromm to Dunayevskaya about the young Marx. In addition to his work as a social psychologist, Fromm by this time was taking

advantage of his standing as a major public intellectual to bring the young Marx to a wide public, as seen in his *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961). In publishing the *1844 Manuscripts* along with his own long essay on Marx as a democratic and humanist thinker in this book, Fromm succeeded in getting Marx discussed positively in mass media outlets like *Newsweek*. As Fromm also defended the peace movement in this period, he experienced very nasty attacks from future neocons like Daniel Bell, Sidney Hook, and Lewis Feuer, both on the young Marx and on his "appeasement" of the USSR, which in fact Fromm had criticized as a form of totalitarian state capitalism.

It was above all the socialist humanist thread in Fromm's work, as well as his surprising degree of sympathy for both Lenin and Trotsky, which constituted the intellectual affinity that sustained the Dunayevskaya-Fromm correspondence. These threads of affinity coexisted with some important differences of opinion and intellectual interests, although these were not usually expressed openly. At a political level, Dunayevskaya's positions were much further to the left than were Fromm's, whose socialist humanism was closer to reformist social democracy than her revolutionary version of Marxist-Humanism. Moreover, Dunayevskaya was not that interested in Freud, and although Fromm cited respectfully Hegelian interpretations of Marx as found in the work of Lukacs, Marcuse, and Dunayevskaya, he himself did not engage in that kind of work.

During the years of her correspondence with Fromm, 1959-78, Dunayevskaya contributed to Fromm's widely circulated collection, *Socialist Humanism* (1965), a book that linked both of them more deeply to Marxist oppositionists in Eastern Europe, especially Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Fromm also helped her to find both a German and a Spanish publisher for her second book, *Philosophy and Revolution* (1973). She in turn gave Fromm some comments as he was developing his last book dealing with Marx, *To Have or to Be?* (1976). Their correspondence is also filled with pungent assessments of Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.

Take for example Fromm's letter of November 25, 1976 criticizing Marcuse and the Frankfurt School, and dismissing its whole notion of critical theory as a subterfuge in order to avoid any explicit mention of Marxism. Let me quote the part on Horkheimer and Adorno:

"Horkheimer is now quoted as the creator of the Critical Theory and people write about the Critical Theory as if it were a new concept discovered by Horkheimer. As far as I know, the whole thing is a hoax because Horkheimer was frightened even before Hitler of speaking about Marxist theory. He used in general Aesopian language and spoke of Critical Theory in order not to say Marxist theory. I believe that is all, behind this great discovery of Critical Theory by Horkheimer and Adorno."

Fromm also attacked Marcuse in nearly as strong terms. In her response of November 30, 1976, Dunayevskaya defends Marcuse to a point:

"He surely is no coward, and his *Reason and Revolution* surely did not hide his Marxism, as he

understands it.… What was strange in… the 1950s, is that our fights were over my 'optimism' and 'romanticism' over proletariat and Black; he used to argue that they only want a 'piece of the American pie,' and while he doesn't oppose that, it couldn't be called 'revolutionary,' as I insisted. He also opposed my view of the East German Revolt of 1953 as revolution from under totalitarianism, saying it was only because Germans couldn't stand Russians, etc. And I got nowhere with him when I tried to convince him that he shouldn't use 'Marxism' when he was speaking of Russian communism."

As to Adorno, she recalls that she had run into some hostility at a meeting the Hegel Society after criticizing his *Negative Dialectics* in her paper.

The last exchange between Fromm and Dunayevskaya took up Rosa Luxemburg and gender. It elicited this 1978 comment from Fromm, who was responding to Dunayevskaya's reflections concerning a feminist dimension to Luxemburg:

"I feel that the male Social Democrats never could understand Rosa Luxemburg, nor could she acquire the influence for which she had the potential because she was a woman; and the men could not become full revolutionaries because they did not emancipate themselves from their male, patriarchal, and hence dominating, character structure.… I believe she was one of the few fully developed human beings, one who showed what a human being can be in the future.… Unfortunately I have known nobody who still knows her personally. What a bad break between the generations."

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The Clogged Capillaries of the Peruvian Amazon

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When one decides to take the trip into the jungle city of Iquitos – the largest city in the world inaccessible by road – there are two options. The first is a flight by one of Peru's many domestic airlines, 5 to 10 times per day, with a flight time of approximately 2 hours. This will cost between $100-$200 one way, far too out of the range of the average Peruvian worker who in Lima can make 50 soles per day ($18.50 on today's markets), and in the provinces a mere 25-30. And certainly out of the range of my budget, a traveling journalist on a mission to send home my stories of peeling through the carefully crafted and commodified layers of culture that are for sale on the international market for anyone who is willing to pay the steep fees for "experiences".

The need to travel to and from the Amazon on a budget has given rise to the network of river ships that carry cargo, livestock, and people to and from Tarapoto, Iquitos, and Pucalpa – to name a few Peruvian ports – and sustain the human presence deep within the jungle. As I arrived to the port of Yurimaguas that night after having been delayed a few hours due to land slides that often plague the roads swerving between mountains in the high jungle, I was presented with a pleasant and comforting illusion as most things present themselves when you are a foreigner traveling through the jungle. There was an empty ship, its pale blue steel stood as a reminder to all of how the sky and heavens reflect to the iris before being shrouded in a thick pillow of clouds that replenish the Amazon with its life source of sudden and heavy sheets of rain. The three floors were stacked like a jenga puzzle, with neither windows nor walls, allowing the few gusts of wind that find themselves in this area of the world to break the stranglehold and provide relief to all those suffering from the stifling humidity. The green, murky waters of the Amazon slapped up against the side of the ship as it shuddered up and down with the current; a whole new world of mysterious and magical creatures living below the river's dirty shell adorned with drifting pieces of wood and plastic soda bottles.

The ride lasts for 3 days, but nothing is ever on schedule. The ships leave as they fill, and after learning that most of the cargo trucks were jammed in the same landslide that had affected me, I quickly began to understand the reason the ship was empty for the first night. In order to travel on the Amazon a hammock was required, unless one preferred to spend the nights on the steel floor, as well as some kind of plate or bowl to receive the scoops of rice and boiled plantains that were provided with passage. As the ship crammed with passengers the following morning and hammocks were tied up encircling me on all sides, my unexpected quest to learn about the Amazon region through the eyes of my compatriots began. Most adults only said a few words to me during mealtimes, still trying to get used to the fact that I was obviously not

from Peru yet was using the local mode of transport. The children would always be running by asking me questions, having me point out where I came from on maps that were usually only of Peru, dumbfounded when I tried to explain to them my country was far above the limits of the paper they held in front of me. In turn they told me about their lives, their favorite foods, their hopes and thoughts.

As the ship left port every passenger crowded along the edges, hanging onto the steel poles that wrapped the ship, waving goodbye to relatives, staring out onto the port, or examining the herd of cattle that was encased behind wooden railings quickly latched together at the last minute before departure. The first observation that took my breath away was only a few hours into the voyage. I realized the trees were not getting any larger. Originally it seemed that the short trees, much more reminiscent of the local park in the suburb of New Jersey that I had grown up in rather than the legendary Amazon rainforest, were due to the close proximity of the port town of Yurimaguas. However, as we progressed onward through the currents of the Amazon, I had the feeling that perhaps I wasn't in the Amazon at all but rather in a plant nursery where the latest decorative styles were being germinated for corporate offices on Wall St.

"What do you think?" A middle-aged man asked me after lunch, speaking slowly, hesitant to see if I would even respond in Spanish. I told him I was very surprised, what happened to the jungle? Where were the trees whose roots were so large that they burst out of the ground and grew into caverns large enough to live inside? Where was the height that led to the development of the multiple levels of the rainforest, something I had remembered being taught in elementary school? He chuckled, leaning his head back and closing his eyes, taking a deep breath of the air that was free of the smog of idling ships and sawdust.

"I remember when the trees were tall enough to reach the sky," he said, looking up, "I couldn't see above any of them and under each canopy there was a whole wilderness of animals, flying from branch to branch, swinging, singing. My father taught me the way to navigate through it, always use the machete to cut to one side," He made the motions with his right hand, cutting through the breeze that rushed along the deck, "that way when you retrace your steps you can always follow your path. Things haven't been that way in a long time, since the lumber companies came in whole fields have been cleared out. It started with the forests near the cities and villages and worked its way outwards, now getting to the point where the lumber companies need to take boats for twenty days through the minor river systems to find trees that are even worth harvesting."

* *

According to a recent Wikileaks cable as much as 90% of Peru's broad leaf mahogany, a breed that is considered endangered prompting Brazil to halt its exports and Bolivia to drastically reduce theirs, is exported illegally, much of it being done with the government's knowledge. To top it off the United States is the purchaser of a majority of this timber, one statistic claiming that the US bought 88% of Peru's 2005 exports. At this rate it is no surprise the

Amazon is slowly converting its status into that of a suburban backyard, with its wildlife and peoples taking the hit.

Throughout the journey the ship made frequent stops in small indigenous communities, the brown patched roofs of their houses blending into the dirt and mud on the banks of the river. Of the 15 or 20 stops they all followed the same routine. Men from the village would approach the ship carrying large bundles of plantains, handing them over to the workers on the ship in exchange for western commodities; soda, beer, and potato chips. The women and children would rush onto the ship calculating the best strategy to reach the 300 people anxiously waiting for them on top deck, sometimes dangling their arms over the edges and motioning to have articles thrown up to them, to buy and trade foodstuffs. During these moments exotic fruits, raw vegetables, cooked beef, grilled boar, and barbecued river fish were all sold to the passengers of the ship, prices ranging between $0.25 and at most $1.50. Most of the time these indigenous salespeople would leave the ship sold out, especially if the stop happened to be before mealtimes, and would use the little bits of money they had collected for purchasing the products that couldn't be produced within the constraints of their sustainable lifestyle. At the end of the day even the most isolated communities can enjoy a glass of Coca Cola during meals.

This image seemed to me to be the most obvious example of the integration of the Peruvian Amazon into the global economy; however, the most destructive are those that are the hardest to see. The Amazon is called by many here the "lungs of the earth", a slogan meant to give the locals pride in their communities, attract tourists, and draw attention to the enormous problems we would face globally if the Amazon was altered enough to slow down or even stop doing its job. It's not necessary to have to explain here what happens to a living being if their lungs slowly stopped working. A recent report titled *Rainforest Deforestation and Climate Change* by The Environmental Defense Fund (www.edf.org) estimates that deforestation, both the removal of trees as well as the usage of cleared lands for cattle grazing and crop growing, released an equivalent of 15-35% of annual fossil fuel emissions during the 1990s. Of course, with today's new scientific consensus on the issue it is obvious that climate change is not a linear teleology but a circular isomorphic problem and the Amazon is obviously being harmed by these logging practices in an exponential manner, besides from the loss of its aesthetic "jungle" mystery that had taken me by surprise and shocked me into attention.

The timber economy has protruded its never-ending lust for profit so deep into the jungle that its arms have reached and ensnarled areas that have never even been seen by modern man. Survival International, an organization fighting for the rights of uncontacted peoples all over the world, estimates in its numerous reports and awareness campaigns that the few remaining uncontacted tribes that call the South American Amazon their home are being blinded by the bright light of modernity by the actions of logging companies and the "representatives of the new world" that they employ and send out, axes sharpened. A radical change from the missionaries, church bureaucrats, and conquistadors that had courted the cousins of these

uncontacted tribes centuries earlier, but an ironic reflection of who our society decides to send out to bring in the last patches of “barbarism” into “enlightenment”, whether we consciously choose to or not. The tribes often have to relocate, pushing them into confrontation with other tribes, and some who have chosen to make contact have described in horrific detail the fear that the monstrous stone skinned animals bring to their people as they eat away through trees leaving desolate wastelands behind them.

The ship had no set time of arrival, in a Kafkaesque way everyone seemed to know exactly where we were and how long we had traveled, though they all disagreed; I would get my updates from the man who slept to my right. On the fourth day, he was sitting up in his hammock peeling apart a papaya, motioning me over and gently tossing me a slab of its orange flesh saying, “We’ll be there tomorrow morning but I won’t see you, I’m getting off before Iquitos and I’m sure it will be around 3 or 4 in the morning.” I ate the fruit with him, and talked about his plans now that the temporary job he had on the coastal city of Piura had ended. We hurled the papaya skins over the edge of the ship from our hammocks where they stayed afloat on the river like small toy boats. He told me he was sure to be back but for now he was looking forward to spending time with his family who he hadn’t seen in 5 months. The next morning as he promised, he was gone; I had arrived in Iquitos.

A city with a dense and rich past but an uncertain future, the Plaza de Armas and surrounding blocks were filled with expensive hotels, tour guide offices touting the latest and greatest in jungle getaways, fancy restaurants serving fusions of the local cuisine, souvenir shops, and leftover ruins of the famous synagogue – a remnant from the Sephardic Jews of Morocco who arrived here during a rubber boom in the early 19th century. Marcel, the owner of the guesthouse I was staying in and supposedly a descendant of this ancient Jewish community, told me at one time Iquitos was such a popular tourist destination that there were non-stop flights from New York City. They had to be cancelled because the large planes were killing off the thousands of vultures that lived off of the leftover animal parts rotting around in the market after a long days work. “They had to clean the dead birds out of the jet engines every time! I guess the bastards got too cheap to continue” he laughed, with a thick accent and a cigarette dangling between his lips as he wiped down the ashtrays at the sink. He was a man that had an extensive knowledge of the city, living here all of his life but having attended university in Lima where he learned English and studied politics. Marcel knew everyone in Peru; either through what seemed to be flakey business ties or through the work he did with his beloved political party, Acción Popular. We passed our nights talking about Jose Carlos Mariategui, the famous Peruvian communist of the early 20th century, and what he would think of Henry, the infamous man known to everyone in Iquitos only by his first name that owned all the cargo ships and was now investing in the construction of oil tankers specially designed for river travel. He would often stumble out of his chair laughing, gasping for breath as he described Henry’s ties to the Amazonian organized crime ring, tears pouring out of his dry, bloodshot eyes.

Like any city that has had to make a switch from a semi-sustainable local economy to a tourist economy, everything in Iquitos is available to the tourist at a price. The indigenous people who

still live in the outlying jungle surrounding the city will perform, sing, and dance for anyone who is willing to buy an anaconda bone bracelet afterwards. The Bora, one of the indigenous groups that I had seen perform, do not actually live the life that they put up for sale to tourists. After a further investigation, which just involved me walking through the jungle with some friends instead of leaving on the small rented motorboat we came on, I discovered what looked like a small suburban neighborhood in the larger cities of the Peruvian coasts secretly tucked behind the thick jungle foliage, with houses, plumbing, and partially paved roads.

The whole polis is organized around making money by selling goods, photo opportunities, and the shades of long forgotten cultures. Even exotic animals are traded in the marketplace of Belen. Walking up and around the fish gut stained concrete I found nets of colorful feathered birds, monkeys clawing and swinging in cages, and scaly prehistoric fish apparently able to live outside of water for three days. A booming economy of child sex work is brought to awareness by the large painting mural on the side of an old building near the main plaza reading, "No Al Turismo Sexual Infantial". The stains of the neo-liberal drive to turn everything, and everyone, into an object to be bought or sold, traded or trashed, have penetrated deep into the river systems with lumber, oil, and tourism of all varieties.

It has become a war on two fronts in the Amazon. As if deforestation is not enough petroleum has become the new high priced commodity bubbling below the depths, and everyone is waiting on line to get a piece of the action. I remember the conversation I had with an Argentinean couple that met while living in the jungle for months organizing tribes against the exploitation of the oil companies. They were in their early twenties, coming out into the jungle because they were "tired of hearing about the change, we wanted to *make* the change", as they put it. They expected an idealized life in the jungle communities, without private property, corruption, and political scandal, problems they were all too used to back home in Cordoba. "I remember the first moment reality smacked me," the man said.

"I woke up and went to have a bite for breakfast before going off to find something to do for the day and the whole tribe was in disarray. 'He is gone, he went with the men' people were telling me. I was confused. It was only later that evening that I was able to piece it all together. That the man who was put in charge to lead the community, the tribal chief, had run off with about $1000 that the oil companies had paid him after selling them the community's land. Everything that they were on, poof, gone, open for exploration, who's next? The next few days the roads started going up, they were in perfect grids that criss-crossed through the jungle. This wasn't because they had found anything yet, this was just for exploration, but the time was coming and the whole community was pushed over."

The abuse is felt by everyone and resonates in all corners of the jungle. While it can manifest itself in ways that lead to local empowerment and general improvement in people's standards of living, ideology has a way of manifesting itself in the most despicable ways. On a few instances in different jungle cities throughout Peru and Ecuador I noticed storefronts that hung swastikas in their windows. I was always stunned and confused, walking past slowly starring

at the icon, never able to find anyone to ask about it. Finally I had the opportunity to confront what to me was hypocrisy when I found a small storefront in the marketplace with the symbol. The owner of the shop, which specialized in old plastic cell phone casings, explained that this is the symbol of the jungle independence movement. “We’re not racists”, he told me, shocked that I would think that,

“We are exactly what the symbol means, we are Nationalist Socialists. Our nation is the Amazon, and since the discovery of Peru until now it is being exploited while we are left out with nothing. First it was the Spanish, then it was the Americans and Europeans, and now it’s our *own* people, the people on the coast, the limaños, they take all of our resources to fund the country that they call Peru but where is our place in Peru. You’ve seen it, how many restaurants do you find in Lima serving cuisine from the jungle, where have you seen our music and dance, how easy is it for an Amazonian to find a job in the city, it’s impossible. They use us for everything we have and at the end we get nothing. That is why we’re standing up and saying enough is enough, we want our independence and our resources for ourselves.”

By this time the man had a few customers in his shop egging him on and throwing in examples. “We don’t get any money from the ministry of tourism!” One man in the crowd yelled, “They don’t even know what juanes or cecina is!” another woman said jokingly to me as I left the store.

The week I spent in Iquitos gave me much to think about during the six-day boat journey to Pucalpa. I was born in the United States, a country that is part of the global monster in consuming resources and causing destruction in exploring for new ways to feed the addiction. At the end of the day the events of the past two weeks are direct expressions, however negative they may be, of the way that I live at home, my family, and my friends. This is the ugly side of what it means to be developed in the 21st century and heading into a crisis of global overdevelopment while the planet reacts lurching and staggering to our human changes. While facing the challenges we today have to solve I believe it is extremely necessary to redefine what it means to be “developed”.

photo by Magdalena García B.

It did not take me long before I began to see the physical realities of my thought process. While I remembered passing many indigenous communities on the banks of the Amazon throughout my journey to Iquitos, the picture that passed in front of me as I lay in my hammock was not the same. The area of the river had flooded, taking houses, livestock, and crops with it. Every community I passed was in a different stage of shock. Some seemed to be lifeless, all human activity completely disappeared with rooftops poking through the running water. Others had adapted, with planks and bridges already in place with people running supplies to and fro; going about their daily lives. Whenever the ship stopped to unload and take on goods, workers of the ship took lists from the communities of the types of emergency supplies they would need

to build back up again. Of course, this probably wouldn't reach them for at least two weeks. Life had turned upside down.

A few days of confusion and shock from the people onboard and we were finally able to get a straight answer. Ten or twenty years ago, according to a passenger on the ship who was from one of the villages, the river had receded, giving way for about 50 feet of usable land. At first people were skeptical, thinking this was just a temporary event. "After about 5 years" he said, almost in disbelief, "we thought it was the new normal and our villages adapted, we moved closer to the river and expanded. I'm just as confused as you are, I don't know why it came back, and after so long." I saw him peering out over the edge of the ship everyday from then on, observing the destruction with a fixed stare on every village we passed.

On my final day aboard the ship destined for Pucalpa, I was chatting and sharing a cigarette with a 17-year-old boy heading for Lima to find a job. He stopped suddenly and starred at the shore, the land and trees slowly creeping by. I turned my head, trying to get a glimpse of what he was so mesmerized by. Finally, I had the courage to break the silence and ask, "What is it? What are you looking at?" He muttered, still in the babble of disbelief. "This is the first time I have ever seen a mountain", he whispered to me. In the distance, climbing towards the sky, its peak lost in the grey blanket, there was something, not a mountain, at least not like the ones I had seen crossing the Andes, but a hill at least. I laughed with joy and shared in the mystery, sighing as I thought of all the things this boy was going to discover, our collective reflection as humans during 10,000 years of civilization on this planet, in the vast 9 million-person metropolis of Lima.

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Antithesis Incarnate: Christopher Hitchens, A Retrospective Glance

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As a “public intellectual,” Christopher Hitchens’ eminently readable writings helped cast people and events from a different perspective – mostly, it must be said, one based on reality rather than received “wisdom” and prejudice. While his work was certainly refreshing in this age of competing groupthink and duckspeak across the political spectrum, unlike his hero George Orwell, one has to doubt whether his currently impressive work will still be read in seventy years time.

It is useful to compare the two. While Orwell sought to write a prose that is like a pane of glass and gave his famous list of does and don’ts, Hitchens played with words and often broke many of his mentor’s rules. The uncharitable might conclude that he was often trying to draw attention to the writer rather than the message, and they would often be right.

While Orwell tends to state his theses magisterially, if occasionally cantankerously, Hitchens’ preferred style always came as the polemic. He functioned best when he was arguing with an opponent, to the extent that by the time of the Iraq war he made his own windmill to tilt at – a collective left that did not actually exist.

Even so, re-reading *Hitch 22* reveals a more self-deprecatory and reflective person than Hitchen’s often intemperate outbursts would suggest, and at times hints at a vulnerability for which he was overcompensating. Indeed the book lists as his own “most marked characteristic,” “insecurity,” which I suspect derives from his British upbringing. Like Orwell, from the Lower Upper Middle Classes, his public (that is private)-school and Oxford background had given him a sense of entitlement without the income, and so he had become an inveterate freelancer – who I suspect turned down a commission as rarely as a cocktail invite.

As well being a rung or two down the caste ladder from Orwell, Hitchens came of age when the charm of an upper class accent was wilting in the face of working class heroes like the Beatles. And unlike in Orwell’s day when even working class socialists might defer to a “toff” who was on their side, by the 1960s even the universities were filled with students of working class origin who were more likely to see a posh accent as the mark of Cain, while the residual deference of the proles themselves had long gone. To his credit Hitchens did not attempt the nasalized pastiche plebeian accent to which his Merseyside origins might have given him some claim.

In contrast, as he and others noted, educated British arrivals in the US, particularly English ones, escape the social insecurities of home and land as honorary WASPs with almost instant deference guaranteed. An accent that in Britain would have fathers locking up their daughters

and wallets is considered high class in the US! It is no accident that Hollywood chooses that Oxbridge accent for Roman colonialists and Gestapo officers. But the combined effect of his accent and his over-reaction to insecurity enhanced the appearance of almost reflexive arrogance – certainly compared with Orwell, who let the ideas speak for themselves. Better sounding cantankerous than supercilious.

To be fair, the Socialist Workers Party, originally the International Socialist Group, to which he adhered, was more open minded and attractive intellectually than the other quantum particles splitting from the various Fourth Internationals, and its guru, Tony Cliff, although revered and influential, was not as rabbinically omnipotent as his rivals in other sects. Amusingly he anticipated Hitchens' omniscience in his works by citing other great thinkers, such as A. N. Israel and Ygael Gluckstein, without mentioning that these were some of his pen names.

While Orwell excelled at weighing courses of action in the balance and factoring desirability against feasibility, sects such as the one to which Hitchens subscribed tended to take the full prerogatives of the harlot and assume power without responsibility. That tendency was accentuated even more when he arrived in the US and drifted away from his native home where there is a spectrum of the left from ultra through to centrist with channels of communication and sometimes shared political purpose and action. In Britain even the ultra-left can talk to socialists in Parliament. In the US, many of them regard Bernie Sanders as a reformist sell-out!

Hitchens' decades in the US accustomed him to the self-denying ordinances of some of the sectarian American left, who can condemn shrilly while never having to offer practical alternatives. Particularly in relation to Iraq he should have remembered his own book on Orwell, in which he praises his hero for his realization that there was no facile analogy with appeasement when he opposed calls for a quick war against Stalin's Russia. With *Animal Farm* already out, and *1984* in preparation, Orwell opposed what could have been a successful—if bloody—attempt to overthrow a tyrannical evil regime guilty of monstrous crimes against its own people and its neighbors. Orwell thought about the consequences: Hitchens sixty years later did not, until afterwards.

All people, and all writers change over time. Some can admit to previous follies, but Hitchens found that difficult, hence the temporal consistency in his outlook since he never admitted he had been wrong before. Whatever new apercu he presented fitted over his previous views like a badly erased palimpsest, which was not always conducive to clarity and impeded a consistent and coherent worldview from his contemporary essays.

The World according to Hitchens is all too often a pointillist picture where the dots are the holes from the darts he had flung and rarely retracted. He shared with his disgruntled former comrades the same *ad-hominem* approach that they later used to bell book and candle him out of the "movement," for the perceived instances where he broke "the line." Sounding almost wounded, he writes in *Hitch 22,* "I had become too accustomed to the pseudo-Left new style, whereby if your opponent thought he had identified your lowest possible motive, he was quite

certain that he had isolated the only real one."

What he says is quite true and perspicacious. But it describes exactly his own style and that of the old left from Lenin and possibly before. He shared with his detractors on the American Left the Manichaean tendency to divide the world into black and white, cowboys and Indians, goodies and bad and a consequent proclivity to hate more well than wisely. Along with Saul Alinsky's organizational schemata it has certainly been adopted enthusiastically by the new right, with far more devastating effect. More people see this type of bile on Fox News in one program than have read Socialist Worker from its inception!

However, one reason Hitchens wrote with a renewed animosity, even at a time when his politics were aligning to reality – he began to support the Labour Party in the UK – was the bile on the left that had begun after NATO's belated intervention in Balkans – events which eventually led both Hitchens and myself to terminal breaks with *the Nation,* for example. Even if there was a certain sense of taking ones own medicine, one needs a refined sense of irony when assaulted by groups whose cardinal principles simultaneously encompassed the absolute innocence of Mumia and the wrongness of the death penalty with the infallibility of Milosevic and an apologia for the mass murder of Bosnian and Kosovar civilians.

However, after he supported the war on Iraq, the steady drip of bile became a tsunami. Above all it was the Comintern view that once someone had been outlawed, their past and future were equally excoriated. Sadly, that was a pattern he followed himself. One manifestation perhaps of his atheism is that he rarely shows signs of believing in redemption and indeed shows few signs of human sympathy. This is most un-Orwellian. Orwell made O'Brien in *1984*, almost likable, and we almost feel for the apparatchiks who do Big Brother's work.

In his biography of Orwell he shows that his subject went out of his way to defend and maintain friendly relations with people he disagreed with, sometimes profoundly. However, Hitchens range of enemies was wide, and his atheism took a Calvinist tilt, in which those not of the elect, his personal friends, had no chance of redemption for a perceived deviation. He did antipathy and rarely empathy or sympathy. He retained the Leninist binary politics that eschewed any in-betweens and fuzzy logic. In fact, he never really got social democracy even when he joined the British Labour Party in the USA!

If he could write hagiographies of Thomas Jefferson, the slave-owner and raper, why did he preserve a life long animus against his overtly Trotskyite student-era foe Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister who kept Britain out the Vietnam War in the face of relentless political and economic pressure from LBJ? Or indeed Michael Foot, a cultured and principled radical who led the Labour Party – and incidentally eloquently supported the same principles as Hitchens in the Kosovo and Falklands War?

Above all, I shared his revulsion for Bill Clinton and remember fondly when Murray Kempton shouted across a crowded UN cafeteria that he had enrolled Hitchens and myself as charter members of "Revolutionary Socialists for Bob Dole." But Hitchens churlishly refrains from

giving the rubber-spined President any credit at all, even though, belatedly he was dragged into supporting intervention on behalf of the Kosovars.

Indeed, later at the time of Iraq, he even achieved the rare feat of making Clinton seem hard done to. His newly adopted friends around the White House, the "tougher thinkers in defense department " and the "Pentagon Intellectuals," as he called them, had harried Clinton into military ineffectiveness in Kosovo and Rwanda because he had opposed the war in Vietnam but was not called up. In contrast, many of the most sedulous detractors of Clinton actually agreed with the Vietnam war – but dodged the draft and then went on to wage war in Iraq. Hitchens' response was to attack those who used the well-deserved epithet "Chicken Hawk" against the Bush coterie since the "Pentagon intellectuals" were not of age or health to qualify in the new volunteer army. Heredity triumphs. Few if any of their offspring ran to the colors.

Once can only put down these jejune excuses to a relapse into the polemical mode of the sects, in which once the enemy has been identified, you throw everything you can at him while fiercely defending your own side. The problem is, of course, that someone of his genuine intellectual acuity should have been able to weigh the relatives masses of beams and motes in the eyes on either side.

Even so, re-reading *Hitch 22* reveals a more self-deprecatory and reflective person than the author's occasionally intemperate outbursts would suggest, and at times hints at a vulnerability and insecurity for which he was overcompensating. Indeed the book lists as his own "most marked characteristic," "insecurity," which as I said earlier reflects his British upbringing.

He compensated for this with strong relationships with friends – sometimes enough to evoke scabrous rumors from observers. His account of his disagreements with, for example Edward Said, has more than a hint of a feeling of personal betrayal. In this, I too argued with Said about the Balkan Wars and his Chomskyite view of the US as the only permitted target, but certainly agreed with him about most of the targets he did pick!

Hitchens made the Iraq War his own equivalent of the Leftist loyalty oath, and preemptively put the mark of Cain on all who disagreed. In the shrill and un-nuanced "A Long Short War," about the war he tried to maintain all the old positions he held on the Left, while uncritically embracing his new friends "the Pentagon Intellectuals" or the "tougher thinkers in the Defense Department." For a time he had become a free floating antithesis with not much thesis, unless you accepted as such his claims of wisdom and morality for the Bush administration.

It is also true that many Leftists, whoring after strange gods as is their wont, were putting Saddam Hussein along with Slobodan Milosevic and later Gaddafi and Assad in the Pantheon of progressive heroes. However, contrary to the customized windmill he had built to tilt at, many others were not, but were disturbed by a militarist lynch mob that disregarded international law, manufactured evidence and carried out the intervention so clumsily that more Iraqis died than at the hands of the tyrant's forces.

"First do no harm," was the old Hippocratic advice to surgeons, and the coterie around Bush

might indeed have removed a malignant tumor when they excised the Ba'athist regime, but they also eviscerated and lobotomized Iraqi society in the process. On a national scale, "it was destroying the village to save it," which was an entirely predictable consequence of a war fought by the ignorant, malignant and ideologically driven, who before the first shot had cast aside the lamentably few people in the State Department who knew anything about the country and the region.

It was pleasant to see that before he died, even if he had no doubts about godlessness, he did have those second thoughts about the conduct of the war. Uncharacteristically he had, if not withdrawn from his positions, at least, shall we say, ceased to state them so emphatically. He admits "I probably now know more about the impeachable incompetence of the Bush administration than do many of those who would have left Iraq in the hands of Saddam," and adds in possibly the nearest thing to admission that "even though they don't alter the case against Ba'athism, (they) have permanently disfigured the record of those of us who made that case."

It is typical Hitchens to claim that he is better informed about the arguments against cheering the White House to war than many on the Left he reviled had pointed out at the time that he was cheering on a mad-axeman to carry out brain surgery. I drank with him shortly after his meetings with Paul Wolfowitz, which clearly flattered and intrigued him. Without succumbing to Hitchens' unfettered admiration, it is indeed possible that if Wolfowitz had had more influence on the conduct of the war many of its more disastrous outcomes would have been avoided. It is true, for example, that Wolfowitz had the chutzpah and foresight to tell AIPAC that the Palestinians had genuine issues that needed resolution. But once it was clear that the tenuous rational element in the administration had been sidelines, why did he not at least scale down to merely two cheers for the war effort? Why act as a champion of Bush while casting Clinton into outer darkness? Was it because as Kissinger said of the latter "he does not have the strength of character to be a war criminal?" Or was he just as "loyal," in his own way, to his enemies as he was to his friends? On the loyalty front, while Britishers are rarely "loyal" to their native land in the American sense of tub thumping, one wonders what the quietly patriotic Orwell would have made of Hitchen's un-British enthusiastic professions of loyalty to his new American home when he took his oath?

Hitchens left the left by means of redefining it, to exclude a humanitarian and democratic socialist view to which he was hewing by the end. However, he was right (and Left) far more than he was wrong, because he derived his positions from opposition to all forms of tyranny and barbaric governments without making expedient tribal or geopolitical exceptions.

Now that he is dead, proving if it needed it that there are indeed atheists in hospices, it seems almost churlish to consider tone and attitude so important. After all, most of his targets deserved some, at least, of the winged arrows of outraged morality. However, one cannot help feeling that such unbalanced denunciation can lead philosophically to the totalitarianism that he otherwise fought against strenuously and sincerely.

In the end, that is why, much as I enjoyed talking and drinking with him, like a bar chat, his works are stimulating and enjoyable, but on a longer scale ephemeral. Like the plaster casts from Pompeii, future readers would have to fill in the centre to determine what he was *for* by reference to those whom he was so clearly against. And they are hardly great turning reference points. Hitchens is cursed with an age where even bad guys are eminently forgettable. In future years Mother Theresa will be one of those minor saints in the RC calendar and Bill Clinton will be down there with Millard Filmore as an historical footnote, the blow-job forgotten as the DNA sample on Monica's frock breaks down. There are probably more people know Dr Strangelove from TV re-runs than know Henry Kissinger.

But aberrations of intemperance aside, the sins of totalitarianism, hypocrisy and complaisance in the face of evil against which he railed are still rampant. It is sad to see his voice silenced, now.

Ian Williams was born in Liverpool about the same time as Christopher Hitchens to an upper lower working class family, was expelled from Liverpool University, worked on the railroad and in the union before becoming a writer and journalist in the USA. He was always surprised at how often a teenage Maoist like him and a teenage Trotskyist like Hitchens agreed on things. He drinks but does not smoke. His collected works tend to appear in deadlinepundit.blogspot.com.

Modernism, Surrealism, and the Political Imaginary

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Surrealism had the longest tenure of any avant-garde movement, and its members were arguably the most "political."1 It emerged on the heels of World War I, when André Breton founded his first journal, *Literature*, and brought together a number of figures who had mostly come to know each other during the war years. They included Louis Aragon, Marc Chagall, Marcel Duchamp, Paul Eluard, Max Ernst, René Magritte, Francis Picabia, Pablo Picasso, Phillippe Soupault, Yves Tanguey, and Tristan Tzara. Some were "absolute" surrealists and others were merely associated with the movement, which lasted into the 1950s. The intervening years saw a shift from the original concern with the purely intuitive to a somewhat more rational—and perhaps more political—standpoint. But there were always journals intent on providing philosophical justification for surrealist artistic experiments, including *La Revolution surrealiste* and *Le Surrealisme au service de la revolution*. These were also edited by Breton. His novel *Nadja* (1928) is in this regard far less important than his countless essays, speeches, and manifestos.

Other writers offered important pronouncements and views about the character, interests, and politics of surrealism. Nevertheless, André Breton was its leading light, and he offered what might be termed the master narrative of the movement.2

No other modernist trend had a theorist as intellectually sophisticated or an organizer quite as talented as Breton. No other was [as] international in its reach and as total in its confrontation with reality. No other [fused] psychoanalysis and proletarian revolution. No other was so blatant in its embrace of free association and "automatic writing." No other would so use the audience to complete the work of art. There was no looking back to the past, as with the expressionists, and little of the macho rhetoric of the futurists. Surrealists prized individualism and rebellion—and no other movement would prove so commercially successful in promoting its luminaries. The surrealists wanted to change the world, and they did. At the same time, however, the world changed them. The question is whether their aesthetic outlook and cultural production were decisive in shaping their political worldview—or whether, beyond the inflated philosophical claims and ongoing esoteric qualifications, the connection between them is more indirect and elusive.

Influences

Surrealism was fueled by a romantic impulse. It emphasized the new against the dictates of

tradition, the intensity of lived experience against passive contemplation, subjectivity against the consensually real, and the imagination against the instrumentally rational. Solidarity was understood as an inner bond with the oppressed. Surrealism took shape around 1924. Its influences reach back to Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Alfred Jarry, and Guillaume Apollinaire.3 Ultimately, however, the surrealist enterprise rests on one basic claim: "To each according to his desire!" Intent on heightening human powers and making each person cognizant of his or her repressed feelings, the surrealists appropriated cubism and Dada to explode the established habits and perceptions of everyday life. But the latter was surely closer to their heart. Cubism was already established when surrealism was born, and that made it a target. Breton surely smiled at Picabia's 1920 Dadaist "portrait" of Cezanne as a montage of a stuffed monkey. The surrealists also had no interest in reducing reality to its elemental geometric forms. But they did employ an invention of Picasso and Braque's: the collage composed from different shards of reality. The cubist collage elicited a reconstruction of the canvas—and the meaning of the work. The arbitrarily constructed character of everyday life was thereby rendered manifest. The associative moment within the cubist collage ultimately led the surrealists to look beyond the real—not simply "above" it, as the word *sur* literally implies. They were concerned with deepening our understanding of what comprises reality. Breton called for the "great refusal" of what is taken for existence in order to evoke and cultivate the dream element within the experience of everyday life. In jokes, slips of the tongue, and unpremeditated actions surrealists insisted that hopes for liberation were protected from the "reality principle." Even if the surrealists ultimately rejected the clinical aspect of psychoanalysis, it only makes sense that they should have been led to Freud and his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899).

But first there was Dada. Committed to anti-art, addicted to the outrageous and the satirical, Dada began at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich in 1916. Switzerland was neutral during World War I, and Zurich's geographic proximity to all the European combatants made it a center for dissidents and resisters of all sorts. Lenin lived across the street from the Cabaret Voltaire, where after learning of the capitulation to the war fever by international social democracy, he suffered a near breakdown and then began a close study of Hegel.4 Famous writers preaching pacifism like Hermann Hesse, Romain Rolland, and Stefan Zweig were in Zurich as well. But they were already established […]. The young and unknown artists with a radical temperament were brought together by Hugo Ball, who invented the "sound poem," and Emmy Hennings. These [new] artists were of different nationalities: Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco came from Romania, Richard Huelsenbeck from Germany, Jean Arp from Alsace—and there were many more. As Lenin and his few comrades ruminated on revolution, and pacifists sought to dampen chauvinist attitudes, the young rebels blended these two positions with bohemian contempt for the civilization that had produced the conflict.

Dada was a meaningless word supposedly picked arbitrarily from a children's dictionary either by Tzara, Arp, or Ball.5 The term was meant to reflect the meaninglessness of language and rationality in a world that had become meaningless—and that needed this meaninglessness thrown in its face. The Dadaists complied. Its founders had as little interest in psychoanalysis as they did in historical materialism or anything systematic. They instead looked for inspiration

to poets like Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine—whose relationship was satirized in Bertolt Brecht's first play, *Baal* (1918)—and Apollinaire, who sought a language of immediacy devoid of syntax, punctuation, adjectives, or embellishment. But what made the Dadaists famous was a kind of performance aesthetic that poured scorn on established aesthetic conventions as well as the audience. Entering such a performance might involve walking through a huge urinal only to find a Dadaist "poet" declaiming poetry composed of nonsense words that were arbitrarily strung together, while another poet talked loudly over him. Unscripted Dadaist "dance" might follow in concert with improvised Dadaist "music" that was little more than noise or the thumping of a drum. All of this constituted a new kind of performance art predicated on shock and immediacy—and spiced with what Tristan Tzara termed "Dadaist disgust" for the established order of life and art.

Dada mirrored a world gone mad with its own madness: its pranks, jokes, irony, playful barbarism, rejection of society, celebratory individualism, and expansion of the material and methods employed by the visual arts all served its protest (and served to define the political limits of that protest). The aesthetic violence directed by Dada against art was meant to yield anti-art. Defined by what it opposed, indeed, anti-art was soon bound for the museum. Certain members of the movement were explicitly political from the beginning, such as George Grosz and John Heartfield. [Few] of the Dadaists, however, were ever connected with pacifist or even revolutionary elements of the international labor movement.6 [Few] of them were particularly concerned with the important antiwar gatherings that took place at Zimmerwald and Kienthal in 1915–16, let alone the postwar proletarian rebellions that rocked Europe in the aftermath of World War I.7 Dada was uninterested in organized political engagement. Its resistance was bohemian in style, vague in purpose, and without any connection to the masses. Indignation rather than resistance best defines the sensibility of the Dadaist, which emerged just as trench warfare was turning men into material and individual battles were costing the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Civilization thus did appear at an end—and Dada celebrated its passing. Nevertheless, for better or worse, it was ultimately "civilization" that lived and Dada that died.

Surrealism was Dada's heir. The new movement was more conscious of its aesthetic influences and more explicit in its political posture. The basic idea of surrealism is simple enough, and that defines its power. Everyday life or the habitual reality we experience is, according to Breton, a barrier to the expression of those manifold and unspoken desires encoded in dreams. Art should bridge the antithetical relation between reality and the dream—fuse them in the name of a new and superior reality, or the "surreal." What Walter Benjamin termed the "poverty of the interior" becomes the target of surrealism and its attempt to transform everyday life.8 Evoking the consciousness of that poverty—or, to use another famous phrase from Benjamin, winning "the energies of intoxication for the revolution"—thus becomes the purpose of the surrealist enterprise. 9

Creating the associative conditions for the exercise of the imagination—or, better, producing a kind of twilight or daydream—was seen as breaking down the wall between artist and audience. The audience becomes an integral part of the artwork. Montage [is] crucial in

destroying the barrier between the normal and the abnormal. The juxtaposition of dissimilar objects in [, say,] the *Lobster Telephone* (1936) of Dalí [does not] provide a work whose meaning can be objectively determined by individual members of the audience. There is, in short, no "message." Shock may inspire viewers, but the signification each gives to the montage will differ. Insofar as this multiplication of significations is achieved, each member of the audience will complete the artwork in his or her own way. This purpose underpins automatic writing. Many might collaborate on a surrealist novel: one writer stays up all night, exists in the twilight, and lets the unconscious dictate his thoughts, while the next writer prepares to take up the pen once his friend collapses from exhaustion. The point is to subvert the idea that writing (or art) is reserved for the "writer" or the "artist." With automatic writing, indeed, anyone can write and everyone is an artist. Syntax, punctuation, and coherence—let alone narrative structure—are unnecessary. "In this regard, the will to open the floodgates doubtless will remain the generative idea of surrealism."10

The artist liberates the unconscious, creates the proper ambience, and thereby provides a free association of thoughts whose connection is determined by the reader in variable fashion from one moment to another.11 Coincidence, chance, and the arbitrary thus become enduring themes of surrealist art and literature. Things will no longer be what they seem. Cartoons like Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) can make mushrooms dance. Hashish, heroin, and opium can aid the creative process. Everything must be rendered transient and the objects of everyday life open to interpretation and reinterpretation. Breton made this clear when he wrote that "the earth, draped in its verdant cloak [,] makes as little impression upon me as a ghost. It is living and ceasing to live that are imaginary solutions. Existence is elsewhere."12 Only from the perspective of "elsewhere" can the surrealist overthrow the established habits and perceptions of everyday life.13 And such a task demands a concern with the "alienation of sensation," an obsession with "objective chance," and the use of "black humor."14 Aesthetically expressing these concerns [fosters] a new solidarity between the artist and the audience, in which, following Lautreamont, "poetry must be made by all, not by one." Whether any of this has anything to do with dialectics, however, is another matter—one that deserves scrutiny.

Interlude—The Myth of the Surrealist Dialectic

None of the surrealists, ultimately, had anything more than cursory knowledge of the dialectical tradition. Though Breton first published Lenin's "Philosophical Notebooks," which highlighted the importance of Hegel for Marxism, Hegel had no influence on French intellectual and cultural life prior to World War I. Genuine intellectual interest in Hegel, indeed, began only during the 1930s when Alexandre Kojève—Wassily Kandinsky's cousin—gave his legendary lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807).15 The surrealists gained their knowledge about dialectics neither from the classroom nor from the political struggle; they learned about it in cafes. Unlike Hegel and Marx, the surrealists never considered freedom as the insight into necessity, and they had no use for […] basic dialectical categories like mediation and determination. Breton was content to insist on the mix, or twilight, that exists between the conscious and the unconscious, the real and the imaginative, the aesthetic and the political. Thus he wrote,

Everything leads to the belief that there exists a certain point of mind at which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low, are not perceived as contradictions. It would be vain to attribute to surrealism any other motive than the hope of determining this point. It is clear, moreover[,] that it would be absurd to ascribe to surrealism either a purely destructive or a purely constructive character—the point at issue being precisely this: that construction and destruction can no longer be brandished against each other.16

Surrealism called for total revolution. It highlighted the blending of the real and the surreal. Critical consciousness requires something more, however, than the evocation of the surrealist twilight or insight into "the crisis of the object." The dialectical method is not intent on making reality more arbitrary in its associative possibilities, but of (thematically) rendering it more transparent and comprehensible. For Hegel and Marx, indeed, it was a matter of determining how the object was constituted in its historical specificity and how its workings might be rendered *consensually* visible.17 Admittedly, Breton wished to move beyond philosophy and stated openly that "at the point where [the surrealists] found it*, the dialectical method in its Hegelian form was inapplicable*."18 But he elided the question of whether surrealism and the dialectical tradition began with mutually exclusive assumptions. He simply insisted that surrealism was the application of dialectical materialism to art.

Most critics took him at his word. Herbert Read, among the most famous English art critics of the twentieth century, saw surrealism as dialectically bridging the gap between aesthetic radicalism and a socialist outlook. A staunch defender of modernism and an anarchist who was later knighted, he tried to fit surrealism into a conventional rationalist tradition with which it had nothing in common. Breton and his friends were always explicit in their rejection of reason in any guise related to systems or methodological coherence.19 Read's identification of reality-dream[-] and "supra-reality" with the famous thesis-antithesis-synthesis model offered by Hegel and Marx is also mechanical and misleading.20 The same holds for using the "romantic principle," the primacy of imagination, as a form of agency. English philosophers bred in the analytic and empiricist traditions have always had a difficult time with Hegel and the idealist interpretation of Marx. Neither Walter Benjamin nor T. W. Adorno, however, had any such excuse. Both were deeply committed to the modernist enterprise, and they sought to justify surrealism in the same terms that they used to justify their own work.

Benjamin, in his 1929 "Surrealism" essay, praised Breton and his friends for providing the "dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable and the impenetrable as the everyday." Benjamin was struck by the way surrealist novels fastened onto seemingly insignificant objects and, through montage, created an overarching "atmosphere" that generated a reinvigorated sense of everyday life. […]He later employed similar techniques in his vast and unfinished *Arcades Project* (1927–40) that sought to illuminate modernity by juxtaposing cited texts without authorial comment. Benjamin praised the surrealists for generating the kind of "intoxication" that might fuel revolutionary politics. Adorno was more skeptical. He shrewdly noted that surrealist constructions are merely analogous to dreams, and that people do not dream the way surrealists seem to think they do. What Adorno rightfully

admired was how surrealism suspends conventional logic and "rules of the game of empirical evidence" in favor of a shattering—a regrouping and dissolution of objects. He was content to note that surrealist images merely express the "dialectic of subjective freedom in a situation of objective un-freedom."21

But this has nothing to do with political practice. Breton would surely have condemned such a metaphysical view of resistance. He wanted the total revolution and he wanted politics too. Neither Hegel nor Marx, however, believed that "existence is elsewhere" or that the struggle for liberation could be furthered by some indeterminate juxtaposition of dream and reality. They knew that the denial of necessity is the denial of politics—and, thus, of the dialectic.

The Political Imaginary

Expressionism and Dada made way for the New Sobriety around 1921 in Germany. Utopianism and pathos, wild rebellion and satirical lunacy, made way for a colder and more reflective outlook. Most point to the devastating impact of World War I, the improved economic situation in the aftermath of terrible inflation, and the calm that followed the failure of extremist uprisings. But France suffered as much, if not more, than any other nation from the Great War: the bloodiest battles were fought on its territory, one in four families suffered a death at the front, and victory was as costly as defeat. French economic life was also devastated by the war, and victory did little for the reputation of the Third Republic. Postwar protests were relatively tame in France, but like Germany, it witnessed the Communist Party emerge as a significant minority within its labor movement. Both countries experienced an economic recovery around 1924, seeming stability, and the return of the working class to its social democratic roots, or what Leon Blum termed "the old house." A movement like the New Sobriety should have taken over in France. But French bohemian and anarchist traditions changed the equation. Surrealism, instead, proved triumphant.

Imperial Berlin was not Paris; Germany lacked a bohemian tradition that in France was idealized in Henri Murger's *Scenes of Bohemian Life* (1847)—which served as the basis for Giaccomo Puccini's *La Bohème* (1896)—and extended over Georges Sand and Baudelaire to Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Apollinaire. Anarchism also had an importance in France that it lacked in Germany, whose socialist movement was the organizational model for Europe. The expulsion of a tiny, rambunctious minority known as "The Youth" (*Die Jugend*) from the German Social Democratic Party in 1882 deprived anarchism of any further political influence. With its emphasis on nonparticipation in parliamentary politics, by contrast, anarchist syndicalism had great power in the French labor unions, and many radicals were sympathetic to individual acts of terror, or what was known as "the propaganda of the deed." The anarchist tradition in France stretched back beyond the Paris Commune of 1871 to Gracchus Babeuf and the Conspiracy of Equals in 1796. Bohemianism and anarchism set the stage for surrealism and its overarching contestation of reality.

“Surrealism,” wrote Breton, “asserts our absolute *non-conformism* so clearly that there can be no question of claiming it as a witness when the world comes up for trial.”22 The ultimate expression of nonconformism, of course, is the gratuitous act. Breton made use of the idea to *épater le bourgeois* with his notorious claims that “the perfect surrealist act would be to go into a crowd and start shooting” and that his ultimate desire was to “blow up” the Arc de Triomphe “after burying it in a mountain of manure.” Bohemian radicalism fueled the surrealist attempt to pit the pleasure principle against the reality principle. French anarchism highlighted the radical empowerment of the proletariat through unions and the general strike; it sought to abolish the state and break society’s longstanding reactionary attachments to nationalism, religion, and militarism. Surrealism blended these two currents in a new theory of total revolution.

Breton and his friends openly attacked the rising chauvinism of the French Right in their “Open Letter to Paul Claudel” in 1925 and staged a mock trial for Maurice Barres, a founder of the protofascist *L’Action francaise* and a famous writer. There is no reason to doubt that Breton joined the Communist Party in 1927 [in a quixotic and romantic attempt] to support the fading “Workers’ Opposition” that stood for proletarian democracy and artistic freedom during the radical decline in Trotsky’s influence and Stalin’s tightening of the reins of power in the Soviet Union. Breton, along with a minority of his surrealist friends such as Benjamin Peret and Gerard Rosenthal, remained not merely subversive of bourgeois culture but also of all attempts to impose a proletarian art.23 Identification with the outsider and the heroic underdog obviously played a role in all of this. Trotsky remained the surrealists’ political muse.24 Breton endorsed virtually all of his political choices: his pluralistic position on art, his call for a “united front” in the 1920s, his identification with the strikes that greeted the Popular Front of 1936 and opposition to its “continuation of politics as usual,” his support for the anticommunist Unified Marxist Workers Party (POUM) and the anarchists during the Spanish Civil War,25 his contempt for the Moscow Trials,26 his view of the Soviet Union as a “degenerate workers’ state,” his loyalty to the original vision of 1917, and his commitment to international revolution.27

These are positions on which it is possible to agree or disagree. None of them, however, has anything intrinsically to do with surrealism. Supporters of Trotsky came with the most diverse aesthetic and political views. Many of the original surrealists like Aragon, Eluard, and Tzara (it is worth noting) ultimately renounced their bohemian past and became dogmatic adherents of the Communist Party. But there is a way in which the surrealists were always uneasy about their connection to political organizations, and the organizations were also uneasy about them. Aside from those who were abject in their surrender, in fact, there is a general truth to what Sartre said of Picasso with respect to his association with the Communist Party in the 1930s: “The party can neither swallow him down nor vomit him up.” The Comintern understood the public value of famous artists like Picasso, who during the 1930s and ’40s tempered the more radical surrealist use of montage and old ideas about the unconscious and dreams in works like *Guernica* (1939). Indeed, the title serves as an avenue into the painting and sets the context for the feelings it evokes.28

Surrealism was aesthetically innovative, intellectually daring, and scandalous. But there is nothing intrinsically revolutionary or even political about any of this. Acting as the guilty conscience of society can be achieved through the naturalism of Emile Zola, Upton Sinclair, and Aleksander Solzhenitsyn just as easily—and perhaps more easily—than through surrealism. Breton was candid in noting that surrealism explores "the other side of the real." His own collages, montages, and "poem objects" highlight the "uninterrupted becoming of any object." They don't illuminate real conflicts of ideological and material interest between competing social and political forces. Surrealism interrogates the latent content of everyday life, questions the "givenness" of things, and expresses the disorientation that modernity produced in the aftermath of World War I. Dalí employed a host of innovative techniques like montage for just this reason in his most famous paintings as well as in the dream sequences he composed for Alfred Hitchcock in his commercial film *Spellbound* (1945).29

None of this had anything to do with politics. Surrealism generated a sense of fun and wonder in the audience. Its artists still evoke a sense of discomfort with reality and the feeling that things can be different. Surrealism may thus foster a psychological or subterranean desire for change. All this, however, requires no further justification. Neither a dialectical foundation nor a revolutionary politics is necessary in order to exercise the imagination. Surrealist art offers its own reward.

Beyond Europe

Do you wish to see with your own eye, the hidden springs of the social revolution? Look at the frescoes of Rivera. Do you wish to know what revolutionary art is like? Look at the frescoes of Rivera.

—Leon Trotsky

Surrealism is still associated with "the great refusal." Herbert Marcuse and other cultural radicals of the 1960s embraced the term, originally coined by Breton: it sealed the identification of nonconformism with politics. Through the lens of the cult-like popularity of the situationists,30 whose idea of politics rested on disrupting and reinventing the "spectacle" of everyday life, the surrealists only gained further revolutionary credence. Forgotten were other artistic groups, whose members often overlapped with the surrealists in the bohemian cafés of Paris during the 1920s, and who understood anarchism and the revolutionary political character of their art very differently. That is especially the case with Latin American painters of the 1920s [who, while] deeply affected by indigenous sources like Jorge Posada, were also influenced by Cezanne and his (politically quiescent) cubist followers. The most politically important of them was Diego Rivera. But his wife, Frieda Kahlo, painted striking portraits and scenes of everyday life. David Alfara Siqueiros produced ominous propaganda paintings and left a host of unfinished murals. There was also José Clemente Orozco, whose singular works evidence not only a frustrated Christian vision of redemption but also a deep attachment to the fight of the oppressed and the experience of oppression in Mexico.

These artists, too, had only the most superficial knowledge of the political conflicts raging in the Communist International during the interwar period, never mind the theories of Marx, Lenin, or Trotsky.31 Most drifted in and out of the Communist Party, and Siqueiros even played a prominent role in a plot to assassinate Trotsky. Others like Kahlo and Rivera, who became friendly with Breton, associated themselves with the bitter rival of Stalin who would become exiled in Mexico. Neither painter was obsessed with immediacy or the shocking effect for its own sake, as in the case of, say, the famous cutting of the eye in the film *The Andalusian Dog* (1929) by Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dalí. Conscious of themselves as "revolutionary artists" (in the dual meaning of the term) and banding together during the heroic years of the Russian Revolution, Rivera and his comrades were adamant in their rejection of both abstraction as an end unto itself—the pathos so often associated with expressionism—and any doctrinaire form of socialist realism. They expressed their politics and their dreams in their work (often using surrealist techniques), even as they embodied unique mixtures of the personal and the political in a painterly anticipation of what would become known as "magic realism." This was especially the case with Kahlo, but also with Rivera, who introduced some of "the most important development in murals since the Renaissance."32

Reinventing the fresco and evidencing a genuine desire to communicate the struggle of the exploited and disenfranchised, Rivera wished to "paint the revolution" on the walls of world capitals. He showed the constraints, limits, and explosive possibilities of change in the 124 panels decorating the Education Building and the National Palace in Mexico City, as well as those in the Agricultural School at Chiapingo.33 *The Earth Oppressed* (1925), *Night of the Rich* (1926), and *Night of the Poor* (1926) were anything but beautiful, and critics coined a new word, *feismo* (uglyism), to describe them.34 Works like these, precisely because they do not translate into book illustrations or wall posters, evidence the singularity of painting for a new age. They are not painted for the singular buyer or intended for the museum or private collection. They are painted so that anyone can see them, and insofar as they exist on public walls or public buildings, they alter the experience of everyday life. They are not self-referential in their revolutionary aspirations, but portray a lived collective experience through an individual vision. With his wonderful murals, Rivera brings about an encounter with history, fosters an anti-imperialist sensibility, and—perhaps above all—builds a sense of radical political tradition.

Rivera's dreams always enter the story and fashion the vision. But the associations are never free; they always have an objective referent: the Paris Commune, the First International, or the Mexican struggles of peasant revolutionaries and the betrayal of their hopes. Rivera's magnificent historico-allegorical mural of Mexican history that began with *Before the Conquest* soon enough resulted in "not a painting but a world on a wall [that] became a treasure mine of iconography . . . [and that] an archaeologist of the future could use to lean more of Mexico, actual and legendary, than any other single monument in history would reveal of any other civilization."35 In a somewhat more modest vein Rivera's *Communist Unity Panel* (1933)—destroyed at the behest of the buyers after it was commissioned to adorn Radio City Music Hall in New York—creates an objective referent for onlookers by depicting the great political figures of an international movement, including "Stalin the Executioner." Rivera and

his comrades were concerned with the concrete hopes that still fuel the struggle of the exploited and the disenfranchised. Their artistry carries forward not only the dialectical legacy of Hegel and Marx but the [most] genuinely political legacy of modernism as well.

Notes

1. Note the excellent survey by Mary Ann Caws, *Surrealism* (London: Phaidon, 2010); and the standard work by Maurice Nadeau, *A History of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Howard (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

2. André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Lane and Helen Seaver (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), and *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York: Pathfinder, 1978).

3. Note the listing of authors according to the criterion of "Read . . . Don't Read" in André Breton, "The First Dalí Exhibition," in *What Is Surrealism?* 46.

4. Lenin [highlighted the primacy of consciousness in revolutionary theory and thereby legitimated] carrying through the proletarian revolution in Russia under conditions of economic underdevelopment with his [famous] claim that "intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism." Lenin, "Philosophical Notebooks," in *Collected Works* (Moscow: International Publishers, 1961), 38:276.

5. William S. Rubin, *Dada and Surrealist Art* (New York: Abrams, 1968), 64.

6. "My 'politics' is only concerned with the 'spiritual' [*Geistigen*] and, in Germany, it's useless to upset oneself." Hugo Ball, *Briefe, 1911–1927* (Zurich: Bensinger Verlag, 1957), 41.

7. Julius Braunthal, *History of the International* (New York: Praeger, 1967) 2:36ff.

8. Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism," in *Reflections: Aphorisms, Essays, and Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz and trans. E. Jephcott (New York: Harcourt, 1978). Also note the fine discussion by Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 126ff.

9. "The immoderation of the Surrealists attracted [Benjamin] more profoundly than the studied pretentiousness of literary Expressionism, in which he discerned elements of insincerity and bluff. . . . Benjamin was not an ecstatic, but the ecstasies of revolutionary utopias and the surrealistic immersion in the unconscious were to him, so to speak, keys for the opening of his own world for which he was seeking altogether different, strict, and disciplined forms of expression." Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1981), 135.

10. Breton, “The Automatic Message,” in *What Is Surrealism?* 101.

11. “An appeal to automatism in all its forms is our only chance of resolving, outside the economic plane, all the antinomies which, since they existed before our present social regime was formed, are not likely to disappear with it. . . . [These] are the contradictions of being awake and sleeping (of reality and dream), of reason and madness, of objectivity and subjectivity, of perception and representation, of past and future, of the collective sense and individual love; even of life and death.” Breton, “Limits Not Frontiers of Surrealism,” in *What Is Surrealism?* 155.

12. Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 47.

13. For some interesting reflections, see Herbert Marcuse, “Letters to the Chicago Surrealists,” in *Arsenal* 4 (1989): 31–47.

14. Breton, “Interview with ‘View’ Magazine,” in *What Is Surrealism?* 203–4.

15. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the “Phenomenology of Spirit,”* ed. Allan Bloom and trans. James H. Nichols Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

16. Breton, “What Is Surrealism?” in *What Is Surrealism?* 129.

17. Stephen Eric Bronner, “Sketching the Lineage: The Critical Method and the Idealist Tradition,” in *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 16ff, 21ff.

18. Breton, “What Is Surrealism?” 130; italics added.

19. Surrealism in “its very definition holds that it must escape, in its written manifestation, or any others, from all control exercised by reason.” Ibid., 128.

20. Herbert Read, “Surrealism and the Romantic Principle,” in *The Philosophy of Modern Art* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), 110ff.

21. Theodor W. Adorno, “Looking Back on Surrealism” in *Notes to Literature*, 2 vols., trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 88.

22. Breton, “What Is Surrealism?” in *What Is Surrealism?* 125.

23. Breton, “On Proletarian Literature,” in *What Is Surrealism?* 89ff.

24. See Breton’s beautiful “Visit with Leon Trotsky” in *What Is Surrealism?* 173ff.

25. Ibid., 175ff.

26. Breton, “Declaration on the Second Moscow Trial,” in *What Is Surrealism?* 168ff.

27. Note Breton's "Speech to Young Haitian Poets," which inflamed the intellectuals of that impoverished country in 1945 and sparked a successful uprising against a dictatorial regime. *What Is Surrealism?* 258ff.

28. "But the painting quickly became legendary and has remained legendary. It is the most famous painting of the twentieth century. It is thought of as a continuous protest against the brutality of fascism in particular and modern war in general. How true is this? How much applies to the actual painting and how much is the result of what happened after it was painted?" John Berger, *Success and Failure of Picasso* (Penguin: Baltimore, 1965), 165ff.

29. Sara Cochran, "Spellbound," in *Dalí and Film*, ed. Matthew Gale (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 174ff.

30. Fixing a call for radical forms of worker democracy with a critique of "total consumption" and the prefabrication of experience through the "spectacle" of commodity culture, the situationists were a blend of vanguard and avant-garde who sought to bring the revolution into everyday life by staging what might be termed counterspectacles and deconstructing the givenness of our perceptions. Their most famous representative, who became something of a cult figure [in the 1960s], was Guy DeBord. See his book *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Fredy Perlman and John Supak (Chicago: Black and Red, 1983).

31. "None of the painters ever took the trouble to study the writings of Marx and Lenin whose names on occasion they evoked. Even Modigliani, whose brother was an outstanding leader of the Italian Socialists, knew nothing of the literature of Marxism. Mastering political and economic treatises was not their métier. All that Diego [Rivera] ever knew of Marx's writings or of Lenin's, as I had ample occasion to verify, was a little handful of commonplace slogans which had attained wide currency." Bertram D. Wolfe, *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera* (New York: Stein and Day, 1969), 419.

32. Ibid., 142.

33. Luis Martin Luzano and Juan Coronel Rivera, *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals* (New York: Taschen, 2008).

34. Ibid., 203.

35. Ibid., 263.

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Racialized Consciousness, Symbolic Representionalism, and the Prophetic/Critical Voice of the Black Intellectual

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I. Introduction: A Night to Remember So that We Can Forget

November 4th, 2008 was a night that African Americans will always remember. It was also a night that most white Americans will also remember. Unfortunately, it was also a night that allowed many Americans to forget that which should never be forgotten. What have we forgotten? We have forgotten the simple fact that racism is alive and well in the USA. This is a fact that many (particularly white Americans) strive to forget. In an interview entitled "Giving Whiteness a Black Eye: Excavating White Identities, Ideologies, and Institutions" Michael Eric Dyson states: "In regard to race, we are living in the United States of Amnesia. We've got to revoke our citizenship in what Joseph Lowery terms "the 51st state, the state of denial."[1]

Indeed, the day after the election I experienced this denial in full effect. At a conference in Washington D.C. on the philosophy of Alain Locke, our keynote speaker, Professor Paul Taylor, in his address warned us against our pre-mature celebration of a post-racist America. I was in agreement with Taylor. However, I was astonished by the resistance to Taylor's warning. That night at dinner a couple of white colleagues and friends were quite critical of Taylor's position, a position that I defended. As I sat and talked with them I found myself in the same position that I've been in too often to remember in my twenty plus years in institutions of higher learning. That is, I found myself trying to explain to my white friends how racism doesn't just go away. Even when it seems that racism no longer has the power to influence our decisions at the voting booth, it still has a strange way of surviving. The sensitive victim of racism is painfully aware of how racism evolves and adapts so that it may bite us from behind. In other words, I found myself working as an anti-racist surgeon with scalpel in hand trying to remove the cancerous blindfold from the eyes of my friends. How frustrating!

It is this kind of experience with highly intelligent, well-intentioned, white liberals, who sincerely want to see racism come to an end that propels the critical consciousness and to some degree defines the critical role of the Black intellectual. My friends were ready to eulogize racism after the election of Obama. Such a move would only insure the survival of racism.

In this paper I will address the way in which even anti-racist, liberal whites fall victim to the evolution of racism. Parts II will address what I call "racialized consciousness which is an attitude that permeates American society and allows new forms of racism to develop and persist undetected. Part III will deal with the social mechanisms that work to maintain the structure of white supremacy while acknowledging African American achievement. In Part IV will finally discuss the critical role of the modern Black intellectual. The reason for saving my discussion of the critical role of the modern black intellectual until last is because before such a role can be discussed we must be clear about how racism works in this age of Obama.

II. Racialized Consciousness and Epistemologies of Ignorance

Nothing bothers me more than when TV talk show hosts invite as their guest groups like the KKK and the White Patriots Party, when they want to address the problem of racism in the US. So, the audience gets to see a group of intellectually impaired individuals express their hatred for Blacks, Jews and gays. This group is quickly ridiculed by the host and the audience. What bothers me about this is not the racist individuals on stage, I can't take them seriously. I am bothered by the fact that Americans idea of racism is reduced to such groups. This allows white Americans who not only do not belong to, but in fact, oppose such groups to think that they are not racist. It allows them to get off the hook.

My critique here will not be of the blatant racist or white supremists, rather, I'm more concerned about those who get themselves off the hook by saying "I'm not like them". I am concerned about the so-called white anti-racist who unconsciously opens the door for the further victimization of Black people. I have adopted the term "racialized consciousness" instead of racism because the term racism suggests a conscious commitment to white supremacy along with the intentional dehumanization of Blacks.

I have adopted the term "racialized consciousness" instead of racism because the term racism suggests a conscious commitment to some form of white supremacy along with the intentional dehumanization of people of color. "Racialized consciousness is a term that will help us understand why even the well-intentioned white liberal who has participated in the struggle against racism may perpetuate a form of racism unintentionally."[2]

In some ways, the notion of racialized consciousness is not that different from the concepts of institutionalized or structural racism. Both of these terms point to the ongoing work of racism behind the backs of conscious, intentional agents. In short, there is a growing awareness that social institutions are structured in such a way that even after the overturning of blatant racist laws and practices in response to the civil rights movement, African Americans still suffer from various forms of inequality. Although racial discrimination in its *de jure* form has seemingly come to an end, it still exists in its *de facto* form. If this is the case, then why would white liberals think that post-election 2008 we are in a post-racist America? My term "racilized consciousness" is a theoretical concept used to explore a type of social ignorance that

permeates White America as well as Black America to some degree. However, racialized consciousness does not work the same in blacks as it does in whites. I will explain this later.

Racialized consciousness designates a dialectic of conscious and unconscious social action. It points to a form of social ignorance that undergirds even conscious, well-intentioned actions and beliefs. The concept of *habitus* developed by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is helpful for unpacking my notion of racialized consciousness.

The *habitus* – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world. The *habitus* is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects `without inertia' in rationalist theories.[3]

Due to their histories black people and white people live in two separate worlds. The fact that whites were more willing to see the US post-racist than blacks suggests a difference of perception due to the habitus. Of course, these two worlds overlap and there is a shared experience like the middle part of two sides of an overlapping Venn's diagram. This may sound highly problematic at first but I think that an examination of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and the formation of consciousness will bring some clarity to my claim.

While consciousness is always consciousness of something, it is not the case that consciousness is conscious of its own formation. This being the case, consciousness always carries with it the unconscious mechanisms of its own formation. This is precisely what the *habitus* is. It is the unconscious conditions for the formation of consciousness. This is very important for understanding racialized consciousness and white racialized ignorance. While a white person may not be consciously or intentionally racist, he or she has developed practices, values, ways of being, ways of seeing, and ways of interpreting social phenomena that allows some form of white supremacy to survive. To the extent that whites and black have had a very different experience in America it seems that these embodied histories would naturally produce different perspectives on social phenomena. I recall several conversations with white and black people after 9/11. Almost all of the white people whom I talked with spoke of feeling insecure for the first time in their lives. Blacks on the other hand tended to claim that nothing has changed regarding their sense of security. The point is that to be black in America is to always feel insecure and unsafe. This dichotomy is a reflection of our radically different histories as well as present social structures that disadvantage blacks in a number of ways.

I could say much more about the different worlds that Black people and white People occupy, however, that would require far too much space, and, there is already a huge body of literature on this. I now want to turn to the overlap between our worlds. This is where the problem lies

in this age of Obama and the premature belief that we now have a color-blind society. We must admit that over the years quite a bit of progress has been made in terms of race relations. However, we still have far to go. One of the major obstacles to further progress is the desire by whites to claim at every step "it is finished". I said in my introduction that I was in agreement with Paul Taylor's assessment of the post-election hype. There is perhaps one small disagreement between us and this may be due to a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, whether I misunderstood Professor Taylor is irrelevant to the point that I'm going to make. Professor Taylor criticized the tendency among whites to celebrate post-racism after the 2008 election. I agree with him here. He went on to point out that for decades now blacks have moved into positions that were once reserved for whites. We have an incredible list a black achievement in the arts, politics, academia etc. There are black doctors and lawyers on TV and in real life ect. So, why is it the case that it took the election of Barak Obama to prove to blacks that we can be somebody? Taylor's view was that this was just one more move by whites to ignore racism by pretending that we are now post-racist.

It seemed to me as if Taylor took this attitude of whites as a recent phenomenon. This might be where I misunderstood him. However, this move by whites is historical. It is the attitude that blacks have what they want, so, we've done enough. This was the attitude after slavery and even during several phases of the civil rights movement. Whites have had a tendency historically to say to blacks after every new black achievement, "you've made it, now there is no more racism". However, somehow blacks still tend to linger at the bottom of the socio/economic ladder. It seems funny to me that people think that racism ends with just one event. When does the post-racist moment occur? Did it occur after the election? Did it occur at some point before the election and we were not aware of it until election day? Were we post-racist on November 3rd 2008 and black people did not know that their situation in America had changed? Granted, the election of Obama is a historical moment and it puts black skin where it has never been before, but does this change the situation of all black skin in America. No.

In the last section I will talk in more detail about the role of the black intellectual today.

However, in passing I would like to mention the task of the black intellectual as well as the task for all persons who truly want the US to become a non-racist society. Racism or racialized consciousness evolves over time. It has a way of maintaining itself by responding to any form of progress. I cite Bourdieu on the nature of *habitus* again:

The *habitus* which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection, brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class. Early experiences have particular weight because the *habitus* tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally of by force, especially by avoiding exposure to such

information.[4]

III. Complimentary Racism and Symbolic Representationalism

In the previous section I discussed racialized consciousness as *habitus*, a structured and structuring structure that allows racism in its unconscious and unintentional form to reproduce itself. In this section I will focus on a particular form of racialized consciousness and its function. On several occasions during my college years white students would refer to me as the "smart black guy". On a couple of occasions a white friend would say to me "you're the smartest black that I know". Black academics are accustomed to hearing from whites "you are so articulate". Here one is reminded of Joe Biden's comments about Obama's articulateness and cleanliness after Obama announced his candidacy for the Presidency.

What appears to be a compliment actually functions as a mechanism for the perpetuation of racism and racist stereotypes. It also functions to separate the "good black" (the type that whites can tolerate) from the "bad black" (the dangerous, over sexed thug). The "compliment", in fact, serves to establish in white minds a universal law. The law is that Blacks are generally bad, ugly, ignorant, lazy, etc. The "compliment" elevates an individual above the group. "This one is an exception to the rule." The effect is the creation of a new class of Blacks that Whites can tolerate and in some cases even love.

To get back to the Venn's diagram analogy that I used earlier, the space where the two circles overlap is the space occupied by Whites and is open for the entrance of certain types of Blacks. By being an exception to the rule, these Blacks are to some degree de-racialized. As exceptional, they no longer properly fit the category Black. Yet, they must be labeled as black so that the whites who embrace them can say that they are not racist, that they are color-blind. Hence, the exceptional Black is engaged in the performance of blackness, a performance that must properly balance whiteness and blackness.

While Obama identifies himself as black, he has had to avoid directly addressing on going racial inequalities. These inequalities are very real and are disclosed year after year in various studies and lived experience.

The Black unemployment rate is currently 11.9%. Among Black males age 16-19 unemployment is 38%. Unemployment for whites in 2008 was 5.8%.

The median household incomes of Blacks and Latinos are $38,269 and 40,000 respectively, while the median household income of whites is $61,280.

People of color are disproportionately poor in the United States. Blacks and Latinos have poverty rates of 24% and 21% respectively, compared to their white counterparts.

Nationally, the typical African-American family today possesses less than 10 percent of the net

worth of the average white family. Almost 30 percent of black families have zero or negative net worth. And far fewer blacks than whites benefit from inherited wealth or assets.

On the *median*, for every dollar of white wealth, people of color have 15 cents. On *average*, people of color have 8 cents for every dollar of white wealth.[5]

The situation of blacks in America has not changed under Obama. In fact, Obama has apparently made a conscious effort to avoid dealing with black issues. One need only think of the several invitations to meet with black leaders, activists, and scholars that he has turned down. Also, his willingness to distance himself from Rev. Wright during his campaign.

The problem of complimentary racism opens the door for a new form of racialized consciousness that I call symbolic representationalism. That is, the exceptional black becomes a symbol for the progress of the entire race. The success of certain black elites and the ascendency of Barack Obama to the White House is certainly a sign of progress. However, not nearly enough progress has been made to suggest that we are in a post-racist or color-blind society. Symbolic representationalism then, functions as a distraction. It allows the struggle for complete equality to come to an end because we can always point to the symbols of black achievement. In this respect, whites and blacks perpetuate a form of racialized consciousness. While whites are too quick to assert that America is post-racist, blacks are inclined to avoid critique or critical engagement with leaders such as Obama. Blacks are too content to have a black President to actually ask "what has the President done". It is with this idea in mind that we are ready to examine the role of the modern black intellectual.

IV. Giving Voice to Ruins: The Prophetic Role of the Black Intellectual

First, I must say that it is my position that all intellectuals should play a prophetic role in a society such as ours. It is unimaginable to me that any intellectual can be content with the level of class, race, gender, and sexual oppression and repression in American society and in the world. For me, the intellectual should use his or her knowledge to envision a better society. The prophetic intellectual is one who orients his or her intellectual labor around what Douglas Kellner calls the three Cs of critical theory. Indeed, the prophetic intellectual must be a critical theorist (not necessarily in the Frankfurt School sense). Kellner writes:

From a methodological point of view, critical theory is at once to *comprehend* the given society, *criticize* its contradictions and failures, and to *construct* alternatives.[6]

I think that this is especially true for the black intellectual given the history of black people in America. We owe it to blacks in the prophetic tradition whose struggle made it possible for us to enter the halls of academia. We owe it to our aunts, uncles, and cousins who have not been as lucky as we have. However, the black intellectual who dares occupy the position of critical theorist or prophetic voice is in a precarious place.

Before explaining the prophetic role of the black intellectual and its precarious nature, I would like to situate the prophetic black intellectual by taking a look at Walter Benjamin's "Ninth Thesis on History".

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is called progress.[7]

I turn to Benjamin at this moment because this thesis accurately represents the situation that we are in with regards to race, class, gender, sexual orientation etc., in the US. Oppression succeeds if it can get the oppressor as well as the oppressed to look in the same direction and speak the same language. In our present situation privileged whites and oppressed blacks look toward Obama and see racial progress. Indeed, the very presence of Obama in the White House (as well as the presence of a few black in predominantly white academic institutions) is a sign of progress. However, this is the reduction of race relations to symbolic representationalism. Turning our gaze toward the symbol of progress forces us to not see the wreckage that continues to pile up. This creates a very bad situation for those blacks who are still discriminated against, who live in poverty, and still experience disrespect and dehumanization on a daily basis. The claim to be post-racist because of the success of a few individuals and because there is a *bi-racial* individual in the White House does nothing more that permit various forms of racism to continue. The victims of this ongoing racism have no weapons with which to fight because they are told that racism is over.

In the above passage by Benjamin, the angel looks in a different direction than the rest of society. He sees what no one else sees and it horrifies him. While others are shouting "progress" the angel sees the ongoing legacy and long-term consequences of the system of white supremacy. This system has not been abolished but has only change forms. It is difficult for most to see that the system of white supremacy is still in place because of the number of symbols of black achievement that cloud our vision. This is the importance of the different direction in which the angel looks. In fact, this different direction represents a different place. The angel sees from a different place. He sees from the position of the old and new victims of racism. He sees from the perspective of the poor. He sees from the perspective of the wreckage or the ruins of history. He does not see Obama, instead, he sees the masses of black folk who even the Obama lovers despise. He sees the cooks and housekeepers in our white academic institutions who are constantly treated with disrespect by white academics who voted for Obama.

The black intellectual who really wants to make progress with regards to race relations must

put him or herself in the place of the angel of history. That means, he or she must recognize the degree to which little progress has been made. Such an intellectual must side with the ruins of history even if it means challenging the symbols. Black people are not better off because Obama is in office. First, Obama's presidency does not mean that we are in a post-racist society. All it means is that he is the kind of black that many white Americans are comfortable with. Secondly, blacks are not better off because they now have someone looking out for them. I have already discussed Obama's attempt to avoid the issue of race.

The modern black intellectual must focus his or her attention on Sly Stone's "everyday people". It is the situation, lives, and experiences of everyday people that will tell us when we have a post-racist society, not an elected politician or movie star, or athlete etc. This means that the black intellectual must agitate. He or she must disrupt our desire to find premature comfort in our small stages of progress. The struggle for social justice is not finished until the "least of these" no longer suffer from disrespect, dehumanization, and the lack of the necessary resources for self-development and self-determination. The prophetic black intellectual runs the risk of being unpopular because the oppressor and the oppressed tend to find comfort in these small, brief moments of progress. The black intellectual must dismantle the mechanism of symbolic representationalism for the sake of real progress. This will of course put the intellectual at odds with his or her society. With respect to Obama, the black intellectual must find a balance between supporter and critic. In fact, to be a supporter is to be a critic. If Obama is going to make the change that he promised, he must be pushed by those who have not been fooled by symbolic representationalism.

Notes

[1] Michael Eric Dyson, "Giving Whiteness a Black Eye: Excavating White Identities, Ideologies, and Institutions" In, *Open Mike: Reflections on Philosophy, Race, Sex, Culture and Religion*(Basic Books, 2003) p. 112.

[2] Arnold L. Farr, "Whiteness Visible: Enlightenment Racism and the Structure of Racialized Consciousness" In George Yancy ed, *What White Looks Like: African American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004). P. 144-145.

[3] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* Translated by Richard Nice (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990) p56.

[4] Ibid., p. 60-61.

[5] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism & Racial Inequality in*

Contemporary America (Lanhan, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2010) P. 209-210.

[6] Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and London: Macmillan, 1984) p. 122-123.

[7] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* Ed. Hannah Arendt Translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) p. 257-258.

What is Genocide?

By | 2012: vol. 11, issue 1

Most discussions regarding what has become by now an almost chronic question: “what is genocide?” tend to focus on the epistemological aspect of this question. This question is understood as an inquiry regarding the adequacy of a specific analytic concept to a specific factual pattern of events.

This recurring pattern is supposedly traceable in a certain – yet highly contested – canon of historical situations, such as: the Nazi liquidation of the European Jewry during the Second World War; the destruction of the Ottoman Armenian populations by the Young Turks regime during the First World War; or the annihilation of alleged Tutsis by the Hutu Power in 1994 Rwanda. Is genocide, for example as defined by the 1948 UN convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime genocide, a good enough analytic description of what actually happened in those historical situations? Do any of the other definitions of genocide, suggested over the years, enable a better analytic description of such events?

Obviously such epistemological inquiries are not naïve in the sense of assuming an independent historical reality – an already structured constellation of hard facts, which was objectively out there as such – waiting for us to adjust and fine-tune our analytical concepts to the point of perfect accuracy. There is a deep interdependence between the formation of analytical concepts and the uncovering, construction and interpretation of historical hard facts. The very canon of possibly-genocidal historical situations is paradoxically both constituted by the definition of genocide and is also the empirical basis from which one is supposed to extract such a definition. This means that such epistemological inquiries are in a way an endless reciprocal movement between the factual and the conceptual, each underpinned by the other and yet also transcending the other, hence perpetuating the process further.

It is for this very reason that the definition of genocide in the UN genocide convention cannot be a very good definition of the phenomenon concerned. One could hardly argue that Raphael Lemkin – who originally proposed the term – or the various drafters of the convention, were somehow miraculously able to bring the factual data available to them at the time and the conceptual pattern they extracted from it, to such a perfect accord that could not be surpassed ever since. In the sixty years that passed since the adoption of the UN genocide convention, an avalanche of historical, anthropological, political, sociological and physiological studies on genocidal events were published. In view of all these new insights on the phenomenon concerned, certain conceptual modifications to the definition of genocide were indeed already called for. In fact, some have already argued, that the way we understand what had actually happened in the historical situations concerned has been so revised by now, that the very

foundational components of the concept of genocide are no longer applicable. From an epistemological perspective, we can no longer narrate or analyze such historical situations in terms of a concrete collective actor ("the perpetrators") that is intentionally perpetrating a certain systematic act ("the genocide") to an identifiable pre-existing group of victims (the "victims") in front of by-standing third parties ("the by-standers"). Far from corresponding to the grid that the concept of genocide presupposes, some have suggested that the historical situations concerned should rather be described in terms of various groups of perpetrators that are targeting various groups of victims because of various motivations and by means of various kinds of violence.

Such defused and micro-level oriented descriptions may indeed be far closer to the detailed way in which things actually happened; yet they do not merit abandoning the concept of genocide or its re-conceptualization. We should note that the concept of genocide – originally coined as a legal concept – is not simply referential (i.e., describing states of events), but rather what the philosopher of language J. L. Austin influentially termed: performative. The concept of genocide is performative in the sense that rather than describing the world as it is, it is meant *to do* something in the world. The concept of genocide is meant to shoehorn a complex reality into a rigid framework that will enable a certain processing of what happened and in reaction to what happened. This was in fact intended to prevent such a phenomenon – genocide – from happening again. A proper concept of genocide should surface and accentuate certain aspects and dynamics in a given historical situation, so as to facilitate the tracing of culpable agents, the delimitation of the concrete criminal actions and the clear identification of their victims.

Certain definitions of genocide, though suppressing significant parts of what actually happened – crudely homogenizing a rather diverse aggregation of agents, actions and victims into a unified pattern – may nevertheless be preferable to definitions that open up a far richer and detailed description of the concerned events. A proper concept of genocide makes for an efficient narrowing of vision – a tunnel vision that will bring into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality. The conceptualization of genocide was meant to make that phenomenon legible in the sense used by the political anthropologist James C. Scott. By making a phenomenon legible, Scott means legible to the state – legible so as to enable the state to govern and administer the concerned phenomenon by means of law. Shoehorning the inexhaustible multitude of details actually found in a phenomenon into a rigid grid may be the only way to make it administrable, regulatable and controllable.

However, in the case of the conceptualization of genocide, the phenomenon concerned was not made legible to the state – it was made legible to that rather contested entity referred as the International Community. The problem was – and still is – that the exact meaning of making a certain phenomenon legible to the International Community is an essentially contested matter. How much should the International Community be allowed to govern, regulate and monitor certain situations and patterns of conduct? We may describe the drafting of the genocide convention as a far from trivial attempt to properly describe the phenomenon concerned so as to make it legible to the International Community, while at the same time still struggling to

understand how far the drafting countries were willing to make their internal affairs internationally legible.

The above means that the epistemological aspects of the question: “what is genocide?” are strictly subjected to the political aspects of this question. Hence, we should not be asking if the exact difference that the convention established between acts that do constitute genocide and acts that are “less than genocide” is accurate or false. Instead we should ask other kinds of questions: Why was such a difference deemed necessary to create in 1946? Who benefited from its establishment? What did such a difference facilitate? What did it prevent?

Why did countries (55 of them in 1946 and 58 by 1948) agree to create and than actually adopt the UN genocide convention, circumscribing the Westphalian ideal of absolute state sovereignty? Why would any government favor establishing an effective independent international authority, the sole purpose of which is to constrain its domestic sovereignty in such an unprecedentedly invasive manner? By creating and ratifying the genocide convention states did not just give away a certain portion of their internal sovereignty. They also committed themselves to actively intervene under certain circumstances in the internal business of other countries even if they do not have any direct interest in doing so, and even if doing so will be against their direct interests. It may well be argued that the willingness of states to provide in certain situations resources (whether manpower, equipment or funds) for dealing with problems that may not affect or concern them at all, is just as puzzling as their willingness to allow other states to intervene in their own internal business. Why than would states subject themselves to sacrifice valuable resources in order to address the problems of others?

There is no single answer here of course – a single explanation applying to all states. Different states under different circumstances did so for different reasons. The obvious first explanation will suggest that states participated in the drafting of the convention and adopted it because they were coerced into doing so – compelled to do so by great powers, which externalize their ideology. The tightening tensions of the emerging cold war were of course manifested in the drafting discussions, as each of the blocks tried to word the convention in a way that will express its own ideological sensitivities and interests. A characteristic statement in this regard was for example made by the Polish representative who argued during the drafting discussions of the convention held in the Sixth committee of the General assembly that: “if the inclusion of the protection of man in the political field was being considered, I would ask why the protection of man in the economic field should not also be included. Poor working conditions, starvation wages or lack of labor legislation, were also ways of annihilating people”. As the statement of the Polish representative exemplifies, the two blocks were equally on guard, cautioning against the other side’s attempts to harness the convention for the dissemination of its ideology. As opposed to such ideological excesses, it was assumed that there is a certain obvious to all, core idea concerning what was that phenomenon termed genocide, and how should the convention prevent it from happening and punish its perpetrators.

A second explanation may hence suggest that states participated in the drafting of the

convention and adopted it because they were normatively persuaded into doing so – swayed by the overpowering ideological and normative appeal of the values that underlay it. As the American representative stated in the opening of the convention drafting discussions in the General assembly's Sixth committee: "having regard to the troubled state of the world it was essential that the convention should be adopted as soon as possible, before the memory of the barbarous crimes which had been committed faded from the minds of men".

Having said that, the states that took part in the drafting of the genocide convention needed to define the concept of genocide in a way that will on the one hand *apply* to those notorious and spectacular perpetrations of the Axis states *before and during* the war, while on the other hand clearly *not apply* to any of the systematic attacks on civilians or to the populations engineering policies that were sponsored by the Allies *during and after* the war. Hence the drafting states sharpened and radicalized a notion of an "obvious difference" allegedly separating acts of genocide from any other seemingly bordering acts. This notion of an obvious difference was constructed by stressing the peculiarities of Nazi ideology, innovative industrialization of murdering and even the spectacular plethora of perversions that the Nazi era indeed cultivated. Responding to this tendency during the drafting discussions, the Chinese representative drew the committee's attention to: "the fact that Japan had committed numerous acts of that kind of genocide [genocide committed through the use of narcotics] against the Chinese population. If those acts were not as spectacular as Hitlerite killings in gas-chambers, their effect had been no less destructive. In drawing up a convention of universal scope it was appropriate to keep in mind not only the atrocities committed by Nazis and Fascists, but also the horrible crimes of which the Japanese had been guilty in China". The Venezuelan representative also protested against the over identification of genocide with the spectacular perpetrations of the Nazis: "the human conscience was particularly shocked by those acts of genocide which constituted mass murder […] yet less spectacular crimes should not be overlooked and the concept of genocide should extend to the inclusion of acts less terrible in themselves but resulting 'in great losses to humanity in the form of cultural and other contributions" for which it was indebted to the destroyed group'".

And indeed, the Venezuelan representative seemed to express in this statement the original intentions of Raphael Lemkin himself. Lemkin intended genocide to mean the metaphorically defined murdering of the genos itself – the effective annihilation of that certain collective wholeness that though somewhat elusive so fundamentally distinguishes a genos from any mere aggregation of individuals (such that may be found for example in a refugee camp, or in a busy airport terminal). And yet, the final version of the convention defined genocide as the intentional annihilation of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, exclusively by means of physically murdering its members. During the drafting process, acts, that while resulting in the complete shattering the group's collective existence, do not bring about the physical death of its members (such as: forced mass transfers of populations, destruction of identity defining assets, preventing the group members from practicing their identity sustaining practices), were excluded.

This is not very surprising given that the Allies shouldered the forced transfer of around twenty

million people in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1955. Between 1947 and 1951 around 7,000,000 people were uprooted and transferred from India to Pakistan and about the same number were uprooted and transferred from Pakistan to India. And there were still other cases of uprooting and mass transfers of populations that took place in those years. The lion share of all these brutal transfers of populations was perpetuated in the very same days as the convention was being drafted. Reference to acts such as uprooting and forced transfer of populations, were already suggested in the very first draft proposed by the delegation of Saudi Arabia in 1946. In the Saudi draft, one of the acts constituting genocide was the: "Planned disintegration of the political social or economic structure of a group, people or nation". And yet although several references to such acts were proposed over the following two years (interestingly mostly by Muslim countries), they were not included in the convention.

It is in light of such exclusions that we turn to a third and final explanation. An explanation suggesting that the states participated in the drafting of the convention and adopted in order to hide behind it all the agreements and institutions they were not interested – or no longer interested in creating or joining. The drafting of the UN genocide convention was part of the establishment of a very certain international regime of rights, created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The Whiggish take on the matter argues that the drawing and the adoption of the UN genocide convention, with all its faults and shortcomings, constituted a step forward in humanity's civilizing process – stabilizing a consensual definition for an essentially contested concept. It expressed the modest yet unprecedented willingness of independent states to give away a certain portion of their sovereignty by subjecting themselves to a carefully phrased higher moral standard. Given all that was perpetrated during the Second World War, it really seems that the creation of the UN genocide convention was the least humanity could do, if being human was to retain any of its core meaning.

Yet what if this is indeed all that the drawing of UN genocide convention really was – literally *the least* that the international community could do? What if, the creation of the UN genocide convention was also a way to practically waive and veil all that the states were not willing to commit themselves to avoid doing? Rather than a long over-due element in the linear progression of the international rule of law, the creation of the genocide convention was part of the reconstructive dismantling of the former – evidentially dysfunctional – international regime of collective minorities' rights, established after the First World War.

Since the end of the 1930s, all were unanimous in arguing that the inter-war international regime of collective minorities' rights failed completely. Commentators repeatedly stressed the way Nazi Germany (and even certain elements within the Weimar Republic before hand) abused the international protection of minorities in order to mobilize into so called "fifth columns", the German minorities in Germany's neighboring countries. Yet those commentators tended to down-volume the fact that the inter-war minorities' protection system was also not universal at all. It applied only to some of the defeated or the newly created states. The system was clearly damaged by its undisguised discriminatory nature. The states bound by it felt themselves humiliated – robbed of absolute sovereignty over their own territory and populations. Nevertheless, any attempt to transform international Minorities' protection system

into a truly universal regime, by which all “civilized nations” were bound, was decisively aborted by the great powers.

After the Second World War, Britain, France, the US or the USSR were still very unwilling to commit themselves to any minorities’ protection system. Hence, in the name of establishing a truly universal regime of rights, the underlying principle of collective rights was replaced by a principle of individual human rights. The celebrated rise of the international protection of individual human rights, codified in the UN 1948 declaration of human rights, effectively camouflaged the disappearance of the inter-war international protection of collective minorities’ rights.

And yet, distinctively referring to the annihilation of the genos itself rather than to the individuals composing it (which are protected by other concept such as crimes against humanity and war crimes), the genocide convention clearly emanated from the former principle of collective rights. As such, it should be interpreted as a remnant of that debased principle. The genocide convention is the minimal protection of collective rights that the post-war international system was still willing to provide: the right of a collectivity not to be annihilated by means of the physical destruction of its members. Having said that, since the collective existence of human groups could still be dismantled by many other means (such as the forced displacement of the group’s members or their forced assimilation into another group) one may rightly wonder: which right exactly was actually protected by the genocide convention? Only by assuming, against all existing historical evidence, that the mere physical survival of the group’s members is sufficient to enable the reconstruction of its shattered collective existence, can the genocide convention be interpreted as truly protecting the right of national, ethnic, religious or racial groups to exist.

The Concept of Genocide and the Partial Destruction of the National Group

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Ever since the 3rd U.N. General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on December 9, 1948, international law has faced a paradox. The international community resolved to make the systematic annihilation of populations a universal jurisdiction crime with no statute of limitations. But by protecting some groups and excluding others such as political, gender and sexual identity groups from its protection, it created a legal instrument that has proved to be almost useless given that nearly all modern genocides are, to some degree, politically motivated. Indeed, despite the global proliferation of genocide in the second half of the twentieth century, the first conviction for genocide by an international court was not until 50 years later in 1998. Since then, the number of convictions has been disappointingly low.

The steady stream of protest over the years about the wording of the Convention has made little difference. Pioneers of Genocide Studies such as Leo Kuper, Israel Charny, Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn all complained about it, as did Benjamin Whitaker. However, the 1985 Whitaker Report – one of two major United Nations documents on genocide – was never even discussed by the U.N. General Assembly and when the narrow 1948 definition of genocide was included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998, further discussion seemed useless. Many judges and academics abandoned the notion of genocide in favor of "crimes against humanity."

Nevertheless, this paper will argue that the concept of genocide is still relevant in the twenty-first century. In particular, it will show that:

1) The Genocide Convention does not exclude Lemkin's essential notion that modern genocides are attempts to destroy the identity of national groups. Therefore the concept of genocide can be applied to a much wider range of cases than is generally supposed.

2) The notion of "destruction of a group" is specific to the concept of genocide and is not contained in the definition of "crimes against humanity".

3) The broadening of crimes against humanity (to include "terrorism" among others) makes it all the more important to distinguish such crimes from genocide. Arguably, accusations of human rights violations are already being used to undermine the sovereignty and political independence of non-hegemonic states with the excuse of defending an ever increasingly list of loosely defined "human rights". In such cases, the genocides of the past can easily provide an

excuse for armed intervention in quite different situations, to neutralize insurgent or opposition groups.

Partial destruction of a national group

The term genocide was coined by the Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin, who wrote that "By genocide we mean the destruction of a nation or … ethnic group". Lemkin went on to argue that "Genocide has two phases: one, the destruction of the national identity of the oppressed group, the other, the imposition of the national identity of the oppressor." [1]

The distinctive feature of genocide, according to Lemkin, is that it aims to destroy a group rather than the individuals that make up the group. The ultimate purpose of genocide is to destroy the group's identity and impose the identity of the oppressor on the survivors. This idea gives us a useful insight into the workings of power systems in the modern era. In particular, the nation state has tended to destroy the identities of ethnic and religious minorities within its boundaries and impose a new identity on them: the national identity of the oppressor.

Although this meaning of genocide is present in the two earlier drafts (the Secretariat Draft and the Ad Hoc Committee Draft) of the Genocide Convention written in May 1947 and April 1948, it was carefully edited out of the final text, which was approved only after two years of intense disagreements. By excluding political groups, delegates were able to pretend that genocide was an irrational and therefore "non-political" form of racism or religious bigotry far removed from the rational logic of state oppression.

The illegitimacy of excluding political groups in this way has been discussed by various authors in different works.[2] However, the Genocide Convention still offers a way of linking the crime of genocide with the systematic destruction of national identity through the concept of "partial destruction of a national group."

The concept of "partial destruction of a national group" is contained in the 1948 Convention and all subsequent legal definitions of genocide, and summarizes the essence of genocidal practices as Lemkin understood them. The oppressed group might live under colonial rule, as was common in Lemkin's time, or form part of a nation-state, as tended to be the case in the second half of the twentieth century, when the national security doctrine of the Cold War period brought a resurgence of military regimes around the globe and turned national armies into armies of occupation within their own borders, replacing the colonial armies of the past.

Many commentators have argued that the national group must necessarily be different from the perpetrator group. However, this idea is not supported by the Convention itself, which states only that genocide occurs when there is "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such" [3] without saying anything about the identity of the perpetrators.

Assumptions about the relationship between victims and perpetrators lie at the heart of different conceptions of genocide. Those who argue that "partial destruction of the national group" does not apply when victims and perpetrators belong to the same group, tend to see

genocide as resulting from a confrontation between two or more groups, fuelled by “ancestral hatred” or “irrational discrimination.” Supporters of this view tend to focus on genocides currently occurring in Africa, where rival groups are assumed to have reverted to tribal savagery and ancestral hatred in its most ethnocentric form. This explains the emphasis of the media and quite a few academics on conflicts in Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. However, more careful analysis shows that these conflicts are far from being mere “tribal confrontations.” Moreover, they are not the only phenomena of mass destruction in recent decades.

Interestingly, the conflict in the former – Yugoslavia also tends to be seen as a tribal clash. Thus, a modern conflict is explained in terms of 14th century struggles between Christians and Muslims, which of course is exactly how today’s nationalists in the Balkans – whether they be Serbs, Croats or Bosnians – want to portray the conflict. Unfortunately, it has also become the common sense view not just of the media but of scholars who know little about the realities of ex – Yugoslavia in the twentieth century.

In contrast, those who argue that the “partial destruction of the national group” constitutes genocide even if the perpetrators are members of the same group, tend to see genocide mainly as a power strategy. This idea was pioneered by Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzon in his indictment of Scilingo and other Argentine military officials in 1997 and has been adopted by several courts in Argentina. In this view, the ultimate purpose of genocide is not the destruction of a group as such but the transformation of society as a whole. This was the aim the Nazis in Germany and Axis- occupied Europe as well as being that of the perpetrators in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Indonesia, Cambodia and Latin America, to mention just a few cases in which terror has been used as an instrument of social transformation.

To sum up, even though the Genocide Convention makes no claims about the underlying causes of genocide, the way in which the “national group” is interpreted has profound consequences for our understanding of genocidal processes.

Effects on social memory processes
As a paradigmatic case of genocide, the Holocaust provides a good example of how different interpretations can promote ownership of experience or, conversely, alienation. If we analyze the Holocaust only in terms of the Jewish and Roma communities annihilated in Germany, Poland or Lithuania, “ordinary” Germans, Poles and Lithuanians seem to have remained largely unaffected except for possible feelings of solidarity with the victims. Once stripped of their German, Polish or Lithuanian identities, Jews and Gypsies were could only be seen through the eyes of the perpetrators, as being outside of the German, Polish or Lithuanian national group.

On the other hand, if we see the Nazi genocide as a partial destruction of the German, Polish or Lithuanian national group, we can reinstate the victims as full citizens and confront the goals of Nazism, which proposed the need for a Reich “free of Jews.” The aim of Nazism was not only to exterminate certain groups (ethnic, national and political, among others), but to transform German and European society through the absence of such groups, a transformation that in the

event proved to be quite successful. In particular, one of the most enduring effects of the Nazi genocide of Jews and Gypsies was the disappearance of internationalism and cosmopolitanism as constituent parts of German and European identity.

The key feature, then, of this more recent interpretation of “partial destruction of the national group” is that it focuses our attention on the wider purpose of genocide and the way it targets the whole population of a particular territory. It invites societies to reflect on how destruction has shaped their *own* social practices, avoiding the alienation inherent in treating genocide as the suffering of *others*.

Understanding genocide as the partial destruction of one’s own group also widens the sphere of complicity in the planning and execution of murder. We are forced to ask who has benefited from the disappearance of certain groups and – more importantly – from the social transformation generated by the processes of annihilation and terror. The business and political sectors behind many genocides have often remained invisible and unpunished, since responsibility is usually attached only to the direct perpetrators, whether military or police, but not to their paymasters.

Genocide or crimes against humanity
The specific meaning of genocide as a policy directed at groups and not individuals, is almost entirely absent from the looser concept of crimes against humanity as formulated in international law. For example, the Rome Statute states in Article 7:

1. For the purpose of this Statute, “crime against humanity” means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack:

(a) Murder;

(b) Extermination;

(c) Enslavement;

(d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population;

(e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;

(f) Torture;

(g) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;

(h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are

universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court;

(i) Enforced disappearance of persons;

(j) The crime of apartheid;

(k) Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

The persecution of groups is only mentioned in (h), which curiously reproduces the wider concept of genocide as contained in the Secretariat Draft and the Ad Hoc Committee Draft of the Genocide Convention, and in (j). However, the key element of the definition is the "widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population" without there being necessarily any "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a […] group, as such". The definition thus emphasizes attacks on individual members of the "civilian population" rather than on clearly differentiated groups.

The big difference between genocide and crimes against humanity is that the victims are not seen as part of a "national group" but as individuals whose individual rights have been violated. This is the most important legal difference between the concept of crimes against humanity (which refers to indiscriminate actions against members of a civilian population) and the concept of genocide (which refers to the deliberate targeting of specific population groups for complete or partial destruction).

In short, by using the term "crimes against humanity", we define mass annihilation as an accumulation of individual human rights violations. We recognize the victims as *citizens*, but we exclude the surviving members of the group from being treated as co-victims.

New directions for criminal law in the 21st century

This debate about genocide and crimes against humanity is not merely an academic one, nor is it relevant only to past events. Its influence can already be seen in the workings of the International Criminal Court and the enactment of "anti-terrorism laws" around the world and its importance will become clearer as international criminal law evolves throughout the 21st century.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established in 2002, following the enactment of the Rome Statute. Its main mission was to investigate and prosecute cases of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity as defined by the new international criminal law. However, the way in which the Court has operated since it was set up – and even the way it has intervened in conflicts – raises serious concerns about its ability to prevent state violations of human rights, which is purpose for which international criminal law was created in the first place.

To begin with, the ICC can only act in cases where the perpetrators and / or territory involved belong to States that have accepted its jurisdiction. So far, the ICC has intervened only in

cases brought before it by member states or by the United Nations Security Council. The Court's freedom to act against violations committed by member states *themselves* seems to exist almost solely on paper. As a result, all the proceedings of the ICC have to date focused on Africa, with three of them directed against **non-state organizations** (in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and the Central African Republic).

The most worrying thing about this – apart from the seriousness of the crimes reported – is that it is not clear why non-state organizations should require action by the Court. Such action would seem to violate a fundamental principle of international criminal law: the Court exists to try human rights violations committed by the state apparatus and not by forces opposing the state, which can be tried in domestic courts.

Moreover, the Court's interventions contrast sharply with its failure to intervene in **state violations of human right**s in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Palestine, Sri Lanka and Tibet, to name but a few cases that have been reported. In some cases, the Court's argument is that the defendants (U.S., Israel or China) or the countries where violations are occurring (China, Iraq, Afghanistan) have not ratified the Statute. In others, like Colombia, the situation is more serious. The Court accepts the argument that the state "is making sufficient efforts to address such violations" without asking why proceedings to investigate the systematic annihilation of people in Colombia have not even begun, or why political opponents and indigenous groups are still being murdered to this very day.[4] There has only been one case in which the Court has acted against a state –Sudan – and only then because it had the full backing of the United Nations Security Council.

The 21st century has also witnessed a widespread attempt to equate genocide and crimes against humanity (committed by the State) with crimes of terrorism (committed by individuals). This blurring of conceptual boundaries has become increasingly frequent since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, leading to the enactment of the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism in 2002 as well as the subsequent adoption of anti-terrorism laws in many countries. The speed with which some countries have passed these laws contrasts surprisingly with their slowness to pass anti-genocide legislation.

These anti-terrorism laws are becoming increasingly vague and open-ended, criminalizing political protest and differences of opinion. Thus, Argentina defines "terrorism" as "compelling a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act" as long as there is "a plan of action to propagate ethnic, religious or political hatred.". [5] *By invoking the proviso* of "political hatred" judges are potentially able to typify a wide number of actions such as mass demonstrations, walkouts and strikes as "acts of terrorism."

These developments take on new meaning in relation with U.S. reports analyzing the tools of international law. An element that appears repeatedly in these reports – the most famous of which is *"Preventing Genocide: A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers",* (2008) – is the need to *limit territorial sovereignty as a way to prevent genocide*.[6]

These reports advocate “prevention” regardless of international agreements, suggesting that the U.S. can intervene economically or militarily anywhere in the world without requiring the approval of any regional or international body. In other words, once the U.S. considers a crime to have been committed, it can ride roughshod over any State’s territorial sovereignty. And yet, paradoxically, if the same events took place in the U.S. or were committed by U.S. citizens, no international or regional intervention would be possible because the U.S. has not ratified any international conventions or even the ICC.

In conclusion

We have seen that the Genocide Convention allows for an interpretation of genocide based on Lemkin’s notion of *partial destruction by the perpetrators of their own national group*. This explanation makes the Convention applicable to a potentially large number of politically motivated annihilations, including nearly all modern genocides. This is true even when a group appears *at first sight* to have been targeted for religious or ethnic reasons. At the same time, Lemkin’s interpretation is much more enriching for social memory processes, restoring ownership of the past to the victims rather than letting it be appropriated by the perpetrators.

We have also seen that the concept of genocide is restricted to attempts to destroy a particular group, even when this also involves the mass annihilation of civilian populations, as in crimes against humanity. Although the current legal definition of genocide needs to be changed to include political and other groups, the fact that any group annihilation also constitutes a “partial destruction of a national group” may serve in the meantime as a technical solution to the problem of excluded groups, making the application of the Genocide Convention more effective and less arbitrary.

There is a growing tendency to include non-state actions within the category of “crimes against humanity”, thus confusing acts of terrorism and even political dissent with state-sponsored atrocities. This blurring of conceptual boundaries is making the notion of “crimes against humanity” so open ended that it could eventually be used to persecute any civilian group opposed to the status quo.

It is therefore important to emphasize the distinctiveness of the concept of genocide, which requires intent to destroy a group in whole or in part. We should not devalue international criminal law with a host of new concepts (“atrocity crime”, etc.) which lump things together that are qualitatively different (for example, state-sponsored crimes as compared to non-state crimes). Clear legislation is needed to protect individuals from arbitrary state persecution and to guarantee fundamental rights, which have taken centuries to evolve.

Contrary to the hegemonic trend in international law, which seeks to replace the term “genocide” in all cases with “crimes against humanity”, I feel it would be much more useful if the ICC called cases of genocide by their proper name. It should stop putting the actions of insurgent movements in the Congo, Uganda or Colombia on the same level as mass murder committed by the state. Instead, it should insist that small-scale non-state crimes be tried in national courts under national laws, respecting the fundamental rights of the perpetrators,

however abhorrent these monsters and their crimes may be.

Failure to confront these issues will not only affect the work of individual judges and lawyers. It may eventually destroy the criminal justice system that we have known throughout most of the twentieth century, with the return of unfettered discretion and arbitrary exercise of power marking the end of citizenship rights. Unfortunately, this will occur under the guise of "defending" human rights and "preventing" violations.

Notes

[1] Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, 1944, p.79

[2] Authors with very different approaches who have challenged the exclusion of political groups include: Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analysis and Case Studies*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990; Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1997; Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, The Free Press, New York, 1979. Leo Kuper, *Genocide. Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1981; Vahakn Dadrian, "A typology of Genocide", in *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 15, 1975, pg. 204; Barbara Harff and Ted Gurr, "Toward Empirical Theory of Genocide and politicides" in *International Studies Quarterly* 37, 3, 1988; Matthias Bjornlund, Eric Markusen and Martin Mennecke, "¿Qué es el genocidio? En la búsqueda de un denominador común entre definiciones jurídicas y no jurídicas," (What is genocide? In search of a common denominator between legal and non legal definitions) in Daniel Feierstein (ed.) *Genocidio. La administración de la muerte en la modernidad* (Genocide. The management of death in modernity), EDUNTREF, Buenos Aires, 2005.

[3] Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 2.

[4] For recent work on Colombia, see Andrei Gomez, "Bloques perpetradores y mentalidades genocidas: el caso de la destrucción de la Unión Patriótica en Colombia" (Perpetrator blocks and genocidal mentalities: the case of the destruction of the Patriotic Union in Colombia), in *Revista de Estudios sobre Genocidio* (Journal of Genocide Studies), Volume 2, CEG-EDUNTREF, Buenos Aires, 2008, pp. 42-55 and Marcelo Ferreira, "Genocidio reorganizador en Colombia. A propósito de una sentencia del Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos", (Reorganizing genocide in Colombia. Apropos of a sentence of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal), in Daniel Feierstein (ed.) *Terrorismo de Estado y Genocidio en América Latina* (State Terrorism and Genocide in Latin America), Prometeo, Buenos Aires, 2009.

[5] Article 213 of the Argentine Penal Code, enacted in 2007.

[6] Madeleine Albright and William Cohen; Preventing Genocide. A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, The American Academy of Diplomacy and the Endowment of the U.S. Institute of Peace, U.S., 2008. “There is a growing understanding, however, that sovereignty implies rights and obligations, and that states have a basic responsibility to protect their citizens from genocide and mass atrocities. No government has the right to use national sovereignty as a shield behind which it can murder its own people” (p. xxi). It is paradoxical that one of the editors of the report is the Holocaust Museum in Washington. For a discussion of this issue, see 4.2 of Journal of Genocide Studies and Prevention (CITE).

Genocide and Effacement: A Conference on Cambodia, a Painting, and Ways of Knowing

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In December 2010, I participated in a conference in Paris entitled, “Cambodge, Le Génocide Effacé.” Cambodia, The Genocide Effaced. The metaphor here is powerful and operates on several levels, ones that take us from the act itself to the ways we think about genocide, including the origin of the term and the work of the man who coined it, Raphael Lemkin.

Upon a first glance, the conference title invokes the obvious violence of genocide as an attempt to “expunge,” “erase,” or “obliterate” a group of people. To efface something is literally to “remove the face” (*ef-* [out] + *-face* [face/appearance]) and is etymologically derived from the twelfth century old French word *esfacier*, “to wipe out, destroy.”

This essay explores the interlinkages of genocide and effacement as well one of the acts against effacement, reclamation, a key subtext of the conference. In doing so, it traces the outlines of Lemkin’s work and the emergence of the field that now recognizes him as its father, genocide studies. Many of the issues of effacement with which Lemkin grappled, ranging from the mechanisms of mass murder to cultural destruction, were foregrounded in the conference. In the backdrop was a project of reclamation centered around the arts and a number of assumptions about our ways of knowing about genocide.

I. Lemkin and the Mechanisms of Mass Murder

The conference, held at Université Paris 8 on the outskirts of the city, took place in an auditorium filled with faculty, students, scholars, and quite a few first and second generation Cambodian-French. The discussion ranged from the theoretical and abstract to the very concrete stories of survivors, who described in painful detail their suffering under the Khmer Rouge, a group of revolutionaries who attempted to radically transform Cambodian society when they took power in April 1975. Buddhism was banned, families split apart, work and livelihood collectivized, community structure revamped, and freedom of speech, movement, and choice dramatically curtailed. Everyone had to work long hours, often on stavation rations. Those who had suspect class backgrounds or displayed signs of subversion were eradicated.

In the end, almost a quarter of Cambodia’s population perished from disease, starvation, overwork, and mass murder. Members of the audience described the atmosphere of fear and terror in which they were engulfed and how, before or after the genocide, they fled to refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border in the hope of gaining asylum in another land. France,

France, which had colonized Cambodia in 1863, opened its doors to many of these refugees. The Cambodian diaspora shaped the conference in many ways. Indeed, one of the two organizers, Soko Phay Vakalis, an art critic and professor at Paris 8, was a part of this diaspora, having moved to France in 1976.

The two and a half day conference was comprised of an opening forum on the first night followed by half-day sessions on "The Mechanisms of Genocide," "Art against Effacement," "Genocide and its Effects," and "From Genocide to Justice." I particpated in the first session on "The Mechanisms of Genocide," which directly took up genocidal effacement in its most obvious sense, the process by which groups of human beings are exterminated.

Not surprisingly, this issue figured prominently in the work of Raphael Lemkin, a Polish jurist who himself had fled abroad to escape genocide, immigrating to the United States in 1941 Born in 1900, Lemkin took an interest in mass murder from a young age. In his unpublished autobiography, Lemkin recalls how, as a youth, he read Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* and was struck by Nero's casual laughter as Christians were thrown to the lions.

Even as he read and wondered why a group of human beings could be slaughtered so easily, he heard real-life stories of violent pogroms in nearby areas of Poland and of mass extermination of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey. When Turkish war criminals who had been arrested after the genocide were suddenly released, Lemkin wondered "Why is a man punished when he kills another man? Why is the killing of a million a lesser crime than the killing of a single individual?"

There was no easy answer. Lemkin states that it was at this point he began to strongly believe a law must be passed banning such "racial or religious murder." His resolve was only enhanced when, after enrolling in law school in the 1920s, his law school professors explained that such violence was permitted because of the principle of state sovereignty.

In the United States, Lemkin completed his groundbreaking *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), which included a chapter on genocide, the first time the term was used in print. "New conceptions require new terms," Lemkin explained. "By 'genocide' we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. This new word, coined by the author to denote an old practice in its modern development, is made from the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing)."

Having introduced the concept of genocide, Lemkin next turned toward his life-long goal of making it a crime. In 1945, he began drafting a resolution ("on the soft sofa in the Delgates Lounge") that was a subsequently introduced at the UN. After much debate, bargaining, compromise, and modification, the UNGC was passed on December 9, 1948 and ratified roughly three years later.

Lemkin continued to read widely about genocide. During the decade prior to his death in August 1959, Lemkin set out to write a grand history of genocide. It was never published. Lemkin was a systematic man and his approach to his history shows it. He created a topical

template and applied it to each case. Much of it focused on the mechanisms of genocide. Thus he began with “1. Background-historical” information before turning to “2. Conditions leading to the genocide,” “3. Methods and techniques of genocide,” “4. The genocidists,” and “5. Propaganda.” The last items on his template focus on victims and bystanders, including “6. Response of Victims,” “7. Responses of outsider groups,” and “8. Aftermaths.”

Lemkin and his work were largely forgotten after his death. Indeed, it is said that only a handful of people came to his funeral. While some of his unpublished work has been lost, much of it survived thanks to colleagues, friends, and family members. These materials were later donated to the American Jewish Archives (AJA) in Cincinnati (in 1965 and 1983), the American Jewish Historical Society which is now located in New York (in 1975), the New York Public Library (in 1982), and a few other, smaller locations.

As the dates of these donations suggest, interest in Lemkin and the mechanisms of genocide was slow to emerge and, coincidently or not, loosely followed the contours of the emergence of Holocaust and genocide studies. The first donation in 1965 occurred just after the 1961 publication of Raul Hilberg’s groundbreaking *The Destruction of the European Jews* and the trial of the Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichman, who was the subject of Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). These two studies, which both foreground the role of bureaucracy and state structures, provided some of the earliest theorizing about the mechanisms of mass murder.

By the time of the donation to the American Jewish Historical Society in 1975, the field of Holocaust studies was emerging with a particular focus on issues of memory. Even as Holocaust studies began to mature, the first books in the nascent field of genocides studies, including Leo Kuper’s groundbreaking *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (1981), were just beginning to be published by the time of the 1982 and 1985 donations.

Both Holocaust and Genocide Studies have extensive literatures now, ones that explore the mechanisms of genocidal effacement. Within Holocaust studies, a key debate emerged between “intentionalists” and “functionalists,” with the former viewing the Holocaust as a top-down process driven by ideology and central planning. Functionalists, in turn, view the Holocaust as a much more stochastic process influenced by the actions of lower-level groups and institutional strutures.

This debate has resonated within genocide studies as well, which has been heavily influenced by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNGC). Lemkin regarded the passage and later ratification of this document as the culmination of his life work. Indeed, he sometimes introduced himself as the “founder of the Genocide Convention” and the epitaph on his gravestone reads, “The Father of the Genocide Convention.” Many scholars now refer to him as the “father of genocide studies.”

The UNGC defined genocide as the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such.” The intentionalist emphasis of this definition, which

stressed state-sponsored intent and was written in the shadow of the Holocaust, was a strong influence on first-generation scholarship in the field of genocide studies.

Meanwhile, Lemkin remained a largely forgotten man. It was only in the mid-to-late 1990s, after genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia and the publication of Samantha Power's Pulitzer-Prize winning book, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (2002), which foregrounded Lemkin and drew on his archives, that interest in Lemkin began to rise sharply. In the same year that Power's book was published, an edited collection, *Pioneers of Genocide Studies*, recognized Lemkin as the "father of genocide studies" and published an excerpt from his autobiography, "Totally Unofficial Man: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin" – even if this chapter was just one of a number of first-generation reminiscences about the origins of the field of genocide studies.

But the momentum was there and interest in Lemkin continued to grow both with the emergence of a gloal genocide prevention movement, particularly in the aftermath of Darfur, and new scholarship which revisited Lemkin's unpublished writings on genocide.

Interestingly, in *Axis Rule*, Lemkin himself defined genocide in a manner that differed from the UNGC, viewing it as a "a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves." This definition encompassed not just the physical effacement of a group, but also a communal effacement involving the "disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups."

While Lemkin's 1944 definition was heavily influenced by Nazi policy in occupied territories, he also opened the door to the exploration of colonial and imperial genocides that predated the Holocaust. During the last decade, a number of scholars, particularly historians, have drawn inspiration from this thread in Lemkin's work to explore the relationship of genocide to empire, colonialism, imperialism, and settler societies.

II. Cultural Effacement

If the conference was concerned partly with effacement in this sort of physical sense, it also foregrounded cultural destruction. The conference opened with a videotaped interview with Vann Nath, a Cambodian artist who survived incarceration at S-21, a Khmer Rouge interrogation and torture center where almost all of the more than 12,000 inmates were executed. He spoke of his experiences and his use of art after the genocide. The opening continued with a dialogue with the French feminist literary critic and writer, Hélène Cixous, a film about S-21 by Rithy Panh, and a discussion of cinema and the archive.

These authors were featured in or contributed to a special magazine issue linked to the conference, "Cambodia, Memory of the Extreme," that included essays on fine arts, cinema, theater, and literature. The magazine cover featured *Hommage (Jayavarman VII)*, a painting by Séra, a French-Cambodian artist, which was also featured in a campus gallery exhibition of related works by artists of Cambodian descent. During a reception held there after the

opening, Séra did a performance art piece, using watercolors and charcoal pens to paint while bending over a large canvas stretched out on the gallery floor, a crowd of over 100 people surrouding him.

Hommage was hung prominently in the gallery. Playing on a common Cambodian image, *Hommage* featured the silhouette of a featureless Buddha-like figure, sitting cross-legged, oulined by white that dripped into a hazy backdrop of light and dark green. A single spot of red could be seen behind one of figure's armless shoulders.

Séra had picked a potent image for Cambodians. Jayavarman VII is a legendary Buddhist ruler who greatly expanded the borders of the Khmer empire even as he launched building projects, including Angkor Thom and the Bayon, which are part of the famous Angkor Wat complex in Cambodia.

If Jayavarman is widely celebrated in Cambodian art and culture as a symbol of the country's past greatness, the figure in *Hommage* has a decidedly different feel, almost ghost-like as streaks of paint dribbled down from the white silhouette, like rain or tears. Instead of celebrating construction and glory, *Hommage* suggests disintegration and decline. Effacement.

* * *

After the the opening and exhibition, I had dinner with the two co-organizers of the conference, Pierre Bayard and Soko Phay Vakalis, both of whom teach at Paris 8, and asked how they had selected the conference title. They noted that many students knew nothing about what happened in Cambodia, in part because the international community ignored the genocide during the 1980s, when Cold War politics led the United States, Thailand, China, and their allies to back the Khmer Rouge, who were fighting a guerrilla war against the Vietnamese-backed government that had overthrown the Khmer Rouge in early January 1979.

In this odd situation, in which a genocidal regime was propped back up and even given Cambodia's seat at the United Nations for several years, the Khmer Rouge crimes were often diplomatically referred to as simply "the unfortunate events of the past." It was only in the early 1990s, after the signing of a post-Cold War peace agreement and UN-sponsored elections, that people began to speak of Cambodia and seeking justice for the Khmer Rouge, the topic of the last session of the conference.

Eventually, our converation turned to Séra. *Hommage*, Vakalis, who has written about Séra as well as art, genocide, and memory more broadly, noted how the painting operated on a variety of levels, with the white outline suggesting the spirits of the dead and the dissipating figure suggesting decline. Indeed, Vakalis said that when she discussed the image with students in Cambodia, many became upset; some even said the image was insulting to Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge past also lies in the background of *Hommage* and other works by Séra. Born in 1961 in Cambodia, Séra's family fled to Paris with his French in 1975. His father was killed by the Khmer Rouge the following year, a death that echos in his work. Indeed, when I later

asked Séra about the figure in *Hommage*, he looked at me and said, “It’s a boy. It’s me.” Upon a closer look at *Hommage*, a wide band of light green is visible, cutting across the figures torso and the dark green haze, as if the figure were bound, strapped to the past.

A grant proposal that Vakalis wrote to fund the conference and exhibition as well as related workshops notes, “Sera (Phousera ING) was born in 1961 to a Cambodian father and a French mother. He has ceaselessly interrogated the grief-stricken memory of Cambodian history through his various artistic practices: drawing, painting, sculpture and graphic novels (*bandes dessineés*). His work evokes and pays homage to the nameless dead and ‘disappeared’ of mass crimes.”

The proposal expands upon the larger themes of the conference and the related exhibitions, arguing that there is a critical need for Cambodian artists like Vann Nath to transform “direct memory” into “cultural memory” though media like art, cinema, and literature) “so that our society can preserve and rehabitate the past – even [if] painful – in today’s discussion.” This would also be facilitated by “creation workshops” at which Vann Nath and Séra would lead young Cambodian artists in making art objects at the Bophana Center, located in Phnom Penh. The results of these workshops were profiled in a documentary shown in a back room at the opening exhibition. The urgency of the proposal was well founded: Vann Nath died, after a long illness, in on September 5, 2011.

III. Genocide and Effacement

Effacement, then, operated on several levels at the conference. Beyond the first, and most obvious sense, of the physical effacement of the victims, the conference highlighted cultural effacement, both through the conference and the related exhibitions and publications. In doing so, it invoked the idea of culture as a glue that, once unstuck, destroys group identity. This was similar to Lemkin’s view that genocide is an assault on “the genius of a people,” a notion that invokes another anthropological concept of culture that emphasizes cultural achievements, such as art, myth, and religion, and a “folk spirit” (*volkgeist*), which gives a group its particular identity. Lemkin’s template details some of the different aspects of this process of cultural destruction:

Cultural:

desecration and destruction of cultural syumbols (books, objects of art,

religious relics, etc.)

looting

destruction of cultural leadership

destruction of cultural centers (cities, churches, monastaries, schools, libraries)

prohibitions of cultural activities or codes of behavior

forceful conversion

demoralization

While cultural genocide was largely written out of the UNGC, echoes of it survived in a clause of Article 2 that includes “Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group,” a dimension of genocide that allows the next generation of the victim group to live while effacing their cultural heritage. Most recently, this form of genocide has surfaced in relation to debates about the settler policies which forcibly removed the children of First Nations peoples in Canada and the “Stolen Generations” in Australia.

On yet another level, the conference was concerned with combatting effacement through cultural reclamation. One of the panels at the conference, during which Soko gave the first paper, was called “Art against Effacement,” an idea that was very much at the center of the proceedings. As the proposal for the project, which was entitled “The Sharing of Memory and Creation,” noted, “The aim of this project is artistic collaboration on the subjects of memory and violence, and [to] promote diversity of Cambodian cultural expressions . . . [b]efore the next dissapearance of a ‘direct memory” – witnesses and survivors, Vann Nath is old and will die one day . . . so that our society can preserve and rehabilitate the past.”

The conference, then, involved a double resistance to effacement: the attempt to reclaim memory and culture through the art of survivors and the endeavor to transmit the memory of the past to future generations both through activities like “creation workshops” and through promoting the art of the next generation. To this end, the proceedings also included talks and performances by young French-Cambodian artists whose work dealt with the genocide. The ten-page program included a photo of a young man, his face mostly in shadow, holding up an exhibition painting, and a list of “films of memory,” many of which were to be screened during the month following the conference.

Yet another form of effacement, the conceptual erasures of political acts and even academic thought, was also in the background of the conference. The act of definition is paradoxical, constructing a way of understanding that trods upon potentially relevent aspects that are pushed into the shadows.

Cultural genocide is a case-in-point. Included in the early drafts of the UNGC, it was more or less written out of the Convention and thus, for many years, the discussion of genocide. The long and contentious debates about the Stolen Generations and the Children of First Nations Peoples illustrates part of the reason why: there were vested political interests in preventing a situation in which (neo)colonial policies of the past could be defined as genocidal and thus be subject to condemnation and, perhaps, legal redress.

Such decisions have widespread consequences: groups of people are left unprotected and our ways of knowing unfold with a gap, though one that can rarely be fully closed. Academia is

directly implicated in this process, as it asserts judgments of truth and falsity through its discursive habits and social practices, including conferences that must, like all of our knowledge, foreground and background while asserting a set of intellectual priorities.

The field of genocide studies is particularly contentious, beset by a potential tension between scholarship and activism that was embodied by Lemkin. Thus, members of academic associations in genocide studies bicker over who does more "pure" scholarship and who fights for the victims and scholarly debates unfold over which cases should or should not be considered genocide. A canon of cases has emerged, headed by the triumverate of the Holocaust and the Armenian and Rwandan genocides (the Cambodian genocide is frequently invoked within scholarly discussions even if it has been effaced from much public memory), one that again foregrounds certain moments of recent history and backgrounds other events. In the United States, slavery and the genocide of Native Americans remain largely in the shadows of the discussion. The fact that we speak of the genocide of indigenous peoples as a whole as opposed to the destruction of specific "indigenous" groups at particular moments of time is revealing in this regard and in a sense reproduces the social death of so many peoples by subsuming their complex identities in a reductive category – just like cultural reductionism.

The field of genocide studies has been shifting of late, reconsidering its biases and preconceptions through the lens of what might be called "critical genocide studies." As part of this reexamination, there has been a turn to reconsider the UN Genocide Convention as a product of its time – in part, as noted earlier, by revisting Lemkin's alternative approach.

Written in the aftermath of the Nazi atrocities, the UNGC defined genocide in a manner that foregrounded state-sponsored mass death, and by implication the 20th century in which it took place, and ignored genocidal histories that proceeded along a different path, often involving long-term structural violence that continued to destroy a group long after the genocide had allegedly ended. The long-term disempowerment and structural violence Native Americans have endured again highlights this point.

As the acts of reclamation at the Paris conference illustrate, genocidal effacement is rarely complete. The past carries forward into the present, a sort of cultural *nachträglichkeit* to invoke Freud's concept of deferred action in which memory of the past is reinvested with meaning in the present. This process of *nachträglichkeit* was also evident at the conference, where the understanding of the past was being rearticulated through art and other media, the transmission of "direct memory," and the experience of second-generation survivors. *Hommage* is again revealing in this regard, as the ghost-like figure sits outlined against a murky backdrop, at once asserting a present past that is impermanent and ephemeral and always in danger of being effaced.

Sculpture

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Movie Review: A Dangerous Method

By | 2012: vol. 11, issue 1

Ambivalence, not sex, is the innermost dirty secret that Freud managed to flush into the open. We love and we hate, sure, but often wind up mingling extreme emotions toward anyone to whom we are intensely linked, and in varying degrees and guises. The exploration of this fickle core within our troublesome selves, and the bold lives of inquisitive spirits like Freud and Jung, is the admirably ambitious aim of David Cronenberg's latest film. Psychoanalysis rudely demolishes the illusion that we are masters in our own turbulent houses, but Freud also showed we could come to grips with this trickiest of human conditions and trek on with some decency and dignity. Does the film's title (drawn from John Kerr's book) imply psychoanalysis is too dangerous to apply or else that it is a valuable yet hazardous tool in the hands of even the most adroit practitioner? Cronenberg opts for the latter verdict in this account of two touchy titans brought together for a spell by one hell of a young sorceress.

Cronenberg taps into a controversial century-old case (disclosed in the 1970s) replete with therapeutic experiments, betrayals and self-deceptions, and tracks how they figured in forming the best of the methods yet devised for navigating the kaleidoscope of the human soul. In a pill-happy, gene-infatuated era drenched in anti-Freudian bile, Cronenberg and writer Christopher Hampton deserve full marks for nerve and flair in transmuting this tortuously complicated story into intelligible cinematic shape for a mass audience. That said, could anyone really portray the epic rupture, personal as much as professional, between Freud and Jung without taking sides? Well, no – and we'll get to that tender point below. Still, this daringly intelligent film is well worth seeing despite all its faults and slips and feints and dodges. Cronenberg truly tries to conjure an evenhanded portrayal of the three-way drama, but many viewers will be misled or puzzled by seductive pat answers explaining away the antics of the dramatis personae.

Freud, entrancingly played by Viggo Mortenson, comes across as a low-key magisterial figure, a keen questing intellect who is erudite, urbane, and savvy. This Freud, unlike many a mocking modern cartoon of him, is neither fanatic nor fool but a sober sage intent on keeping his audacious enterprise – childhood sexuality, the unconscious, the iconic couch, etcetera – on an even scientific keel despite formidable opposition, distortion and scorn. The young Carl Jung (Michael Fassbinder) is priggishly earnest and yet airy too, giving the impression of a wobbly vendor of helium balloons in a high wind skidding across solid ground. Jung at this formative stage in his life is the classic physician who cannot heal himself, except through violating oaths and patients first. "Sometimes you have to do something unforgiveable,' Jung laments, "just to go on living." Jung is the chary 'crown prince" who cannot help but cross his increasingly aggravated mentor at almost every turn.

The Freud-Jung schism, like Freud's splits with Alfred Adler and others, usually is trundled out as absolute proof that Freud was a tyrant intent on stifling independent spirits in the clan – such as the wayward wanton sprite Otto Gross. In Cronenberg's film Otto Gross (Vincent Cassel) functions as Jung's external 'shadow" – a kind of mini-me Mephistopheles urging the tormented psychiatrist to surrender to all temptations of the flesh. And the devil, of course, gets all the best lines. ("Monogamy? I can't image a more stressful concept.") Gross was one of the so-called "wild analysts" of the era– ranging from unwitting apostates to sheer charlatans – whose mischief Freud had to police as best he could before they discredited his entire enterprise. Keep in mind the exquisite irony that Freud himself was a fierce rebel who battled a repressive society saturated with hypocritical norms, one not so different from the miserable 'moral' world the televangelists toil to impose on Americans today.

The film's 'catalyst' is the fetchingly wretched Sabine Spielrein, who brings together Jung and Freud first as a deeply disturbed patient whose radical "talking cure" treatment they discuss, and later as an aspiring psychoanalyst herself so as, she tells Jung, "to give people back their freedom the way you gave me mine." Keira Knightly, who must have sniffed Oscar nomination, portrays Spielrein in a carpet-chewing, jaw-jutting jamboree of facial tics and other egregious acting school excesses. Had Speilrein, by all accounts a charming and lively soul after her cure, been half so prickly and morbidly intense as shown here Jung would have scampered to a galaxy far, far away at warp speed. Spielrein actually was a remarkably intelligent and insightful person, as were many talented women who joined Freud's alleged den of misogyny and thrived there.[1]

Dangerous Method opens at a ferocious gallop in Zurich in 1904. Spielrein, troubled offspring of an affluent Russian Jewish family, is hauled in a coach to the renowned Burgholzi psychiatric hospital, grimacing and gnashing, jingling and jangling all the way. Doctor Jung soon is staring benignly down at this gibbering wraith of a girl robed in white, crouching on the hospital floor. "I'm not mad, you know," she gamely spits. Unbeknownst to her the Burgholzli staff had fiddled with every imaginable medieval torture of the mentally ill or odd, but things thankfully now were changing.[2] Jung, inspired by Freud, merely urges her to free associate. For the crime of playing with her food an attendant warns Spielrein that she will inform hospital director Eugen Bleuler, who was known to support sterilization in certain cases. Spielrein gets off with nothing worse than a tepid bath. For splashing around in Ophelia-like hysteria in a fetid pond, she likely would have been surgically mutilated by Bleuler's predecessor (August Forel) in the holy name of the search for a sound medical solution. Anyway, Jung helps to heal her through the new-fangled Freudian method and, less laudably, hooks up with her romantically.

Next thing you know Spielrein is helping Jung administer word association tests, through which she swiftly divines Jung himself is weary with his wealthy wife Emma (soon to be a sharp psychotherapist herself), who seems to get pregnant every time he exhales around her. "Her husband may be losing interest," Sabine solemnly diagnoses. "You've quite a flair for this," Jung marvels. Jung laments that Freud put out the barest outline of how to perform analysis so he is especially eager to correspond with, and meet, the master. Turnabout becomes fair play on the spookily perceptive Spielrein as Jung ferrets out her own secrets. Corporal punishment

as a child left her with a pronounced bent for sexual masochism, which Cronenberg can't resist prefiguring by a rather arch shot of Jung whacking Sabine's billowy cloak with his long straight cane.

Freud's Vienna lair. Spring 1907. Three years elapse. Jung finally sees Freud face to furrowed face. Our intrepid doctors enjoy an enthralling wide-ranging conversation that lasts the whole day, with a bit of mutual back patting about Spielrein as a "walking advertisement for the effect of psychoanalysis." Their mutual adoration society, however, contains disruptive ripples that mark any serious intellectual relationship. Jung from the start skittishly pleads for a milder term than libido, that is, the sexual drive, as the root concern of psychoanalysis. Freud sensibly replies, "Once they work out what we mean they'll be just as appalled as ever." Freud nonetheless is smitten; here is a gifted 'Aryan' successor who can pry psychoanalysis out of the central European Jewish ghetto to which he feared it was confined. A token of Freud's esteem is his request for Jung to look after the sybaritic and self-destructive former analyst Otto Gross, who was committed by his father to the Burgholzi. Gross is a skyrocket, rapidly ascending with pungent one-liners, unsettling Jung, bonking a nurse and escaping the hospital ultimately to hit a literal dead end in 1920, a less pleasing outcome than that of Spielrein. Jung ungallantly later credits Gross, not Spielrein, with crystallizing crucial ideas – such as the anima and the shadow – he pursued ever afterward.[3]

Back in Zurich Spieirein deftly seduces Jung, who by the way is still her analyst. They make love Victorianly, almost fully clothed, leaving a virgin's bloodstain on the sheets. From his blushing wary behavior you'd think it was Jung's. Then behold our proud family man standing beside his indulgent but astute wife Emma in front of their deluxe gingerbread house. Unwitting Emma surprises her straying spouse with the present of a shiny new sailboat, which triggers strangely spasmodic guilt. In A Dangerous Method it is Jung alone who is tortured with guilt, Jung alone who suffers self-blame, Jung alone who feels deceitful – and who goes on deceiving. In a trice, guilty or not, red sails loom in the sunset and a tilt-down shot captures Jung and Spielrein entwined in the womb-like cockpit of his wife's generous gift. We are jollied every single step of the scripted way into excusing, and sympathizing with, this poor conflicted Swiss prig. The rest of the cinematic tale turns around Jung manfully freeing himself both from his plainly taboo entanglement with his patient Spielrein, which he initiated as much as she did, and to wriggle free from a powerful father-son relationship with Freud, which the movie omits to mention he himself explicitly urged on Freud. Talk about ambivalence!

'You musn't think I have a closed mind,' Freud, who privately believed there was something to telepathy, implores Jung regarding religious speculations.[4] (Jung's father was a gloomy clergyman, his mother a bubbly spiritualist, and his dissertation explicitly probed the Occult.) Freud simply saw no point drawing more ridicule on his nascent movement by openly pursuing paranormal research too. Jung, now dubbed Freud's heir, comes to view Freud's followers (who, to be fair, mightily resent him) as nothing more than "degenerates and bohemians picking up crumbs from his table." Hey, just look at Gross, who shakes up Jung rather badly. "Perhaps [Freud] seeks obedience," Jung muses in a customarily self-serving way. Jung grouses that Freud is "inflexible" and "obsessively sexual" because, you know, there "must be

more than one hinge into the universe." Well, Freud thought so too. Their correspondence attests that Freud strived to overlook Jung's escalating deviations.[5] Cronenberg treats us to an eerie incident when a bookcase in Freud's office makes a crackling noise. Jung predicts an encore that happens on cue. Freud was startled by 'the poltergeist moment,' which Jung termed a 'catalytic exteriorization phenomenon,' but it didn't spur Freud to embrace a supernatural research agenda. (Nor could he forbid Jung from following his hocus-pocus inclinations.) The next cracking noise we hear is Jung spanking Sabine in erotic prelude.

Freud is depicted as a pretty smooth pragmatist willing to appease the establishment when at this time in 1908 he published perhaps his most radical essay on "Civilized Sexual Ethics and Modern Nervousness, "which defiantly championed the individual against smothering cultural constraints. The filmmakers maneuver Freud into the role of stolid model-builder and thus make Jung appear the audacious radical when neither depiction was quite the case. The sailboat, scene of adulterous trysts, is made a site for subtly mocking Freud. The formally attired Doktor uncomfortably nestles in Jung's boat and confronts him, gently, about rumors of an affair with Spielrein. Jung denies it. (Jeez, why can't Freud lighten up like Jung?) Freud briefly is a deceived 'go-between' defending Jung to Spielrein, of all people, as "incapable of shabby or frivolous behavior."

The reckless affair is exposed when an anonymous letter, likely scribbled by Jung's wife, alerts Spielrein's parents. Jung indignantly retorts that Spielrein is no longer his patient "since I stopped charging you." So the distinction between patient and fair game is cast as a purely monetary one, which is an outrageously unethical or, to put it charitably, desperate ploy. Spielrein remains frantic, needy and hectoring. She even slices Jung's cheek with a knife. Any sane shrink would have fled this crazed Fatal Attraction precursor, except the cheek was never slashed. Jung resigns from the Burgholzi because of the impending scandal that he whines that Speilrein caused, but is his own fault. Spielrein, who will earn her own medical degree in 1911, also demands that Jung tell Freud the truth about the affair. Jung blusters, "You're blackmailing me." This self-absolving reply takes astounding nerve, but the film portrays Jung as the injured party.

Jung has no choice but to confess. Freud duly apologizes to Spielrein who impresses him so much when they meet that she soon enters Freud's circle as an analyst in training. Her contributions are significant ones. Spielrein suggests to Jung that there is an ingredient of "man in every woman and vice versa." Presto, Jung's anima. Wrestling with why the sexual drive is so easy to repress, Spielrein proposes that "only the clash of destructive forces can create something new" and that true sexuality demands fusion and the temporary destruction of the ego. Despite Jung (and the filmmakers) hailing her proposition as the heretical opposite of Freud's notions, Freud himself urged publication of Spielrein's work in the Psychoanalytic Society's yearbook. a paper regarded as a forerunner of Freud's concept of the 'death instinct."[6] Yet Spielrein, who afterward did her level best to reconcile Jung and Freud, is treated onscreen more like an idiot savant than a truly creative thinker.

Next stop? Jung and Freud (and Sandor Ferenczi) voyage off to a triumphant visit to Clark

University in 1909. Sigmund and Carl's excellent adventure is marred both when Jung moseys to a first class stateroom while Freud is relegated to shabby second class, which was not true, and when Freud declines to share a revealing dream with Jung, which is true. Jung claimed Freud lost his authority at that moment, yet for several years afterward Jung was repeatedly on record as revering his Viennese mentor.[7] Freud, by the way, had construed one of Jung's dreams as a wish to displace the father figure, himself. Hard to fault Freud's interpretation nowadays. Later, Jung's wife inquires why Freud refused to meet Jung's boss Bleuler. Jung casually replies, "Freud was a great one for bearing Incomprehensible grudges." Incomprehensible? The filmmakers omit mentioning that Jung himself had gotten fed up with Bleuler much sooner than with Freud (who had a testy but overall good relationship with Bleuler).[8] It seems to be characteristic of Jung to search assiduously for clay feet in anyone he idealized. It is not a rare syndrome – tabloids thrive on it. Any audience member, by the way, can be forgiven for thinking that anti-Semitism existed only in Freud's head, for there is no trace of it in the film.[9]

Jung is awarded the upper hand in an exchange with Freud over the symbolic meaning of an Egyptian artifact. Jung indeed gets every break the filmmakers can muster. (Artists love Jung's work and for good reason.) Deviations pile up and Freud – painfully for both men – severs the relationship in 1913. Jung quickly goes into a protracted tailspin from which he eventually emerges with extraordinary verve. Spielrein, now married, pregnant and an analyst herself, visits her disconsolate former lover, who shares nothing less than a prophetic vision of apocalyptic World War. Jung's wife hilariously but improbably tells Spielrein that she 'tried to persuade him to let you analyze him"! Jung is given the last uplifting word, saying we have to "help the person off on a journey at the end of which he becomes the person he always intended to be." Well, okay. That Jung could be a louse in his personal relations does not remotely ruin the value of his fascinating life's work, whether you credit the mystical forays or not. Freud, and no doubt your grandmother, advised us to regard all surfaces – especially the most plausible and persuasive ones – with some suspicion. A Dangerous Method clinches their case.

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Notes

[1] See Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester, *Freud's Women (*New York: Basic Books, 1992), Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London: Allan Lane, 1974), Jean Strousse, ed, *Women and Analysis* (New York: G.K Hall, 1985) and Janet Sayers, *Mothers of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1993).

[2] See Elliot Valenstein, *Great and Desperate Cures* (New York: Basic Books,1986) and Andrew Scull*, Museums of Madness* (London: Allan Lane, 1972).

[3] Bruno Betteleheim, 'A Secret Symmetry,' in *Freud's Vienna and other Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1991), p. 26

[4] 'In my opinion it shows no great confidence in science if one does not think it capable of assimilating and working over whatever may perhaps turn out to be true in the assertions of occultists.' Freud, 'Dreams and Occultism,' in *New Introductory Lectures* (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 49.

[5] 'It seems I shall have to go my own way for some time to come,' Jung informs Freud in June 1912. 'But you know how obstinate we Swiss are.' Jung breezily writes of his American visit. 'I found that my version of [psychoanalysis] won over many people who until now had been put off by the problem of sexuality on neurosis.' William McGuire, ed. *The Freud/Jung Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 233, 237-238.

[6] Coline Covington and Barbara Wharton, eds. *Sabine Spielrein: Forgotten Pioneer of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), p. ix.

[7] Bettelheim, 'A Secret Symmetry,' p. 60.

[8] Paul G Stern, *C.G. Jung: The Haunted Prophet* (New York: George Braziller, 1976), p. 55.

[9] 'Nervous illnesses' were officially regarded as 'higher among Jews than among the other races of Europe.' John Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method* (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 22. Also see Sander Gillman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 93-131

Robert Cohen’s Freedom’s Orator and Edward P. Morgan’s What Really Happened to the 1960s

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Robert Cohen,*“Freedom’s Orator”: Mario Savio and the Radical Legacy of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2009)

Edward P. Morgan, *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy* (University Press of Kansas, 2010)

On 15 November 2011, at the same spot on the Berkeley campus where “freedom’s orator” emerged into history in 1964, thousands gathered to commemorate Mario Savio and to protest against the police assault on OccupyCal a few days before. At the request of the Occupiers, the Mario Savio Award committee agreed to hold their 2011 award ceremony on the Steps officially dedicated to him. So on that chilly November evening we gathered to remember the past and to act in the present. And when Lynne Hollander Savio, Mario Savio’s widow, asked for those who had participated in the Civil Rights Movement, then the Free Speech Movement, then the Anti-War Movement, and so on down to Occupy, to raise their hands, an elderly woman in my vicinity, confined to a wheelchair, had her fist in the air from first to last, as did hundreds upon hundreds of others. Berkeley’s past and present came together that evening in a trans-generational moment of a sort all too rare in the neo-liberal era: a moment of political opposition rooted in a deep sense of connectedness, of understanding of each other’s hopes and fears, combined with a determination to act. It was, I think, an extraordinarily educative moment for all concerned–for far too long, many of us from the past have tended to bewail the apolitical younger generation, while many of the younger generation have found our preoccupation with our past irrelevant. It was a moment uniquely generated by the Free Speech Movement and Occupy together. Yet it was not a uniquely Berkeley moment, although that it occurred in Sproul Plaza did lend it a particular aura. For Occupy Wall Street–like its precursor, the Wisconsin rising–has been notable for again bringing young and old onto the streets of America.

Since Occupy has so altered the climate of political judgment, there is now no need to treat the books by Cohen and Morgan, published before 2011, as if their value resides solely in whether or not they rescue their historical subjects from condescension and misrepresentation. Published amidst so much despair that any movement against the dominating rottenness of our times would ever materialize, their authors surely also aimed to do what they could to weaken

that domination. But there have been many other efforts to confront the worldview insinuated by the mass media, as Morgan argues, into all the nooks and crannies of our understanding. So while it may be debated how much and in what ways any of these has contributed to the present rejection of and assault upon a system and its supporting ideology whose existence is suddenly so widely perceived to be incompatible with society, the contribution of these two books should not be exaggerated and should not be the basis on which they are judged. They are, nevertheless, worth considering for the encouragement and warnings they provide as we again confront our actually existing democracy.

A first warning: The uplifting feeling, palpable at the Savio Steps, that we all–or at least 99% of us–are involved in something necessary and life enhancing, deserves scrutiny. For as Morgan warns, we have all been subjected to mass media relentlessly bent upon bending us to conservative notions of what is and is not permissible by (re)writing for their own ends our history even as we live it. And we all to some degree inhabit these system-serving misconstructions. (That the social conflicts of the Sixties were merely generational conflicts, is one of the distortions he emphasizes. That it was all merely the folly of youth is, as we will see, one of the accusations directed against Savio towards the end of his life by one of his last political opponents.) So the feeling that we are now engaged together in something vital is not enough. Bridges of understanding anchored in re-examined and re-invigorated self-understanding need to be fashioned. Both these books can help us rid ourselves of the prevailing "odious" order of things we have in part internalized and encourage us, now that the first rush of joy in action is past, begin the necessary long, slow boring of the hard board.

No matter that an emphasis on generations is problematical, Cohen's detailed account of the Free Speech Movement will almost certainly remind some of us that we once were so, so young. Still, it comes as a bit of a shock to be told in the book's opening words that Savio was only 21 when he burst upon the political scene. Of course, many in the Free Speech Movement –or in the Civil Rights Movement, in which Savio was active (and educated), in Mississippi, in the Freedom Summer of 1964–were young. But then, as now in Occupy, youth proved no barrier to political invention and sophistication. The politically unsophisticated, the leaden footed who never seemed to be able to take a right step, were those then, as now, already ensconced in positions of power and privilege. But Cohen's account of Savio's political engagements after 1964 shows that the self-perpetuating oligarchy's early setbacks proved in many respects temporary. How this hydra grew new heads, is Morgan's subject. How to go on wrong-footing today's oligarchs and how to prevent them from growing two new heads when one is cut off, is a key problem facing Occupy today. If that is to be done, it will require ever more political imagination and inventiveness. It will also require awareness of the sort that Morgan provides concerning how the vast apparatus devoted to defining and manipulating thought and action operates.

Cohen also warns that those seeking to undo the system must avoid wrong-footing themselves. His account of the failure of the effort at Berkeley in Spring 1965 to defend the freedom to speak even obscenely shows that it is certainly possible for someone, even someone widely respected as a leader, to try to lead where few will follow. As it became clear that the FSM

leadership was divided on the issue and that only hundreds rather than thousands were willing to defend “filthy speech” with their bodies, Savio backed away from it. But some damage had already been done. Now, as then, there are a great many matters that agitate some of us more than others. But not all of them are of the same political significance. One must hope that Occupy manages collectively to winnow the wheat from the chaff and avoids wasting time and energy on things that are politically marginal and marginalizing. Yet, again, however, as Morgan warns, Occupy’s efforts to make Occupy grow are being frustrated by the fact that at every turn we are subjected to a process that treats us as an audience rather than actors, that plays on our emotions in such a fashion as to “[draw us] into a culture of consumption and entertainment that provides . . . a compensatory but ultimately erosive sense of empowerment”–something that certain sorts of issues and actions seem to lend themselves to.

While Cohen’s biography takes note of the resurgence of the system under the leadership of far right-wingers, it does not dwell on how that came about. It does, however, show how, after FSM, Savio engaged with this unwelcome reality –which brings me to the most poignant aspect of this book. Poignant not because Savio’s time in the political sun was so short (although his was a life of political engagement until its end), nor because he died too soon. The poignancy springs from being reminded so forcefully that those are vulnerable human beings who choose, because where and who and what they are leaves them no other choice, to “put [their] bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon the whole apparatus” to try to stop “the operation of the machine [which has become] so odious, [which] makes [one] so sick at heart, that [one] can’t take part.” Yet these same circumstances helped Savio, who long suffered a speech defect, to find his voice, just as today’s circumstances are helping some to find a voice they did not know they had. Cohen thus reminds us that those we now see facing the militarized police are not superheroes; they’re not going to spring up after the state juggernaut has rolled over them to continue the struggle unscathed. Those crushed by power seeking to persuade that it should still be worshipped are surely courageous. But they are being hurt, and so long as the struggle goes on they will continue to be hurt, in their minds as well as in their bodies. That Savio was vulnerable and that, aware of his own vulnerability, he nevertheless went on to act, is a mark of his courage. That Savio was vulnerable and that those close to him in 1964 and thereafter knew he was vulnerable, explains, I think, why those who knew him loved him warmly and supportively, but with no hint of idolatry.

Savio was certainly not alone in his vulnerability. We who went through those dreadful yet inspiring years surely all know someone whose life was knocked off course. We even know some who, unlike Savio who rediscovered his early scientific interests, failed to find a new satisfying course for themselves. The same will surely happen this time around. So, many of the young who are risking so much of themselves will need encouragement as they deal with the consequences of their actions. This is another warning. But Cohen’s book encourages one to hope that support will not be lacking. As the recent gathering at the Mario Savio Steps also bore witness, it was a genuine community that came into being at Berkeley in 1964. And evidently many of those who joined it have found it a lifelong source of friendship and support, and an instrument through which to critically perceive and engage with society and its media.

Butt all was not sweetness and light within the FSM. Cohen makes it clear that circumstances, personalities and politics led to internal conflicts. And no one, certainly not Savio, emerges as a saint–although Cohen's account of Savio's background, especially the importance to him of the teachings of the religion from which he had lapsed, might mislead some to thinking so. The all-inclusiveness of the movement, beginning with the initial mass 32-hour encirclement of the police car into which the first arrestee, civil rights activist Jack Weinberg, had been dragged, meant that it encompassed many political persuasions, including even some conservatives. That made conflict inevitable. Some differences could be reconciled; others could not. Many of these, which surfaced, as Cohen makes clear, at that founding moment of "The Sixties," are still with us. None has perhaps been more disruptive than that which separates those who insist it is necessary to make deals with those who possess power from those who insist that the latter must be relentlessly subjected to pressure and that their limits, which are the limits of the system itself, must be exposed by confronting them/it with demands for non-reformist reforms they/it cannot concede without simultaneously surrendering part of their/its basic nature. Savio was ever ready to argue against conceding too much too quickly to faculty and administrators, who could not be trusted, especially where the principle of freedom of speech on campus was concerned. He also used his remarkable ability to persuade enormous crowds of people, many of whom accorded him a special trust, to support the approaches he favored. And no doubt this too antagonized those on the FSM's Steering and Executive committees who disagreed with him.

Of course, he antagonized others outside the Movement even more. And as Cohen notes, those antagonisms endured. They certainly surfaced 30 years later when Savio joined in opposing a fee increase at Sonoma State University, where he was an untenured lecturer in physics. There an administrator compared encountering Savio's very public political activism against the corporatization of higher education to "watching . . . a reformed alcoholic saying, 'You know, life was more fun when I was a drunk. And I'm going to start indulging again." For that administrator, Savio's radicalism was only a childish indiscretion he should have outgrown. That he had not done so showed he was addicted to it. What such critics do not get is that there can be transformative experiences in people's lives which forever preclude surrender to the odious machine no matter how it may have been restyled. No doubt some of the young engaged in Occupy, including those who have joined in today's struggles against tuition fees and other aspects of the still advancing corporatization of the public education system, will similarly find that they have been transformed and that their lives have been forever marked, for good and ill, by this deeply personal political act.

That others long harbored antagonisms, and that they similarly failed to recognize that the FSM–or, more generally, the movements of the Sixties– were, for many, deeply transformative, is further evident in some of the ways in which, as Cohen describes, Savio was remembered after his death. Not just the Mr. Joneses of the world, but even world-famous philosophers seem to be as incapable now, as they were then, of knowing what is happening. So again a warning: Don't expect those who experience Occupations as the rejection of their values and way of life to acknowledge that these are principled actions. To them, these principles will remain incomprehensibly wrong, for they require leaps of sympathy and of the imagination

beyond their capacities. Expect their endless rancor.

But why are some people locked into the belief that, bad as it may be, this is still the best of all possible worlds? Why cannot some people see that a new world is necessary? Of course, not everyone sees everything in the same light and it is surely legitimate not to do so. And when talking of how we live and how we ought to live, heated words are unavoidable. But beyond that, at least some of the war of words surely erupts because 'we' feel that 'they' do not listen to us, do not take 'us' seriously. Again, this is to be expected. For we all have many things on our minds and none of us can engage to do something about every terribly pressing matter. There is, however, a further problem with the way we live, a problem that, according to Morgan, is lodged in the way we learn about our world and its problems.

That those who know the Sixties only through the ways it has been presented in our culture think of it in ways often unrecognizable to those of us who lived through it, should not surprise us. But even we who live with "our own memories" of the Sixties live with the distortion of these memories. For we, too, have been subjected, as Morgan argues, to mass media "grounded in the broader political economy [which] shape media outcomes systemically," which "provides the public with an endless stream of imagery, distorted claims and personalities they can loathe, embrace, or emulate–and not much else." Perhaps when it comes to matters with which we were intimately engaged, we retain some sense of what really happened. Concerning matters which engaged us peripherally, our memories are less to be trusted–not just because our memories become more fallible with the passage of time, but more because a number has been done on us too. And so we, too, live, however uncomfortably and resistantly, in that world of "ideological and identity enclaves" framed by the "highly imagistic media culture['s]" exploitation of "the Sixties." We, too, especially when we seek to converse with those who do not agree with us, find ourselves discoursing according to the parameters laid down in that media culture which reduces "the likelihood of democratic conversation among the citizenry" while sharpening our differences as we each bring to the conversation a half century, almost, of unrelieved emotion. And so we too often dance the same old dance to their tune.

This is why the Occupy movement has been so refreshingly different. It opened the door to the discussion of things that had long been off the table in ways that the media-supported dominant ideology had long ruled illegitimate. Opposition to the neo-liberal system began to find a new voice. Occupy held out the promise that it would break free of that decades long debilitating pseudo-discussion of constricted possibilities and make something like a democratic conversation possible. But in some places, the weight of that illusory "past" has proved too much, pressing people back into trying to engage in fruitless ways with misleadingly defined issues. The warning is clear. If we are to avoid dancing the same old dance, the Sixties must be engaged with critically. The ideas and practices that informed that inspiring historic era must not be trundled out again half a century later by would-be emulators locked into an erroneous, media-constructed understanding of that era. Morgan's suggestion, that "we need a reckoning with this past that we can learn from, not a discourse that keeps a distorted past alive while simultaneously trying to bury it," is surely correct.

And so back, finally, to Mario Savio and the FSM. For what Cohen's account clearly shows is that the FSM was also notable above all for speaking in ways that made political conversation fresh and meaningful, something that correlated with Savio's own non-sectarian leftism. Yet while Savio himself seems to have remained free from ideological cant, the larger politics of opposition all too quickly diminished to conflicts among unyielding orthodoxies. That, perhaps, is the final warning to be taken from these books: that meaningful political conversation is terribly hard to maintain when so much surrounding us and in ourselves encourages us to keep on gnawing away at the same old stale cake of custom.

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Robin Melville used to teach politics at a liberal arts college in Wisconsin.

Lawrence M Krauss', Quantum Man: Richard Feynman's Life in Science, and Graham Farmelo's, The Strangest Man: The Hidden Life of Paul Dirac, Quantum Genius

By | 2012: vol. 11, issue 1

Paul Dirac and Richard Feynman were legends in their lifetimes and remain so to this day. Their peers thought of them as unconventional, eccentric, magical geniuses. As theoretical physicists, they had much in common – an ability to focus on difficult problems and pursue them, if necessary, for months on end. Their personalities were, however, very different: Dirac was a loner; Feynman a joker. No one could imagine Dirac wearing a beanie hat with a helicopter on top, playing bongo drums at parties, as Feynman did at Cal Tech.

In 1928 young British physicist Dirac published a mathematical equation which was to have a profound effect on particle physics. Just three years before, Erwin Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg developed quantum mechanics to explain the peculiar behaviour of matter at atomic and sub-atomic scales, which classical physics failed to do. Some twenty years before that Albert Einstein had unveiled his theory of Special Relativity on the relationship between space and time, and between energy and mass. The problem with quantum mechanics at first was that it did not work for particles moving at speeds close to the speed of light. It was not relativistic.

Dirac's equation ingeniously used both quantum mechanics and relativity to describe the behaviour of the electron, but it also had unexpected implications. The equation allowed for two solutions: one for an electron with positive energy and one for an electron with negative energy, the latter flying in the face of all common sense. How can anything have negative energy? This was, of course, an expedition into the realm of pure theory on Dirac's part, but in 1932 Carl Anderson at Cal Tech when studying cosmic rays saw a track left by something positively charged with the same mass as an electron, thus confirming Dirac's strange finding. Anderson called this anti-electron a positron.[1] In 1933 Dirac thus shared with Schrödinger the Nobel Prize in Physics for the discovery of new forms of atomic theory. In his Nobel Lecture he speculated that while the Earth contains a preponderance of negative electrons and positive protons some stars may be built up mainly of positrons and negative protons, introducing, for the first time, the possible universality of antimatter.

In 1946 Dirac coincidentally encountered one of the most exciting scientific talents in America,

twenty-eight-year-old Richard Feynman. Dirac had been invited to give a paper at a bicentennial conference in Princeton on the future of nuclear science, and Feynman was to introduce Dirac to a distinguished gathering. To Feynman, Dirac was already a hero. Even as a sophomore at MIT Feynman attended advanced graduate courses in theoretical physics, becoming attracted to topics ranging from relativity to quantum mechanics, and developing a love for the classical theory of electromagnetism. He carried these interests to graduate school in Princeton, where he tried to determine the energy levels of electrons in hydrogen only to discover that Dirac had beaten him to it more than a decade before. Feynman noticed though, that while Dirac suggested a 'vague analogy' between a critical quantum quantity and its classical counterpart, he took it no further. So Feynman commenced to provide calculations showing that the analogy could be made exact.

For all his admiration of Dirac, Feynman had been disappointed by the manuscript note he had seen of Dirac's conference speech. It seemed backward looking, stale and unimportant. After the applause, Feynman tried to give lay members of the audience a sense of the significance of what Dirac was saying. Always a jokester, he cracked more than his usual quota, only to be rebuked by Niels Bohr – lionized in the play 'Copenhagen' – for not taking the proceedings seriously. A few hours later Feynman noticed that Dirac had left the conference and was lying outside on the grass gazing into the sky. Feyman saw this as an opportunity to answer a burning question: what had Dirac meant in writing about an analogy? Here is Feynman's recollection of the conversation:

Feynman: "Did you know that they were proportional?"

Dirac: "Are they?"

Feynman: "Yes."

Dirac: "Oh, that's interesting."

This, as we shall see, was a long conversation by Dirac's standards. It gives no answer to Feynman's question. Feynman himself eventually would point out that even the simplest interaction of light and matter (electrons) affects all chemistry and biology, and is therefore of the greatest importance. Dirac, in combining quantum mechanics and relativity in 1928, concentrated on the 'simple' electron. Even so, difficulties arose with Dirac's formulation, notably when calculating effects of interactions between electrons and the electromagnetic field. Infinite, and therefore useless results, were obtained. In the 1930s many theoretical physicists, including Feynman, worked to improve quantum electrodynamics (QED). It was not until the late 1940s that satisfactory solutions were found.

The spur came in 1947, when Willis Lamb at Columbia University completed some remarkably accurate laboratory measurements of the fine structure of hydrogen, which showed that some energy levels of hydrogen were slightly shifted relatively to one another. Sin'Itero Tomonaga, following up suggestions by Hans Bethe and others, realised that a solution might be found by using a mathematical device known as renormalisation. Almost simultaneously, experiments at

Columbia showed that the magnetic moment of the electron was larger than assumed. Julian Schwinger calculated that a small anomalous addition to the theoretical value of magnetic moment would bring it into alignment with experiment. Feyman, however, used a more radical technique of space-time diagrams to solve these knottiest of problems. His unique but simple approach was readily understood by other physicists and remains an important tool to this day. In 1965 the Nobel Prize in Physics was jointly awarded to Tomonaga, Schwinger and Feynman, as a result of which "quantum electrodynamics suddenly became one of the most accurate of all the theories of physics"[2] Dirac had combined relativity with quantum mechanics; Feynman blew away the fog of infinities. These were the great achievements of two remarkable giants of physics, Feynman and Dirac.

Dirac, who said he never felt love as a child, was born in 1902 at Bristol, a large industrial and commercial city in southwest England. His father, Charles, brought up in a French-speaking Swiss canton, settled in Bristol in the mid-1890s, and was Head of Modern Languages at the Merchant Venturers' School at the time of Paul's birth. Paul's Cornish mother, Flo, was twelve year younger than her husband. He was a Catholic, though he kept that to himself; she a devout Methodist. It was a strange, if not estranged, marriage. The husband was a dominant personality; she was a day-dreamer. He spoke French to their children (Paul had an older brother and a younger sister), she spoke to them in English. They rarely ate together. Paul would eat with his father; his siblings with his mother. Paul found the meals with his father distressing. He had no talent for languages, and if he made any slip in pronunciation or grammar his father would refuse any requests. Unable to express himself properly in French, he thought it better to remain silent. Dirac would always be ill at ease with normal conversation.

At age five Dirac started junior school. At first he did not shine but later picked up and passed exams with flying colours. In August 1914, when war was breaking out, Dirac entered the school at which his father taught. The curriculum was slanted towards technical subjects and Dirac soon established himself as a star pupil in science and mathematics. Aged only sixteen, with war coming to an end, he began studying engineering at Bristol University and was awarded a first class degree. His father, keen that Dirac should go to Cambridge, wrote to St John College. Dirac passed the entrance examination, but the accompanying minor scholarship was not enough to support him. Fortunately the head of the mathematics department at Bristol arranged for him to take an honours mathematics degree course free of charge, allowing him to skip the first year. Dirac was in his element, but not being overstretched; he attended lectures in physics, and learned quantum theories and new ways of thinking about light. The head of the mathematics department also wrote to St John's College, Cambridge, extolling Dirac's prowess. He also added a caveat: 'He is a bit uncouth, and wants some sitting on hard, is rather a recluse, plays no games, and is very badly off financially'. This time, Dirac got the award of scholarships just sufficient to cover his first year costs.

At Cambridge Dirac's low social standing was revealed by his cheap suit, gauche manners and, on the occasions he spoke, his accent. His manner at dinner in Hall was legendary. Most students had been educated at the top fee-paying schools, knew Latin and Greek, and

conversed easily on fashionable topics. Dirac sat through courses without saying a word, or even acknowledging those sitting beside him. Yet, as his biographer records, he did prefer to eat in company and to hear intelligent people talking about serious matters.

Fortunately, his supervisor, physicist Ralph Fowler, recognised Dirac's talent and gave him carefully chosen problems to solve, and constant encouragement. Fowler had a light touch and for the most part Dirac worked on his own. Fowler, however, encouraged him to report his results, rather than filing them away, and Dirac developed a writing style characterised by 'directness, confident reasoning, powerful mathematics, and plain English.' By the end of 1924, he produced five papers and was recognised as an outstanding student and a natural researcher. In 1925 Dirac's paper, 'The Fundamental Equations of Quantum Mechanics,' was published in the proceedings of the Royal Society, and Cambridge woke up to the fact that a star had been born. Quantum Mechanics was new, and little understood. Max Born, who had coined the phrase in 1924, was amazed to read a year later a paper 'perfect in its way and admirable' written by a youngster. Heisenberg was also fulsome in his praise. In 1926 Dirac was awarded a PhD for a thesis of exceptional distinction.

Dirac left Cambridge to spend a year in Europe: six months with Niels Bohr at Copenhagen and six with Max Born at Göttingen, meeting many great innovators of quantum theories. These were enjoyable and productive interludes for Dirac. It was in Copenhagen that he turned to finding a relativistic quantum theory of the electron which led to his Nobel Prize. Dirac returned to Cambridge and published his famous equation in 1928. Some four years later, in the midst of triumphs in the Cavendish laboratory, in particular Cockcroft and Walton's 'splitting of the atom', Dirac was appointed Lucasion Professor of Mathematics, a Chair previously occupied by Isaac Newton and, more recently, Stephen Hawking.

In1934 Dirac began a sabbatical at the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton, with an office next to Hungarian refugee, Eugene Wigner. He struck up a friendship with Wigner's sister, Manci, a lively divorcee with a young son and daughter, who encouraged Dirac to take more interest in music, literature and ballet. They married in January 1937. Their first child, Mary, was born in London in 1940. A second daughter, Monica, was born in 1942. During the war Dirac turned down invitations to join teams of scientists working for the war effort, but stayed at Cambridge where he spent time advising those engaged on the development of the atomic bomb on practical ways of enriching uranium.

In the post war years Dirac spent much time travelling, making many returns to his favourite haunt, Princeton. In 1963, Oppenheimer told him that he had arranged for a framed photo of him to hang on a wall at the Institute, next to one of Einstein: 'You two are alone on that wall.' In 1969 Dirac relinquished his Cambridge post. Two years later he became Visiting Eminent Professor at the University of Florida. On 20 October 1984, aged 82, Dirac died. He had turned down a knighthood and honorary degrees, but accepted membership of the Order of Merit, which did not oblige him to call himself anything other than 'Mr Dirac.' He is commemorated in the science corner of Westminster Abbey.

Richard Feynman was born in 1918 in Manhattan and brought up in Far Rockaway, a small town on the outskirts of New York. His father was the son of Lithuanian Jews who migrated to the United States when he was five, and settled in Long Island. He tried various occupations before establishing himself in a business making uniforms. Richard's mother, Lucille, the daughter of a prosperous businessman, was of Polish Jewish descent. Their house was shared with Lucille's sister and her family, so Richard and his younger sister were not lacking in company, their cousins in the house being thought of as siblings.[3] Richard got on very well with his parents. His father stimulated his interest in science. His mother's sense of humour, warmth and compassion greatly influenced his character.

When Richard was about ten, the Feynmans moved to Cedarhurst, and he attended the local elementary school where he was taught little he did not already know, except in the last two years when he studied algebra, and surprised his teachers with his mastery of it. After two years or so the family went back to Far Rockaway and Richard entered High School. Avidly reading popular books on science, he again found that he knew everything that was being taught, except for advanced mathematics, in which he was pushed hard and learned a lot. The head of the department told Lucille to ensure that her son went to college after high school. Feynman prepared for college by working as a waiter to raise money. He was accepted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with a small scholarship, in 1935. In his first year he studied engineering and then switched to physics. By the end of his final year he had covered not only the undergraduate but also the graduate physics curricular and was looking forward to another four years in graduate research. He was offered a scholarship to Havard but chose Princeton, where Einstein was. Here he had the good fortune to be supervised by John Wheeler, a young scientist who had worked with Niels Bohr in Copenhagen. As Wheeler wrote later: "I am eternally grateful for the fortune that brought us together on more one fascinating enterprise…Discussions turned into laughter, laughter into jokes, and jokes into more to-and-fro, and more ideas." Feynman brought mathematical brilliance and insight, Wheeler brought experience and perspective. In his Nobel acceptance speech in 1965, Feynman emphasises the part played by Wheeler in his development of quantum mechanics.

From their high school days, Feynman and Arline Greenbaum had been in love. From MIT and from Princeton Feynman returned home on vacations to see her. They became engaged. Arline became seriously ill and was diagnosed with a fatal disease. After receiving his PhD Feynman and Arline were married in a registry office in 1942. At that time Feynman was beginning to work on aspects of the Manhattan Project at Princeton, and in the spring of 1943 he moved to Los Alamos, where Oppenheimer helped in making arrangements for Arline to stay in a hospital in Albuquerque. She died on 16 June 1945.

At Los Alamos, he joined Hans Bethe's Theoretical Division and ultimately was put in charge of the Theoretical Computations Group. He greatly admired Bethe, and the sentiment was reciprocated. After the war, Bethe returned to Cornell and used his influence to secure an assistant professorship for Feynman. It was at Cornell that he developed his space-time approach to quantum electrodynamics that led to a Nobel Prize. After wrestling with QED from 1946 to 1950, Feynman was searching for new challenges and new environments. He settled

on Cal Tech in sunny Pasadena where he teamed up with a twenty-five year old wonder boy called Murrey Gell-Mann, a combination that was to attract many students to Cal Tech. Feynman's lectures to undergraduates at Caltech, in turn funny and serious, and sometimes over the heads of students, were published to great acclaim. In 1952, Feynman began an unhappy marriage with platinum blond Mary Louise Bell. They parted four years later. In Geneva in 1958 he met a young English woman Gweneth Howarth and invited her to Pasadena to be his maid. They married in 1960, had a son two years later and later adopted another child, Michelle. They remained happily married until Feynman died, after a long illness on 15 February 1988, at the age of sixty-nine. Eugene Wigner once described Feynman as 'a second Dirac, only this time human.' Unlike Feynman, Dirac was, in conversation, an extremely poor communicator, especially of his feelings, but in other situations he was a normal human being. On the evidence of the two biographies under review I would recast Wigner's epigram to read: "Feynman was a second Dirac, only this time one who could talk as well as listen.'

Notes

[1] 'The History of Antimatter,' Cern 2000-2001, begins its story with the publication of Dirac's equation in 1928.

[2] "The Nobel Prize in Physics 1965", *Nobelprize.org.*

[3] Krauss's *Life* is short on family details, so I have drawn on J & M Griffin's *Richard Feynman: a Life in Science.*

Colin Hughes, a former physicist, is a frequent reviewer for *Logos*.

Christopher Hitchens' Hitch-22 and Arguably: Essays

By | 2012: vol. 11, issue 1

Christopher Hitchens publicly courted posterity's verdict and repeatedly stated the standard by which he sought to be judged. Introducing Arguably, the essay collection that appeared a few months before his death in December 2011, he notes that in a 1988 book, Prepared for the Worst, he'd "annexed a thought of Nadine Gordimer's, to the effect that a serious person should try to write posthumously." In *A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq* (2003), he reiterates this intention to write without regard for readers' reactions, for current fashion or for prevailing opinion (but doesn't mention the novelist Gordimer). Encapsulating his core conviction, he concludes *Why Orwell Matters* (2002) by asserting that "it matters not what you think, but *how* you think." He says this again in *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007) and multiple times in his memoir *Hitch-22* (2010). Hardly a relativist, Hitchens meant that beliefs arrived at by way of independent, informed, cosmopolitan, ironic, critical thought have better hope of holding up over time than ideas accepted on faith, parochial or literal-minded in nature, or tailored to follow a party line. Assessing Hitchens on these terms, it's fair to say he couldn't consistently meet his own ideal even if he did produce many essays of enduring value. For it was as an essayist, more so than as a polemicist, that he excelled.

Despite his pleas, many readers and cable television talk show watchers probably cared more about *what* Hitchens had to say than how he said it – the positions he took rather than his intellectual method. Though commonly seen as having taking a turn to the right, from the socialism of his youth to the bellicosity of his last decade – from being a *Nation* magazine columnist for twenty years to being someone who gleefully attacked the likes of Noam Chomsky and Michael Moore – Hitchens invoked the legacy of the left to explain his support for military intervention in Iraq, even if he couldn't resist simultaneously throwing a jab at contemporary anti-war protesters. "Not all leftist three- or four-word slogans have always been absurd," he writes in the introduction to *A Long Short War*. "'No War on Iraq' in 2003 may conceal the silly or sinister idea that we have no quarrel with Saddam Hussein, but the 1930s cry – 'Fascism Means War' – is worth recalling. It preserves the essential idea that totalitarian regimes are innately and inherently aggressive and unstable, and that if there is to be a fight with them, which there must needs be, then it is ill-advised to let them choose the time or place of engagement." George W. Bush and Tony Blair were absolutely right, then, and right on principle, to overthrow the Iraqi dictator before things got truly out of hand. Some attentive readers might wonder whether the implied assumptions that Bush and Blair were well-advised in their planning of the engagement, suitably equipped to foster the stability so sorely absent in the region, and accurately informed about the *specific* rather than general reasons for entering into armed conflict might indicate a failure of skepticism on Hitchens's part and an unusual

confidence in the wisdom of political leaders.

Hitchens believed being right was the main thing, even if things went wrong. “Surely, identifying the situation that is appropriate for intervention is both an art and a science,” he allows in a 2008 piece (not explicitly about Iraq) included in *Arguably.* Yet “taking a stand on principle” remains worth doing “even if not immediately rewarded with pragmatic results.” In his view, “war and conflicts are absolutely needful engines for progress and … arguments about human rights, humanitarian intervention, and the evolution of international laws and standards are all … part of a clash over what constitutes civilization, if not invariably a clash between civilizations.” Of course, debating what constitutes civilization, and identifying its true cultivators and its insidious opponents, offered more intellectual stimulation than worrying over whether Saddam Hussein actually had monstrous weapons of mass destruction stockpiles, actively sought them, or merely dreamed of possessing them.

Even when Hitchens concedes possible errors or acknowledges changes in his stances, he suggests he was never really wrong at all and that others, not him, strayed from fundamental principles. Though he ceased identifying himself as “a man of the Left,” he insists in *Hitch-22* that it was those who opposed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein who betrayed the left’s proud history of anti-fascism. He didn’t abandon former comrades; they crept wretchedly from him. Though he says he “probably” came to “know more about the impeachable incompetence of the Bush administration than do many of those who would have left Iraq in the hands of Saddam,” he wouldn’t retroactively retract his support for war. “If I could have had it proved to me beyond doubt that he did NOT have any serious stockpiles on hand, I would have argued – did in fact argue – that this made it the perfect time to hit him ruthlessly and conclusively.” If he was ever wrong, he had impeccable reasons – and someone else was much more wrong anyway. That is how he thought.

Eluding easy classification, which Hitchens seems to see as a sign of individual cleverness, provides him with the conceit around which he organizes his memoir. He doesn’t narrate the education of a contrarian (a label his disliked); rather, he strings together anecdotes (almost like a series of essays) shaped to show how living a kind of double life provided him with acute powers of observation. Sometimes the taking on of a new identity is a formal matter, as when Hitchens, born British, becomes an American citizen. It can have metaphorical aspects, as when he wants both to participate in events and cover them in “the Janus-faced mode of life” of a politically active journalist. He set out to be both “an ally of the working class,” he claims in *Hitch-22,* and something of an aesthete who enjoyed the connections with establishment figures his years at Oxford offered him. Thus, his memoir’s title names a condition involving the struggle against both absolutists and relativists, the simultaneous “admission of uncertainty” (which he advocates more than he performs) and “repudiation of the totalitarian principle,” and the habit of attending both protest marches and posh soirees).

Although he doesn’t present *Hitch-22* as a full-fledged autobiography, the memoir is oddly unrevealing. (The *Vanity Fair* essays on his esophageal cancer diagnosis and treatment Hitchens wrote during his last year are far more intimate and present unblinking reflection on

his individual experience, or a momentous part of it: the end.) As I hint at above and discuss more below, much of what he shows of himself he'd already exposed in print. He comes across as less interested in introspection than in arguments. He does begin *Hitch-22* with remembrances of his parents (an especially affectionate one in the case of his mother, who committed suicide), but he only mentions his wife and children in passing. If he offers evidence from his personal experience, he does so mainly to illustrate points in the ongoing debates that fueled a sizeable portion of his work. Describing his friendships with other writers allows him to revisit peak moments in the life of his disputatious mind. Though his account of a firm bond with novelist Martin Amis mostly amounts to a vigorous celebration of friendship, it also summarizes a disagreement the pair had over the history of communism. Recollections of his relationship with Palestinian-American intellectual and literature professor Edward Said lead Hitchens to ventilate his annoyance with the belief "that if the United States was doing something, then that thing could not by definition be a moral or ethical action." Hitchens finds this all too common with former friends and associates. (Hitchens had no compunction about disparaging the dead and presumably didn't expect scrupulously polite obituaries.)

Said factors in Hitchens's story, and in other writers' intersecting stories, in another noteworthy way – one that suggests that a small literary community in which everyone knows (but doesn't necessary like) everyone else actually does exist. As happens in such an environment, a squabble or minor conflict can take on outsize proportions. Such people care passionately about their interpretations of events – and they commit them to print. A volume of Saul Bellow's letters appeared soon after *Hitch-22* did. Corresponding with author Cynthia Ozick, Bellow describes a recent, disagreeable dinner with his younger friend Amis and Hitchens (the latter someone of whom he'd not previously heard). Amis writes of the same contentious meeting in his autobiography *Experience* (2000). Hitchens (who correctly calls Amis's account "slightly oblique and esoteric") offers his version of the evening in *Hitch-22* (having already rehearsed it in a 2007 *Atlantic* piece reprinted in *Arguably*). Though all three agree that Said and Hitchens's understanding of the duties of friendship factored in the dispute that erupted before dessert, they differ in emphases and on recollections of facts. Amis wanted to avoid a scene for Bellow's sake; Bellow wanted to avoid a scene for Amis's sake. Hitchens did not mind causing a scene. Bellow concludes that that's all that mattered to Hitchens and other "*Nation*-type gnomes," whereas Amis credits Hitchens with more depth than that (as does Hitchens, of course). Amis believed his two friends fought about Israel, though Said did come up. For Hitchens, Said was the focus, and he believes Bellow intended all along to steer the conversation to a controversy over Said's origins and views of terrorism. (In their respective versions of the event, different journals are claimed to have started the row: Hitchens remembers a carefully placed, marked-up *Commentary* article about Said; Bellow mentions a *Critical Inquiry* essay by the author of *Orientalism* that he just happened to have at hand.) Both Amis and Hitchens greatly admired Bellow's fiction, and Hitchens knew Amis intended a high gift in introducing him to the novelist, but politics ruined what could have been a fine evening.

Such maddening interference in literary life is something of an ongoing theme in Hitchens's story. At a reading from *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (2001), I saw Hitchens hold up a copy of

another volume of his, *Unacknowledged Legislation: Writers in the Public Sphere* (2000), and heard him say he wanted to be remembered for such literary essays rather than books like his brief arguing for charging the former Secretary of State for war crimes, but that he couldn't ignore, or stop writing about, political developments. Like Michael Corleone into the mob in the worst of the three *Godfather* movies, Hitchens couldn't help being pulled into history. The Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* calling for the death of his friend Salman Rushdie for having written *The Satanic Verses* – which Hitchens writes about in *For the Sake of Argument* (1993) as well as *Unacknowledged Legislation, Letters to a Young Contrarian* (2001), *God Is Not Great, Hitch-22* and numerous magazine articles – illustrates how and why. The affair of the *fatwa*, by plainly demonstrating the threat religious fanaticism poses to unfettered thought and to civilization itself, spurs Hitchens the memoirist to state his principles by listing what he hates ("dictatorship, religion, stupidity, demagogy, censorship, bullying, and intimidation") and what he loves ("literature, irony, humor, the individual, and the defense of free expression"). Literary essays dominate the "Love" section of the 2004 collection *Love, Poverty, and War* – though his other concerns get equal or greater space. Such enthusiasm might explain why so few of his *Slate* columns, which he used mainly to comment on news of the day, ended up in *Arguably,* which instead consists largely of book reviews, some of which he knew were among his "very last." (I once gave the title "Hitchens in Love" to a review of *God Is Not Great,* and while I claim no special insight, since he penned many attestations to his adoration of literature, I can't help noticing how routinely this aspect of his work gets overlooked, or relegated to commentators' respectful notice of his wide range of references to novelists and poets.)

Though Hitchens fully earned his reputation for animadversions, in his essays on literature he shows qualities often absent from his political pieces, such as generosity, graciousness, forbearance, humaneness. His tone changed when he aimed to encourage appreciation rather than win an argument. He had the capacity to enjoy the work of writers, like Evelyn Waugh, whose political and religious beliefs he despised. Echoing and amplifying George Orwell's "great and noble defense of Wodehouse against the wartime calumny that was spread about him," Hitchens finds it impossible that the creator of Jeeves, Psmith and Sir Roderick Spode knowingly collaborated with the Nazis, even if P.G. Wodehouse did appear on Nazi radio after the fall of France. Hitchens relies on his historical knowledge to defend the comic novelist's innocence. Wodehouse once joked, of the Polish region where he was interned after being deported from France, that "there is a flat dullness about the countryside which has led many a visitor to say, 'If this is Upper Silesia, what must Lower Silesia be like?'" This might appear callous, at best, given that Auschwitz was in Silesia, but, as Hitchens points out, Wodehouse couldn't have known about what was going on there, and that the Nazi's didn't implement their Final Solution until after Wodehouse was gone. It's hard to imagine Hitchens trying to shield a candidate for office, for example, from such unseemly associations. Indeed, he excoriates serial presidential candidate Pat Buchanan for his views about World War II (i.e., that it was not worth fighting). But fine wordsmiths could soften his heart.

Although long after their first meeting in 1989 Hitchens and Bellow continued to differ on Palestinian-Israeli issues generally and Edward Said specifically (even if his inclination to stand

up for the latter weakened), Hitchens retained intense admiration for Bellow's fiction. In the aforementioned *Atlantic* essay in *Arguably,* he singles out *The Adventures of Augie March* for praise, declaring one particular line –"What use was war without also love?" – to be "one of the most affirmative and masculine sentences ever set down." (The remark draws attention to the fact that the majority of writers Hitchens celebrated were men, even if Nadine Gordimer did supply him with his writerly code. Other statements, like the following, suggest that Hitchens may have come to see something of himself in Bellow: "His life as a public intellectual is sometimes held to have followed a familiar arc or trajectory: that from quasi-Trotskyist to full-blown 'neocon'…. But Bellow's political evolution was by no means an uncomplicated or predictable one.") He sounds a similar note in an essay on Philip Larkin. Though the occasion of the piece was the publication of *Letters to Monica,* letters chronicling "perhaps the least romantic story ever told" (that of the poet's "distraught and barren" relationship with his long-suffering long-term partner Monica Jones), Hitchens manages to conclude it with some of the bard of suffering's most positive lines: "Our almost-instinct almost true: / What will survive of us is love."

Even if, like his writer hero Orwell, Hitchens never really regarded literature and politics as discrete categories, he might get his wish and end up more closely identified with the former –at least for as long as those whose writing about literature rises to the level of literature are remembered.

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Ivan Greenberg, The Dangers of Dissent: The FBI and Civil Liberties Since 1965

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Within hours of the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, while many American writers focused on feelings of horror and helplessness, Noam Chomsky soberly looked to the near future and wrote that these attacks would become "a gift to the hard jingoist right, those who hope to use force to control their domains."[1] This analysis understood the uses of such a horrific shared public tragedy, and how, as Naomi Klein would latter phrase, the "shock doctrine" could so easily plow under civil liberty safeguards, widespread distrust of domestic intelligence and security operations, and rapidly expand the reach of a burgeoning national surveillance state; all in the name of protecting Americans.

After the fact, it is easy to connect the Twentieth Century American prologue of FBI monitoring and interference in domestic political movements with post-9/11 increased domestic surveillance, violations of civil rights, and the rise of attractive communication technologies that make our lives legible to governmental overseers. Ivan Greenberg's The Dangers of Dissent: The FBI and Civil Liberties Since 1965, provides an excellent, well-documented, narrative connecting these post-9/11 transformations with the FBI's past efforts to monitor, control, and subvert a broad range of domestic political activities.

The Dangers of Dissent provides a crucial explanation of why, a quarter century before the terror attacks of 9/11, Congressional and Executive Branch limits of the FBI's involvement in monitoring domestic political groups were established. The Dangers of Dissent carefully documents the extent to which the FBI has functioned as a domestic secret police force, monitoring, harming, and harassing individuals and groups engaging in deviant political activities. While a body of solid scholarly historical literature documenting the FBI's role in monitoring and suppressing the development of socialist or communist political movements during the mid-Twentieth Century, and later programs like COINTELPRO, Greenberg's work is an important step extending the reach of this body of analysis in ways that connect trends from the mid-1960s to the post-9/11 present.

While he does not frame his analysis in terms of counterinsurgency theory, Greenberg's book nonetheless provides a well documented analysis of how, during the past half-century, the FBI routinely functioned as an arm of domestic counterinsurgency operations supporting a matrix of hegemonic governmental, corporate, racial, and gendered interests. While foreign counterinsurgency operations are always necessarily threatened by questions of the local legitimacy of foreign occupiers, domestic counterinsurgency operations run by local governmental forces do not have to struggle for this legitimacy with the bulk of the populous. Because of the FBI is widely viewed as a legitimate actor in the maintenance of domestic law

and order, its actions do not generally come under the same sort of negative scrutiny that foreign counterinsurgency operations frequently experience. Greenberg's documentation pieces together a narrative demonstrating how the FBI's monitoring and interference with political organizations in America has damaged the development of a wide variety of American democratic movements.

The Dangers of Dissent is a well documented and meticulously researched work that deserves the serious attention of social scientists of all disciplines and anyone concerned with the growth and impact of the surveillance state on democracy in America. Greenberg draws on tens of thousands of pages of FBI files released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to present a critical evaluation of the FBI's investigations and harassment of individuals and groups engaging in political dissent in the United States. Greenberg divides his approach into succinct chapters exploring the history of FBI surveillance of and interference in the activities of political dissidents in the United States. The book's chapters examines: the notion of state crimes, the evolution of 1970s spying, outcomes of efforts to reform the FBI, the FBI's post-Cold War search for new enemies, the post 9/11 FBI, citizens' efforts to sue the FBI for spying on them, and a critical examination of the FBI's role in American surveillance society.

Along the way, Greenberg chronicles the rise and fall of policies restricting the FBI's investigatory and political activities. He shows how while both the legislative and executive branches of government have established hearings or commissions investigating FBI improprieties, most of the policies limiting or unfettering FBI actions came from the Executive branch. While the Church and Pike Committees investigated illegal activities of intelligence agencies, it was presidential guidelines (such as the Carter administration's Levi Guidelines restricting the FBI's ability to investigate speech activities that do not advocate acts of violence) that significantly restrained FBI activities. And later, it was the Reagan Administration that worked to again unfetter the FBI from such restrictions. Historically, the House and Senate have abdicated their responsibility to provide scrutiny and oversight over domestic and international intelligence activities. But it was the great post-9/11 national security spasm that pushed aside the remaining legislative safeguards preventing the FBI from spying on domestic political groups engaging in political dissent.

The FBI's campaign of fighting terrorists as a justification for monitoring domestic political activities began long before September 2001, the terror attacks simply accelerated trends set in place during the Reagan administration and continued by later presidents. One of Regan's supporters back in the early 1980s, Republican Senator Jeremiah Denton (Alabama) that the "Soviet's active sponsorship of terror worldwide" represented a serious domestic threat, and Reagan's Justice Department used claims of terror networks to weaken limits on the FBI's domestic activities.

Greenberg's list of domestic political groups subjected to FBI surveillance and harassment is impressive. While most of the groups targeted by the FBI were from the leftwing of the politic spectrum, rightwing political groups, to a lesser extent, also received the FBI's attentions. In the 1980s and 90s, armed rightwing militias did not receive the same FBI surveillance and

scrutiny as leftwing political groups. As Greenberg observes "in the FBI's view, right-wing radicals were merely misguided and in need of civic education."[2] The list of groups under FBI surveillance includes mainstream and radical environmental groups ranging from the Sierra Club to Earth First!, gender equity groups, gay rights groups, anti-war groups, a broad range of socialist, communist, anarchist groups, a broad range of religious affiliated peace groups (e.g. Witness for Peace, American Friends Service Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, CISPES). Under COINTELPRO, FBI programs strove to undermine the effectiveness of the American Indian Movement, the Black Panther Party, and a broad range of minority leaders. These lists go on and on, but are united by a common thread (a thread stretching back to the FBI's McCarthy Era persecutions of almost much anyone publicly protesting racial inequality as "communists") of shared resistance to the structural inequalities of American life that the FBI primarily protects.

In 1982 President Reagan lied to the public, claiming that U.S. anti-nuke community leaders had been recruited by the KGB, claims that led the FBI to act as a political agent of the executive branch as they harassed and monitored American anti-nuke dissidents.[3] FBI agent, Jack Ryan, was fired after he wrote a report arguing that the FBI investigation of members of the anti-nuke Plowshares group was, "using this investigation not as a means of developing a case to be prosecuted but as an end in itself, a way of intimidating. And I know well how intimidating it can be to be investigated by the FBI."[4] Ryan mistakenly believed that his job was to investigated crime, not harass political dissidents. Other presidents used the FBI to settle other scores. Under Clinton, the FBI monitored anti-abortion groups and in 1994 the Violence Against Abortion Providers Task Force compiled databases on about 900 individuals and groups with rightwing religious ties.[5] Clinton's support of globalization brought coordinated political surveillance at the Seattle WTO protests.

Legal efforts to hold the FBI accountable for its violations of civil rights, warrantless break-ins and wiretaps, and general disregard for the law are shown to have mixed results, with some victims (e.g. Frank Wilkinson, the Socialist Workers Party) receiving legal judgments against FBI lawlessness, while many other cases being abandoned before conclusion—in part as a result of FBI's tactic of refusing to release documents, it's ability to easily hide behind a veil of secrecy, and using legal tactics to stretch-out litigation for a dozen years or more. Even when plaintiffs did not prevail in civil litigation against the FBI, many of these cases led to the release of important FBI documents.

Greenberg shows how the post-9/11 era brought little that was new to FBI practices, instead bringing it full-circle back to old habits of monitoring the political activities of dissidents. After 9/11, the few protections still remaining from post-Watergate, Church Committee era restrictions were quickly brushed aside, as the Patriot Act brought new forms of surveillance. The Patriot Act's Section 215 authorized gag orders making it virtually impossible for targets to know if they were under surveillance, much less if their basics rights were being abused by the FBI. Soon the FBI was back in its comfort zone: infiltrating anti-war groups, religious organizations, and a variety of grassroots organizations, as if the atrocities of the 1960s and

70s had never happened.

The FBI began a new campaign of employing the public to generate “tips” on “suspicious activities” possibly related to terrorism, and while about 96,000 tips were called-in during the first week after the September 11, 2001 attacks, and a half million tips were made to the FBI during the year after the attacks,[6] little usable information was provided to the FBI, though the waves of fear and social solidarity provided by such programs had their own uses. Arab Americans and American Muslims soon became the default targets of American paranoia and the subject of an unknown number of FBI investigations.

Dangers of Dissent closes with a consideration of the rapid expansion of surveillance in our current electronic age, as the internet, ubiquitous surveillance cameras, street-level microphones, Facebook, cell phones, and a range of digital media make us all increasingly legible to the FBI and other intelligence agencies. There is much about our surveillance in the present that remains unknown, Greenberg notes when considering disclosures about FBI political practices, we know more “about the period before 1975 than the period after it.”[7] While efforts to establish a single surveillance database (like the failed Total Information Awareness program), have thus far been publicly resisted, the trajectory documented by Greenberg suggests it will only a matter of time before the FBI, some other intelligence agency, or perhaps a privatized neoliberal corporate subcontractor reaches that moment of singularity where panoptical dystopian science fiction dreams become the waking nightmare governing American’s political lives.

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Notes

[1] Chomsky, Noam. 2001. “A Quick Reaction.” *CounterPunch* 9/12/01. https://www.counterpunch.org/2001/09/12/a-quick-reaction/

[2] Greenberg,170.

[3] Greenberg, 129.

[4] Greenberg, 131.

[5] Greenberg, 170.

[6] Greenberg, 187.

[7] Greenberg, 291.

Cedric Johnson (ed.), The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans

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For the United States, Hurricane Katrina was one of the two defining catastrophes of the first decade of the second millennium. It had the same degree of impact on the political fortunes of President George W. Bush and the Republican Party as the attacks of September 11, 2001 (although in the opposite direction). More importantly by far, it yielded death and destruction on the same order of magnitude, although in painful slow motion that only exacerbated the victims' suffering. In short, it was by both political and humane measures, among the most consequential events of the past ten years. As such, it should reveal a great deal about our politics and culture. The authors of *The Neoliberal Deluge*, under the editorial guidance of Cedric Johnson, offer an explanation that locates the cause of the catastrophe squarely in neoliberal ideology and policy. It is a compelling, and intuitively plausible premise.

Unfortunately, the book falls short of its promise. Many edited volumes suffer from uneven quality among the various contributions, and this is no exception. To its detriment, this particular collection has its strengths in the wrong places. The best material lives in its more narrowly focused chapters, examining the damage done by the neoliberal state's failure (or refusal) to guarantee or affirmatively to promote safe labor conditions, equal protection for women, and quality educational choices for all who seek it for their children. It falters, however, in its attempts to establish connections to a theoretical framework. This consigns the stronger elements of the book to floating about, convincing by themselves but together amounting to little more than a sampling of entirely valid but disconnected complaints against neoliberalism.

The collection's central claim is that Hurricane Katrina was more a man-made catastrophe than a natural disaster. Johnson writes in the introduction that the book's authors "share the basic view that human agency and public choices were more to blame for the death, destruction, and suffering experienced along the Gulf Coast. Forces of nature were instrumental, but policy choices made by local and national publics were more decisive." (pg. xx)

By the editor's own standard, the success of the volume depends on how well the essays demonstrate a causal link between decisions made under open deliberation and suffering that could have been avoided under a different set of choices. Moreover, these decisions should fall squarely under the rubric of neoliberal ideology. This seems at the outset an entirely

achievable goal. The tragedy played out exactly as a critic of neoliberalism would predict. The federal government had neglected to maintain the levees (a classic public good), which consequently failed and led to massive flooding. Those people with the means to self-evacuate managed by and large to escape harm, others did not. A set of political commitments premised on the notion that government does not work proved itself by its own incompetence, and congratulated itself at every step. In short, the authors' stated premise is completely plausible and entirely within reach.

In seeking to establish a causal link between public choices and the systemic failure that turned a survivable storm into a devastating flood, the authors resort in large part to a kind of intellectual outsourcing. In Chapter One, "From Tipping Point to Meta-Crisis," Chris Russill and Chad Lavin "argue that an insufficient notion of crisis organized the managerial strategies of key Bush officials" (pg. 4). They cite Eric Klinenberg's "social autopsy" of a deadly 1995 heat wave in Chicago as a more appropriate model of crisis. According to Russill and Lavin, Klinenberg shows how political and economic structures left many elderly poor residents without air conditioning or access to medical care, leading to a great many preventable deaths. He further shows how the neoliberal media discourse masks these underlying causes. Russill and Lavin only reproduce this latter part of the social autopsy with respect to New Orleans. They prove the cover-up, but not the crime. The bulk of the important work is done offstage, in Klinenberg's analysis.

All too often, the authors cite major figures of critical theory without sufficiently connecting the empirics of the case to the underlying analytic foundation. These citations often resemble ritual invocations of scholarly saints rather than sound bases of analysis. In Chapter 2, "We Are Seeing People We Didn't Know Exist," in an otherwise compelling argument about the impact of ostensible "colorblindness" on the distribution of vulnerability, Eric Ishiwata loads up his theory with references to Michel Foucault and Jacque Rancière that add little to the argument except the borrowed weight of previous scholarship. To a lesser extent, Paul A. Passavant does something similar in Chapter 4, "Mega-Events, the Superdome, and the Return of the Repressed in New Orleans." He borrows from his own previous work as well as Giorgio Agamben's in ways that seem appropriate and relevant, but he never adequately traces the practices that create the "consumer-criminal double" (pg. 88) or the "ever more frequent states of exception or states of emergency" (pg. 90) to choices that might have been decided differently in this case.

In short, while Passavan't analysis yields compelling interpretive leverage, it does not reveal a strong form of agency on the part of officials responsible for the response to Katrina. In describing the Superdome's transformation from a location of consumption to incarceration, his evidence consists mainly of witness statements and newspaper headlines describing the stadium as "worse than a prison" (pg. 114). He leaves unanswered the basic questions of agency. Who designated the site as an emergency shelter? What requirements does such a designation trigger with respect to providing food, sanitation, and medical care? Were such requirements insufficient by design, or did the authorities simply bungle the execution? This important work remains offstage, and core conclusions remain vaguely implied rather than

proven.

The major exception to this form of outsourcing is Chapter 8, “Laboratorization and the ‘Green’ Rebuilding of New Orleans’s Lower Ninth Ward,” by Barbara L. Allen. She carefully and convincingly shows how the redevelopment of the Holy Cross neighborhood closely conforms to Bruno Latour’s “laboratory studies” model. In her words, this reveals “the influence of local conditions and contingencies in the knowledge production process” (pg. 230). Even in applied sciences, knowledge must be context-aware, conforming somewhat to the language of the community, and in turn the community must be conditioned to accept the scientist’s notion of progress. Allen’s essay demonstrates clearly how this process has worked with respect to “sustainable, green” rebuilding projects in the Lower 9th Ward neighborhood.

Still, the tendency within this collection is to let certain major theories speak for themselves, without clearly connecting them to the case. On the other hand, the volume’s major theoretical antagonists are treated very differently. While critical theorists are allowed to speak for themselves (and in some cases, to speak for the authors), Jane Jacobs and Thomas Schelling are only permitted to speak through actor Brad Pitt and FEMA director Michael Brown (via pop-journalist and management guru Malcolm Gladwell). This yields some exceedingly odd results. It is implied in Chapter 7, “Charming Accommodations” (written by the editor) that Jacobs, an avid proponent of high density mixed commercial-residential zoning, would have approved of a sparsely populated neighborhood of stand-alone single-family houses. Schelling is equally mistreated by Russill and Lavin, who write, “[i]t is difficult not to see the uptake of Schelling’s arguments [regarding tipping points] as consistent with the general strategy of benign neglect” (pg. 10). This directly contradicts the conventional reading of Schelling’s *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, in which he argues that, in the absence of corrective institutions, free markets often produce socially and individually undesirable aggregate outcomes.

This lack of any intellectual generosity, or even some small degree of self-skepticism, is a critical problem with the editorial thrust of the book. Johnson, with no hint of irony, calls for “a mature understanding of the American political process” in the same paragraph that he dismissively calls the current President’s supporters “Obamanistas” (pg. ix). Rather than balance the pros and cons of competing paradigms, Johnson promotes a non-disprovable logic. He writes about the Magnaville project discussed in Chapter 3 (by Johnson and Geoffrey Whitehall):

> *[a]lthough this charitable project addressed the immediate needs of some evacuees, its most enduring accomplishment was to advance a privatized approach to relief and reconstruction and legitimate the view that philanthropic work and individual agency can resolve the deep inequalities produced by global capital (pg. xxxvii)*

Even by doing good, the neoliberal program sins. By this logic, one might wonder whether

every bit of suffering that it produces is really a blessing, in that it discredits the neoliberal paradigm that, despite this volume's failure to prove the case, really does seem to have caused or radically amplified the suffering surrounding the storm.

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