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Israel-Palestine: The Continuing Debacle

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Old habits die hard. George W. Bush administration is almost 8 years old, an age that in human life expectancy may equal to 80 years. Facing the termination of his presidency G. W. Bush is hesitant to make serious changes in his Israeli – Palestinian strategy, although his previous achievements fall much shorter then his expectations. The Road Map that the outgoing President initiated in 2003 is a process oriented document. It serves him as a tool to manage the Israeli – Palestinian confrontation and show the difference between him and his predecessor's policy of trying to resolve the 120 years old conflict. However, Hamas victory in 2006 parliamentary elections and its taking over Gaza Strip forcefully in 2007 proved the American and Israeli mismanagements. Annapolis meeting aimed to overcome these unexpected outcomes by inaugurating just another process. The joint statement of Annapolis fixed a time table of one year and issued list of subjects that the sides will negotiate over. However, Israel and the Palestinian Authority did not discuss any of those subjects in their first negotiation meeting, 12 December. The meeting ended when the Palestinian demanded Israel to reverse its recent decision to expend settlements in Jerusalem. The USA expressed its dissatisfaction with the Israeli decision, but its envoy General Jones declared that he will not function as an arbitrator. The January 2008 President's visit in Jerusalem and Ramallah brought the sides to resume their talks yet it's unclear how far they moved beyond agenda settings. Neither Israel nor the USA formed professional administration unites to support the talks and develop the know-how needed to move form conflict containment to conflict resolution.

The Israeli – Palestinian peace process is over 16 years old and still keeps most of its structural characteristics. Oslo agreements were interim agreements that did not mature to achieve their peace end. Although the second Intifada terminated Oslo agreements their structure remain in force. Documents such as Mitchell and Tenet report of 2000 or the Road Map introduced longer process with more interim steps then Oslo accords subscribed. Lacking a clear end goal the process leaves the impression that it is a process for the sake of process. With all its deficiencies in preparation and management, Camp David summit of 2000 stands as exceptional attempt, almost heroic, to swim against the stream and reach a final status agreement. The policy of integrating the Road Map into Annapolis process and the Israeli will to negotiate with Abbas on the establishment of a Palestinian state with provisional borders may add new processes on the top of old ones.

Israeli policy of expending borders beyond its 1949 lines is over 40 years old. It began in June 1967 with the annexation of East Jerusalem and continues till these days. The Intifadas of 1987 and 2000 forced Israel to withdraw from populated Palestinian areas but the old strategy of redrawing borders and reconstructing the Palestinian environment is still implemented in the rest of the West Bank. In mid-December Ha'aretz published on Israeli plans to build five new

settlements in the outskirts of Jerusalem. Moreover, in Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem Israel continue to mange an experiment in national engineering. The almost total closer of Gaza Strip was aimed to bring the Palestinians who live there to revolt against their Hamas government [Jackson Diehl in the Washington Post 9 July 2007 page A 15 in http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/08/AR2007070800924.html?sub=AR], an act that they did not take nor show any sign that they consider to take. Hamas operation of blowing up part of the border wall with Egypt gave Gaza Strip the oxygen it needed and changed the power balance between all players. The ineffectiveness of the closure and the Egyptian interests were ignored by Israel. Hence Hamas operation came as a strategic surprise for Israel. While in Gaza Strip Israel tried to manipulate a regime change, in East Jerusalem it tries to contain the Palestinians, divide and control. Israel wants to them to remain passive, not to revolt. Israel builds a Wall to disconnect the city from its natural hinterland, builds big settlements in empty lands around the Arab parts of the city and spreads enclaves of settlers inside Palestinian neighborhoods in order to prevent Palestinian integration and keep them passive.

In the West Bank business is as usual as well. The donor countries conference of 18 December decided to allocate in the next three years 7.48 billion dollars to the Palestinian Government of the West Bank. The political goal of strengthening Abbas government is clear, but without letting off Israeli occupation this huge sum will go to a barrel without bottom. An absurd division of labor takes place there since the 2000 Intifada. The Israeli army acts, the Palestinians react [or the other way around] and the donor countries write checks [Scott Lasensky, "Chequebook Diplomacy: the US, the Oslo process and the role of Foreign Aid, in Michael Keating, Ann Le More and Robert Lowe, eds. *Aid, Diplomacy and Facts on the Ground – the Case of Palestine*, London: the Chatham House 2005, pp. 41-58]. According to the World Bank report prepared for Paris conference [in http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/294264-1166525851073/ParisconferencepaperDec17.pdf]

> *"In addition to PA reforms, the defining factors for the West Bank and Gaza economy remain settlement growth, and movement and access restrictions related to Israeli security concerns, which have fragmented the economy into disconnected cantons. In the West Bank, the number of checkpoints increased from 376 in August 2005 to 541 in July 2007. There are currently 149 settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and roughly 100 "illegal outposts" that lack Israeli government approval. The Settlement population has risen to approximately 450,000, 63% more than during the Oslo Accord period in 1993. Some 38% of the West Bank has been confiscated for current or future settlements, outposts, closed military areas, municipal boundaries, and settlement regional jurisdiction. Palestinians without special permits are restricted from important agricultural areas in the Jordan valley, and producers are cutoff from the East Jerusalem market." [p.9]*

> *"Successfully reaching the donor countries goals will lead to modest growth, averaging 5% per year, which- given current demographics and distribution of income- will barely affect poverty levels of the West Bank… Achieving 5% growth rates will depend critically on the commitment of the international community to fill the total fiscal gap over the next three years, as well as on the revival in the private sector as a result of concrete steps by Israel on settlement growth, and movement and access restrictions. Even with full funding but no relaxation in the closure regime, growth will be slightly negative, at around -2% per year". [p.4]*

Israel's legitimate security concerns are more then a goal that Israel achieves by defense operations. Security is an infrastructure that overrides many Israeli methods, peacemaking included. The defense establishment has always taken a lead over the foreign ministry in formulating Israeli foreign policy. Israel tends to solve diplomatic problems by military means, and prefers the political defeat of a rival to compromise. Military officers held key political and negotiating positions in politics and in the negotiating teams, and also imposed styles and patterns of thinking. The military accepts the formal superiority of the political leadership. But when the politicians go beyond what the military sees as its red line, the army applies pressure to the political leadership through directing the public discourse to its side. An aggressive military culture has created a subculture of groupthink that views the country's foreign relations through rifle sights, and uses worst-case scenarios as the basis for diplomacy. The Arabs, and most of all the Palestinians, are permanently suspects, and no third-party guarantees should be fully trusted. Israel must secure itself against every threat and may not take any significant risks. It must play tough in negotiations, and give preference to short-term goals over long-term ones. Israel's diplomats use ideas and proposals the way its army uses exploratory fire-to probe, expose, and exploit the enemy's weaknesses. It uses divide-and-rule tactics to dominate the opposing negotiating team. Palestinian weakness is an opportunity to be exploited, and a fact to be perpetuated in the agreement. On the other hand, each Israeli concession is perceived as a sign of weakness and capitulation, rather than as a consensus-building act and a means of creating mutual gain. It is the Israelis who table proposals first, thus setting the agenda. Their red lines, and the low price they are ready to pay, become the starting points. The asymmetric relations of the Oslo period were thus reproduced in Camp David 2000, instead of being replaced by an exchange between equals and joint decision making. Israel's attitude put the Palestinians on the defensive, so at Camp David they adopted a strategy of survival in the face of Israel and the U.S., and in the face of their own public opinion at home [Tamara Cofman Wittes, ed. *How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate: A Cross Cultural Analysis of the Oslo Peace Process*, Washington D.C.: US Institute of Peace Press 2005].

While Israel wishes to achieve security by gaining maximum control and dominance, the Palestinians want to build their independent state through a rights-based discourse. Despite their lack of a state establishment and improper political function, the Palestinian expectations are high. The PLO hoped to bridge the gap between its high expectations and its limited ability via the international legitimacy of United Nations decisions, and through international

mediation that would achieve the best possible agreement for the Palestinians. Basing negotiations and discourse on their rights and international legitimacy, the Palestinians hoped to create equality with the stronger Israeli side. The Palestinians base their position on the international legitimacy of UN Security Council Resolution 242, along with their consent to a solution involving a Palestinian state in the 1967 territories, comprising only some 23 percent of the area of Mandatory Palestine. Unlike Israel, the Palestinian leadership sought to begin the talks from these principles, and not from the details. This point was important substantively, but all the more so in light of the structural constraints of Palestinian working procedures. The PLO's room for maneuver on final status issues is limited as is its ability to put negotiation pressure on Israel. Therefore the Palestinians create frequent crises and often threaten to walk out of talks. Each issue becomes a matter of principle, with symbolic, and not just practical, importance. When it negotiates with Israel, the Palestinian side is extremely sensitive to any formulation that infringed on its sovereignty or that implied that the permanent status agreement might perpetuate aspects of occupation [ibid].

Indeed the old habits mentioned above die hard, but there is a need to ease their way out. One year that Annapolis declaration scheduled for achieving peace treaty between Israel and Palestine is too short time for an overall change. However it can be the appropriate time frame for concluding the framework of the comprehensive peace treaty. In order to succeed and avoid repeating the Oslo mistakes its worth considering to take the following steps. The Israeli leader will agree to base the final status agreement on 1967 lines and a land swap of 1:1 for those few settlements that will be annexed to Israel; will accept Palestinian sovereignty on all Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and on the Temple Mount. Simultaneously the Palestinian leader will agree not to exercise the return of 1948 refugees to Israel, at least not with great numbers. Each leader must agree to make these concessions before the opening the talks. If any of them is unable to do it its better not to have talks at all and prevent adding more disappointment and frustration to previous ones. In order to help the leaders to take these decisions each will commit at the eve of the discussion he concludes is subjected to referendum of elections. The two peoples' vote is need in order to institutionalize the debate, reduce the power of opposition group, as well as to empower the current weak leaders. Once the principal agreement is ratified and the leaders delegated to move ahead the two sides will manage their negotiation in two tracks simultaneously. One track has to look forward and conclude the comprehensive peace treaty, while the second track has to look back and see how the sides can reach get there from their current engagement.

Due to the asymmetry between the sides, these decisions are harder to Israel to take then to the Palestinians. Empires neither envision their dissolvent nor are ready to reallocate authority and territory to their inferior subject. "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire" declared Winston Churchill in 1942 in an unexceptional declaration [Hendrik Spruyt, *Ending Empire – Contested Sovereignty and Territorial Partition*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005, p.1]. However the alternative to an Israeli – Palestinian peace agreement is not a manageable low intensive conflict that the Israeli superior side can bear and contain by dividing the Palestinians into five sections with different legal status and accessibility to each other: those in Gaza Strip, West

Bank Palestinians, those in East Jerusalem, the Israeli Palestinians and the Diaspora Palestinians. Developing this system and tightening it under the pressure of armed clashes and demographic changes will lead Israel to create an ethno-military regime on Mandatory Palestine [i.e. between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean] of Jewish – Israeli minority over the Palestinian majority. The conflict will move from a conflict between a regional empire and a national liberation movement to a kind of civil – domestic war between the Palestinian majority and the Israeli -Jewish ruling minority. In such case Israel will be unable to claim neither democracy nor practicing Jewish values.

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Who Are The Palestinians Today?

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Five years before his death in 1980, Henry Pachter — my former teacher and friend – published an article in Dissent that enraged the editors: It was entitled "Who Are the Palestinians?"[1] Knowledge about "the occupation" and sympathy for Israel among the Left – and especially among the Jewish Left in the great urban centers of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles — was far less than it is today. Edward Said was still virtually unknown and it was simply assumed for the most part that criticism of Israeli policies was tantamount to anti-Semitism. Little understanding existed about the society already in place in 1947 or the wanton destruction that accompanied what the Arab inhabitants of Palestine would call "the catastrophe" (Nakba). The refugees numbering in the hundreds of thousands and languishing in the camps were faceless – while audiences wept upon seeing the heroic Jewish settlers in the film version of the monumental bestseller by Leon Uris' Exodus. 1948 and 1967 were still fresh in the minds of the American populace; the PLO wasn't yet a decade old; and most believed that the call for "two states for two peoples" – Israel and Palestine –was the first step to the next "final solution."

A political exile from Nazi Germany and a Jew, who had spent time in the concentration camp at Gurs, Henry Pachter was a person of exceptional integrity who toed no line. He maintained that the refugee camps were a "moral and humanitarian outrage" and that the refusal of the Israeli government to grant Palestinians the "right of return" constituted a violation of international law and a "crime." He noted the centrality of the Israel-Palestine conflict and that the plight of the refugees would erode the possibilities for peace throughout the region. He insisted upon letting them choose between monetary compensation or the right of return – believing that most would take the cash. He was cynical about the persistent use of "security" to justify Israeli policies and he argued that

Israel must take the initiative, retreat to its pre-1967 borders, and negotiate the return of the occupied territories. Whether any of this would be enough to end terrorism, or even lower the level of anti-Jewish rhetoric, remained an open question. But he was convinced that ultimately Israel had few options and that this was the only way to lay the foundation for a more constructive relationship between Arabs and Jews. Indeed, with a certain disregard for specifics, he called for a contiguous Palestinian state – and, prophetically, suggested that the real issue was not simply its viability but its sovereignty.

Henry Pachter challenged the conventional wisdom of his time. More than thirty years have passed, however, since his essay first appeared. The Palestinians and the Israelis have changed or, better, the conditions are no longer what they once were. Back then guilt-ridden Western nations lent their support to Israel. They considered it a bulwark against Soviet expansion in the Middle East and condemned the new Palestinian Liberation Organization that

Yassir Arafat had forged from disparate clans, tribes, and factions. Western nations thus sought to secure the safety of Israel — the lone regional outpost of democracy – and foster disunity within the PLO in order to counter a supposedly subterranean communist threat. Indeed, while common cause among all Arabs was made with the dispossessed Palestinians, Western progressives were far less enthusiastic. Even relatively uncritical supporters of anti-imperialist regimes and movements like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were circumspect when it came to the Palestinians and Israel.

Many looked back to 1947 when the dispossessed Palestinians and their Arab supporters rebuffed the UN offer of a "second state "and, following the 1967 War, refused to recognize the legitimacy of Israel in exchange for a return to the "green line" or the pre-war boundaries. Nostalgia still existed among Arabs for the situation that existed prior to expanded Jewish immigration during the 1930s and, in 1967, even Yassir Arafat was still unwilling to recognize Israel. Perhaps there was the belief that the "Zionist entity" would simply erode or that "struggle" would vanquish its defenders. Israel, still bearing the scars of the holocaust, seemed to the Western world a nation under fire confronting a Palestinian movement whose institutionally vague desire for sovereignty seemed to threaten the existence of the "Jewish" state.

* * *

Today the situation is very different. No longer is Israel the American bastion against communism, if that argument ever actually made sense, but the lynchpin in President Bush's "war on terror." Israel is the dominant military force in the Middle East. It is already the recipient of $3.5 billion in yearly aid from the United States. With its seemingly insatiable appetite for settlements, moreover, Israel rather than the Palestinians is now seen by much of the Western public as blocking the road to peace. The democratic reputation of Israel has also been compromised due to its discriminatory policies against Israeli Arabs and its hideous treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Then too, even while "facts on the ground" have undermined its viability, the two-state solution has become generally accepted by Western and Israeli progressives. Egypt and Jordan have made peace with the "Zionist entity" prior to any agreement over Palestine – and Saudi Arabia has publicly called for the Arab League to recognize Israel in exchange for a withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders.

Western public opinion has also shifted somewhat in its perception of the Palestinians. The brutality of the Israeli occupation is slowly coming to light and, most recently, the barricading of Gaza has caused an international scandal. Despite the best efforts of powerful and reactionary pro-Israeli lobbies like AIPAC, anti-Semitism is less and less being equated with every criticism of Israel. Its ideological reliance on the holocaust to justify every new atrocity in the occupied territories and every blockage of the peace process is also growing tired and hypocritical. This is especially the case since the Palestinians had nothing to do with the holocaust. The constant element of Israeli policy from 1947 until the present has been the accumulation of territory. An expanding set of settlements – both new ones and spatial growth of old ones -has led to somewhere around 450,000 settlers living in communities concentrated

around Jerusalem sprinkled around the West Bank.

Palestinians have had to deal with these settlements — composed primarily of radical nationalists and religious fanatics – since 1967. It has not been easy. Israel always prided itself on pursuing "peace" with "security." But the former has been compromised by the manipulation of the latter. As the nation grew more powerful, and Jewish settlements increased, the old borders appeared increasingly inadequate to supporters of a "greater Israel." Many in the Israeli political establishment would argue that security could only be maintained by stopping the flood of new settlers and withdrawing those already in place. Given the outcry that accompanied the withdrawal of 8,000 settlers from Gaza in March of 2006, however, evicting fifty times that number is not exactly an appealing prospect for an Israeli regime whose military invincibility was punctured in the Lebanon War of 2006. But these are problems that Israel has brought upon itself. There is no reason why the Palestinians should have to suffer the consequences. Israel has now been in existence twice as long as a colonial power than as the state it was prior to 1967.

All of this has had a pronounced impact on the Palestinians both with respect to their aims and their self-image. As Israeli power and its settlements increased over time, and as the quality of its offers to the Palestinians concomitantly decreased, the "peace process" became a substitute for peace. Or, to put it another way, "crisis management" became a substitute for resolving the crisis. In this respect, however, the Palestinian leadership also bears some responsibility. To deprive the Palestinians of political agency is to render them incapable of affecting their fate and dealing with their situation. Paralyzed by military defeats, obstructed diplomatically in its goal of realizing an independent state, Fatah still identifies its interests with those of "Palestine" even as its bureaucracy has become increasingly authoritarian, corrupt, and incapable of securing the most basic social services for its citizens. Hamas stepped into the breach. It astonished Western "experts" by winning an open election in 2006, engineering a virtual coup against Fatah in Gaza, and fundamentally dividing the Palestinian movement. The support given Hamas by the most downtrodden and frustrated Palestinians – especially in Gaza — is understandable. Nevertheless, its program is more ideologically intransigent and organizationally self-serving than directed toward realizing a meaningful set of political aims for a national citizenry.

Hamas was formed in 1980. Working at the grass roots, building a disciplined political and paramilitary organization, it served as the religious and more "radical" alternative to Fatah and Yassir Arafat, who had become the champion of a two-state solution. Often forgotten, however, is the organizational necessity for Hamas to distinguish itself from Fatah. This it has done by 1) adamantly refusing to recognize the existence of Israel; 2) rejecting the legitimacy of all previous precedents for a settlement of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict (including United Nations Security Council Resolution #242); 3) insisting that violence directed against Israeli citizens is a morally appropriate means of resistance; 4) placing primacy upon the religious rather than the secular character of the Palestinian movement; and 5) embracing explicit anti-Semitism – i.e. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion remains part of the organization's charter — as a legitimating ideology.

After winning its electoral victory in 2006, to be sure, Hamas signaled that it might recognize Israel and consider a Palestinian state built on pre-1967 borders (The New York Times January 11, 2007). These cautious initiatives were reiterated in the aftermath of the Annapolis conference (The New York Times December 20, 2008). But Israel never took them seriously. Indeed, with the help of the United States, its policy became more confrontational as Gaza was turned into what has appropriately been termed an "outdoor prison." The dismissal of conciliatory overtures by Israel clearly strengthened the hand of the more extreme elements within Hamas. In turn, of course, this has been used to justify Israel's isolation of Gaza and the terrible sufferings experienced by its citizens. Intelligent diplomatic initiatives might lead Hamas to change its policy or, better, certain of its policy positions. Nevertheless, it should be stated clearly, the difficulty of such an undertaking should not be underestimated.

Hamas is capable of bold strokes. Its exploding of the barricade at Raffah without casualties made it possible for masses of Gazans to stream into Egpyt and purchase the bare necessities of life. This brilliant tactic clearly heightened the prestige of Hamas at the expense of President Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah. On a strategic level, however, the cautious inquiries toward peace – and unity with Fatah — made by Hamas are insufficient. Its rhetoric remains bellicose, its often violent conflict with Fatah is ongoing, and its shelling of a few Israeli settlements continues. Pursuit of such policies suggests that Hamas sees itself as capable of dealing with Israel on equal footing. But this ignores the prevailing imbalance of power between Israelis and Palestinians. Israel will resist conciliatory overtures by Hamas not merely because such resistance will prolong the peace process, which is in its interest, but also because it is capable of doing so.

Tragically, in the current context, the weaker party will ultimately have to make the larger concessions. Hamas must recognize that reality. This calls for policies and symbolic actions undertaken with an eye on garnering allies and strengthening its moral standing. The truth is that Palestinians increasingly economically rely on western nations. In this regard, for right or wrong, many of these nations still consider Israel as imperiled and its actions against the citizens of Gaza as warranted for "security" reasons. That is why a bold reassessment less of its tactics than its strategy is required by Hamas. Gandhi, King, and Mandela taught the world that non-violence was less a tactic than a moral choice with strategic implications. The situation is no different for Hamas. A decision to reject violence in principle could easily be linked with an acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution #242 and the recognition of Israel. That decision — or perhaps a bold stroke leading to that decision – would transform the image of Hamas. It still remains to be made.

Hamas may well believe in its program and there is a self-serving organizational purpose to its ideology. A strategic outlook that would allow Hamas to distinguish itself from Fatah may well be involved rather than a discrete set of policy positions. Often seen merely as obstructionist and dogmatic, if this strategic vision is taken seriously, the tactics of Hamas assume a certain logic and a positive character – beyond the merely negative insistence that the more moderate tactics of Fatah simply haven't worked. To reject the existence of Israel is, obviously, to reject the existence of a negotiating partner. To deny the legitimacy of all precedence for reaching an

agreement, such as UN Security Council Resolution 242, is to deny the possibility reaching any territorial compromise. To make favorable reference to the Protocols of Zion generates a vision of Israel and its politics as the product of conspiratorial intrigue undertaken by the intrinsically evil Jews for whom there is no place in the region and against whom violence is obviously legitimate.

What might be in stake, in spite of qualifications and disclaimers, is the commitment of Hamas to a single state rather than a two-state solution. Substance thus mixes with a style that is reinforced by the memories of real oppression directed by Israel against the Palestinian people. If Hamas considers the existence of Israel morally impermissible then equally impermissible is the creation of a "second state"-even a contiguous and viable Palestine — through negotiation with the "Zionist entity." Mahmoud Zahar – an important figure in Hamas – has stated that Palestine encompasses Israel and that "any normalization of relations with the enemy is treason" His words echoed those of Ismail Haniya, the acknowledged leader of Hamas, who put the matter quite bluntly: "Let the whole world hear us: We will not relinquish a centimeter of Palestine and we will not recognize Israel" (The New York Times November 25, 2007).

More than likely, fear of Hamas – not some abstract notion of morality — led Yassir Arafat to reject the Camp David proposals of 2000. Former Israeli foreign minister, Abba Eben, might have said that yet again the Palestinians did not "miss the opportunity to miss an opportunity." But something more serious was involved. What occurred in 2000 was yet another example of what has proven an almost congenital incapacity on the part of the Palestinian political leadership to recognize the historical trend that has made them the increasingly weaker party in all negotiations since the birth of Israel. That has not changed in spite of the Israeli blunders in Lebanon or the significant shift in world public opinion. The Palestinian economy, especially in Gaza, is on the verge of complete collapse whereas Israel is experiencing a growth rate of 6% per year. Military aid to Israel from the United States has increased, not decreased, and the American political mainstream remains wedded to the interests of the "Jewish" state. The failure of the peace process and the decline of the peace movement within Israel have generated a kind of political cynicism that is fodder for both a labor party turning right under Ehud Barak and the more extreme political reactionaries now associated with Benjamin Netanyahu. The traditional unity of Arab states behind Palestine is also beginning to fracture: Egypt and Jordan have each made what amounts to a separate peace treaty with Israel and, increasingly sick of the infighting among the Palestinians, other Arab nations seem willing to follow suit (especially if American dollars in support of such a policy change appear forthcoming).

The Palestinians are, arguably, in a more precarious political position than ever before. Their leadership faces a choice down the road: either accept an agreement that might ultimately produce a Palestinian state, maintain the status quo, or engage in armed struggle. The peace plans generated by President Bill Clinton at Camp David in 2000 would not have given the Palestinians a contiguous state and it would have left Israel in control of water, roads, and air lanes between the Palestinian clumps of territory. It wasn't a great deal. But, whether "moral"

or not, it might have set a precedent for further negotiations. It might also have created building blocks of sovereignty and perhaps some breaks on the construction of new settlements. Be that as it may, the rejection of what was on the table in 2000 only begs the question: what will be the Palestinian response to the next proposal?

* * *

Most likely that proposal will — for better or worse — be determined within the rough "statement" of principles set by the Annapolis Conference of November 27 2007. With an administration defined by the catastrophic invasion of Iraq, lacking a single foreign policy success in eight years, President George Bush and his Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice were ready to grasp at straws to bolster their "legacy." That was undoubtedly one important reason why they hastily decided to hold a conference that would help resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Forty- four nations attended. Nor was the Bush Administration above using bribery and arm-twisting to encourage participation. It is particularly interesting to recall the new multi-year $30 billion military aid package offered to Israel and the $25 billion to Saudi Arabia roughly four months prior to the meetings in Annapolis. Few of the forty states were enthusiastic about the meeting and Syria only decided to attend after it was agreed – in what might, arguably, prove the most important legacy of the conference – to place the return of the Golan Heights on the agenda.

In fairness, it should be noted, George Bush was the first American president willing to acknowledge the need for a Palestinian state – though he refused to meet with Yassir Arafat and, while he was alive, publicly condemned him as a "terrorist." But this doesn't change the fact that the Annapolis meeting was poorly planned and conceived in an atmosphere of desperation. No declaration of common principles or agenda for future talks was offered. No mention was made of UN Security Council Resolution #242 though President Bush stated that the United States would now "monitor" progress on the part of both Israelis and "Palestinians" – or, better, Fatah. Hamas as well as the smaller Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine were not invited and they stated that, even if they had been invited, they would have refused to attend. These organizations then held their own separate conferences, and brought 100,000 supporters into the streets to protest the meetings at Annapolis. It is also worth considering that, since the conference took place, Israel has once again made numerous military incursions into Gaza, tightened its embargo, and witnessed an old fashioned pogrom carried out against Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank city of Funduk, and encouraged the United States to withdraw a resolution seeking UN support for resolving the conflict.

The Annapolis meetings could not have occurred at a more inopportune moment. Perhaps the conference took place because the major participants were politically weak and, therefore had nothing to lose: President Bush is a "lame duck" lacking a majority in Congress; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is still smarting from his disastrous incursion into Lebanon and down in the polls; President Mahmoud Abbas, with the specter of Hamas looming, has nothing to show for his conciliatory attitude toward Israel and the West. In any event, whatever made possible the

conference, the political weakness of its major participants will most likely undermine the possibility of resolving the "final status" issues surrounding the creation of a new Palestinian state: the future of Jerusalem, the "right of return," the Israeli settlements, and the question of borders.

Even while the Palestinians insist upon East Jerusalem being the capital of their new state, and wish the details settled quickly, there remain roughly 250,000 Israeli settlers in and around the Arab parts of the city. A right wing contingent of Israelis thus seeks to delay any such development. The same groups and concerns come into play when discussion turns to the "right of return." It is absurd to believe that every Palestinian from the occupied territories will instantly rush back to reclaim land and houses held in the past. That is especially the case if, using as a model the German policy of compensating Jews for what they suffered under Hitler, Israel were to provide monetary compensation to individuals in exchange for relinquishing their "right of return. Both Hamas and western progressives should recognize that these would be sensible policies to support. Bringing about "one capital for two states" and coming to terms with the "right of return" in a practical way are preconditions for settling the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

President Abbas has staked his career quickly realizing these ideas. But stalling is crucial for the Israeli right less in order to preserve the "Jewish" character of the state than its imperial policy. It is the same with the settlements. Even if Israel were to inhibit their further growth, they already dot the entire landscape. Radical Zionists and religious fanatics see these Jewish outposts as testaments to the creation of a "greater Israel" and there is a palpable threat of civil war should demands arise for their dismantling or the transfer of territory to the Arabs. Lastly, with respect to the borders for a new Palestinian state, while there is a general understanding that Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders is a pre-requisite for a viable Palestinian state, Prime Minister Olmert remains vague about the details and seems intent to delay the process as long as possible. Other structural obstacles exist as well. President Abbas is in the position of either embracing a potentially unfavorable negotiated agreement, thereby risking civil war, or seeing his support from the United States and Western Europe withdrawn. As for Prime Minister Olmert, unless he makes some overture toward peace, he will anger his Western allies. At the same time, if he does make such an overture, he will anger his reactionary coalition partners like Shas and the Pensioners' Party (Gil) – who might well switch their allegiance to Benjamin Netanyahu. Demands that Abbas clamp down on "terrorism" before Israel settlements are dismantled essentially means that Fatah will have to clamp down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the (utopian?) hope that Israel will keep its part of the bargain.

Western progressives must begin to confront in public the more sophistic arguments put forward by Israel in the name of "security." But they must also call upon Hamas to facilitate the peace process. This would make things easier for the Palestinian people-and that should be the prime purpose. From the organizational standpoint of Hamas, however, simply to acquiesce in the peace process would also improve the position of Fatah. A bold stroke leading to a fundamental shift in policy is therefore required by Hamas. This would involve not merely changing its attitude toward Israel, but changing its attitude toward Fatah. The United States

and Israel might make that easier by combining economic incentives with political incentives. Fatah would need to be pressured, the more moderate elements of Hamas would need to be backed, and its leadership would need to be provided with an honorable way to change course. The necessity for progressives to back such a course seems obvious since as things now stand: 1) Fatah and Hamas have fundamentally different aims; 2) both have genuine popular support if, admittedly, in varying degrees; and 3) any decision on a negotiated settlement made by Fatah will either call for ratification by Hamas or a military assault on Hamas.

No insistence on the part of President Bush that he will employ his considerable "political capital" will prove meaningful unless he is willing to recognize these divisions among the Palestinians and lend his support to the original principle of a "two-state" solution. But that is only possible if real pressure is placed upon Israel by the United States. In this regard, progressives should concern themselves less with symbolic exercises like an international "boycott" on Israeli universities. Illiberal and counter-productive demands of this sort inflame the passions without any clear political purpose. It is better to highlight demands – even if they are exceptionally difficult to achieve — that would make a difference. These should include – above all — cutting military aid to Israel unless it accepts the proposal of Saudi Arabia and the Arab League calling for withdrawal of Israel to its pre-1967 boundaries in exchange for the formal recognition of Israel by member states of the Arab League. The possibilities of having such a radical policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict confirmed in the United States are, admittedly, slight. But there is no use in progressives fooling themselves — no symbolic activities can substitute for the real thing. At the same time, even should Israel be pressured to offer a suitable settlement, it would remain incumbent for the two wings of the Palestinian movement to achieve a modus vivendi. Thus, while it was not done at Annapolis, it is essential for progressive voices both to call for Palestinian unity and insist upon the importance of bringing Hamas into the peace process.

Again, in fairness, the Annapolis meetings were intended less to forge a peace settlement than the "framework" for providing one. But there is a problem. While what constitutes such a general framework has been obvious in principle since a "two-state" solution first gained popularity, its recognition in fact has remained cloudy since the collapse of the talks at Camp David in 2000. Holding aside all other issues, the "two state" solution originally rested on the assumption that two states – each with its own contiguous territory – would co-exist side by side. But that notion can no longer be taken for granted. The vision of a contiguous Palestinian state was ignored in the proposal supported by President Clinton (and subsequently rejected by Yassir Arafat) in favor of a "second state" composed of effectively discrete cantons over which Israel maintained control over roads, airspace, water, and major constructions. Under these conditions, of course, skepticism regarding a two-state solution by groups like Hamas makes sense. The quality of the peace proposals offered by Israel has degenerated as the imbalance of power between the two sides to the conflict has grown and the ability of the Palestinians to stand united has decreased. Thus, the Palestinians stand at the crossroads.

They share the memory of dispossession, a language, a religion, the dream of a secular state, and the struggle against a common enemy. Emphasizing the need for unity between Hamas

and Fatah should be a primary concern since the greater the degree of organizational and ideological disunity the worse the deal that the Palestinians will have to ponder. As things stand today, in this regard, the Palestinians are deeply divided between two movements, two forms of struggle, and two political visions. If it is ideally a matter of forging a bond between the most forward thinking elements of Hamas and Fatah, therefore, it is first necessary to render a judgment about the policy that might best serve the Palestinian national interest. Choices must be made over whether to privilege the religious over the secular, violence over negotiation, and ultimately the bi-national over the two-state solution to the conflict. Nor is this choice as simple as it may initially appear. Secularism is on the defensive, negotiations have stalled, and a viable two-state solution now seems almost as utopian as a bi-national state. The next offer made by Israel might pale even in comparison with that made at Camp David — and it will be tough for the Palestinians to swallow. Nevertheless, the alternative is worse.

Israel is not going away and the most downtrodden among the Palestinians will pay the highest price for a policy predicated on embracing violence, rejecting all prior agreements, and denying the existence of the "Zionist entity." Hamas and its more fanatical allies can insist upon framing a choice between "struggle" and "surrender." But that is really not the choice at all. Calling upon Hamas to shift gears and support negotiations that will bring about a far less than perfect Palestine now does not imply abandoning the quest for a more viable state in the future any more than would insisting upon the immediate dismantling of existing settlements, lifting the virtual cordon sanitaire around Gaza (and Bethlehem), or demolishing the road-blocks and checkpoints that plague the Palestinian people. Even the shards of a new state could generate concrete proposals for future steps that might make it contiguous. New possibilities for investment could arise. A viable bureaucracy and security apparatus could begin to develop along with new incentives for Hamas and Fatah to reach some kind of new modus vivendi. The Palestinians could perhaps also find themselves playing a different role in the international community and representatives of their sovereign state might finally be recognized as a legitimate "negotiating partner."

All of this is, admittedly, speculative. But such a policy offers a far better bet for positive outcomes than the paralyzed politics of the present in which economic collapse is already under way, civil war looms, and increasing numbers of Palestinians are bereft of both hope and clarity of purpose. Lenin knew what he was doing during World War I when, seeing his country gobbled up by its enemies, he called for "peace at any price" rather than the "neither war nor peace" policy advocated by Trotsky or the demands to continue the military campaign against Germany by Bukharin. The analogy is appropriate when considering the choices faced by the Palestinians with regard to taking a deal, maintaining an intolerable status quo, or romanticizing a fruitless military struggle whose costs will be borne by a weary and scarred citizenry. Something is to be learned here from a very different historical context if not about the superiority of communism then about the value of realism: salvage what is possible, give the citizenry a breather, and then let the political struggle continue.

Notes

[1] Henry Pachter, “Who are the Palestinians?” in Socialism in History: Political Essays of Henry Pachter edited by Stephen Eric Bronner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pgs. 203-215.

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American Democracy after Bush: Out with the Republican Party, in with the Republican Spirit

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

The Bush reign ended symbolically with hurricane *Kathrina*. When the news media talked about "refugees" fleeing New Orleans; when the TV showed the terrible scenes of those unable to flee who were left to fend for themselves in a football stadium-or, when I was asked a few days later to appear on a talk radio show to explain what Hobbes meant by the state of nature as a "war of all against all" – it was clear that something finally had snapped. The failure to find the supposed WMD in Iraq, the grotesque photos from Abu Graib prison, and the manifest twisting of national and international law at Guantanamo had not hit home until that terrible storm of August 2005 and its aftermath. From that point on, as if a faultily knitted sweater began to untangle its formerly connected warp and woof, the one loose thread began to unwrap the intricate deception.

Katrina revealed first the incompetence of a government that had won re-election by its promise to protect its citizens. The agency responsible for dealing with natural disasters had lost its independence when it became part of the gigantic Department of Homeland Defense created in the wake of 9/11. Its incompetence, second, was seen to be the result of a kind of corruption that had seeped into an administration that had no tolerance for a loyal opposition even within its own ranks; it was a regime without checks and balances. This was connected, third, to a totalizing project that placed its friends everywhere within the power structure (including among the lobbyists: this was the moment of the Jack Abramoff scandal, in whose wake at least two Congressmen are now in jail); political loyalty rather than competence were rewarded. It became clear, finally, that this corruption was a threat to the republic; it was not just private self-enrichment but an attack on the "virtue" that is the basis of any political republic.

Against this background, another consequence of the Bush political machine took on a greater importance: those "refugees" from New Orleans were mainly black, and they were poor.[1] In one sense, this was not surprising; but in the classical republican framework that Americans were vaguely remembering, the racial and economic inequality took on a different weight: it was a source of shame. As opposed to guilt, which is internalized and individual, shame exists in the eyes of others and calls for social remedies. The political autism of Bush's foreign policy is put into question by the rediscovery of shame; one need not be a specialist in foreign policy to know that America's reputation has been sullied, nor an idealist to recall that it was once, and can again be guided by better hands.

In this context, the now widespread call for "change" reflects a resurgence of the still-present *republican spirit* that has characterized America *when it is at its best*, which is, alas, not always the case. At present, according to a survey by the Wall Street Journal and NBC News just prior

to the beginning of the primaries, 24% of Americans, whatever their partisan choice, desire "small adjustments," 29% want "moderate correction," while a massive 46% yearn for "major reforms" and a "brand-new" approach to politics.

But the appeal to a "republican spirit" is shot full of ambiguity; the Republican party has its own claims to the label. Classical republicanism assumed the existence of a "common good" beyond the difference of interests among the citizenry, which were to be sacrificed if necessary. And, in foreign policy, its universalism can become imperial, with unpredictable domestic consequences.[2] I will return to these ambiguities and hopes at the end of these remarks.

The ambiguities of the classical republican project suggest that the Bush junior regime can be seen as the radical heir to Reagan's *America's Back!* After the Clinton interregnum, the neo-conservatives (who did not include Bush, or Rice) set out to realize goals that they had proposed privately at the end of the government of Bush senior [3], and then elaborated publicly in the 1997 "Project for a New American Century." Their goals dove-tailed nicely with the outsized dreams and underhanded methods of Republican party leaders captivated by Karl Rove's ambitious plan laying the grounds for a long-term domestic hegemony modeled on Mark Hanna's creation of the McKinley presidency in 1896, during which Spain was driven from the New World and the Philippines conquered (at the cost of a long and costly guerrilla war). Financial support was assured by hitherto unheard of tax cuts to the wealthiest segments of society, creating a wealth-gap that recalled the rapacious rule of the Robber Barons of McKinley's day.

The creation of a new political oligarchy was to be based on the complete conquest of all available levers of power *and* its ruthless use against any source of resistance. The Republican leaders of both Houses of Congress brooked no dissent. In the House, the rule of Tom Delay was absolute [4], the Democrats were excluded from participation at every possible occasion, and dissenters within Republican ranks were penalized (while the venal sins, financial or sexual, of those who remained faithful were overlooked). "Earmarking" of projects for the favored meant that the supposedly frugal, small-government Republicans increased vastly the deficit, but this contradiction was overlooked by the power-driven party loyalists. The Republican-led Senate gave the President a blank check for appointees, forgetting its constitutional duty to "advise and consent." When the Democrats dared object, the Republicans threatened what they themselves called a "nuclear option" that would destroy the rights of the minority. As a result, the judiciary is now overloaded with life-tenured ideological Republicans whose rulings have begun to roll back the gains of the civil rights era while confirming the exorbitant claims of executive power which is the capstone of the Bush edifice.[5]

More important than the Republican smothering of Congress and the judiciary has been the expanded power of the presidency. This had been the dream of Dick Cheney since his days as White House chief of staff under Gerald Ford when, in the wake of Nixon's abuses [6], the "Watergate Reforms" re-established the constitutional equilibrium among the branches of government, particularly in the form of Congressional and judicial oversight over the presidency. Presidential power did not grow simply in response to 9/11; Cheney had already refused to release the names of those whom he was consulting with regard to the reform of US energy policy. That was the first claim of "executive privilege" with regard to the release of

documents or the testimony of administration personnel before Congressional committee hearings. It has not been the last, despite the Democrats' retaking of Congress in 2006.

Another manifestation of this omnivorous new executive branch can be seen in the scandalous over-reaching of the Department of Justice, most baldly in the nomination (and removal) of federal prosecutors and their clearly political decisions as to whom to prosecute and whom to ignore (for example, the former Democratic governor of Alabama, Don Seligman, received a five year jail term on charges of corruption for activities that, had he been a Republican, would certainly have been ignored).

But enough. As Machiavelli might say, *if* it is necessary to take power in such a way, one might indeed imitate the deeds of this Prince, as one should imitate those of Borgia, Sforza, even the lowly Agathocles, described in the chapter titled "Of Those who Have Attained the Position of Prince by Villainy." But was it necessary to follow this path in an America whose republican spirit did not suddenly disappear on September 11 2001? And was it wise? Could it work? After all, it should be recalled, Machiavelli was a republican who understood the limits as well as the need for power.

*** *** ***

The Bush overreaching could not be maintained; the edifice began to crack, like the dams that broke in New Orleans. The public that was rendered skeptical by the aftermath of *Katrina* was long weary of a military quagmire; many still remembered May 1, 2003, when the president-hero landed on the flight-deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln under a sign "Mission Accomplished." But the mission was not just military; as in domestic affairs, the Bush gang identified force with politics. Total victory leaves you with no resources when the tide turns.

But the now nearly ubiquitous desire for "change" that has been adopted by all of the candidates, from both parties represents no alternative project. What kind of change? By which participants (or actors)? With what goals? Even the Republicans, especially the Republicans who are worried about their future and have no loyalty to a lame-duck president, want "change."

American political parties have traditionally been coalitions of interest groups. The "Reagan coalition" that George W. Bush inherited is composed of three distinct groups: the "values voters," offended by secular relativism and united by their religious evangelism; the libertarians who want to cut taxes and keep government small; and the former anti-communists allied with the neo-conservatives who want to conserve American hegemony. This coalition formed at a particular time (the 1980s) in particular circumstances (a fossilized progressive Democratic party that was prisoner to its own coalition members), and around a particular leader (Reagan, and then George Bush as the "anti-Clinton" in 2000, re-elected in 2004 on a platform of fear).

As the 2008 primaries take shape, it is evident that the coalition is breaking up. Each component has its own candidate(s); the religious/values candidate, Mike Huckabee, won the Iowa primary; the tax-cutting small government forces managed a victory in Michigan by Mitt Romney; while the aggressive foreign policy faction could claim a victory with John McCain's ability to rally independent voters in New Hampshire-although Rudy Giuliani, stressing his role as New York mayor during 9/11, is competing for its support in Florida. The chances that no candidate dominates the primaries, with unseemly bargaining at the Convention (of the sort:

"we'll vote for your candidate if ours becomes your Vice-President or Secretary of State…") will weaken the eventual candidate, who would be denounced as a puppet by the opposing party.[7] As for the Democrats-who, it should be noted, seem certain to enlarge their majorities in both Houses of Congress-there are two choices: transition or transformation (or, as I put it in a recent French Op-Ed, "reformer ou transformer"[8]). A third possibility would try to renew the very old coalition, whose glory days date to the New Deal that was cobbled together in the middle of the last century, tries to reawaken the old ghosts who still remember Franklin Roosevelt's famous October 31, 1936 re-election speech at Madison Square Garden, when he attacked those who "had begun to consider the Government of the United States as a mere appendage to their own affairs. We know now," he continued, "that Government by organized money is just as dangerous as Government by organized mob. Never before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate for me-and I welcome their hatred."[9] The result could be a renewed populism, personified by John Edwards. The fighting spirit is admirable; but class warfare has little resonance in a country whose history has remained colored by its republican origins and its democratic social relations.

The Democrats who are concerned above all to return to power (and to "change" losers of the Bush years into the winners of tomorrow) tend to line up with Hillary Clinton. Typical of her approach is a TV ad that ran shortly before Christmas. Mrs. Clinton talks ostensibly to herself, asking where to put the presents labeled "Universal Health Care" or "Alternative Energy," before unveiling a surprise gift called "universal pre-K." As *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich points out (January 13, 2008) this piecemeal approach to reform is typical of her campaign director, Mark Penn, who recently explained his theory of winning politics in a book called *Microtrends*. Penn's thesis, according to Rich, is that "there is no one America anymore," but rather "hundreds of Americas." Penn, who has kept his job as chief executive of the Public Relations firm Burson-Marsteller, prides himself on "the niching of America." This is necessary, he claims, because "Americans overwhelmingly favor small, reasonable ideas over big, grandiose themes." This progressive inversion of the old Stalinist "sausage technique" might indeed insure the transition to a Democratic victory; and it would certainly inaugurate many piecemeal reforms, as in Mrs. Clinton's ad. But "small ideas" and acceptance of the idea that "there is no one America anymore" are problematic recipes in a nation that remembers (at least sometimes) its republican heritage while desiring "major reforms" and a "brand-new" approach to politics.

The other option places its bets on a revival of the republican spirit. In the soaring rhetoric of Barack Obama, who first came to public attention in his 2004 Convention speech, one hears the rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement, the rhythmic hopes of the gospel, as well as the rhetoric of the great Shakespearean theater. His acceptance speech after his surprise victory in Iowa seemed to echo the Bard's Henry V addressing the "happy few" on St. Crispin's Day before the Battle of Agincourt. Appealing precisely to the one America, preaching the need to overcome the sharp-edged stalemate that has made politics into a dirty word for many citizens, Obama seems to have struck a spark. But where is the kindling? How will the fire be sustained? How can the candidate of "hope" overcome the cool headed practical reflections of older party regulars who prefer Hillary Clinton as the candidate of "experience"?

With her back to the wall in New Hampshire, Hillary Clinton put her foot in her mouth. In what seemed to be a common sense remark, she pointed to what may prove the crucial element in the renewal of American democracy at the end of the Bush era. "Dr. King's dream began to be realized when President Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act," Mrs. Clinton said, "It took a president to get it done." While this was literally the case, there had been many presidents prior to LBJ; and they did not "get it done." One could even say that it was only because of the Civil Rights Movement that the president was able to act successfully. Whether Mrs. Clinton's insensitivity-which occurred at the same moment that she showed exquisite sensitivity to her female public, showing finally that she, too, had emotions like the rest of us[10]-will cost her in electoral terms can be left aside here; our concern is the future of American democracy, not that of a candidate for its leadership, be she a woman, or he an Afro-American.

The attractiveness of the Obama candidacy lies in its *post-racial* nature. It is as if the call of the Civil Rights Movement for *integration and equality among all Americans* had been realized; the old coalition politics, in which African Americans had become merely another interest group wanting its share of the pie, could finally be transcended. While Hillary Clinton's victory might break what she calls "the hardest glass ceiling," it's not clear that she would inaugurate a *post-feminist* era-which might not be a good thing! She is a first-class politician whose victory, however, would be the triumph of partisan politics over the hope of democratic renewal.

There was a revealing implication in Mrs. Clinton's insistence on the role of the president in the realization of civil rights reform. When Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Law, he told friends, "there goes the South for a generation." And he was right; the Republican party conquest of the South, and Washington, began at that moment. Some praise Johnson for putting the national interest above partisan concerns. But, in spite of his tone-deafness to movements of national liberation abroad, Johnson was a politician who, like Machiavelli's republican Prince, knew that opportunity knocks only once. In that sense, he may indeed be a kindred spirit to Barak Obama rather than Hillary Clinton.[11]

"It won't be easy… It won't be easy," repeats Barack Obama at every recent speech. He's right. But when people try to explain to him that he'd be better off remaining in the Senate, gaining experience and reputation before leaping onto the national stage, his response is more significant than he realizes. The moment for action arises only once; the time has found its man, who can't shy away. Obama may have thought of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Act IV), which insists that "There is a tide in the affairs of men / Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; / Omitted, all the voyage of their life / Is bound in shallows and in miseries." But he of course does not cite the author's probable source-Machiavelli-even though he is in fact applying the political teaching of the Florentine, who wagered on *virtu* to vanquish the vicissitudes of *fortuna*. It's perhaps this old political lesson-understood by the Elizabethan dramatist better than the well-intentioned reformers-that suggests the possibility for the renewal of a republic that had fallen prey to a fear manipulated by political reactionaries.

This hope is bolstered by historical experience. As opposed to the European model whose origins lie with the French revolution-which had to seize state power and then use it to remodel society in a way that would overcome the distinction between the particular interests of society and the general interest incarnated by the state-the Americans sought to protect the autonomy

of their social relations by creating republican institutions whose universality would protect the plurality of an active democratic society. The European model is a democratic republic, a social democracy in which class differences are leveled as far as possible; the American is a republican democracy in which political institutions keep alive the pluralism and pragmatism that insure the dynamism of social relations. What appears to Obama's critics[12] to be the vague, merely rhetorical character of his campaign is from this perspective its power. It is not necessary to be a poet to recognize that words have a unique power just because they create a shared world of meaning in which individuals find themselves able to act together. Was that not, in the last resort, the power of John F. Kennedy, to whom Obama is often compared?

Notes

[1] This became clear in the Fall of 2007, when fires ravaged swaths of Southern California; those forced to flee into the San Diego football stadium found massage therapists, well-stocked food banks and other commodious features to which those of their middle and upper class were already accustomed

[2] C.f., Peter Bender's provocative *Weltmacht Amerika. Das neue Rom* (Klett-Cotta, 2003), whose French translation *L'Amérique nouvelle Rome. L'engrenage de la puissance* (Buchet-Chastel, 2005), adds a clarifying subtitle.

[3] The project was drafted by under-secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz under the direction of secretary Cheney. It envisioned a world in which America would tolerate no competitors to its world dominance; its unilateralism would be reinforced by the use of military pre-emption when necessary. After the 46 page document was leaked to the *New York Times*, which published an article about it on March 7, 1992, the document was toned down and released publicly on April 15. Bush's defeat in the November elections made its claims nugatory-until Bush II.

[4] Delay used his power to work toward another republican goal: conquest of the federal states. He managed to redistrict the state of Texas in a manner that assured that its Congressional delegation would remain republican. The means that he used are the object of an ongoing court case. Another illustration of this type of abusive use of power has come before the Supreme Court in January 2008, in *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*. The state of Indiana's republican dominated legislature passed a law requiring that every voter present a government-issued identity card (such as a driver's license, since there are no national identity cards in the US). This manifestly discriminates against the poor, and the urban-dwellers, who are less likely to have a car or need to drive. When the law was appealed, the court's ruling admitted explicitly that its results would hurt democrats; but, it added without a qualm, that doesn't make it unconstitutional. The republican dominated Supreme Court seemed inclined to agree when it held its hearings on the case.

[5] It was probably a mistake of the civil rights era-in which I include the feminist and gay movements-to rely too heavily on the power of the courts. Not only can court majorities change; judgments imposed by a non-elected, life-tenured court can provoke a democratic counter-movement.

[6] Nixon's abuses are not without similarity to Bush; his claim was simply that if the president wills it (e.g. to break into democratic headquarters, or to use the FBI for partisan purposes), it is justified.

[7]After the 24 primary elections on "Super-Duper-Tuesday" February 5, it appears that John McCain is now favored to win the nomination early. His strong position is in good part the result of several accidents. Rudy Guiliani bet that he could wait until Florida's January 29 primaries before making a serious mark; when he lost heavily, he threw his support immediately to McCain. Meanwhile, the Republican primaries of February 5 were fought on a winner-takes-all model. Because Huckabee remained in the race, he won votes in the South and among religious conservatives that would otherwise have gone to Romney. As a result, McCain won all of the delegates in states where he was far from getting even a majority of the republican voters. It is no surprise that Romney, who made his fortune as a venture capitalist, and knows how and when it is necessary to cut his losses, dropped out of the race on February 7, two days after Super-Duper-Tuesday. Hardened conservatives of the free-market and libertarian ilk will not support Huckebee-and McCain will not find it easy to reconcile them; they probably won't vote against him, but they may simply abstain in November, which would be costly. (The Democrats, by the way, use a proportional system rather than winner-take-all, hoping in that way to give contenders a chance to emerge from the pack with the support of their electorate.)

[8] *Ouest-France*, 3 décembre 2007. C.f., also "Réformer ou transformer," in *La lettre de la fondation jean-jaurès*, No. 82, Décembre 2007, pp. 11-12.

[9] It might be noted that his cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, who succeeded William McKinley and challenged the plutocratic vision of Mark Hanna, attacking the "malefactors of great wealth," a phrase that has stuck in the memory of political commentators on the left.

[10] It should be noted that the animosity inspired by Hillary Clinton is enormous; she may be the only candidate who could successfully unite the republican party coalition! Obama's more friendly, non-threatening demeanor at times recalls the appeal of the "compassionate conservative" George W. Bush. In his earlier incarnation, Bush was a man whom you'd like to drink a beer with. Obama similarly is someone with whom you'd enjoy having a glass of wine. The point being that one ought not elect a president simply because of his/her personal attractiveness.

[11] It should be noted that while Obama did win large majorities of black voters in the South, he also won the support of 30% or more of southern whites. This could signal the arrival on the political stage of that "new generation" in which Johnson placed his hope for the future. Johnson's so-called "We Shall Overcome" speech of March 15, 1965 which proposed the Civil Rights act a century after the American Civil War is worth reading in this context. It can be found at http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650315.asp

[12] His critics include not only his rivals in the primary campaign but also those who situate themselves on the "left" of the political spectrum but whose goals are those of a European social democrat. Their enmity, based on a misunderstanding of their own national history-as noted previously in the case of John Edwards-could prove harmful, perhaps even dividing the party should Obama get the nomination. The nature of what counts as "left" is a matter for discussion elsewhere.

How Would Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit Be Relevant Today?

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

I

As we scome to the end of the 200th anniversary of the publication of the Phenomenology of Spirit (PhS),[1] I am reminded of a remark made a decade ago by the noted Hegel-scholar Robert Pippin. He then entertained the possibility of what a sequel to the PhS would look like were Hegel able to complete one. In his mind, the sequel would present two new chapters, which "would have to include oddly parallel accounts of both [a] the great expanding confidence and influence of modern science and technology…and [b] the coincident ever-growing pessimism that all of that, and much of anything else, matters all that much.…"[2] Pippin rightly recognized the need of new "shapes of Spirit" relevant for at least a 1997 PhS. He had seen in the trajectories of these two large-scale cognitive and ethical enactments "contradictory" outcomes in which the success of (a), in fulfilling ideals that have been set for modern science and technology, comes at once with (b), with a disposition that ever loosens the normative grip their ideals are to have on us.

I myself admit that Pippin's selections to a hypothetical sequel to the PhS and his evaluations for those selections are on point. However, I would like to make a suggestion of my own to such a sequel. With all the discussion, both critical and uncritical, on racial oppression and cultural diversity over the distant and recent past, a shape of spirit accounting for a conceptualization of these matters appears to me quite apropos.

Nonetheless there has been, generally speaking, an ambivalent reception to what is taken to be Hegel's thoughts on these matters. On one side, many point to Hegel's famous section "Independence & Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship & Servitude" in chapter 4 of his PhS as a place for imagining, at least, a fruitful source for examining historically and sociologically the American slave experience[3] or fruitful connections with African-American literature[4] or, more broadly, with matters of "blackness" and identity.[5] On the other side, many point to Hegel's infamous remarks on non-western cultures generally and on Africa and Africans particularly[6] in his Lectures on the Philosophy of World History as well as his infamous comments on race and so-called "Negroes"[7] in his Philosophy of Subjective Spirit as sites for justifying the alleged absence of history or the alleged arrested development, both intellectually and culturally, of African and African-descended peoples. However, since the latter set of annotations does not arise from the PhS, they shall not be examined here.[8]

Still there is something puzzling about using chapter 4 of the PhS to highlight modern racial slavery. There are many who believe that Hegel gets **philosophically right** the **historical** experience of servitude; that the servant/slave (via enslavement), not the lord/master, becomes aware of both life and freedom; and that the servant/slave is involved in struggle to acquire recognition of one's identity from the other.[9] This position stands in contrast to the result of more recent, historical and sociological studies on American slavery, which would insist that

Hegel's account is **inadequate historically** on the "details" of the experience of enslavement and would thereby claim that Hegel's philosophical account has nothing to offer intellectually, say, to the understanding of slave culture.'[10]

What is fascinating here, when framed in this way, is that both sides share a common presumption, despite their difference. They both take for granted that Hegel's discussion of lordship and servitude in chapter 4 entails an **institutional arrangement for enslavement and a history of the practice**. There is something common at work on both sides concerning the action of the servile mode of self-consciousness-customs or ethos of a community, historical tradition, membership in a community-which lead it to seek recognition. As a consequence, the difference between the sides is whether Hegel's philosophical account of the experience of servitude in chapter 4 **carries in a sufficient or an insufficient way** a historical background to establish the appropriate dialectical advance of the servant's/slave's cultural integrity and socio-psychological strength in the struggle with the lord/master for recognition.[11]

But herein lies the rub. **There is not even an allusion to any kind of historical experience or cultural arrangement in Hegel's chapter that contributes to or is the outcome of (a) his analysis of lordship and servitude or (b) the possibility of any comparative work with any historically extant slave experience.** Let me bring in two examples. (1) Hegel **succeeded** in speculating (with an adequate historical background), according to Patterson, that "the slave never internalized the degraded condition of himself held by the master."[12] (2) Hegel **failed** (with an inadequate historical background), according to Patterson again, "to take account of the free non-slaveholding members of the master's society and thereby failed to conclude that a "[vibrant slave culture] is possible only where slavery does not totally dominate the society."[13] These two points may be true, but neither statement is pertinent to Hegel's chapter given the strictures of his analysis, because they are extraneous for the appearance of the so-called "master-slave dialectic".

Even if true, they would still be violating Hegel's **phenomenological** rule[14] of allowing, in this case, the conditions for the appearance of the "master-slave dialectic" to develop directly from the context-demanding character in which that dialectic emerges. (Otherwise negation would not be determinate.) Hegel himself would consider that dialectic as partial and wanting with respect to the question of reciprocal recognition. But he would not see its deficiency turning on the sufficiency or insufficiency of a historical background he provides in his analysis of that dialectic because, at this juncture of the PhS, history is neither epistemically nor ethically criterial for that dialectic. What is of criterial significance here is the **certainty of self-consciousness**, which appears generally and immediately in the form of **desire**. The question for Hegel is whether anything else renders the criterial character of that certainty defeasible.

II

Briefly stated, the certainty of self-consciousness as desire is the concern an individual has toward itself in its regard of and its behavior toward a virtually indeterminate domain of objects as both wholly reducible to and immediately identical with its concern **ad libitum, ad infinitum**. Nothing stands as recalcitrant to or as independent of the desiring individual's projects and their fulfillments; thereby nothing is at odds with its sheer or immediate self-

assurance. All things are evanescent for it. However, for that self-assurance to be intensely ever present, it requires the persistence, not evanescence, of an indeterminate domain, which Hegel calls "life."

Moreover, life is not only the required counterpart to self-consciousness as desire; it is also (1) that within which desiring self-consciousness subsists and (2) that in the face of which desiring self-consciousness constantly presents itself as life's measure. As one can see, the domain of life takes on a determinate form as well as an integral and **mediating** role for desiring self-consciousness. At the same time, however, desiring self-consciousness must either nullify or render inessential anything other than itself that could undermine its venture of making its self-assuring concern **exclusively** criterial for knowledge and action. Nothing else is on the table.

Self-consciousness seems here paradoxical. How can it claim to subsist in life while simultaneously certifying that the domain of life matters **only** through projects motivated by its own desires and that its dependent, mediating attachments to life are **inessential** to such projects? Hegel's answer-"only in another self-consciousness" [PhS, §175] or, better said, only in another mode of self-consciousness. There is a **mode** of self-consciousness (1) which, despite its attachments to life in the conduct and preservation of its life, has another mode of self-consciousness (2) and **acknowledges** that the independence and certainty of (2) is **fulfilled** through ventures fueled essentially by its own desire and that life and anything therein offer no resistance to those ventures. In this schema, (1) refers eventually to the servile mode of self-consciousness and (2) eventually to the lordly mode.[15] How and why does this take place?

Since self-consciousness is essentially marked by desire, each mode appears independently to the other as so marked. Since each presents itself to the other as independent in the life of the other, each makes life totally subject to the projects each has set self-consciously for itself in life regardless of life's constraints, including and especially each other. Each serves as a living constraint on the other, but not like anything else in life, because each designates the other as a living constraint not instinctively, but self-consciously. Each presents itself to the other as the negation of the other's life, viz., death. But death here is not simply the boundary of that negation distinctive of the process of life; it is, more importantly, the negation of life as what self-consciousness projects for itself in life. So each does not just stake its so-called "biological" life, but its life as set and enacted independently by itself and self-consciously for itself. Two consequences issue from this "risk of life"-**either** both modes die, in which case the experience of self-consciousness as desire in PhS ceases, **or** one subdues the other or one gives in to the other in fear of risking life, in which case the "victor" obtains from the subdued acknowledgement of its certainty, independence, and projects, while the subdued accepts "that life is as essential to it as pure-self-consciousness" [PhS, §189].

As we know, the latter consequence, issuing from the "risk of life," leads to the **elementary** form of interaction that has been called the "master-slave dialectic" or what can be called the experience between the lordly and servile modes of self-consciousness. We also are familiar with the paradoxes which emerge from that experience. On the one hand, the lordly mode, in risking life, overcomes its dependence on life. But it sustains its independence over life only through the **mediation** of one which is for the lordly mode no more than an **inessential** living being, and as such at one with life, viz., the servile mode. Yet the servile mode "is the object

which constitutes the truth of the lord's self-certainty" [PhS, §192]. The lordly mode, then, is **not** as it seems to that mode itself, an immediate and self-certain mode of independence. Moreover, the lordly mode cannot be the successful culmination of an independent self-consciousness, because it gains acknowledgement from another that it cannot regard as a self-consciousness.

On the other hand, the servile mode, in **not** risking life, places its desire in abeyance, first through fear, then through work, and treats itself as one living being among others. In holding its desire in check, it (a) desists in making its self-assurance a measure for life, (b) suspends its claim for independence, and (c) establishes the lordship-servitude relationship. Although Hegel states that the servile mode "will in its culmination become the contrary of what it is immediately" [PhS, §193], that does not mean that it will culminate in independence under the conditions set for self-consciousness in chapter 4 of the PhS, viz., desire and life. So neither the lordly nor the servile mode of self-consciousness are the appropriate modes in and through which the independence of self-consciousness can be realized in another self-consciousness. Under the sole conditions of desire and life, **both** modes lead to cul-de-sacs with respect to addressing the issue of how an independent self-conscious individual finds satisfaction in another such individual.

What is the upshot of all this? Notice that under this reading the issue pivots on the feasibility of self-consciousness' position that its self-assuring concern alone is sufficient to confirm that life is what desiring self-consciousness projects for itself in life regardless of life's own process and constraints. Furthermore "self-consciousness finds its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" [PhS § 175], because the self-assurance of its concern cannot be sufficiently criterial for defining life and everything therein solely in terms of what a desiring self-consciousness sets for itself in life. Only another self-consciousness, Hegel maintains, can and will be so criterial. Only another self-consciousness offers the measure for testing the feasibility of a self-consciousness dealing with life immediately and solely in terms of the fulfillment of its desire. Hence it is implausible under this reading to make the sufficiency or lack thereof of historical information about the institution of slavery criterial for establishing the appropriate dialectical advance of lordship and servitude. The dialectic here is found wanting, because the condition for the certainty and independence of desiring self-consciousness cannot be met.[16]

Furthermore there is nothing available to each mode of self-consciousness-neither laws nor customs of a community, nor membership in a community, nor historical tradition, nor reciprocal recognition-to settle the threatening conflict engendered by the self-presentation of each to the other in risking life. Spirit has not yet emerged on the scene in the form of reciprocal recognition.[17] Or, better said, it has appeared on the scene only in the very elementary form of interaction that is the risking of life in the face of the other wherein nothing reciprocal is reached. The issue, then, for Hegel, given that neither mode can rely on an **already extant** life of spirit with a historical orientation and background, is working out and through the conditions in which the life of spirit and history's role therein fully obtain self-consciously in cognitive and ethical endeavors. Consequently spirit and its concomitant history can be neither presupposed nor achieved in the "master-slave dialectic."

III

Most read chapter 4 of the *PhS* as if the life of spirit and its historical orientation and background are fully extant. It is the reason why many assign to Hegel a belief that he is couching lordship and servitude in some kind of historical background (either adequately or inadequately.). But if that were so, desire and life would not be the only strictures to the structure of self-consciousness. Thus besides my concern to provide to a "PhS sequel" a shape of spirit dealing with the conceptualization of racial oppression and cultural diversity, I have expressed the view that Hegel's phenomenological account of the experience of lordship and servitude is historically groundless, that history is not one of the conditions of that dialectic.

But my concern and my reading of chapter 4 are not at cross-purposes with each other, because they are both spurred essentially by the matter over **where** history and historical investigations must enter in the PhS. For me, they **must** enter not in chapter 4, but in chapters 6 and 7, i.e., "Spirit" and "Religion."

What is the meaning of this "must", i.e., with respect to what must history and historical investigations enter in, and into what kind of analysis or account must history and historical investigations enter? I shall not delve into a full answer here, for it would take us too far afield. Nevertheless, the well-qualified candidate, I believe, for the point at which history and historical investigations must enter in would be that "shape of consciousness," which would enable us to distinguish those shapes in the PhS whose epistemic or ethical conditions either precede or express the **becoming** of the life of spirit and those shapes whose epistemic or ethical conditions have the life of spirit as their **presupposition**.

Be all that as it may, the new shape to the hypothetical sequel as well as the appropriate entry of history in the extant PhS would be on much more solid ground if chapter 6 were made the target of our case. For I would argue that African-American history and historical investigations on, say, American slavery could definitely operate within that chapter. Most Hegel-interpreters take for granted the historically European content and focus of the chapter as necessary, sufficient, and essential to the development of spirit in which the notion of reciprocal recognition is self-consciously realized.[18] The oft-cited racist remarks, usually attributed to Hegel, about the unhistorical character and impoverished culture of peoples of African descent clearly add emphasis to the necessity of the Eurocentric character of the life of spirit. However, despite that view imputed to Hegel about the absence of history in African and African-diasporic cultures,[19] his PhS does not and cannot commit him to an Eurocentric history. The strictures of the PhS bind neither Hegel nor us to the historically European content that comprise the chapter entitled "Spirit," because that content and focus are not constitutive, but illustrative, of the life of spirit.

What the strictures of the PhS do bind us to are simply a history and historical investigation which illuminates and illustrates the development of the life of spirit as chiefly undergoing destabilizing cognitive and ethical setbacks whose possible resolutions in reciprocal recognition are understood as spirit's own self-conscious yet historically conditional achievements. This phenomenological claim about what history elucidates and embodies is not supposed to be a local claim whose validity is confined to a particular life of spirit, e.g., European culture. Nor is it a universal anthropological claim whose validity extends to all human groups. It is rather a philosophical claim expressing constitutive conditions for the life of spirit being present in any way at all.

If this is the case, then the life of spirit can be rethought and illustrated through African-American history. Clearly the way in which the life of spirit appears in African-American history is different from the manner of its appearance in European history. But that the life of spirit in African-American history has involved an interminable quest through destabilizing cognitive and ethical conflicts and setbacks for some cognitively and ethically restabilizing yet historically provisional like-mindedness with others as a self-conscious achievement is beyond doubt.

Although the details for reconstructing chapter 6 of the PhS along the lines of African-American history is an endeavor that cannot be pursued here, the historical phenomenon of and the historical investigation into American chattel slavery would predominate here and not in relation to chapter 4. They would enable "Spirit" to be weaved from incidents such as the corruption of motherhood as exhibited in the Margaret Garner story (a story given mythic significance in Toni Morrison's Beloved[20]); the terror of the slave regime and, for example, the San Domingo Revolution;[21] the struggles of Douglass and Covey as well as Harriet Jacobs and Flint; the opposition between African-American intellectual enlightenment and the "observational" protocol for disconfirming the intelligence of Africans; the tension within African-American intellectual enlightenment regarding the merits between abolition and violent resistance; the hampering of rational action in the face of the Fugitive Slave Laws and the Taney decision; the Civil War; the views of "beautiful souls" represented by Crummell and Douglass and the call for reconciliation between those views; and the ever present religious call for reconciliation among the legatees of modern racial slavery. These are just a few 19th century examples from which material could be drawn for reconstructing the chapter "Spirit."

Indeed, if those examples were weaved together in the light of Paul Gilroy's work on, say, "modernity in black,"[22] we would go a long way toward a successful reconstruction of "Spirit" along African-American or African-diasporic historical lines in the PhS. Such a reconstruction, I would claim, of this chapter along these lines not only would add a new or modify an old chapter to a hypothetical sequel with a certain mode of relevance for today. But it would also be both a significant task and a welcome innovation, especially in the face of the already numerous and ever-increasing analyses constantly revisiting the celebrated "master-slave dialectic" to make all kinds of oppression cogent.

Nevertheless this reconstruction would not need a "second dialectic," as some have submitted. Although the historical content and focus would differ from Hegel's, they would not deviate from the condition that makes the life of spirit what it is. But that comes with a price, perhaps too high to pay for those subscribing to the PhS as some kind of social theory. It would mean that "Spirit" illustrative of African-American history would still be consonant with the overall task of the PhS, viz., delineating the matter of "Absolute Knowing."[23]

Notes

[1] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). Hereafter cited as *PhS*. All references are to sections and are to be found in the body of this essay.

[2] Robert Pippin, "On Not Being a Neo-Structuralist: Remarks on Manfred Frank and Romantic Subjectivity" in *Common Knowledge*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 148-49.

[3] Cf. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982. David Brion Davis' *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) and Stanley Elkins' *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959) also make use of the so-called "dialectic" found in the "Lordship and Servitude" section of Hegel's *PhS*. For an intriguing account that argues that historical and sociological studies on the "plantation ethos" or the "slave culture" in American slavery **dispute and are an advance over** what Hegel claims is involved in the "slave experience" in chapter 4 of his *PhS*, see Cynthia Willett's *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities* (New York: Routledge, 1995.)

[4] Cf. Charles Johnson, "The Education of Mingo" in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Tales & Conjurations* (New York: Plume Books, 1994), pp.3-23.

[5] Cf. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. C.L. Markmann, (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

[6] Cf. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and The "Racial" Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 19-27.

[7] Cf. Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti" in *Hegel After Derrida*, ed. S. Barnett, (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 41-63.

[8] I am currently investigating these and other similar remarks for the purpose of providing, contrary to the views of Bernasconi and Gates as well as a host of others, an idealist, yet anti-racist, defense of Hegel in a monograph tentatively entitled "Africa and Hegelian Like-Mindedness: The Vanishing 'We' and 'We,' The Underdeveloped."

[9] For example, this view can be found in texts as varied in their ends as Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death*, *op. cit.*, p. 99; Charles Johnson's "The Education of Mingo," *op. cit.*, p. 5; and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

[10] Some representative texts would be John Blassingame's *The Slave Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), Eugene Genovese's *Roll Jordan Roll: The World The Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, Albert Raboteau's *Slave Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), Jacqueline Jones' *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), Angela Davis' *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), Sterling Stuckey's *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Mechal Sobel's *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in 18th Century Virginia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), Ira Berlin's *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) and *Generations of Captivity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[11] See the thought-provoking essay of Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti" in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 26 (2000), p. 844. See also the fascinating book of Sibylle Fisher, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 24-33. Buck-Morss argues for the plausibility that Hegel's inspiration for drafting the "Lordship & Servitude" section in the PhS may have been the San Domingo Revolution. Fisher accepts Buck-Morss' hypothesis but, in the end, takes Hegel's silence on that revolution's success as a contribution to a widespread European disavowal of that revolution itself.

[12] Orlando Patterson, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] For a very worthy assessment of this rule, see Kenley Dove, "Hegel's Phenomenological Method," *op. cit.*, p. 616.

[15] I speak here of "mode of self-consciousness," because Hegel virtually marks self-consciousness in general as desire. So it is important, I believe, to see that the difference between the self-consciousness described in (1) and in (2) is one between modes or cognitive modalities of self-consciousness rather than between kinds.

[16] Indeed there is a piece of evidence in the *PhS* to suggest that this section of chapter 4 has nothing to do with slavery whatsoever. In §187, Hegel states the following. "It is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not just being, not the **immediate** form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure **being-for-self**. *The individual who has not risked life may well be recognized as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness*." (My italics.) Although rarely cited, this statement points to the possibility that the dialectic of "lordship and servitude" is played out among **persons**. This would mean that the aforementioned dialectic neither needs the historical institution of slavery to be operative nor needs to be reflective of such an institution.

[17] Although I cannot address the matter here, Hegel's introduction of "reciprocal recognition" (*PhS*, §178-183) is that of a promissory note that shall be cashed out subsequent to, not within, the so-called "master-slave dialectic."

[18] Despite the excellence of the work, a good example is Terry Pinkard's *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Even some of Pippin's work is prone to this tendency.

[19] Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History-Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet from the Johannes Hofmeister edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 190.

[20] Cf. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Random House, 1987).

[21] Cf. C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Allison & Busby, 1980). James himself was a crackerjack Hegelian. See also note 11.

[22] Cf. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). See also Frank M. Kirkland, "Modernisms in Black" in *The Blackwell Companion to African-American Philosophy*, eds. T. Lott & J. Pittman, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), pp. 67-84. It should be noted, however, that Gilroy too falls victim to making the "master-slave dialectic" in chapter 4 of the *PhS* the *point d'appui* for his conception of "modernity in black."

[23] Many have long held and still hold that "Absolute Knowing" refers to a metaphysically or theologically based knowledge, proffering total, unconditional, and invariant truth about all reality. Such a metaphysical position has contributed to the view that Hegel is anachronistic. But there is ample evidence to provide a non-metaphysical view of "Absolute Knowing" relevant to the contemporary scene, if it is taken to be **our** or spirit's ongoing justification of **our** or spirit's **conceptual** obligations to and within experience. Hegel refers to absolute knowing in terms of "spirit knowing itself as spirit." This entails 3 things for him. First, the ongoing elimination of conceptual standards as independent of human knowledge, yet serving as grounds for such knowledge; second, the ongoing establishment of conceptual standards serving as grounds for knowledge, which are achieved as outcomes dependent on what **we** or spirit count as objective and desiderative in the deliverance of and responsiveness to reasons for knowledge; and third, the comprehension of (1) and (2) as elements in the manner in which conceptual standards as grounds for knowledge are formed and operative.

Celebrating Moravia At 100

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A Focus on (the) Character

Alberto Moravia (1907-1990) was one the great novelists of the 20th century. Born in Rome as Alberto Pincherle, Moravia's father was a Jewish architect and painter born in Venice; his mother was a Catholic from Ancona, on the Adriatic Sea. Stricken at age nine by bone tuberculosis, his school attendance was irregular and finally ended in 1920. His painful isolation during the early years had a definite impact on his psychological and artistic development. Convalescing for lengthy periods, he had tutors and read widely in Italian, French, German and English; his readings included Balzac, Proust, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Moliere, Rabelais, Defoe, Stendhal, Cervantes, Gogol and, among the Italians, Boccaccio, Machiavelli, Goldoni, Manzoni, Verga, and from the Roman classics, Apuleius and Petronius. On his centenary it is apt to remember Moravia among other novelists born in the 20th century before World War I (Steinbeck, Sartre, Canetti, Beckett, Durrell, Vittorini, Camus) and in his particular Italian context where he enjoyed the status of a prominent public intellectual. Moravia was too young to participate in the rage of modernism and the avant-garde, generally seen to end around 1930. His generation was born into a different sort of crisis, destined to experience two world wars, one in childhood and one in adulthood. It was the generation of the existentialists.

To return to the years of Moravia's formation is more difficult than one might expect. In 1907, Italy was stagnating in a prolonged post-Risorgimento crisis. This was the Giolittian period, when, north and south, rich and poor, remained divided sectors in a nation bound more by its enmities and resistances than higher values. Fierce rivalries divided the factions of the ruling Liberal party from each other, and all of them from the Catholic Church, which remained hostile to the government. Few Italians truly identified with the nation or saw it on a path to egalitarian democracy. These and other factors, including rampant poverty, mounting rebellions on the nationalist right, and the failed incursion into Libya, led Italy into World War I. The war in turn paved the way for the rise of Fascism, which seized power in 1922.

Moravia's first novel, *Gli indifferenti* (*The Time of Indifference*, 1929), was written in longhand with scant punctuation and published at his own expense. It is set in Rome, in a family of the

author's own upper bourgeois background. The book is structured like a tragedy that turns abruptly turns into tragi-comedy once the main character, the twentyish Michele, fails to load his pistol before attempting to kill the roguish Leo, a fiftyish ex-lover to his mother and current suitor of Michele's younger sister, Carla. The sordid treatment of the theme of erotic love, in combination with that of financial exploitation and avidity, is central to the novel. In it one sees the author's ability to create characters enmeshed in complex psychological relations and to expose their confused motivations. *Indifference* amounts to a scathing critique of bourgeois normality accomplished by a faithful adherence to analytical description of the most trivial and meaningless of daily events. Moravia had read much theatre and had chosen to emulate the Aristotelian unities in staging what amounts to a conventional story of lust and deceit. Behind the well-mannered appearances of the Ardengo family there is corruption and decay. The irony of this façade of a family in the stage of imminent breakdown, aided by the moral weakness and unconscious errors of its members, suggests the influences of Luigi Pirandello–Italy's consummate dramatist of the absurd–and Italo Svevo.

The seeming lack of moral virtues in Moravia's characters was addressed in 1953 by Giovanni Cecchetti: "Moravia's characters do not live their restlessnesses, their grim agendas, but they submit themselves supinely to them, they are lived by them. Imprisoned in the cage of instinct, they see its bars, but this very vision confirms them in the ineluctability of their destiny. They are disarmed and their awareness of it generates sadness in them. And sad they are, these men and women, incapable of joy and of smiles, bent over themselves to examine themselves, without every managing to see themselves."[1] Cecchetti's description establishes an important point about *some* of Moravia's characters, but in retrospect they constitute a more varied and nuanced, and a more virtuous group than is suggested by this description.

There was in Moravia a sense of the *Zeitgeist*: by absorbing the spirit of the times and translating it into stories rich in irony and realism, he became in the words of Renato Poggioli (also born in 1907–"the most powerful writer of the rich generation of contemporary Italian novelists." Poggioli adds the following *aperçu*: "Moravia's attitude is that of a man who is both a cynic and a moralist: his realism is ironic and lucid, and produces always the impression that reality is stranger than fiction. His characterizations and plots aim at showing what one could call the 'pre-established disharmony' of this world, the absurdity of life and the foolishness of man."[2]

Moravia's insistence on the character, and on the disorder of the world as it emerges through the character's crisis of will, is unique among the Italian novelists of his day. He was writing realistic novels a decade before the birth of neorealism and doing so without any deference to the *verismo* of Verga or the "art prose" and aestheticism of D'Annunzio. As Moravia addressed reality–in particular urban, middle class reality–he probed more deeply into the psychological interiority of his characters than the naturalistic adherence to external reality would have allowed. Among recent authors, the only Italians one can cite as sources are Svevo and Pirandello, the former for his careful attention to the emotional life of his protagonists, and the latter for his irony and humor, and his tragi-comic view of life. Either of these masters practiced a form of the essay-novel; in contrast to these cosmopolitan and content-based novels

of ideas, poet Gabriele D'Annunzio was writing novels that cultivated the language of the Italian lyric transposed into the ambience of the bourgeois drawing room. In his novel *Il piacere* (*Pleasure*, 1889), an aestheticist hero is enveloped in the world of the senses, specifically the extravagant and hedonistic world of the Roman baroque. Here it is useful to consider, in contrast, Moravia's own view of Rome, his home city, and the life of its upper classes.

Whether in the Rome or Stendhal or that of Moravia's youth, "[Roman] society was composed of foreigners, nobility, a tradition-bound populace, and a restricted middle class of traders and middle-men."[3] All this was destined to change, first under the fascists and then under the Christian Democrats after World War II. And yet, "the class psychology has undergone very few changes"; there was still in 1956 an idle and corrupt nobility and a prevailing "indifference" or "lack of participation" which resulted in "the all-embracing unreality of life in Rome" (*ME* 161). Rome, only the national capital since 1871, preserved the same indifference and lassitude among its entrenched nobility and the bourgeoisie as was observed by Stendhal in 1827; meanwhile, among the working class Rome possessed the qualities and cuisine of a rural sheepherding town. The first major physical change in the face of Rome was the destruction by the fascists of poor neighborhoods in the historical center near the monuments and ruins of antiquity, and the construction of tenement housing in the slums of the periphery.

In the year in which *Indifference* was published, 1929, Mussolini and Pope Pius XI signed Lateran Pacts, putting an end to fifty years of non-communication between the Catholic Church and the Italian state; in the same year, Moravia's cousins, the socialist liberals Nello and Carlo Rosselli founded the anti-fascist organization *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Freedom). The Stock Market crashed and led to the Great Depression, as pessimism swept through America and Europe. The Rossellis were eventually tracked down by fascist hitmen in France in June, 1937, and assassinated; Moravia's family residence was searched by authorities. In the period 1935-1939 Moravia traveled to the United States and Mexico, China and Greece. In 1939, a year after the Italian Race Laws went into effect, Moravia's works appeared on the Ministry of Public Culture's list of works by Jewish authors. His 1941 novel *La mascherata* (*The Fancy Dress Party*), a satire of a military dictator in Central America, was confiscated by the regime. He now assumed a pseudonym for his journalistic work. Having long been spied on by the regime, in 1943 Moravia escaped from Rome before being arrested; he and his wife Elsa Morante resided in southern Latium until the Nazi-Fascists were driven out of Rome in 1944.

Man as an End

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO DISCUSS MORAVIA'S IMPORTANCE today, I thought immediately of the seminal book of essays *L'uomo come fine e altri saggi* (*Man as an End*, 1965), written between 1941 and 1964. The book serves as a hinge between the early and late career and is the ideal *vademecum* for a study of the author's ideas. The combined literary and moral focus of Moravia's critical prose distinguishes it from the specialized and technical essays of academics, as it does from the topical essays of literary journalists. The central thesis of *Man as an End* is that contemporary culture has lost its moral compass, that humanity has become a

means but not an end. Moravia's goal is to depict the erosion of human dignity in a mass culture dominated by authoritarian ideologies on the one hand and consumerist neocapitalism on the other.

After World War II, the so-called communist aesthetic, as in socialist realism, was seriously considered by Western intellectuals; thus a perspicuous opposition to such conformism in art was called for. Moravia pointed to the irony of communism's adoption of a classicist style: "But communism is not satisfied with imposing a specific ideological content, it also wants a specific style" (*ME* 127). He argued convincingly that the support by Western intellectuals of the notion of art as superstructure was misguided and destructive of the larger humanistic goal. Moravia was not averse to Marx's analysis of society and the need for a redistribution of wealth. But he saw the heavily conceptual apparatus of Marxist ideology as deterministic and self-defeating in the artistic and literary realm, where it was manifest in Zdhanovism. A supporter of the importance of ideology in the political life, Moravia did not support ideological regimes that imposed their will on the imaginary and artistic endeavor. Harking back to the Renaissance, he defended the autonomy of art: language is only a means, while art is an end. By the same token, neocapitalism's dominance in the West had created abstract and decadent art, which was ironically similar to socialist art: "They both withdraw from reality whose real needs are study, patience, humility, sincerity, sense of truth, and disinterestedness" (*ME* 127).

The earliest essays of *Man as an End* are literary in nature and are unprecedented in Italy as synthetic studies of the novel form by a novelist. In "The Man and the Character" (1941) Moravia states that the ethical force of the novel depends for its success on the character: "The character is not the fruit of a more or less minute and precise observation, but the form taken by moral judgment" (*ME* 67). Moravia defines the genre of the novel during the 19th century *as* character, but sees that definition currently "threatened with complete elimination" (*ME* 67). The fault lies with naturalism, which caused the whole process of portraying objective reality or "truth" in the novel to become mechanical and lifeless; it is the merit of Dostoevsky and Proust to have rejected the naturalistic conception, replacing it with "a kind of character who was avowedly lyrical and autobiographical" (*ME* 69).

In "Notes on the Novel," Moravia calls Dostoevsky as the "father of the ideological novel": "not only is his ideology ambiguous and contradictory but his relationship with his ideology is ambiguous and contradictory too"; this gives the Russian's novels a "hypothetical character" much to Moravia's liking (*ME* 170-71). What Moravia uses as a criterion for successful fiction is whether the reader is able to adapt the story to his or her life; if so, the metaphors at work are successful; if not the work falls flat, being "abstract and conceptual": "Hence it is up to the novelist to dig his own ideology out of themes underlying his own experience and not from cultural and religious traditions. From History in fact, and not history already past" (*ME* 173). Thus the weakness of historical novels, such as Manzoni's *Promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*), is due to their attempt to recreate a history already past; because of its lack of ambiguity, *The Betrothed* "is constantly in danger of being judged as a work of propaganda rather than of metaphor" (*ME* 173). In contrast, there is praise for the "metaphorical novels" of Stendhal, such as *The Red and the Black* for their ability to capture History in the now, in the making of

it, laden with emotion and nostalgia.

Moravia rejected "traditional humanism" as an anachronistic set of linguistic and moralistic conventions employed as ends in themselves by the clerical and intellectual classes. The humanism he proposed rejected this "anti-humanism" as having contributed to the fetishization of art and the dedication to action at all costs (and thus the avoidance of contemplation). Moravia's solution is simple: "If man wants to rediscover an idea of man and break out of the slavery into which he has fallen, he must be aware of his being as man and, to attain this awareness, he must abandon action for contemplation once and for all" (*ME* 59).

In one of the longer essays of *Man as an End*, "Boccaccio," Moravia demonstrates how the author of the *Decameron* handled this problem of action and contemplation in order to arrive at a own genuine humanism. Moravia stresses the key role of action in that author, as opposed to the psychological dimension of interiority or character description. Boccaccio's "indifference to the ethical factor" allows for the rich presence of deceit and sadism as themes in the *Decameron*. Regarded as "a contemplative writer in love with action" (*ME* 145), Boccaccio's expansiveness in time and space was undertaken in pursuit of this passion. In addition he possessed a very modern appreciation of chance events: "chance and mischance are beautiful alike, to be caressed and wondered at with feelings of lascivious desire. All ends up in beauty" (*ME* 152); "Chance, that deceptive and enigmatic goddess, puts the more lovable and younger human faculties to the test first and foremost" (*ME* 154-55). These factors along with Boccaccio's "longing for invisibility" (*ME* 143) are reminiscent of Moravia's own fiction; in either case there is a contemplative author who shows no sign of empathy or identification towards the character. The point I would make is that Moravia has drawn an arc backward from his day to the origins of Italian literature, basing his realism on observation of the complexity of the human psyche and not on the sorts of mythic-lyric-political forms of empathy practiced by the neo-realists, who tended to heroize peasants and workers for the sake of ideological positions.

The Italian Conversation

IN THE EARLY NOVELLAS, SUCH AS "The Tired Courtesan," "The Imbroglio" and "The Wayward Wife," Moravia portrayed a series of adolescent protagonists whose passivity and lack of confidence are recognized and exploited—emotionally and financially–by savvier counterparts, leaving them in a worse crisis than before. Much of this vulnerability and naïveté, and fear of unscrupulous manipulation, flowed out of Moravia's own experience. He was a secular writer who exposed the moral shortcomings of largely middle-class protagonists whose emotional lives and material livelihoods seemed to be in a precarious balance when not pitched against one another. As he matured, Moravia understood that the possibility of the novel in which an individual character develops felicitously in positive tension with the social institutions (as in Stendhal and Flaubert) was gone; but he also realized that the aesthetic experimentation of the modernists, whose novels focused on the destructive impact of social history on the development of the youth—who became "homeless, narcissistic, regressive"—was no longer a viable option.[4] A confirmed realist, Moravia applied himself to the treatment of

love and sexuality as viewed through the prism of social class and the facts of material existence, including the institutions: of marriage, family, church, job and state.

The harshly negative assessment of the psycho-sexual problematic grew more nuanced and hopeful in the three novels of social initiation written in the *dopoguerra*: *Agostino* (1945), *La romana* (*The Woman of Rome*, 1947) and *La disubbidienza* (*Luca*, 1948). Here the characters are not defeated by society but given the opportunity to respond to the perils that confront them by employing their wits and cultivating their loves: Adriana, the young prostitute in *The Woman of Rome*; Agostino, the pre-adolescent whose uncanny discovery of sexuality and differences of social class is conditioned by his love for his mother; and Luca, the sickly and disobedient teenager who discovers love and then, fast on its heels, the death of the lover. These characters are remarkable because of Moravia's pitiless focus on their confrontations with adversity, and on their irrepressible instincts, of sexuality, love, personal power and matters of the spirit.

About *The Woman of Rome*, Poggioli wrote: "[Moravia] is a master of the socio-psychological portrait: he is at his best when drawing the figure of the upstart who is a social climber, of the outcast who conquers his or her place among the happy few'. Such is the case with the protagonist of his novel, *La Romana*, describing at the same time with detachment and gusto an Italian Molly Flanders, against the background of Twentieth Century Rome."[5] While critics have criticized Moravia's decision to have Adriana speak and reason in the standard Italian language rather than dialect, the author did not base his realism on such literalist assumptions; his drafting of a modern morality play endows his character with all the linguistic complexity necessary to communicate her psychological depth. Another criticism is that Adriana's character is somehow a stereotype of natural' female sexuality as found in Zola or Rousseau; but this ignores the problem of a first-person retrospective narration that reveals the paradoxes of Adriana's character, her experience of sadism during her search for love with her diverse clients, and her Christianity and the "chastity" attained in her relationship with Giacomo an anti-fascist political organizer in 1937– in their repeated lovemaking.

Moravia recognized the major importance of the sexual factor in art: by this he meant to accentuate the consciousness of sexuality, not the banality of the physical act. In the repertory of his fictional characters sexuality stands for the tension and miscommunication at the basis of many human relationships. If sexuality is a universal motivation in the psyche, so is the economic drive. Thus in Moravia's plots, money is an emblem of personal power and control, and stands alongside the figurations of sexual desire and deceit. Money, like sex, is not important in itself, but for what it represents psychologically and ethically. The obscure algebra that connects the erotic and economic impulses exists as a form of knowledge: only by dealing honestly with the baseness of sexuality in the sphere of human motivations does one allow for its opposite to loom on the horizon of human possibility.

Moravia brought the "Italian conversation" into the world of letters and vice versa, giving literary form to the elusive and intangible suchness of the day-to-day, the personal attractions and aversions, the mysterious instincts that condition one's moral and material life.

Introducing a 1961 compendium of realistic writers from the Italian regions over the centuries, Moravia asserted that realism is the same as humanism, and that both are forms of courage; the opposite of realism, therefore, is equivalent to cowardice.[6] As an example of such cowardice one need only look to the "fetishism" that arose in the 19th century and which pervades today's society. Rather than proposing man as an end, this society substituted such fetishes as power, money, efficiency, production, the nation, and race. Western culture lost its moral compass, allowing humanity to be a means not an end.

Moravia understood that the process of novel-writing had changed in the late 19th century, in the experiences of naturalism and symbolism, and then had changed more radically in the work of such modernists as Conrad, Rilke, Musil, Joyce, Mann, and Kafka—all named by Franco Moretti as having written critical "late *Bildungsromans*" in the period 1898-1914. Moretti's analysis of the rise and fall of the 'novel of formation' is pertinent to Moravia's own involvement in this sub-genre, beginning with the portrait of youth in *Indifference*. Among the modernist novelists named above, one thinks especially of Joyce, whose *Ulysses* had provided Moravia with a concrete example of how to observe and record the simple events that occur in the course of a day. One also thinks of Proust, from whom Moravia absorbed the lesson of the 'novel of memory' based on the minute analysis of events, but seen through the lens of the past. Moravia's preoccupation with realism carried him, paradoxically, into a period of metafiction. By his own estimation, by the mid-1950s reality in the novel was only to be found in the relation of the writer and himself. In the novels *Il disprezzo* (*Contempt*, 1954), *La noia* (*The Empty Canvas*, 1960), and *L'attenzione* (*The Lie*, 1965), the creative problem of the artist and writer results in a new kind of realism in which invasive ideologies must be confronted and overcome. Behind the struggles of these three male protagonists one can see Moravia's own defense of language and the word within a literary culture that he found to be lacking in disinterestedness and objectivity. In short, the problems of alienation denounced in *Man as an End* continued to be addressed in fiction through the problem of narration itself.

It was against this widespread alienation or *male di vivere* (evil of living) that poet and Nobel Prize winner Eugenio Montale (1896–1981) had also asserted himself, through negativity, as a force of resistance. The humanism of Montale was found in his responses to contingencies that paradoxically arose to illuminate his life and relationships. Moravia too sets out from a radical negativity, but in the domain of prose. This much he has in common with Montale: a stoical and metaphysical curiosity about the nature of existence and the dark conviction that, while only love can repair the brokenness of the world, in actuality this love is more often negated than fulfilled. The redemptive image of love is refined by Moravia in a number of works, but, notably in *The Woman of Rome* and then *La ciociara* (*Two Women*, 1955). Here he focuses on the idea that love for the other is attained only once the subject (or protagonist) exercises self-love. In these two novels the epiphanies occur amidst an authoritarian regime with its personal violence and cruelty, and during wartime with slaughter and rape. The fundamental reality that one can gather from the examples of Adriana and Mino in *The Woman of Rome*, and from Cesira, Rosetta and Michele in *Two Women* is that human beings suffer and that all humans stand as equal in this regard before death.

(Re)reading Moravia Today

IF ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF GREAT LITERATURE is that its value grows over time, it is also true that the culture industry has a way of consuming the past in order to reduce its most genuine icons to the data of an information society. The bending of time or its acceleration in the post-Cold War era, seems to present cultural historians today with an almost arbitrary view of literary history, detached from national traditions or identities, not grounded in geography or dialect, unrelated to the truth, save the post-modern truth' that the foundations of knowledge of been eclipsed. Such a world is alien to a concrete thinker and realist such as Moravia, who enjoyed for decades the reputation of being a balanced and authoritative commentator on Italian culture. To grasp Moravia's humanism today requires that one adopt, in Kenneth Burke's terms, a "perspective by incongruity": one must look across the arc between two different eras. Yet that is precisely what Moravia did in his essays and fiction (as seen in the cited example of Boccaccio); by excavating history as experienced, laden with nostalgia, pathos and equivocation, he provided a model for the modern Italian novel. In our current reality' of globalization and the theatricalization of the day-to-day, it is perhaps suitable to undertake a rereading of the Moravian *oeuvre*.

Ever faithful to himself and to the society that knew him, Moravia was a cultural ambassador, an outspoken opponent of nuclear arms and Italy's first representative to the European Parliament. Heagonized over the tendency of mass society to avoid the ambiguities and moral complexities of great literature. He was infinitely curious about other cultures and literatures, and traveled extensively throughout his life. He wrote a weekly column on cinema for the *Espresso* for many years and wrote hundreds of pieces of travel *reportage*, especially from Asia and Africa. When I heard him speak in 1980 at U. C. Berkeley, he came into the room with the desire to learn about this place and these people. One was quickly engaged by his modesty, aplomb and wit, his frankness and understatedness, his tendency to make a few simple points, to elaborate on them, and then to shrug his head back to weigh the silence with his audience. Moravia entered into a conversation with his audience, trusting in the linear development of his topic, without ornament or flourish, but also trusting in the synthetic force of his thought, founded as it was on a strong ethical sense; as he wrote, "No human activity can be independent of ethics" (*ME* 15). Entering into this American lecture hall, Moravia appeared as intrigued and cautious to encounter our American academic "tribe" as he might have been on a visit to a remote village in Africa. The probing intelligence, and the humility, as he confronted the cultural divide, were part of his humanism, and were predicated, it seemed, on his painful awareness of human frailty.

In the title essay of *Man as an End*, Moravia wrote: "Christianity made suffering the corner-stone of its whole moral and religious system. By accepting on behalf of all men to expiate man's sins on the cross that is, by accepting to suffer for the whole of mankind Christ purified, unloaded and freed men from sin" (*ME* 50). This Christianity has been lost, says Moravia, and, though more suffering has been seen in the 20th century than ever before, man has become a means and not an end, and suffering has lost its purifying flame. In our present day of media saturation and quasi-theocracy, is not the Moravian problematic of missing love, of man as a

means instead of an end, of estrangement and alienation, still upon us?

Notes

1 G. Cecchetti, “Alberto Moravia,” *Italica* 30, 3 (1953): [153-167]155.

2 R. Poggioli, “Italian Literary Chronicles, III: Some 1948 Books,” *Italica* 25, 4 (1948): 322.

3 A. Moravia, *Man as an End* [henceforward abbreviated as *ME*], trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965), 156.

4 F. Moretti, *The Way of the World*. *The* Bildungsroman *in European Culture* , trans. Albert Sbragia (London: Verso, 1987 [2000]), 232.

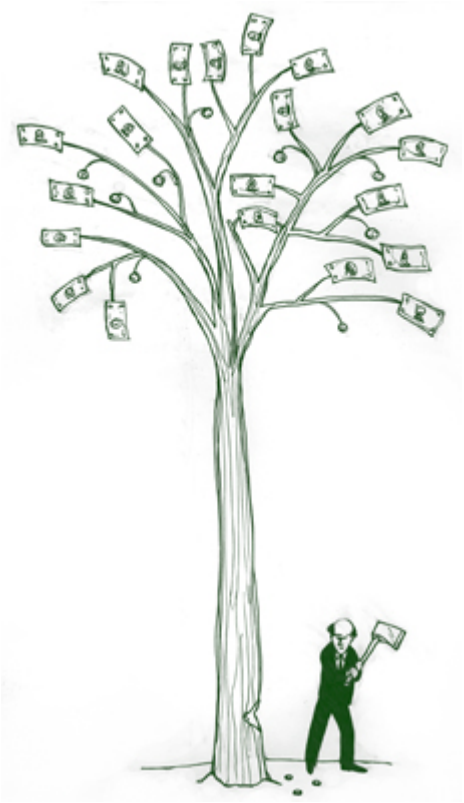
5 R. Poggioli, “Italian Literary Chronicles, III: Some 1948 Books,” *Italica* 25, 4 (1948): 322.

6 P. P. Pasolini, *Scrittori della realtà dall’VIII al XIX secolo* (Milano Garzanti, 1961).

In Defense of The Destruction of Reason

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

Twenty years ago for the 1985 Lukács centenary I wrote an article in defense of *The Destruction of Reason*. [1] The title suggested that Lukacs' book had been taken so badly that anyone finding anything positive in it was necessarily on the defensive.



This year is the fiftieth anniversary of its publication. The conditions, or even the possibility of interpreting the once influential and seminal work has changed again significantly since the eighties. Today the question is not if any of its arguments are feasible, but if it is still readable at all.

It is unnecessary to touch on its causes. It is sufficient to mention that the social political epoch Lukacs (despite his originality and stand-off position) had a decisive role creating, expressing and legitimizing is now over. While in the middle of the eighties conferences were organized commemorating the centenary of Lukacs' birth, today his oeuvre, and especially *The Destruction of Reason,* at least in Hungary, has hardly any readers. I consider this a loss. Both as the mirror of his age with its positive and negative lessons, and for the sake of its original values it would be worth preserving Lukacs' heritage as living part of our culture. Paraphrasing the title of Benedetto Croce's famous book on Hegel, it would be time now to weigh what is living' and what is dead' in Lukacs' philosophy.

Here I can not propose view-points, letting alone a general framework of the systematic account for Lukacs' heritage. I only suggest that some of Lukacs' analyses in *The Destruction of Reason* are deeper and more complicated than one would assume in the light of his otherwise usually partisan and summary judgments.

In the article from 1985 I distinguished the 'external' and 'internal' defenses of *The Destruction of Reason*. 'External' defense meant taking into account the circumstances of its writing – the then fresh memories of fascism and World War II, and the political conditions of the early fifties. 'Internal' defense meant the positive assessment of the book's substantive thoughts and analyses; i.e. trying to prove that though the argumentation is often undoubtedly biased, there are certain analyses and claims that are valid not only within the context of those times.

Today I am not sure if this distinction is the appropriate one, and most probably Lukacs himself would not find it apt either. However, I would not say that only some parts, 'certain analyses and claims' are valid, and the overall train of thought is completely mistaken.

It is inevitable, though, that we have to search for the 'living' elements of Lukacs' philosophy mostly on the level of details and concrete analyses. His general theory about the history of philosophy, and his theoretical framework should rather be labeled as the 'dead' part of his heritage. The same applies to his interpretation of the history of "bourgeois" philosophy after Schelling. He tells a logically necessary, inversely teleological story of decline where all the successive elements seem to tend towards fascism. Irrationalism gaining strength generation by generation supersede reason and the values of rationalism.[2] Fascist ideology appears to be the direct consequence of the development (or rather, the decline) of bourgeois philosophy.

This assumption is not only theoretically problematic, but also empirically unfeasible, since there is no factual justification for the supposedly overall and general irrationalism of modern philosophy. Lukacs left out of consideration those important 20th century philosophers, who, like himself, were also ardent critics of irrationalism. He ignored that schools like the Vienna circle and the analytical philosophers were trying to apply the rational norms of modern science, technology and democracy in philosophy. And let us not forget that Lukacs, in the spirit of the logics of 'either-or', contrasted the irrationalism of bourgeois philosophy with soviet ideology, which he conceived as the only true trustee of the values of rationalism and rationality.

Nevertheless, it can not be claimed unequivocally that whatever is enduring in Lukacs' work belongs to certain minor details, while his general philosophical conception is completely outdated. As for *The Destruction of Reason* it is indisputable (and is echoed by many thinkers and writers from various intellectual traditions), that irrationalist philosophical currents had an important role to play in the emergence of fascism. The in-dept and detailed analysis of this role was and still is an important *philosophical* task. Even if there is no direct causal relation between fascism and the irrationalist tendencies starting from Schelling and Schopenhauer, even if it is nonsensical to blame Nietzsche for the barbarous nazi ideals, it is beyond question that nazism grew out of a culture saturated with irrationalism. This relationship, as all the explainable relationships in history, can only be determined retrospectively – as such a relationship in reality is established retrospectively only. As Susan Sontag puts it: "much of nineteenth-century German culture is, retroactively, haunted by Hitler."[3] Actually, Lukacs also often depicts irrationalism as part of the prelude to fascism – a *prerequisite*, but not its

exclusive *cause*. His main thesis is that the influence irrationalism previously had in German culture (both high and mass) was conducive to the gaining ground of fascism. The thesis can be generalized: if high and mass cultures are soaked by irrationalist ideals, fascist-type movements have a broader latitude, and the possibility of a fascist type seizure of power is higher. In this general form the thesis is feasible if we add that on the level of such an abstract historical generalization it makes more sense to speak about totalitarianism, or even totalitarianisms (in the plural) instead of fascism.

From the relationship outlined above it follows, that attacks on reason – *bone fide* and *mala fide* alike -, are dangerous. As Lukacs puts it, it is the duty of the philosophers "to supervise the existence and evolution of reason" [4] This is true, indeed. Actually, what Lukacs teaches us here is a pretty banal truth.

The antagonism of rationalism and irrationalism in the first half of the 20th century was the main watershed of different philosophical schools. As Popper stated, "the conflict between rationalism and irrationalism has become the most important intellectual, and perhaps even moral, issue of our time".[5] In the half century since the appearance of *The Destruction of Reason* debates about the demarcation and delineation of rationalism and irrationalism, or rationality and irrationality has remained central in ethics, philosophy of science, philosophical psychology, rational choice and action theory, political philosophy and other philosophical disciplines. The problem is a complicated one, and there might not be an answer at all. And difficulties occur particularly in relation to irrationality, and not rationality. For it is easy to trace the presence of some element of rationality in any intentional act, but, paradoxically, the possibility of irrationality requires further explanation. According to Donald Davidson, the real problem is "how can we explain, or even tolerate as possible, irrational thoughts, actions, or emotions?"[6] In this respect we should speak about the paradox of irrationality. [7]

If the existence of irrational acts and thoughts is paradoxical, then even more paradoxical is the philosophy denying the basic rational characteristics of human thinking, and claiming that the main forces of human life are irrational. That is to say, irrationalism is a paradoxical doctrine. This, leaving aside all the political and ideological motives, confirms in itself Lukacs' attack on irrationality.

But what is exactly the target of Lukacs' attack? What does he consider the main traits of irrationalism? Unfortunately, in contrast to Popper, he has no brief and general definition neither of rationalism, nor of irrationalism. Popper's study on the history and political impacts of irrationalism is the obvious starting point of comparison, even if the two thinkers are on different political and ideological sides.

For a brief comparison it is worth remembering that irrationalism, writes Popper, is a doctrine about human nature, according to which "emotions and passions rather than reason are the mainsprings of human action." [8] Its other characteristics are traditionalism, tribalism and, primarily, historicism. Popper does not attempt to give a causal explanation of such a theory, since he is convinced that an explanation would only support irrationalism, for suggesting that

thoughts may depend on circumstances external to the logical structure of arguments (like emotions, historical and social structures) in itself leads to irrationalism.

Because of his objectives, Lukacs analyzes irrationalism in relation to social problems, more specifically, in relation to historical changes. He considers it a modern phenomenon that occur only within the horizon of advanced capitalism. The obvious objection that irrationalistic' trends did occur in earlier periods in the history of philosophy can be refuted by arguing in the Lukacsian spirit that those tendencies were only precursors to *real* irrationalisms. Their difference can only be grasped in causal social terms, that is, by referring to the social problems in the background of the earlier forms of irrationalistic thinking and the full-fledged modern irrationalism. The latter is the product of a new era of social crisis. This new kind of crisis is different from earlier forms of social crises in the sense that it is not accompanied neither by the break-up of the civilizational foundations of society, nor the decline of technology and science. These disintegrations were experienced in early Medieval times. But it might not be accurate to speak about a new period of crisis. It is the whole pattern of social development that changed substantially, and became more and more controversial and contradictory. Technical, scientific and social development involves the deterioration of values, increased exploitation and inhumanity. Increasing rationality on the level of partial subsystems brings along the irrationality of the system as as a whole. The development of capitalism projects the end of capitalism: the progress that creates the existential foundation of bourgeoisie leads to its fall as a class. In this analysis, of course, it is easy to recognize Marx's and Engel's teaching on the nature and role of capitalism in the historical process.

Lukacs' explanation, stemming from the Marxist analysis of capitalism, introduces new conceptual tools. The first is the notion of pessimism. The crisis of progress, and the feeling of this crisis leads to pessimism. This pessimism is deepened further by the anxiety of the bourgeoisie over its desperate historical fate. In this light irrationalist philosophy expresses that faith in progress and future is shaken among the intelligentsia articulating the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The other conceptual tool is the notion of the opacity or non-transparency and "objective irrationality" of society as a whole, which is in contrast with the rationality of subsystems of production, social organization and the now indispensable scientific research. This ambiguity of historical progress and society as a whole seems to confirm that our lives and history are shaped by enigmatic and inaccessible blind forces. In this line of reasoning, the rationality of the subsystems strengthens irrationalism because it proves that rationalization of life leads to new and previously inexperienced problems reason has no power to tackle.

A third conceptual tool arise from the imperilment of the interest of bourgeoisie. Since the logic of capitalism jeopardizes the future of bourgeoisie, it is in the interest of this bourgeoisie to conceal this process and characterize the overall historical process as irrational.

These deductions are causal. They are causal not in the conventional sense that causality is a relation between events, but in the more general sense that complex structures are caused and

can be explained by other complex structures. In our case a causal relationship can be discovered between capitalism as a global system and irrationalist philosophy as the expression of bourgeois worldview. In the language of Lukacs' earlier philosophy, it is to say that the explanation for the emergence and dissemination of irrationalism is that it expresses the "imputed" or "possible" consciousness ("zugerechtnetes Bewusstsenin") of bourgeoisie. This is of course the terminology of *History and Class Consciousness*. Its utilizability suggests that there is a continuity between the explanatory patterns of *The Destruction of Reason* and *History and Class Consciousness.*

I deem Lukacs' above recapitulated explanation of irrationalism as plausible, both in historical and substantive respect, for the periods taken into consideration, at least to the point that irrationalism is in fact the causal result of the crisis culminating in the World War One, Bolshevik revolution and fascism. In this regard, Lukacs' analysis of irrationalism, to say the least, is on a par with any other possible explanation of irrationalism.

From a *formal* point of view this explanation follows the very pattern that we generally use when accounting for irrational beliefs. The explanation of irrational beliefs, thoughts and acts are typically causal, but nothing more. We should here keep in mind the distinction of believing something on the basis of certain *reasons* (i.e. because of the consistency of our beliefs with other confirmed knowledge), and believing something on the basis of certain *causes* (i.e. because our beliefs are determined by factors, such as feelings and passions and the like that are outside the realm of thinking, consideration and reflection. More precisely, there is a difference in the *cause* of beliefs – it can either be a *reason,* or a *cause*, which is external to the content of the belief held. Typical examples for the latter are self-deception and wishful thinking, which phenomena are widely examined by psychoanalysts and rational choice theorists. This distinction solves the paradox of irrationality by elucidating how irrationality is possible.

The thesis above can be put like this: there are two ways of analyzing rational beliefs. We can examine their *rationale*, that is their epistemolgical grounds or *reason,* and their genesis or *cause*, seeking thereby a *causal explanation* for them. Whatever the basis of a rational belief (even the belief in *ratio*) is, we can argue for it, we can give reasons for it. We are rational if we accept a belief on the basis of rational arguments, namely because of recognizing reasons that justify them. In case of irrational beliefs these two distinct modes of analysis are not possible.

Lukacs' reference to interests, specifically to the *class interests* of bourgeoisie has the same pattern as the explanations of self-deceit and wishful thinking. Interests (interests in general and class interest in the Marxist terminology alike) can explain irrational beliefs, held individually and collectively alike.

If irrationalism is causally determined by societal structure, class interest or other supra-rational factors, it is in itself irrational to believe in irrationalism. This banal but important conclusion saves us from a fallacy. From the assumption that to explain mental phenomena is to *rationalize* them, we might wrongly infer (as suggested often by psychoanalytical

explanations) that mental phenomena, which are objects of the explanation, are rational only because they have explanation (because they are rationalized). The espousal of irrational beliefs might be in our interest, but this does not render these beliefs rational. Generally, their causal deductibility from the state of the factual world never renders them rational.

Lukacs tries to give a summary characterization of irrationalism by pin-pointing the crucial "decisive hallmarks" many times. It is worth quote the following: "Its [irrationalism's] history therefore hinges on the development of science and philosophy, and it reacts to the new questions they pose by designating the mere problem as an answer and declaring the allegedly fundamental insolubility of the problem to be a higher form of comprehension. This styling of the declared insolubility as an answer, along with the claim that this evasion and side-stepping of the answer, this flight from it, contains a positive solution and □true' achievement of reality is irrationalism's decisive hallmark.".[9] Lukacs here (and elsewhere too) attempts to give a historical, but not a substantive description, though here he tries to approach the phenomenon not from the basis of social circumstances, but from the history of thinking. Let me emphasize two points. First, irrationalism, as defined above, hinges on the progress of science and philosophy – it is a reaction to the questions and problems brought up and left unresolved by science and philosophy. As Lukacs puts it, "Irrationalism is merely a form of reaction (reaction in the double sense of the secondary and the retrograde) to the dialectical development of human thought".[10] Second, I would stress that irrationalism for Lukacs is "evasion".

From the two points it is the moment of "evasion" which explains irrationalism substantively. It states that irrationalist philosophers refuse to answer the real problems, and from the very existence of these problems they infer that there is and there can not be a rational answer for them. This Lukacs considers the "decisive hallmark" from which he deduces further constitutive elements of irrationalism – intuitionalism, aristocratism, agnosticism and historicism. The latter he conceives a "decadent bourgeois theory which automatically interpreted the historical as □singular', unique' and contradicting the concept of law, thus irrational by nature to a certain extent".[11] He, in contrast to Popper, does not distinguish naturalist and antinaturialist versions of historicism. This implies that he primarily considers irrationalist those who, by opposing nature and history, deny that in history there are either natural or specifically historical laws.

Neither Popper, nor Lukacs was right to assume that any kind of historicism is necessarily irrationalist. But as for the history of philosophy, Lukacs rightly supposed that 19th and early 20th century "antinaturalist" historicism was more prone to irrationalism, and that irrationalism is usually related to those theories that reject causal explanations in history, and instead propose empathy and identification with agents as the method of historical understanding.

While the concept of "evasion" in the definition above is the concentrate of the substantive traits of irrationalism, the moment of "reaction" brings us back to the realm of causal explanations and, strangely enough, implies that irrationalism does not have its own history. And, indeed, this is how Lukacs consistently argues. He actually embraces a stronger version

denying not only that irrationalism has its own history, but that irrationalism as such can have history at all – "irrationalism cannot possibly have a unified, coherent history like, for instance, materialism or dialectics."[12] This is absolutely in-line with his attempt to originate the per definitionem modern phenomenon of irrationalism from Schelling's philosophy.

From a purely historical standpoint this is the main difference between Popper's and Lukacs' approach to the problem of irrationalism. As argued in *Open Society and Its Enemies*, irrationalism does have a "coherent and unified" history linking Plato to Freud through Marx. The history of irrationalism he views as "the perennial revolt against freedom and reason." [13] Accordingly, irrationalism is a perennial option for human thinking. Contrary to this, Lukacs says that "the general employment of this term […] could rise to the false impression of a uniformly irrationalist line in the history of philosophy, such as modern irrationalism has actually tried to give",[14] and argues that "a uniform term would easily blur the specific differences, and would modernize in an unacceptable way old intellectual tendencies that have little in common with those of the nineteenth century".[15]

The reference to "modernization", that is actualization as the obvious sign of "ahistoricity", seems as if it was addressed directly to Popper. We can easily imagine a debate between Popper and Lukacs. Though Lukacs (and Marxist historiographers in general) can be condemned as Popper for commetting the fault of actualization, in the imagined debate about the history of irrationalism (whether it is perennial or a specifically modern phenomenon) Lukacs is right. The timeless and perennial irrationalism construed by Popper can only be described by certain abstract characteristics, which makes it very hard to grasp its historical differences, and primarily the specificity of modern irrationalist attacks on rationalism. Although, we know, the same historical situation inspired both *Open Society and Its Enemies* and *The Destruction of Reason.*

In the history of philosophy there are recurrent efforts to superimpose publicly available knowledge with a mystical knowledge (e.g. revelation, mystical experience, initiation, intuition, etc.) that is inaccessible to argumentative reasoning and comprehensible only for few. The prevalence and recurrence of such efforts seems to confirm Popper's interpretation of irrationalism. But mysticism is not irrationalism, though irrationalism always has mystic elements. To put it another way, modern irrationalism can indeed be called mysticism. We can say that after the rise of scientific methods of cognition, it is irrational to adhere to mystical interpretations of knowledge. The survival of, and the irrational adherence to this sort of mysticism is explained by the frustrating experience that in modern society, and, evidently, in modern science too, all problems solved inherently involve new problems. Motives and proofs coincide here: the aggregation of problems might be not only the *cause* of irrationalism but also the *proof* of the assumption that mystical knowledge is superior to the rational scientific principles of knowledge and social order; or at least that problems of life and knowledge can not be solved by reason.

This returns us to Lukacs' thought that "the general form" of irrationalism is "evasion": evasion from the problems posed by scientific progress, or as he puts it elsewhere, "evading a decisive

philosophical proposition, bound up in methodology with a world-view".[16] In my exposition above I wanted to point out that irrationalist penchants can be explained by the notion of "evasion".

Lukacs considers even Pascal a forerunner of irrationalism, and applies the term "evasion" in relation with his views too: "while seeing the problems, he made an about-turn precisely where his great contemporaries went on in the direction of a dialectic or at least endeavored to go on".[17] In this characterization Pascal, "sees the problems", but turns away from the solution followed by many. Moreover, he foresees and predicts them: "Pascal, therefore, saw both de-humanizing effects of the capitalist boom – then still occurring in the forms of feudal absolutism – and the necessary and progressive methodological consequences of the new natural sciences which were destroying the preceding world-picture's anthropomorphism, and of the new philosophy they engendered".[18] "Evasion" here does not preclude but presuppose problem sensitivity. In Lukacs' portrayal big irrationalist thinkers do not evade problems. They do sense the answers too but evade accepting them because of their interest, social role and other reasons. Lukacs acknowledge even Nietzsche's problem sensitivity: "He had a special sixth sense, an anticipatory sensitivity to what the parasitical intelligentsia would need in the imperialist age, what would inwardly move and disturb it, and what kind of answer would most appease it".[19] Otherwise, it is problem sensitivity implied in "evasion" that makes sometimes irrationalist thinkers including Nietzsche so appealing for Lukacs. Though he often criticizes Nietzsche harshly, sometimes can not but admit his admiration too.

Thus the assumption that Lukacs takes a completely dim and negative view of irrationalism should slightly be modified. Conversely, it can also be stated that he does not find rationalism unproblematic. Many times he characterizes the relation of rationalism and irrationalism as if irrationalism was fostered by the weaknesses of rationalism. In other words, irrationalism is possible only thanks to the limitedness of every form of rationalism. And so, in general, every version of rationalism is limited, too, which construes the general model of rationality on the basis of certain criteria of rationality proper to concrete individual fields of thought and action. That limitedness of rationality can lead to irrationalism, and so foster irrationalist worldviews is illustrated by the above mentioned paradoxical relationship between the rationality of subsystems and the irrationality of the overall social structure.

We should keep in mind that Lukacs conceives the paradoxical relationship of rationalism and irrationalism, described above, as an antinomy related specifically to the bourgeois world, which can only be unveiled from the standpoint of the proletariat. The model of rationality available for bourgeois philosophy is purely technical and instrumental: it is the result of capitalist rationalization of economic and power relations on the one hand, and the scientific progress based on a one-sided model of natural sciences on the other. Rationalistic versions of "bourgeois philosophy" are stuck within the realms of analytical understanding. In Lukacs' analysis this is also "evasion": refusing to overcome the limited rationality of "perception governed by understanding" with the help of the richer, more versatile, more general rationality of dialectic reason. Lukacs, in his Hegelian language, "the central philosophical problem of irrationalism's entire later development, namely those questions with which

irrationalism has been always connected philosophically […] are the very questions resulting from the limitations and contradictions of thinking governed simply by understanding. If human thought detects in these limitations a problem to be solved and, as Hegel aptly states, the beginning and sign of rationality', i.e., of a higher knowledge, then the encounter with them can become the starting-point for the further development of thinking, for dialectics. Irrationalism, on the other hand […] stops at precisely this point, absolutizes the problem, hardens the limitations of perception governed by understanding into perceptional limitations as a whole, and indeed mysticizes into a supra-rational' answer the problem thus rendered artificially insoluble."[20]

Today it can not seriously be said that the weakness of rationalism, its stagnation on the level of "perception governed by understanding" stems from the structure of "bourgeois thinking" only, and that its limitedness can only be overcome with the help of proletarian worldview. Still, the relationship Lukacs laid down does exist. Moreover, it keeps reproducing in various disciplines, e.g. the philosophy of science. This is illustrated by the debates about the nature, possibility and feasibility of scientific rationality both in positivist and post-positivist philosophy of science. Its typical course was, and still is, that proposals for the reconstruction of scientific method sooner or later prove inadequate and raise the necessity of choosing between rationalist and irrationalist alternatives. Whether to describe such situations in Lukacs's Hegelian terminology, or in a postmodern language, is only a matter of taste.

The statement that rationalism is fostered by the weaknesses and limitations of irrationalism can be put into a simpler form by saying that irrationalism is the result of rationalism. This is not far from Popper's thesis, according to which the relationship of rationalism and irrationalism is asymmetric, since it is possible to argue rationally only for irrationalism but not for rationalism. Popper's train of thought starts from the definition that rationalism is the readiness to accept critical arguments. Resorting to rational claims in case of conflicts thus suppose the acceptance of an argumentative attitude that can not be argued for, and which is, in this regard, the result of an irrational decision. This leads to the paradox theorem that rationalism is a belief, i.e. the "irrational *faith in reason*." [21]

Therefore the distance between Lukacs' and Popper's position is not as big as it might seem. Lukacs would agree that rationalism is not opted for on the basis of rational deliberation, that is to say, there are no *reasons* for choosing rationalism. As one would expect, to the question why and on what bases rationalism (or irrationalism) is opted for he answers "that the choice between *ratio* and *irratio* is never an immanent' philosophical question. It is not chiefly intellectual or philosophical considerations which decide thinker's choice between the new and the old, but class situation and class allegiance."[22] So far we have seen that irrationalism is the result of arbitrary decision according to Popper, while for Lukacs it is the result of causal determination. The basis of rationalism is irrational for both of them, even if Lukacs would never admit this explicitly.

At some point I argued that it is itself irrational to believe in irrationalism. Conversely, we can add now, it is also true that accepting rationalism is rational. This, I must admit, is contrary to

Popper's and Lukacs' views alike. Against Popper's theory it implies that there are rational arguments for rationalism. In contrast to Lukacs' theory it involves that there are not only causal factors, but reasons (such as evidences and the requirement of logical consistency) that support accepting rationalism.

Years ago I tried to demonstrate that there are such reasons indeed. I then called this the foundation of rationalism.[23] The term "foundation" nowadays does not sound appropriate, for it suggests fundationalism (though "founding" a belief is nothing else than arguing for it, that is to say, proving its feasibility by rational argumentation) Below I sum up this thesis in a slightly modified form.

The following is to be proved. There are motives (evidences and true knowledge) such that if, in fact, we rely on them in committing ourselves to rationalism, then our choice is not irrational (neither in the sense of arbitrariness, nor in the sense of causal determination).

Such a motive may be the insight that rationality is grounded in history (moreover, in evolution) in the sense that rationalism is the product of history (and evolution). In this sense, opting for rationalism has the meaning of opting for man as a rational being shaped by history and evolution. Nevertheless, choosing irrationalism always remains an option. This means that we can deny human rationality, history and evolution.

Referring to history may trigger harsh criticism, since the statement about the irrationality of history is a blatant truism. But suggesting that history is irrational (or only a-rational as nature) is one thing, and suggesting that rationality is the result of history is another.

The former argument has nothing to do with the rationality or irrationality of history as such, for it does not presuppose the rationality of history, and does not tacitely exploit such a premise. On the other hand, it could easily be added that irrationalism manifesting itself in political power relations always proved to be, in accordance with the above definition of irrationalism, a radical denial of man as rational being. This is the core argument of *The Destruction of Reason*, though in its biased analyses the irrationalism of soviet totalitarianism is completely ignored. But neither the statement about what irrationalism is proved to be in the light of history is exploited in my argument, since facts and ascriptions of meaning are two different things.

In addition to historical aspects, there is another reason for choosing rationalism. It is enough to refer to the fact mentioned above: since every intentional act has a rational element it is rather the possibility of irrational acts and thoughts that are to be explained. The identification of the paradox of irrationalism in itself justifies opting for rationalism.

Just to be on the safe side let us stress again what must be supported by reasons is not rationality but choosing rationalism. Rationalism as a philosophical position is of course a matter of choice, but rationality is not. Let me quote Davidson again: "Rationality is a condition of having thoughts at all", therefore "agents can't *decide* whether or not to accept the fundamental attributes of rationality".[24] In this light we can reach the same conclusion the

previous argument lead to: irrationalism denies the rationality of man, and by this denies an elementary fact. Thus opting for irrationalism is irrational. In this regard, one can speak not only of the paradox of *irrationality*, but of *irrationalism*.

Lukacs' story in *The Destruction of Reason* tells the same. Lukacs considers choosing irrationality irrational and paradoxical. Such a choice, in contrast to rational choices, can not be explained by reasons, but only by causes, as Lukacs does.

Notes

[1] János Kelemen, "Az ész trónfosztása" védelmében. In: *Világosság*, 1986/3. 137-143.

[2] According to some critics Lukacs considers all kinds of idealism irrational. See e.g. H. A. Hodges, "Lukács on Irrationalists". In: G. H. R. Parkinson (Ed.), *Georg Lukács – The man, his Work and his Ideas.* Cox, Wyman, Fakenbahm, London, 1970. 87.

[3] Susan Sontag, *Syberberg's Hitler*. In: Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. 151. (Sontag remarks that nineteenth-century Russian culture is not Haunted by Stalin". Analyzing what this means and what not would take us far from our topic.)

[4] George Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*. London: The Merlin Press, 1980. 91.

[5] K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies.* Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, New York, Evanston 1962. II. 224.

[6] Donald Davidson, "Paradoxes of Irrationality". In: Donald Davidson, *Problems of Rationality.* Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004. 170.

[7] Op. Cit. 174. The source of the paradox is that there is no *entirely* rational act or thought. Moravia mentions this intuition: "L'azione è una cosa razionale di per sé: quando agisci, anche quando sbagli, vi credere di fare la cosa giusta. […] L'azione è consequenziale, razionale." Alberto Moravia – Alain Elkann, *Vita di Moravia.* Bompiani, Milano 1990. 103.

[8] K. R. Popper, Op. Cit. 233.

[9] George Lukács, Op. Cit. 104.

[10] Ibidem

[11] George Lukács, Op. Cit. 125.

[12] Ibidem

[13] This seems to be Popper's favorite expression, see e.g., *The Open Society and Its Enemies,* Vol. I., pp. VII.. (Preface to the first edition, 1943); Vol. II. 30.

[14] George Lukács, Op. Cit. 105.

[15] Ibidem

[16] George Lukács, Op. Cit. 104.

[17] George Lukács, Op. Cit. 115.

[18] Ibidem

[19] George Lukács, Op. Cit. 315.

[20] George Lukács: Op. Cit. 97-8.

[21] K. R. Popper, Op. Cit. 1962. II. 231.

[22] George Lukács, Op. Cit. 100.

[23] János Kelemen, “Historicism and Rationalism.” In: Hronszky-Fehér-Dayka (Eds): *Scientific Knowledge Socialized*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988. pp 347-365.

[24] Donald Davidson, *Incoherence and Irrationality*. In Donald Davidson, Op. Cit. 196.

Creative Genius Or Crazy Scientist? – Delusional Or Defamed? – Paranoid Or Persecuted?: A Biographical Essay Commemorating The Fiftieth Anniversary Of The Death Of Wilhelm Reich

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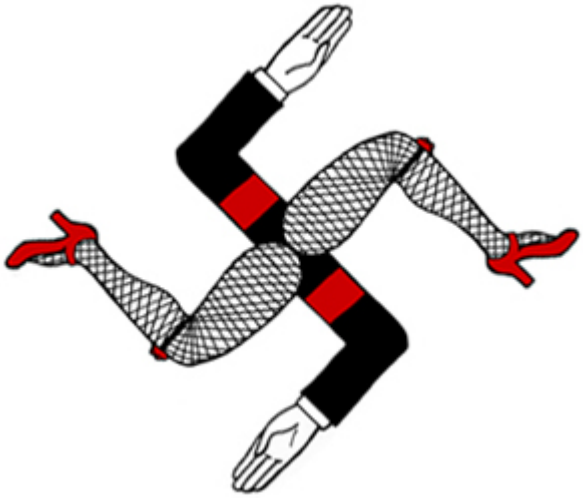

In a diary entry of December 1935 Wilhelm Reich described his state of internal exile as “a burden to heavy to bear” when, “for the sake of the cause one becomes increasingly alone and is no longer a human being among others”. At that time Reichfound himself not only in an internal but also an external exile: early in 1933 he barely escaped being jailed by the National-Socialists (Nazis). His route of escape led from Berlin over Vienna, Copenhagen and Malmö, to Oslo, and later to the United States. But he did not find a safe haven anywhere. Therefore he created for himself a world of his own, a world of unshakable convictions, which he defended in the same self-destructive fashion as Michael Kohlhaas before him.

Reich’s quest for justice had its counterpart in a starkly represented world-view: the oppressor vs. the oppressed, whom Reich was called to redeem, a passion stemming from his own suffering and identification with the disadvantaged and the humiliated of this world. This passion is evident in his later writings Ether, God and Devil (1949) and The Murder of Christ (1953). At the end he paid with his personal liberty and his life for this missionary zeal: in 1954 the Food and Drug Administration outlawed the sale of the so-called orgone-accumulators, with which Reich attempted to capture cosmic radiation to be used as treatment for the sick.

However, since he saw himself not as a medical quack but as a genuine scientist in the tradition of Galileo Galilei, he refused to face his accusers in a court of law. Found guilty of contempt of the law he was condemned to a two year jail term which he began to serve on March 11, 1957, days before his 60th birthday. He died of "heart failure" half a year later in the federal Lewisburg penitentiary in Pennsylvania. Or should one rather say: Wilhelm Reich died of a broken heart on November 3, 1957? Therefore his followers honor him to this day as a martyr who held on to his beliefs as truths in spite of defamation and persecution. And his foes? They continue to vilify him to this day: as having been inconsiderately egocentric, uncompromising, unpredictable, arrogant, narrow-minded and intolerant, as deserving to be labeled "crazy", his writings causing readers to feel "weird", as described in a German psychoanalytic journal even as late as the end of the 20th century century. Who would want to defend a man like this without himself or herself earning the reproach of being "narrow-minded and intolerant"? But one might ask: why should devotion to a man who was considered one of the leading psychoanalysts of his generation be cause for contempt, years after the man's demise? The answer is to be found in history, especially the history of psychoanalysis during the years of National- Socialist rule.

Wilhelm Reich was born on March 24 1897 in Dobzau as the first child of Leon Reich and his wife Cecilia née Roniger, both assimilated Jews. The town, formerly in Galicia, is now part of the Ukraine Republic. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Bukovina, to an estate near Jurinets, that belonged to Josef Blum, his mother's uncle, whose partner Reich's father became. Reich senior later bought another property. This was possible in Bukovina, the "most outlying outpost of German culture" (Reich), thanks to the so-called "Jewish charter" granted to Jews by the Hapsburg monarchy in 1789, the year the French General Assembly proclaimed the Rights of Man. The charter gave Jews the freedom to exercise the professions and to own land. Jurinets is close to the capital city of Cernowitz, also called Cerniowce, Chernivtsy, Cernauti, a multi-lingual town, a melting pot of faiths, languages, and cultures. Here lived Ruthenians, Poles, Moldavians, Russians, Rumanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Germans, Jews, Greeks, Turks, Roma and Armenians. Here prayed to their God Roman-Catholics, Greek-Orhodox and Russian-Ortodox Christians, as well as Jews and Moslems. Here an Armenian, a Pole, two Germans and two Jews held the office of mayor between 1864 and 1914. So how could one tell "Germans" from "Jews" in this place? Of course, anti-Semites found many excuses to defame and persecute Jews. Educated citizens found the difference more difficult to define. Thus we find Reich's father, inspired by a nostalgia for greater Germany, naming his son after a German Kaiser. As Wilhelm Reich remembered in later years: "My mother language was German from the outset and I was taught in German. My parents laid special stress that I should not speak the Yiddish of the surrounding Jewish population. […] On the other hand, Hebrew was the language of piety towards the old Jewish tradition based on a six-thousand-year-old history. The family regarded itself as Jewish aristocracy."

Reich's sister was born in 1898 and died shortly after. Two years later brother Robert was born with whom Wilhelm grew up, isolated from the neighborhood children. At first the strict father taught the son himself and readily beat him "for the smallest error" (Reich). Subsequently he was taught by private tutors. The mother had an affair with one of the tutors which the son

accidentally disclosed to his father. The “betrayal” unleashed a family tragedy: the mother made many suicide attempts and killed herself with poison in 1911. Three years later the father died of tuberculosis, shortly before losing all his assets in a venture that failed.

After a rushed graduation from high school in 1915 Wilhelm Reich was drafted into military service and took part in World War I, in his last assignment as company commander on the Italian front. He was discharged in 1918 due to an exacerbation of his psoriasis which he first developed during puberty. He first matriculated as a law student at Vienna University and shortly thereafter switched to medicine. As medical student he joined the Akademische Verein jüdischer Mediziner [Academic Union of Jewish Medical Students] where he met Otto Fenichel, the leader of a “seminar in sexology”. The Union propagated the ideals of the youth movement: “anti-authoritarian” education and sexuality liberated from the constraints of the patriarchal society. Here is the source for many ideas that Reich later combined with psychoanalytic concepts and elaborated further in his later “sex-economic” and “orgonomic” theories. In 1920, for the first time he attended a session of the Wiener Psychoanalytische Vereinigung (WPV) [Vienna Psychoanalytic Society]. In October he held his inaugural lecture: Libidokonflikte und Wahngebilde in Ibsens Peer Gynt” [Libidinal Conflicts and Delusions in Ibsen’s “Peer Gynt”] (published posthumously). In January of 1921 he was already treating “two paying patients referred by Freud” (Reich). He started a personal analysis with Isidor Sadger and continued with Paul Federn. In 1922 he graduated from medical school and married his former analysand Annie Pink (1902-1971), with whom he had two daughters (Eva born in 1924 and Lore born in 1928).

Also in 1922 Reich started working at the Wiener Psychoanalytische Ambulatorium [Vienna Psychoanalytic Outpatient Clinic] which offered free treatment to indigent patients. In 1924 he became the leader of the “technique seminar” at the VPS. In this capacity and based on his publications on drive theory and ego psychology (character analysis and resistance analysis) he won the reputation of brilliant theoretician. He became one of the most influential teachers of the psychoanalytic generation between the two world wars. Edith Jacobson later remembered him as “a highly gifted, brilliant man […]. It was a pleasure to discuss things with him”. Bruno Bettelheim, as a very old man, expressed himself similarly: “[Wilhelm Reich] was a fascinating person, so very persuasive in his explanations and extremely brilliant. […] He was a glowing personality, very charming, lively, and open in his manner. Willy was loveable, he had a magnetism that drew people to him. In any event, he was important to me because of our friendship and the wonderful conversations about analysis, which we all took part in.”

The year 1927 was a fateful one for Reich. That year was published his book Die Funktion des Orgasmus. Zur Psychopathologie und zur Soziologie des Geschlechtslebens [The Function of the Orgasm. The Pathology and Sociology of Sexual Life]. Freud, to whom this work was dedicated, regarded it favorably. Three years later Freud sought to assure Reich that his functions at the VPS would be reinstated in case he chose to return to Vienna from Berlin, where Reich had moved in 1930. However, 1927 already marked the beginning of the political campaign against Reich which over the next years was applied with increasing acrimony to his theories and analytic abilities, ultimately leading to a break with Freud.

On the 30th of January 1927, in Schattendorf in the vicinity of Vienna, a crippled war veteran and an eight year old boy were shot to death by political reactionaries during a demonstration of the Social-Democratic Party. The murderers belonged to a political movement that would become the seed of Austrian Fascism. The judge let the murderers go free. As a result, on the 15th of July 1927 a mass demonstration took place during which the Palace of Justice was set on fire. The police reacted with brutality: one thousand demonstrators were wounded, 80 were killed. Among the demonstrators was the thirty-year-old Wilhelm Reich who would never forget the screams of the wounded and the sight of the dying, because not too long prior to this event he himself looked death in the eye: in January 1927 he developed tuberculosis and was sent for a prolonged course of treatment in Davos, Switzerland. Reich's brother Robert had died of tuberculosis a year earlier, as did their father in 1914.

Following the crushing of the 1927 demonstration Reich joined the Social-Democratic Party. A year later, together with the dermatologist Marie Frischauf-Pappenheim, he founded in Vienna the Sozialistische Gesellschaft für Sexualberatung und Sexualforschung [Socialist Society for Sex Counseling and Sex Research]. In 1929 he traveled to the Soviet Union. He wrote a report on this journey marked more by hopes and illusions than by a realistic perception of the situation in the Soviet Union under Stalin's dictatorship. In 1929, increasingly unhappy with Social-Democratic politics in regard of Austrian Fascists, Reich founded the Komitee revolutionärer sozialdemokratischer Arbeiter [Committee for Revolutionary Social-Democratic Workers]. This led to his exclusion from the Social-Democratic Party that same year. Early in 1930 he joined the Communist Party. He left Vienna at the end of 1930 and settled in Berlin, the city rife with the most violent clashes between adherents to the red and the brown ideology. He rented lodgings in the "artist colony" neighborhood, in which lived, among others, Ernst Busch, Alfred Kantorowicz, Johannes R. Becher und Ernst Bloch. This was the stronghold of the resistance to the National-Socialists.

As a member of the Communist Party he was instructed in 1931 to take part in the founding of the Einheitsverbands für Proletarische Sexualreform und Mutterschutz [Association for Proletarian Sex Reform und for Protection of Mothers]. That year he himself founded the Sexpol-Verlag [Sexpol Publishing House], allegedly financed by his student and friend Karl von Motesitzky (who later perished in Auschwitz). Reich read his inaugural lecture at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute on 19th of December 1931 on Die sexuelle Ökonomie des masochistischen Charakters [The Sexual Economy of the Masochistic Character]. Because in that lecture Reich criticized Freud's death instinct theory, Freud imputed to Reich, in a letter to Ferenczi of January 24, 1932, the "nonsense" that "the death instinct is the work of the capitalist system". Half a year before Hitler's seizure of power, on June 28, 1932, Reich delivered another lecture which made him even less likable in the eyes of most of his colleagues. This time he spoke about Massenpsychologische Probleme innerhalb der Wirtschaftskrise [Mass-Psychological Problems and the Crisis of the National Economy]. He held that National-Socialism is a movement of the petty bourgeoisie that, seizing upon the misery of the masses caused by economic exploitation and sexual repression, based the Nazi movement on reactionary ideology; that, furthermore, National-Socialism directed the anger, resulting from mass misery, against minorities, as if the latter were the cause of that misery,

instead, that the people, enlightened about its political goals and of the mechanism of repression, would devote its energies to combating the real architects of that misery.

Reich did not hang on theoretical constructions alone but pursued practical goals. As an opponent of National-Socialism, he delivered more and more political speeches at public events, combining them with psychoanalytic concepts. The overwhelming majority of the conservative-rightist psychoanalysts were unwilling to support this position. Moreover, when after the National-Socialist regime seized power and Reich demanded that the psychoanalytic organizations in Germany disband voluntarily, he was denounced not only by Freud and the bourgeois psychoanalysts but also by most progressive-leftist psychoanalysts, who formed an opposition to Reich led by Fenichel. The latter, in order to avoid a break with the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), preferred a clandestine resistance to the politics of accommodation with the regime instead, as Reich wanted, an open rebellion.

Reich saw in psychoanalysis an instrument of enlightenment and thus a means of promoting the political fight against National-Socialism. Freud, on the other hand, viewed psychoanalysis as an "apolitical" science, "neutral" as mathematics, that can be practiced in any political system as long as it is not prohibited. Already in May of 1932, in a letter to the then president of the Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft (DPG) [German Psychoanalytic Association] Max Eitingon, Freud warned against the "dangerous fool" Reich. After Hitler seized power Reich's political position became in fact a source of danger: had the National-Socialist really equated psychoanalysis with Reich's position, psychoanalysis would have been banned immediately. However, contrary to accepted opinion, this did not happen. Moreover, the readiness of the psychoanalyst to accommodate with the regime, resulting in surrender, made prohibiting psychoanalysis in Germany superfluous. Later Freud openly advocated the expulsion of Reich from the DPG and thus from the IPA: "I demand this for scientific reasons, but I am not opposed should this happen for political reasons as well, and wish him every success as a martyr", as he wrote on April 17, 1933 to Eitingon, who shortly thereafter emigrated to Palestine whereupon the "Aryans" Felix Boehm and Carl Müller-Braunschweig took over the presidency of the DPG in the fall of 1933. Those two undertook to "save" psychoanalysis in Germany, a word ("save"), which was used at that time by Anna Freud and IPA president Ernest Jones as well. In the subsequent years Boehm and Müller-Braunschweig continuously coordinated their efforts with the leadership of the IPA, to which Anna Freud belonged as well. Here is one example: In the summer of 1933, in a number of encounters with Nazi officials, Boehm explained the difference between the positions of Freud and Reich. Müller-Braunschweig summed up Boehm's arguments in a paper entitled Psychoanalyse und Weltanschauung [Psychoanalysis and Weltanschauung] (1933) and discussed this paper in a meeting with Jones in Holland, about which Jones informed Anna Freud in Vienna. After everybody became acquainted with the content of the article, Müller-Braunschweig published it in a periodical sympathetic to the Nazi regime.

About the same time Reich's name was stricken from the roster of the DPG. Reich, at that time in exile in Scandinavia, learned about this one year later, at the 13th International Psychoanalytical Congress held in Lucerne. Based on the legally formal argument that nobody

could be an IPA member without being a member of a constituent society (from which Reich was first secretly expelled), Reich was told in Lucerne that he no longer belonged to the IPA. Freud's wish to get rid of Reich was finally fulfilled. After the war ended, Jones, still occupying the office of IPA president, declared at the 16th International Psychoanalytical Congress in Zurich, clearly alluding to Reich: "The temptation is understandably great to add socio-political factors to those that are our special concern, and to re-read our findings in terms of sociology, but it is a temptation which, one is proud to observe, has, with very few exceptions, been stoutly resisted."

The aforementioned policy of the DPG led to its joining the Deutsche Institut für psychologische Forschung und Psychotherapie [German Institute for Psychological Research and Psychotherapy], whose director was Heinrich Mathias Göring, a cousin of Reichsmarschall Göring. This merger was preceded by the publication of an essay again written by Müller-Braunschweig: this time the subject was Nationalsozialistische Idee und Psychoanalyse [The National-Socialist Idea and Psychoanalysis] (1935). A further precondition for entry into the "Göring Institute" was the "voluntary" resignation of all the Jews still belonging to the DPG. Jones, the IPA president, travelled to Berlin at the end of 1935 in order to urge the Jewish DGP member to resign "voluntarily" "in the interest of our psychoanalytic cause in Germany".[i]

Although the DPG has now become judenrein' (cleansed of Jews), as expressed in the Nazi-jargon of the time, she continued as a constituent society of the IPA. In the Korrespondenzblatt (bulletin) of the IPA (printed as an addendum to the Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse) one reads this optimistic prospect for the future: "With the approval and support of the adjudicating authorities the German Institute for Psychology and Psychotherapy' was founded in June [of 1936, B. N.], which will begin its activities in October of 1936 and in which the DPG will participate as a fully accredited member alongside the other schools of psychotherapy; it is to be expected that this will draw auditors and candidates in increasing numbers" (1937, p. 333). However, this "apolitical" institutional policy came to an end in 1938. The Nazis ordered the DPG dissolved. In the International Journal of Psycho-Analysis the following communication appeared: "In November 1938 the German Psycho-Analytic Society, transformed into Arbeitsgruppe A of the Deutsche Institut für psychologische Forschung und Psychotherapie, resigned its membership in the International Psycho-Analytic Association" (1939, p. 134). All this was in stark contrast to the fact that the expulsion of Reich (or his "resignation" as Jones characterized it after the war) from both the DPG and the IPA was not mentioned at all in any of the organs of the associations. Reich simply disappeared from institutional annals without leaving a trace.

Finally, the bitter irony of this story is that just as Freud began to reproach Reich for spreading "bolshevist propaganda" in psychoanalytic journals, Reich's conflicts with the Communist Party increasingly came to a head. While the Stalinist comrades had already looked askance at Reich's advocacy of a sexuality freed from bourgeois compulsions, the publication of Reich's Massenpsychologie des Faschismus [Mass Psychology of Fascism] in 1933 gave them cause to kick him out of the party, either at the end of 1933 or beginning of 1934. In that book Reich was critical of the communist doctrine that the proletariat should be immune from National-

Socialist propaganda and that a socialist revolution in Germany was imminent. Reich, for whom by his own admission psychoanalysis and Marxism were like mother and father, now became an orphan for the second time. From then on he was the only bearer of his science. This historical and biographical background reveals the full meaning of the aforementioned introductory quotation from the 1935 entry in Reich's diary: "it is a heavy burden to bear" when "for the sake of the cause one becomes more and more alone and no longer a human being among others."

Half a century later, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Reich's birthday (24 March 1997), Professor H. G. Petzold, a scientist interested in the history of psychotherapy but not himself a psychoanalyst, addressed a request to the officers of the IPA and the two German psychoanalytic societies the DPG and the Deutsche Psychoanalytische Vereinigung (DPV) to revoke Reich's expulsion retroactively. The officers of the IPA and the DPV did not even deign to answer while the president of the DPG agreed to publish a communication, extracted from a report in the house organ, in which was stated, among others, that while Reich's expulsion was an injustice, a symbolic rehabilitation could not be offered, because "in view of Reich's later theoretical developments, calling Reich today a psychoanalyst and a posthumous readmission to membership are no longer possible. This would not be in keeping with his numerous ideas and activities nor with the present-day psychoanalytic image of the DPG".[ii] Such reasoning by professional psychoanalysts would be the delight of a basher who, after having beaten his roommate black and blue, would refuse to take him back because he now looked so ugly.

Whereas it is arguable that Reich's work could be fairly divided into separate segments, – thus an original psychoanalytic phase, a sex-economy and vegetotherapy intermediate phase and an orgonomic end phase, – Reich himself regarded his work as an integrated whole. In this way he attributed an identity to his scientific theory that is lost in the frequently fragmented biographies. Therefore, in view of the fact that Reich was in the habit of elaborating and emending his early writings according to later "realizations", it is very difficult to achieve a clear historical and critical perspective on his work. Thus, for example, his book Geschlechtsreife, Enthaltsamkeit, Ehemoral. Kritik der bürgerlichen Sexualreform [Sexual Maturity, Abstinence, Marriage Morals. Critique of Bourgeois Sex Reform] (1930) was reissued in 1936 with the title Die Sexualität im Kulturkampf [Sexuality in the Culture Struggle] and it was this new edition that was then used as the original for the American translation that appeared in 1945 as The Sexual Revolution Toward a Self-Governing Character Structure. In this way, across many editions and various languages, an epigraph of a chapter of the 1936 edition in which Reich described the libertarian sexual politics in the Soviet Union in the 1920's (Second Part, Chapter Two), became the slogan of the 1968 student movement.

The 1968 rebels found in Wilhelm Reich their apostle; before this happened, Reich was remembered only as a crazy scientist, a rain maker, an UFO researcher or an orgone healer. In this way they made a crucial contribution to the rediscovery of this "political" psychoanalyst. On the other hand, it is also time to rediscover the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, who in the course of his work in the counseling sex clinics he founded came to know intimately patients today diagnosed as ego-psychologically impaired. On the basis of these experiences Reich was

able to include the nonverbal, bodily, expressive behavior and acting out of these patients within the verbal therapeutic process because he wanted to help such patients instead of excluding them as unsuitable from psychoanalytic treatment.[iii]

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[i] Bernd Nitzschke: „… im Interesse unserer psychoanalytischen Sache in Deutschland". Die Ausgrenzung Wilhelm Reichs aus der „Internationalen Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung" – Marginalien zu einer Vereinsgeschichte oder Paradigma für den Prozeß der Institutionalisierung der Psychoanalyse unter (politisch) erschwerten Bedingungen? In: Wiesse, Jörg (Ed.): Chaos und Regel. Die Psychoanalyse in ihren Institutionen. Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1992, pp. 76-131.

[ii] Quoted from Karl Fallend &Bernd Nitzschke: Vorwort zur Neuauflage [Preface to the New Edition]. In: Karl Fallend &Bernd Nitzschke (Eds.): Der „Fall' Wilhelm Reich. Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Psychoanalyse und Politik. Neuauflage. Giessen (Psychosozial-Verlag) 2002, pp. 13-28.

[iii] Further details about the life and work of Wilhelm Reich as well as comprehensive bibliographies can be found in the following works of the author:

Bernd Nitzschke: Psychoanalysis during National Socialism; present-day consequences of a historical controversy in the "case" of Wilhelm Reich. The Psychoanalytic Review 86, 1999, pp. 349-366;

Bernd Nitzschke: Psychoanalysis and National Socialism. Banned or Brought into Confirmity? Break or Continuity? International Forum of Psychoanalysis 12, 2003, pp. 98-108;

Karl Fallend & Bernd Nitzschke (Eds.): Der „Fall' Wilhelm Reich. Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Psychoanalyse und Politik. [New edition]. Giessen (Psychosozial-Verlag) 2002.

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Sixty Years of Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

Thomas Mann completed the manuscript of *Doktor Faustus* on January 29, 1947. Later that year, the novel was published in Sweden, in the original German. The first English translation[1] was in print only a couple of months later, in early 1948. Ever since, it may possibly have been the novel by Mann that was the most admired by many, and the most resented by some.

The writer of these lines is one of its admirers. I first read it in 1972, as a student, and returned to it in 1990, between the fall of the Berlin wall and the unification of Germany, when some of us feared that the dark drifts in German history, that Thomas Mann so vividly described, might prevail again. I am writing not as an expert in literary criticism or musicology nor in my professional capacity as an academic administrator, but as a layman interested in literature and music who wants to share some of his enthusiasm about this novel and the music it relates to.

As the subtitle says, *Doktor Faustus* is *The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*. Leverkühn is born in 1885 in central Germany. He studies the piano and some composition as a boy but first earns a degree in theology before returning to his German-American music teacher Wendell Kretzschmar to study composition in Leipzig. The very day Leverkühn arrives in Leipzig he is led to a brothel by a tour guide and first meets a prostitute whom he later revisits. She will then infect him with syphilis. The infection is interpreted as a stimulant to artistic creativity – and as a silent pact with the devil who makes his appearance exactly half-way through the novel, probably only in Leverkühn's fantasy. The primary infection is not adequately treated and 24 years later, in 1930, will lead to Leverkühn's mental breakdown and paralysis, from which he will not recover until his death ten years later. The paralytic shock happens when Leverkühn has invited his friends from Munich to the nearby village where he lives, apparently for a presentation of his last composition *The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus**[2]**,* but in fact to confess his nefarious trade of love and warmth for artistic creativity.

This in itself is hardly a plot that would keep anybody breathless for more than 500 pages. But this is not only, and not mainly, the story of a syphilitic composer. It is also, and above all, one of the only great German novels describing an entire era from Imperial Germany to the Nazi regime.

There are two narrative times in the novel, one referring to Leverkühn's life, and the other being that of the writing of his biography by Leverkühn's life-long friend, Serenus Zeitblom.

Leverkühn's conscious life ends in 1930 when the Nazis had just won the first of several electoral successes that would, alongside the support of most of the country's economic, military and political elites, eventually carry them to power. Zeitblom starts writing, like Thomas Mann, on May 23, 1943. Zeitblom is a teacher of Latin and Greek, who dedicates much of his life to his admired friend. The quintessential German humanist, Zeitblom is resolutely *non*-Nazi and resigns from the school system when the Nazis come to power. I would hesitate to call him *anti*-Nazi because he never actively *resists* the regime, although he clearly sympathizes with those who do, like the White Rose Group in Munich.

The novel is sprinkled with Zeitblom's observations on the final stage of the Second World War and on the deep roots of barbarism and irrationality that would lead to the worst crimes in human history and to the destruction of half of Europe, including Germany itself.

Zeitblom reflects Mann's own conviction that the "good" in German society and intellectual history could not easily be separated from the "bad" and dark, in contrast to some of Mann's fellow refugees and many German intellectuals who had stayed in the country and discovered their "inner emigration" before or, more frequently, after 1945.

Zeitblom writes: "Our thousand-year' history, refuted, reduced *ad absurdum*, weighed in the balance and found unblest, turns out to be leading nowhere, or rather into despair, an unexampled bankruptcy, a descent to hell[3] lighted by the dance of roaring flames. … The way that led to this sinful issue … was everywhere wrong and fatal, at every single one of its turns."[4] Or, a bit later: "But a patriotism which would assert that a blood state like this was so forced, so foreign to our national character that it could not take root among us: such a patriotism would seem to me more high-minded than realistic. For was this government, in word and deed, anything but the distorted, vulgarized, besmirched symbol of a state of mind, a notion of world affairs which we must recognize as both genuine and characteristic?"[5]

This may be one reason why Thomas Mann did not give Leverkühn the traits of musicians like Richard Strauss[6] or Hans Pfitzner, who were deeply involved with the Nazi regime and publicly volunteered in 1933 to force Mann into exile[7]. Leverkühn's clinical history is similar to Nietzsche's, who was much admired both by many Nazis and some of their enemies, including Mann. But as a composer, Leverkühn is modeled in many respects after Arnold Schönberg, arguably the greatest composer of the 20th century, a Jew, Mann's friend and fellow artist in exile in Los Angeles and a person of immaculate vanguard credentials.

Leverkühn's system of composition, as he explains it to Zeitblom in chapter XXII of the novel, is in fact Schönberg's technique of "composition with twelve tones related only to one-another". Schönberg, whose sense of humor was not quite up to his musical genius, was furious to be portrayed as suffering from syphilis and being in a pact with the devil (and even feared that future generations might think Mann, rather than he, had invented the system).

Schönberg had once said that his system would "ensure the hegemony of German music for the next hundred years". Even he was not free from the temptation to style Germany as *the* unique

music nation, different from and superior to any other.

*

The cult of the *Kulturnation* is a *first* central topic of Mann's novel. The uniqueness of Germany had also been celebrated by the *Jugendbewegung* in early 20th century. Mann describes at some length discussions between Leverkühn, Zeitblom and their fellow students during a hiking tour. The cult of the nation reached a first paroxysm at the beginning of the First World War, when Zeitblom expresses his nationalism in terms similar to Mann himself in his *Observations of a Nonpolitical Man* of 1918: "What the break-through to world power, to which fate summons us, means at bottom, is the break-through to the world – out of an isolation of which we are painfully conscious, and which no vigorous reticulation into world economy has been able to break down since the founding of the Reich." Leverkühn wryly comments: "At present … the crude event will just make our shut-in-ness and shut-off-ness more complete however far your military swarm into Europe."[8]

Only later, in the 1920s, did Thomas Mann become the public intellectual who broke with a tradition of disdain for democratic process and rational discourse and spoke out for democracy both in Germany and from his American exile.

*

The proximity of aestheticism and barbarism, of beauty and crime, is a *second* central element in Mann's description of German culture which touches the fundamental role of art in society. Walter Benjamin has spoken of the fascist aestheticization of politics. Zeitblom says about one of Leverkühns major works, the *Apocalypsis con figuris,* that it had "a peculiar kinship with, was in spirit a parallel to, the things I had heard at Kridwiss's table-round", an inter-war circle in Munich that Mann describes flatly as "arch-fascist". A few pages later, Zeitblom worries about "an aestheticism which my friend's saying: the antithesis of bourgeois culture is not barbarism, but community[9],' abandoned to the most tormenting doubts. … Aestheticism and barbarism are (near) to each other: aestheticism as the herald of barbarism."[10]

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Third, and perhaps foremost: This is a novel about music. Mann's main musical advisor in writing the novel was Theodor Adorno, one of the founders of critical theory, who had studied composition with Alban Berg, one of Schönberg's first followers. Adorno saw atonal, dissonant, and polyphonic music as the only progressive way for the further development of musical material and as the adequate musical expression of the contradictions of advanced capitalist societies. Adorno was less convinced of the constraints that the twelve tone system imposes on the creative process, in that it prescribes literally every tone that may be used at a given place in the composition.

Thomas Mann read the manuscript of Adorno's *Philosophy of the New Music* while he wrote Doctor Faustus, and he asked Adorno to read the entire manuscript and double-check if the

descriptions of Leverkühn's fictitious works were musically plausible. Mann and Adorno have accomplished that to a remarkable extent: This is a novel that makes you believe to *hear* music that actually has never been composed.

Strangely enough, Adorno appears in Leverkühn's conversation with the devil when Satan's appearance changes from "an ugly customer, a bully, a criminal[11], a rough" to a "theoretician and critic, who himself composes, so far as thinking allows him".[12] And then the devil starts reasoning about music in terms that could have been copied verbatim from the *Philosophy of the New Music".*

Thomas Mann's personal musical taste was much less progressive than Adorno's. In *'Doctor Faustus': The Genesis of the Novel,* Mann describes the triad harmony of Wagner's *Ring* as his musical homeland. Wagner, Hitler's favorite composer and a most despicable anti-Semite, was, as Hanns Eisler has put it, "a great composer, *unfortunately*". Leverkühn claims at one point "that the whole development of music in Germany strove towards the word-tone-drama of Wagner and therein found its goal. *One* goal", says Zeitblom, "referring to Brahms", and Leverkühn agrees. "Brahms the Progressive", was the title of Schönberg's last public appearance in Germany in a radio talk before he fled the Nazis.

Early in the novel, when Leverkühn and Zeitblom are high school students, Kretzschmar gives a lecture on Beethoven's last piano sonata op. 111, and why it has only two movements instead of the usual three or four. Kretzschmar comments the sonata as he plays it. Kretzschmar stresses the "polyphonic objectivity" of Beethoven's late music, an objectivity that tends even to the conventional rather than having it melted into limitless subjectivity.

He then explains the motif of the 2nd movement, the famous arietta. In a gentle gesture to Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno Kretzschmar vocalizes the theme with: *lover's pain, Wiesengrund*. When the variations have reached the incredible climax that Stravinsky called the "Boogie Woogie Variation", Kretzschmar comments a passage of long thrills and desolate loneliness: "'These flourishes and cadenzas! Do you hear the conventions that are left in? Here – the language – is no longer – purified of the flourishes – but the flourishes – of the appearance – of their subjective – domination – the appearance – of art is thrown off – at last …"[13]

At the very end of the movement the motif is expanded to a more consoling version like *"Now forget the pain"* or *"Grüner Wiesengrund"*. A returning after this parting, explains Kretzschmar, a third movement, would have been impossible. The sonata had come to an end.

Just a few days before his breakdown, after the cruel death of his beloved nephew, Leverkühn opposes his own last work to Beethoven, the radical composer of the enlightenment in the revolutionary phase of bourgeois society: "What human beings have fought for and stormed citadels, what the ecstatics exultantly announced – that is not to be. It will be taken back. I will take it back. … the Ninth Symphony."[14] The return of musical development set free by Beethoven to a music where every single note is "thematic" and in that sense unfree, may stand for the dialectic of the enlightenment.

*

When I read the novel again last summer, I was thinking: What has remained of the Germany that Mann described in so desperate and still so loving terms, and what has changed? Germany is very different today, it would seem to me. Of course, the unparalleled crimes committed by Germans under the Nazi regime, are, and will forever be, central to the German collective memory. Any sign of renascent racism there is taken more seriously, at home and around the world, than in most other countries, and rightly so.

Still, the strain of irrationalism that Mann describes and that was so fraught with disaster has all but vanished in contemporary German culture. It would even seem that the national obsession with philosophy has ceased altogether. In the former "land of poets and thinkers", philosophy has become the specialty of a small profession. 95 per cent of German university graduates of my, or the younger, generation, have probably never read a philosophical book, and if so, it was mostly Foucault, Habermas or Marx. Most books by Martin Heidegger, Germany's most influential and most compromised philosopher in the 20th century, are not even available in paperback, for lack of popular demand. The love and high esteem of music, however, seems to have survived. Nearly half of the world's opera houses, I am told, are in Germany – and mainly play Italian opera.

There are good reasons to believe that, finally, democracy in Germany has been the success that Thomas Mann, in Zeitblom's words, had already hoped for during the Weimar Republic. "It was an attempt, a not utterly and entirely hopeless attempt (the second since the failure of Bismarck and his unification performance) to normalize Germany in the sense of Europeanizing or "democratizing' it, of making it part of the social life of peoples."[15]

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[1] Thomas Mann: Doctor Faustus (translation H.T. Lowe-Porter). Everyman's Library (Alfred A. Knopf). New York, Toronto 1992

[2] the only explicit reference to the legend that had already inspired Marlowe and Goethe (and will some years later inspire Hanns Eisler's libretto that he never set to music because of the violent opposition of the Stalinist cultural bureaucracy)

[3] descensus Averno in the Lowe-Porter English translation, *Höllenfahrt* in the German original

[4] idem, p. 462

[5] idem, p. 494

[6] though the fatal meeting with the prostitute Esmeralda takes place on the occasion, or

under the pretext, of Leverkühn visiting a performance of Strauss's *Salome* conducted by the composer

[7] with the infamous protest of the Richard Wagner City Munich" in April 1933, initiated by Pfitzner and the conductor Hans Knappersbusch

[8] idem, p. 312 seq.

[9] "collectivism" in the English translation, Gemeinschaft" in the German original

[10] idem, p. 380

[11] both the translation and the German original use the Austrian dialect expression "strizzi"

[12] idem, p. 242

[13] idem, p. 52 sq.

[14] idem, p. 489

[15] idem, p 396.

* This paper is based on my introduction to an evening of readings and music at Deutsches Haus at NYU on October 30, 2007. I dedicate it to my father, Horst Grothus, who was reading Doktor Faustus for the "Bookworm Club" of the Amerikahaus in Karlsruhe when he first met my mother in 1948.

Remembering Norman Mailer

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

In his introduction to a 2003 collection of essays devoted to the late Norman Mailer, Harold Bloom deems the author "the most visible of contemporary novelists," echoing an ambivalence shared by many literary critics since Mailer first burst onto the scene with the publication of The Naked and the Dead in 1948 (1). His visibility, ultimately, came to define Norman Mailer, earning him as much praise as criticism. Mailer's accessibility provided readers and critics with a rare connection to a generation of American writers known for cultivating an increasingly reclusive relationship to the public. (It's no coincidence that conspiracy theorists often suggested Thomas Pynchon, J. D. Salinger, and William Gaddis were actually the same faceless person). Mailer's detractors viewed his accessibility more as the posturing of a self-centered publicity hound than as a generous willingness to dissolve the boundary separating celebrity from fan. Regardless of Mailer's motives, few can deny the author's preeminent position among American postwar writers though, with the possible exceptions of George Plimpton and Truman Capote, no other author of his generation possessed a literary career so inextricably linked the nonliterary sphere as Mailer.

Mailer's famed ego and larger-than-life persona originated in his childhood. Born in Long Branch, New Jersey in 1923, Norman Kingsley Mailer was dubbed "perfect" by his doting mother and was soon regarded as a genius by his eccentric father, a chaps-wearing, cane-carrying, Cockney-accented Lithuanian-Jewish immigrant from South Africa. In a profile heralding the publication of Ancient Evenings in 1983, Mailer reflected that "[t]hat baroque element in my style, the sidewinder in me…all comes from my father in some funny way" (Brenner 36). Mailer's mother, too, seemed to have a strong influence on the author's character, giving him the Hebrew name Nachum Malech, or "Norman King," because, as Carl Rollyson notes, "Fanny thought of him quite literally as the family's sovereign" and would treat him accordingly (3).

Mailer entered Harvard University at age sixteen, younger and less self-assured than most other members of his freshman class. Lacking "[t]he braggadocio and macho bearing" that would become fixtures in his public persona, the young man quietly began studies in aeronautical engineering (Mills 38). Not yet the hobnobbing gadfly he would become, Mailer spent most of his spare time reading the major figures of literary Modernism and inaugurating his legendary-if exaggerated-habit of scribbling three thousand words daily. In 1941, Mailer's "The Greatest Thing in the World" was selected by Story magazine as the year's best short story by an undergraduate. By the time he graduated two years later, the indefatigable Mailer had penned several unpublished novel-length manuscripts.

Drafted into the Army, Mailer shipped out in 1944 for the Philippines, where he fought as a rifleman in the 112th cavalry and later served as a cook in occupied Japan. Although he did not

see much combat first-hand, Mailer gathered enough material to write The Naked and the Dead, the first major American literary work to emerge from the War. Though later novels such as Joseph Heller's Catch-22, Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five, and Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow supplanted Mailer's novel in most critical assessments of the defining wartime work, The Naked and the Dead catapulted the twenty-five year-old to the literary stardom he enjoyed for the rest of his life. Still, some critics dismissed Mailer as derivative, citing the author's thematic and stylistic debts to Leo Tolstoy, John Dos Passos, Herman Melville, James T. Farrell, and Ernest Hemingway. Mailer, however, would prove to be unique.

The novel's key shortcoming is its realism. Although an exceptionally acute sociological study of lower and middle class men working together in the military, and a gripping psychological portrait combat, The Naked and the Dead simply does not plumb the larger philosophical concern one finds in Catch-22, Slaughterhouse-Five, or Gravity's Rainbow. Mailer limits himself to the literal depiction of the Pacific conflict. Though Mailer's debut novel contains bits of the existential terror and cold war paranoia one associates with Yossarian's absurd struggle against Cathcart, Billy Pilgrim's inability to adjust to peaceful civilian life, or Tyrone Slothrop's terrifying confrontation with a conspiracy spanning decades and continents, it lacks the bravura and force of these later novels. What Mailer's novel does auger is his ability to transform the mundane into literature, an ability he perfected in his later New Journalist writings.

The 1950s, however, were anything but halcyon years for the previous decade's literary superstar. The publication of Mailer's second novel, Barbary Shore, sparked the first of the several critical firestorms marking his controversial career. Given the novel's almost formulaic Kafkaesque mood and overtly leftist political sentiments, Mailer was panned by many as a hack writer whose latest "paceless, tasteless, and graceless" production "collapses under the weight of its polemics" ("Last"; Prigozy 261). Despite its harsh reception, however, Barbary Shore marks one of the first serious literary attempts at making sense of the growing tensions between the state socialist East and capitalist West and established Mailer as a decidedly iconoclastic writer very much at home on the fringes of American society, willing to criticize the jingoism spreading among his countrymen.

Mailer's third novel, The Deer Park (1955), brings to light some of the darker elements of life in Cold War America. Drawing upon his own experiences as a screenwriter in Hollywood as well as Elia Kazan's capitulation to the House Un-American Activities Committee, The Deer Park tears the sheep's clothing off the corrupt structure of Hollywood economics to reveal the wolves lingering behind the scene. Fashioning himself as an outlaw, Mailer dabbled in New York City's burgeoning bohemian subculture, listening to jazz, experimenting with drugs, and consciously altering his accent to confuse and irritate interviewers. For the remainder of the decade, Mailer focused on cultivating a hipster persona, honing it in the columns he would write for The Village Voice, the pioneering alternative newspaper he co-founded with two friends in 1955. Writing with what The New York Times recently referred to as "a homespun, Greenwich Village version of existentialism," Mailer gained some prominence as a social commentator, fending off critics who dismissed him as a literary one-hit-wonder ("Norman

Mailer”).

Capitalizing on the existentialist zeitgeist and infusing it with Marxist sentiments, Mailer published his infamous essay, “The White Negro,” in 1956. The essay, which praises the adoption of elements of Black subculture by White hipster’ youths as a philosophically heroic act, highlights Mailer’s bolder qualities, both positive and negative. In it, Mailer appropriates aspects of the postwar European philosophy made famous by Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, and applies a watered-down version of it to a new generation of Americans. While his celebration of African-American culture may have contributed in some small way to the burgeoning civil rights movement, Mailer also fetishized and distorted Black culture. Further, the bravado with which Mailer unabashedly praises the beat generation embodies the sort of self-congratulatory (and self-defeating) elitism associated with its most obnoxious elements. Mailer did not publish another novel until 1965’s An American Dream, focusing on a nascent style of writing that would soon establish Mailer as one of the New Journalists of the 1960s, alongside the aforementioned Capote, Tom Wolfe, and Hunter S. Thompson.

Advertisements for Myself (1959) was Mailer’s Bildungsroman, a portrait of the artist as an unapologetically ambitious young man. At turns immature and profound, self-deprecatory and self-aggrandizing, Mailer’s collection of essays, rants, interviews, and stories established the writer as one of the nation’s most prominent cultural commentators, and certainly the one with the loudest voice. In November of 1960, as the writer drunkenly prepared to announce his candidacy for mayor of New York City in the following year’s race, Mailer stabbed his second wife, Adele Morales, with a penknife. Although Morales decided against pressing charges and Mailer was released after a brief evaluative stint in Bellevue Hospital’s mental health ward, the altercation colored the public’s impression of Mailer. The incident would be cited by numerous feminists as evidence of the author’s misogyny, especially following a debate with Germaine Greer in 1971, during which he publicly opposed the use of birth control.

While embracing the restless spirit of the counter-cultural sixties, Mailer contributed columns and essays to Esquire, Commentary, Playboy, the New York Review of Books and Dissent, building a body of work he would tap into to produce a series of well-received collected volumes. In addition to 1968’s Pulitzer Prize winning The Armies of the Night and Miami and the Siege of Chicago, Mailer dabbled in film, starring in, directing, and producing Wild 90 (1968), Beyond the Law (1968), and Maidstone (1969). While many critics saw Mailer’s social and cinematic self-promotion as evidence of a disturbing brand of narcissism, Mailer playfully poked fun at himself, penning a series of self-interviews for various publications in which he simultaneously indulged in unabashed self-aggrandizement while acknowledging the comedic aspect of it.

Largely motivated by the economic strain of having to support dependents from four marriages, Mailer published An American Dream in 1965. In a scene eerily reminiscent of Mailer’s stabbing of Morales, the novel’s war hero-turned congressman protagonist, Stephen Rojack, drunkenly murders his wife. As a result of Mailer’s handling of women in An American Dream, Kate Millett scathingly critiques Mailer in Sexual Politics, her seminal study of the

treatment of women in literature. In response, Mailer published The Prisoner of Sex (1971), in which he frequently digresses into outright attacks on Millett, Steinem, Greer, and Friedan. In a review of The Prisoner of Sex for The New York Review of Books, Gore Vidal famously grouped Mailer with Henry Miller and Charles Manson as part of "a continuum in the brutal and violent treatment of women," sparking a highly public feud between the two writers that would continue for the next fifteen years (qtd. in Cabot). In spite of his harsh tone and bombastic statements, Mailer's jeremiad is less the ranting of a misogynist than the impassioned-if misled-concern of the artist for the freedom of expression. Ironically, Mailer's status as a major American writer helped to bring feminist discourse from the fringes of a nation's consciousness to the center of mainstream America.

Mailer wrote prolifically throughout the 1970s, publishing Of a Fire on the Moon in (1970), which chronicled the Apollo moon landing; St. George and the Godfather (1972), an account of the year's presidential campaign; Marilyn: A Biography (1973); and The Fight (1975), which recounts the legendary boxing match between George Forman and Muhammed Ali-a body of nonfiction work in which narrative voice becomes a character on par with the subjects it describes. Despite the centrality of Mailer's voice in his writing and his admitted sense of self-importance, Mailer also revealed a profound dissatisfaction with himself as he approached fifty. In 1972's Existential Errands, for instance, Mailer acknowledges his fear of not producing the proverbial Great American Novel that would legitimize his career and establish him as more than a minor author who had published one major work of fiction.

Still, The Executioner's Song (1979), his epic chronicle of Gary Gilmore's life and death, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1980, and established Mailer as America's foremost nonfiction novelist. The process of writing the book, however, also marked another instance of Mailer's life and work intersecting in the most unpleasant of ways. While researching Gilmore's time in prison, Mailer received a letter from Jack Henry Abbott, an inmate who offered to provide the author with insight into Gilmore's life as a convict. Impressed by the "the literary measure" of Abbott's letters, Mailer believed that the man could become "a new writer of the largest stature" if given the freedom to write (Mailer xvi). Believing that Abbot could "get noting more" from prison, Mailer famously lobbied for his parole (Mailer xvi). Despite the patronage of his famous friend, however, Abbott could not keep himself out of trouble, murdering a waiter shortly after his release. Though Mailer's favorable assessment of Abbott's writing proved prophetic when In the Belly of the Beast, a selection of the latter's letters to Mailer, topped bestseller lists, Mailer again found himself under fire for what some perceived as his support of violence. Mailer's concern for Abbott, however, like his screed in response to the feminist critique of his writing, was largely motivated by a concern for unfettered literary expression in the face of attempts to silence it. Mailer's efforts to free (literally and figuratively) Jack Abbott resulted in tragedy, but also revealed an idealistic and humanitarian side to an author many would not have suspected to be a romantic.

Ancient Evenings (1983) reestablished Mailer as a master fiction writer. Mellowing in his later years, Mailer settled into the role of literary patriarch, regularly attending black tie benefits and serving as the president of the influential PEN American Center. Mailer published Tough

Guys Don't Dance (a film he also directed and for which he wrote the screenplay) in 1984. By his seventieth birthday in 1993, he had quit drinking and, despite increasingly frailty, Mailer continued writing with vigor. 1991's epic novel of the CIA, Harlot's Ghost, received a warm, if not wholly positive, critical reception and marked Mailer's return to political fiction. Two biographies-1995's critically-panned Portrait of Picasso and 1996's nonfiction companion to Harlot's Ghost, an exhaustive biography of Lee Harvey Oswald, Oswald's Tale-and 1997's The Gospel According to the Son, a novel about Jesus Christ, occupied Mailer for the remainder of the decade. With its focus on the human aspects of Christ's life, The Gospel According to the Son was met with some of the same resistance as Nikos Kazantzakis's The Last Temptation of Christ and Mailer was criticized for bringing the veracity of Christian scripture into question.

While Don DeLillo's Underworld, Philip Roth's American Pastoral and I Married a Communist, and Joseph Heller's Closing Time will likely emerge as the great postwar epics published by American writers in the 1990s, Harlot's Ghost and Oswald's Tale offer as chilling an interpretation of Cold War politics as any of Mailer's contemporaries. With a Manichean vision of humanity, Mailer locates the sources of conflict in the individual or in the entertainment industry as often as he identifies it in the clash between East and West. Though not as popular as the novels published at the same time by DeLillo, Heller, or Roth, Mailer's writing during the 1990s must be included in any retrospective of the decade's emergent post-Cold War fiction.

In 2007 Mailer published his final novel, The Castle in the Forest. Returning to the Second World War for inspiration, Mailer adopts the voice of a demon possessing the body of a young man named Dieter to narrate the life of Adolph Hitler. Critically hailed as one of Mailer's finest efforts, Castle examines the naked truths of human mortality the author explored in his first novel through the mature lens of an author approaching his own mortality in a way the younger Mailer simply could not imagine in 1948. In November, while working on a sequel to The Castle in the Forest, Mailer died of acute renal failure.

Norman Mailer was many things during his life: a prodigy, an Ivy Leaguer, a soldier, a husband, a novelist, a journalist, an actor, a politician and, most importantly, a voice. From Depression-era Long Branch to war-torn Manila, from Harvard Yard to the Hollywood hills and back to Greenwich Village, Mailer observed the best and worst of American society and wrote about it. Though we may fault him for his egocentrism or cultural dilettantism, we cannot ignore Mailer's voice. In his towering successes and colossal failures, we find ourselves, naked but never dead. Cold War America lives in Mailer's words. The hopes, fears, concerns, and ambitions of a generation fixated on celebrity, crime, heroism, and pleasure found expression in his writing. Now that we have lost his voice, it is time to attend to the words and reflect on ourselves, on our vanity and audacity. After all, we no longer have Mailer to criticize.

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Desomond Macnamara – An Interview

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

Desmond MacNamara, a prized Logos contributor, died January 8 at the age of 89. Mac, as he was known to friends, was one of the most remarkable people that at least three Logos editors ever met. This profoundly Irish artist, a sparkling wit and inexhaustible raconteur, lived in London since 1951 with his charming English wife Skylla, a film studio script reader. In Dublin in the 1940s Mac worked as a valued set designer for the Abbey and the Gate Theaters and as a prop designer on films, including Laurence Olivier's 1944 film of Henry V. Mac also became the model for the kangaroo-suited MacDoon' in J.P. Donleavy's classic novel of post-war bohemian Dublin, The Ginger Man*. His sculpture is on exhibit in the Irish National Gallery and the Dublin National Writer's Museum.*

Mac also published books on puppetry, uses of papier-mache in sculpture, and the art of picture framing. In the 1970s he won a film award for his work in animation. His Celtic comic novel The Book of Intrusions*, published by Dalkey Archive Press in 1994, won plaudits in the international press. A second novel,* Confessions of An Irish Werewolf*, had just been completed at the time of the interview and is available through Ushba International Publishers (salvi@pk.netsolir.com).*

As a farewell, we reprint the 2003 interview and pair it with the opening chapter of Irish Werewolf *(the excerpted third chapter having appeared earlier in Logos). Readers, we suspect, will see why he will be sorely missed by those of us who were fortunate to have known him. His final book review appears in our next issue.*

– Kurt Jacobsen

ACCORDING TO MEMOIRS WRITTEN ABOUT THE 1940S AND 1950S IN DUBLIN, YOU ARE PORTRAYED AS THE IRISH ANSWER TO GERTUDE STEIN IN THAT YOU RAN A NON-STOP SALON IN YOUR SCULPTOR'S STUDIO ON GRAFTON STREET WHERE MOST IRISH NOTABLES – AND SOME NON-IRISH, LIKE PHYSICIST ERWIN SCHROEDINGER – WOULD SHOW. HOW DID THEY ALL COME TO GATHER THERE?

It's simply that by accident I had a studio in a tall house in the middle of the city in the narrow ravine of a street and I started using a pub around the corner, McDaids – and people would drop in casually. My wife at the time, Beverlie Hooberman, kept an open house. When pubs shut people dropped in. People dropped in before pubs opened, people dropped by when the pubs were open, and people dropped in for a free cup of coffee instead having to pay for it because there was usually coffee bubbling away.

People sunbathed on the roof. There were three studios on the floor. One used by John Ryan,

one by me, and one by a sculptor called John Bourke. There was no furniture whatsoever. No living accommodation. So I furnished it with everything that I had. Theatrical props. Cows heads. Anything to reduce the room from the empty barn it was when I first saw it.

HOW DID YOU COME BY IT?

Through John Ryan.1 It was over the Monument Creameries, which is now gone. So there it was. Up on the Gothic heights opposite Woolworths where I could watch pigeons fornicating on ledges which no one else could see from below. That's really all there was to it. This period of my life lasted only three to four years, but it was a formative three or four years for me. The end of my life as a student and my first evasions of the obligation of living elsewhere or in some other way.

WERE YOU BORN IN DUBLIN?

I'd been born in Dublin. Born in a Georgian crescent near Merrion Square. My mother was Dublin-born, although my paternal family comes from Kileloo. My grandfather was a bespoke-shoemaker. He had a small shoe factory which made riding boots, livery boots and things like that. He was a Fenian .2 He was out at the rising at Tallaght in 1867.

HE WASN'T NABBED BY THE BRITISH?

He came home in a cab. Buried his gun and came home in a cab. When the redcoats appeared.

YOUR SCULPTURAL MEDIUM SEEMS TO BE PAPIER-MACHE. YOU'VE PUBLISHED A BOOK ON ITS USES IN ART. YOU BEGAN BY APPLYING IT TO STAGE PROP DESIGN, DIDN'T YOU?

Yes. A lot of my work was theatrical. Papier-mâché was simply an accident. I had trained in sculpture and done my diploma at the National College of Art, as it then was called. I had always been interested in the theater and I had belonged to rather a progressive theater group.

CONSISTING OF WHOM?

Oh, various people. I can't recall many names. Many are quite well known in the theater now. An ambassador in Luxembourg, Stockholm and Delhi, Val Iremonger, was our last producer. The founder of the Lyric Theater in Belfast was our secretary. Many others passed into acting. So I took to making theatrical props as one of my means of – hardly making a living – an existence, a subsistence, really. It so happened that at the time Hilton Edwards discovered that I was able to do things that previously hadn't been obtainable in Ireland or, for that matter, in London. Certainly not at a cheap price. I started to reduce the amount of scenery, the amount of painted backdrops. That was a fashionable thing then. And I concentrated on huge props like statues of Apollo or Venus or whatever. And so simply because people knew I was there, they tended to come to me from the Abbey and the Gate and other separate productions. And from the odd film when they were on Irish locations.

DONLEAVY INDICATED THERE HAD BEEN A SEPARATION BETWEEN THOSE WHO LIVED UPROARIOUS LIVES AND THOSE WHO DID THE ARTISTIC WORK.

I don't remember any particular distinction of any kind. There were no separate zones of living that I can think of. I went many, many times to the Catacombs. On one occasion I lived there for about ten days, in a most superior room.

IS THIS AFTER YOU VACATED GRAFTON STREET – ABOUT 1948?

I think that it was probably 1949. I've forgotten exactly when I left Grafton Street. I left quite early on because the huge place had been taken over. It was an entire floor of the most expensive property in the middle of the city. Grafton Street district was the equivalent of Bond Street in London or Avenue Louise inn Brussels or anywhere like that. I was squeezed out and ended up in a Georgian mews off Baggott Street. It was a mews off a mews. It was full of hens. You had to pick your way through them to get to it. And so I moved everything up there and expanded to fill up the space. You could hardly move around in it. It was about that time that I met people like Gainor Crist, the Ginger Man.

HOW DID YOU COME ACROSS THAT NEST OF AMERICAN STUDENTS AT TRINITY? HOW DID DONLEAVY, CRIST, AND O'DONOGHUE STRIKE YOU AT THE TIME OF YOUR FIRST ENCOUNTERS?

I can't remember any first meeting. But I do remember the first time I talked to Donleavy at any length. It was at Crist's house at 1 Newtown Avenue, Blackrock .3 He had a little house there with two rooms downstairs and basically one room upstairs. I was there several times. There were problems with Gainor who was rather given to the bottle. I remember one occasion when Petra tracked him down in Blackrock village waving a dirty nappy.

SO WAS CRIST GINGERY?

He had ginger hair. Not violently ginger, I've known more gingery people. He was about six feet tall, slender, very well spoken, a slightly T.S. Eliot way of speaking. I don't think this was an affectation. He actually used rather Dickensian phrases like 'My good man,' 'God's teeth' and even 'zounds.' He would affect, very mildly, a satiric kind of pedantry but he said these things in a comic spirit which you were meant to know, and you were meant to laugh. Many had reservations about it of a violent kind. Somewhere in this flat I still have his law notes in an old ledger with half an acre of foolscap. He left many pages untouched.

DID YOU EVER SEE HIM STUDY?

Law, No. But he read a lot. He read everything.

WAS HE RECOGNISABLE IN THE STAGE PRODUCTION OF THE GINGER MAN YOU SAW IN DUBLIN IN 1999?

He is strangely recognizable. All the characters in The Ginger Man are recognizable – with exception of, I think, of Mary.' There were moments in his life when he became very testy and rather outrageous. These were usually followed the next day by remorse and apologies. It was a feature of his character that Donleavy tends to forget or didn't find convenient to use. He came from Dayton, Ohio and his next door neighbors were the Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur. Gainor's father had been a respected physician who had been to the South Pole with Admiral Byrd. He married a second time, Gainor's mother died when he was quite young. Some people attribute his slightly necrophiliac tastes to the death of his mother.

Skylla MacNamara interjects: Gainor had this wily charm and would get anything out of you, your background, and whatever you were thinking about, your whole life history perhaps. This was truth night. And then`when he had you really flung out, then he'd borrow money. (laughter)

IT SAYS A LOT ABOUT CRIST THAT IT IS A FOND MEMORY. WHAT'S THIS ABOUT NECROPHILIA?

He was hitchhiking to County Down and got as far as Drogheda. It was a hot day and he entered the large cool Cathedral.and, slipping off his shoes, would sit in the back pew with his swollen feet on the cold marble. He fell asleep and was awakened by childish laughter and saw little girls putting pennies into a slot which turned on a light which lit up the mummified head of the blessed Oliver Plunket, now Saint Oliver Plunkett. Gainor was most taken by this and sent me a photographic postcard of it. Two or three years later Brendan rediscovered it and dubbed it the BOP in the box. – B dot., O dot. P dot. Brendan sent me a beautiful postcard to pass onto Gainor and scribbled on it – I think it was Brendan's last piece of verse : The blessings of Ollie, so jovial and Jolly be on you dear Crist till next we get pissed.'

At Gainor's request I made him a small copy of the BOP fitted into a match box. He carried it around in his pocket and would show it. It looked very like the BOP, like someone very dead with teeth showing. a papier-mâché head. Years later he showed me a brothel in Barcelona. They'd had a small morgue: a mortuary chapel and bier awaiting the next customer. I don't know if the brothel had any specialities – probably had to arrange that the day before. Another occasion in Madrid with Peter Walsh, an ex-IRA man, he took me to see Spanish funeral hearses with jetblack horses with nodding plumes six feet high, lined with cut glass windows and velvet linings. Then was taken upstairs to a hearse garage where there were very impressive ones with ebony life sized angels – six more small hearses, pearly white, with weeping angels carved in them. About half life size. This was for kids, He thought it was one of the tenderest things he had ever seen. Very impressed by it.

WHAT WAS CRIST UP TO IN DUBLIN?

Trying to screw money out of the American government. His wife had access to his grant before he laid hand on it. That's his first wife, an English woman, whom he met while in the Navy during the war. They were just around and I got to know them better. Mike Donleavy

struck me as an appallingly bad painter which he was and which apparently his then wife M.W. still believed since she'd barred his paintings from their stately home in Mullingar.

HOW WAS DONLEAVY FARING?

He had a house in Kilcool, a cottage surrounded by concrete blocks which he built for pleasure, I think. Maybe they were abstract pieces of sculpture. They looked just like tank traps in the meadow by the sea. He painted pieces on plywood and Swedish hardboard. He raided the Daisy market and bought off the frames. If the paintings didn't fit the frames, he'd saw them down until they did. The borders of the paintings, which were on scrap pieces of hardboard, were very large. I remember an exhibition Mike held on St. Stephens Green.

WHAT WAS THE SUBJECT MATTER AND STYLE?

Many of them were fruit. They had titles like 'Three Large Happy Apples' or 'Rich Delicious Tomatoes' – and there were three circles. They were rather minimal; they were still lives. Very often the tomatoes or cucumbers or whatever they were would just float into space. They were quite naive. Any resemblance to any school of painting that happened before or since is quite coincidental. One very avant-garde woman painter went to the exhibition with me. She said, "We'd better go along and see what Michael Donleavy is doing." She had previously slapped him down because of his tendency to ask people sexual questions about themselves. He never revealed anything about himself but he'd ask people how many times they'd had it last week and that sort of thing. So on our way over we met him standing on the corner of a side street off Grafton Street and she greeted him with 'Michael Donleavy! Are you sill in your celluloid penis stage?' He said, 'What's that, Phyllis?'

'Sculpting your apples,' she said. 'Your celluloid penises.'

Well, I went with her to Mike's exhibition and we walked around this beautiful Dublin painter's gallery with all the other people. Though tending to frankness, Phyllis did not want to offend Mike by saying anything openly. So when Mike asked her what she thought, she said, 'Well, some of the color is quite interesting and indeed quite good.' And Mike said, 'So it should be That Chrome yellow cost me fifteen shillings.'

HOW COULD SOMEONE OF THAT TEMPERAMENT STAY CLOSE ENOUGH TO RECORD THE ANTICS OF A MAN LIKE GAINOR CRIST?

I don't know. How did Boswell stay close to Johnson. Mike carried a notebook. I noticed him using it on occasion and I thought he was writing down an address and I discovered that he had written down little bits and pieces and, indeed, comments of mine and John Ryan and other people which he changed in some way into aphorisms – directed at nothing in particular. They were rather like the pieces of verse that he used at the ends of chapters. Gnomic little utterances.

DID YOU SUSPECT HE WAS WRITING NOVELS?

No I had no idea until Brendan told me about it. Brendan and I and two or three others had been at a weekend party in a very hospitable house up in the mountains near Glendalough. Brendan had a row with a journalist when they went out for a walk. The journalist was a very tedious man but Brendan also overreacted. So Brendan decided he wasn't going back to the house if so-and-so was going with him. And he set off across the mountains and walked twenty miles down to Greystones where he found Donleavy was out. And he broke in and found the manuscript for The Ginger Man. Donleavy was supposed to have appeared with a shotgun because Brendan, who had effected an entry, as they say, left a window open through which he came in. Donleavy crept up and crept up and looked in to see Brendan reading the thing. Brendan looked up and said, 'Put that away. This book is fucking funny.' That's all I know. That's what Brendan told me.

YOU MET BRENDAN BEHAN WHEN HE WAS IN THE FIANNA [REPUBLICAN SCOUTS], THE JUNIOR IRA?

The first time I ever spoke to him he was maybe sixteen and I was eighteen or nineteen. It was at the end of the Spanish Civil war. There was an attempt in the crumbling days of the Republic of Catalonia to get a food ship out to beleaguered Barcelona. A meeting was held and we were all issued with banners to carry, 'Skim Milk for Spain' and things like that. I'm not sure what the Spaniards thought of skim milk but that's what they got if they got it. The person carrying the other pole of the banner, marching past the General Post Office where Nelson's pillar stood, was Brendan. He was a very good-looking boy with a very bad stammer. A young Stewart Granger in appearance. His personality overpoured.

So I became quite friendly with him although a youth of nineteen looks upon a boy of sixteen as very much younger than himself. Nonetheless Brendan became part of my circle for a while, mostly connected with the theater group. The he disappeared and I heard that he had been imprisoned in England. The Second World War had started by then. A year had passed. Then one day, coming into my Grafton Street studio on a tram – I had a flat in Rathgar – someone appeared behind me and tapped me on the shoulder and it was Brendan who, wherever he was going, jumped off the tram with me and came down to the studio. It was then I discovered he had been released. The previous evening he had enacted the closing scene in his book with the customs officer greeting him in Irish off the boat in Dun Laoighaire. Had Borstal Boy been extended another paragraph he would have said, "Next day on the 15 tram I met . . ." He went home but he wasn't too well received there. There were always rows going on in that family.

IDEOLOGICAL ROWS? PURE FAMILY ROWS?

I should imagine both. All mixed together. He spent the night there. I suppose that's where he was coming from. He didn't go back for about a fortnight. He stayed with me. No one drank a good deal at that time although we went into McDaids often. But we seemed to spend hours over a pint or a couple of half-pints. There wasn't a great deal of money then. And that was my meeting with Brendan. Later he shot at the policeman and went into prison again.

WHAT WERE HIS AMBITIONS AT THE TIME?

His ambitions were not to do house painting. So far as I know, they were purely negative.

BUT HE HAD BEEN WRITING POETRY.

Well, he made some infantile effort while in school. Many children do that. I think his interest was nurtured in prison, particularly in the Curragh, which was kind of a university with lectures going on all day by people like Roger McHugh and many others. People who subsequently took over the Folklore Commission were interned there. He started writing there and also in Arbour Hill, the military prison. His reason for writing poetry, as I wrote in a review of Colm Kearney's book on Brendan, is that the Irish Gaelic magazine paid very quickly and they always paid properly in guineas, never in pounds. Because guineas are for artists and gentlemen and pounds are for the commonality, you see. So it was two guineas a poem, which at the time was quite a lot. Many's the time that I and others waited while Brendan rushed off with a grubby piece of paper in his hand to come back with the money. If those two guineas hadn't existed, the poems would not have been written.

YOU HAVE A HEAD OF BRENDAN DISPLAYED ON YOUR MANTLE, BESIDE MANY OTHER BUSTS, DID HE ACTUALLY POSE FOR IT?

Well, Brendan, who was a monstrous egotist or egoist or both, conceived the idea of having a statue of himself erected in St. Stephens Green. There were a number of grass bays around the perimeter of the north side of the Green, some of which contained statues, some of which didn't. In some cases statues had been there originally which were blown up during the Troubles. It occurred to Brendan that if you erected a statue like that- how long would it be there before people noticed it hadn't always been there? The idea came to him, I think, because I had just done a life-sized replica of a statue of Queen Victoria which originally sat in front of Leinster House.[4] It was for the Annual Horse Show Review at the Gaiety Theater. It was very uncomely.

SO WAS SHE.

She was. The statue was even more so. The monument was quite handsome, baroque. But she, sitting in the middle of it, was rather uncomely. It was known as "Ireland's revenge." Anyway, I'd done this copy complete with dried pigeon and seagull shit. Very effective. And indeed when taken to the Gaiety Theater in the back of a lorry was mistaken for the real thing. Brendan didn't want his own name on the statue. He wanted a statue erected to Rabelais with Brendan's head on it. This was to be set up on a plywood base treated to look like stone, with which I had some skill. He had even gone to the extent of persuading an engineer to design a retractable trolley so we could wheel the thing over, press a lever, so it would settle in the grass as if forever. I had to come, for various reasons, to London then and later he followed me over and we started to do it. The important thing was to get a portrait head of him from which the rest could be fabricated.

SO HE ACTUALLY SAT STILL FOR YOU?

He slept still. He fell asleep half way through, no, a quarter way through. I had to prop up his head with half a dozen books.

WAS THE SCHEME THWARTED?

Well, I didn't go back to Dublin for sufficiently long to do it but the hoax could have been done. Our mutual theory was that it would take about three weeks before some gardener mowing the grass would bump into the base and discover it wasn't granite.

WHAT CHANGES DID YOU SEE IN BRENDAN OVER THE YEARS?

The only change that happened to Brendan is that he was drinking heavily toward the end. He always drank a lot socially but towards the end it was very bad, particularly since his visits to the States and Canada, it began. The chemistry of his body changed and his soul with it. Well the two are inseparable.[5]

PATRICK KAVANAGH'S HEAD IS ON THE MANTLE. TOO. WHEN DID HE ARRIVE AT GRAFTON STREET?

Kavanagh started coming into McDaids when Bev and myself and John Ryan established ourselves there.[6] We hadn't much opportunity or domestic capacity for entertaining. Damp turf fires and all that. So we would just take visiting people over to McDaids for a ham sandwich and half a pint of Guinness or porter, very often, at the time. And Kavanagh was one of the people there. I remember the first lengthy conversation I had with him, a rather irascible one. There was an exhibition of paintings by Irish painters. One was John ffrench. Michael Morrow was another – he was Gothic even in those days – and I think Beatrice, Brendan's later wife, was one of the exhibitors in the Grafton gallery, which was owned by Tom Nisbet and next door to McDaids. There was a crowd of people at the opening. I was invited but there was no room to get in at the door. Eve the porch was filled. I'd thought I would go and have a drink next door and come back in twenty minutes since I knew most people had come fairly early and would leave the gallery reasonably soon.

But Kavanagh sort of craned over my shoulder, looked in and bawled over my head past my ear: "FRAUDS! IMPOSTERS! DECEIVERS!" Then he went into McDaids, ordered himself a small whiskey and he sat curled up in himself on a stool., not looking at anyone. I said, "That was rather cruel." He went on at great length to explain to me why it was true that every phony in the city was there. To some extent this was true. Every phony in the city was there. So were several dozen quite reasonable people. So was Oisin Kelly, who is now a celebrated sculptor. So, you know.

YOU KNEW BRIAN O'NOLAN TOO.[7]

I got to know him when a man called George Jeffares, who was doing a Ph.D on Yeats, was

having continuous rows with Nolan. I attended some of these argumentative sessions and I got to know him. He wasn't a person one talked to. He talked to you. He held court. There was little to contribute. Oddly enough, although Brendan spoke louder and externalized more, he was a listener and he was a question-asker. He'd ask endless questions and he'd pick you up on them. In between his mimicries and fantasies.

ERWIN SCHROEDINGER WAS LODGED AT THE DUBLIN INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES DURING THE WAR.8 HOW DID ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF WAVE MECHANICS ENTER YOUR LIFE?

I met his wife. I found her a very charming Austrian woman. She then invited myself and others to visit over afternoon tea. I met Shroedinger and liked him very much. He invited me to Dunsink observatory with him. His ideas were like toys to him and he liked explaining them to people. I don't suppose I met him more than two dozen times though most were lengthy occasions. I remember he had a loom, a shuttle loom which produced tapestries about eighteen inches in width. He changed the pattern the whole time. He'd try out mathematical curves and then arbitrarily stop them and change to another curve from a different equation. The effect was very beautiful. I wish I had one of them. He once offered to cut me off a couple of pieces. They went on and on in very long strips. He had them running down the walls. Random curves and slopes and colors.

HE HAD WOVEN FORMULAE ALL AROUND HIS ROOMS?

That's right. He dropped into Grafton Street a few times, mostly to hear a singer named Aine Woods, who was a superb Gaelic singer. My wife was compiling notebooks of traditional songs and people used to come over to sing. Schroedinger left Dublin when the war ended.

SOME PEOPLE, LOOKING BACK ON THE YEARS AFTER THE WAR, OR 'EMERGENCY,' PORTRAY THE PERIOD TO BE AS NEAR TO A 'GOLDEN AGE' IN THE ARTS AS DUBLIN HAS SEEN SINCE LADY GREGORY.

It wasn't a golden age. Each age is an age that is dying or one that is coming to birth. I never thought it was golden. Gilt potato bread perhaps. It was a clearing of the lungs after the stagnation of those years of neutrality during the war. Ireland was spared the horrors of Europe but it did pay a price. It was pushed back on itself. Became insulated and cut off from news. Dublin was a city of rumors. Actual news of events in the wide, wide world was very hard to come by because there was censorship on both sides. So you couldn't find out what was happening. I think most people I knew at the time favored the Allies. Most of the IRA then were more violently anti-Nazi and anti-fascist than the British government. Very much so. Many had fought in Spain. At the time the left was very republican, and a large part of the Labour party was republican-socialist. It's the rump of this that you find in the Official IRA.[i]

YOU LIVE IN LONDON. WHAT'S YOUR RECEPTION BEEN LIKE OVER THE DECADES. AN IRISHMAN, GIVEN THE 'TROUBLES' GOING INTO THE MID-90s, MUST HAVE FELT QUEASY ON OCCASIONS.

Well, during rather critical times I've found myself rather embarrassed when going into pubs with plastic bags in my hand. I've been conscious of the fact. My attention has been drawn to them in pubs, but mostly where I'm known. The limeys, god bless them, are a very tolerant people. Harmless and tolerant. Not very imaginative or talkative. Or rather they do talk but not about things that interest me very much. They're not disputative enough. If I were to make an ethnic choice before going into a previously unvisited London pub, I'd choose a fellow Celt of some sort. A Glasgow man. An Edinburgh man. A Welshman. You don't meet many Cornish so I can't judge them. But the Welsh and the Scots are much closer to us than the English I now realize. Anyway, in watching international sporting matches, for example, I am pleased when Scotland beats England.

WOULD YOU SAY DISPUTATIVENESS IS A CELTIC TRAIT?

It does appear to be. Years ago I would deny this but I am aware of it now. Certainly the Welsh are as disputative as the Irish. I know that if I bump into a Welsh man anywhere, he'd talk the hind legs off me. About nothing very much. About life, death and resurrection. From such talk anything can split off.

THERE IS THE CONTENTION THAT CELTS TALK THEIR BOOKS AWAY.

I've heard that. I don't know if there were any books there. I really don't believe that about writing. Because writing is an obsessive thing. Important writing is obsessive.

YOUR FIRST NOVEL, THE BOOK OF INTRUSIONS WAS WELL REVIEWED. IT WENT THROUGH A LONG PERIOD OF GESTATION.

I like writing. It's a very pleasant thing to do. It's a bit awkward if you're arthritic, leaning over a hard table sitting in a hard chair. But otherwise it's a very pleasant occupation. It occurred to me that not only in Europe but over half the new world as well – Meso-America and South America – that people built walls. I started to put down an essay, as it were, about walls.

WALLS AS METAPHORS, WALLS AS REAL WALLS?

Walls as everything. There were vast areas of western Ireland along the Atlantic seaboard up to Donegal and the offshore islands where people built walls in crazy abundance – small walls, tiny walls, all made of gray stone and well maintained. Since they were very old walls, it occurred to me that many of these walls had been repaired down through the endless centuries. As small peasant farmers marry and acquire a bit more land they may take out a bit of the wall but usually leave the rest. Considering these things I introduced a couple of characters – a suggestion of Flann O'Brien on some occasion that it was quite unnecessary to invent new characters. There were lots of characters already invented. You could take a lot of characters from Dickens and put them into a spy story, and you could have a detective named Nickleby. Out of these frivolous cogitations you could take entire stories borrowing characters of a previous generation of writers who are already written about quite satisfactorily and far better than you ever could. So I went on from there. It occurred to me that it would be

necessary to write a story to link it to someone who had gone before. Then there was Limbo. I read something about Limbo having been abolished by the Catholic Church of Pope John. If limbo was abolished, I thought what did they do with the inmates? Did they just turn them loose? All these unbaptized babies and 'meritorious pagans' like Virgil or Juvenal or Marcus Aurelius. So I got the idea very quickly of the emptied Limbo and of squatters. There was a lot of squatting going on at that time in London. And I started to fill it with characters.

FROM KNOWN WORKS, ABORTED WORKS?

Exhumed aborted works. It was great fun.

THEY ROUND BACK VERY ROUGHLY UPON THE AUTHOR.

Yes. They become visible. The tougher ones escape through a fissure. I pictured Limbo as a very old building made of ectoplasm. The ectoplasmic tiles were coming off and odd characters manage to escape. And two of them manage to escape through an early nineteenth century novel. They invade the writer's psyche and get into his narrative. It's a roomy warm place into which they camp quite happily. He discovers to his horror some time later that they have completely taken him over and use him as a place to become encorpified. They use the literary notes to extricate and to free other people. One is an actual creation by Brendan Behan, a translation of the late 18th century poem The Midnight Court by Brian Merriman. It's about a revolt of the women in Ireland who convene a court on the shortcomings of Irish manhood. Brendan did a translation when he was in prison. The governor of the Borstal put in a request for Brendan of the Irish version of the poem. The manuscript, was handwritten sometimes in pen and ink., and sometimes in pencil. It was left on a scaffold. He lost the manuscript.

YOUR BOOK WAS IN DANGER OF NOT GETTING ENCORPIFIED ITSELF. YOU HAD A GALLING EXPERIENCE WITH A BRITISH PUBLISHER.

Someone connected with them. An agent. Someone I met in Bloomsbury in a pub near the British museum took it. He was quite happy to take it to the publisher. Various people at Faber and Faber decided it was worth having a shot at. They had a final meeting on a Tuesday evening. An extremely important super-editor came in rather late. He'd been delayed on the tube or the train. They went through the business of the day very quickly. and someone said what about this Irish book. He said, Don't mention that bloody country to me. No more Irish!' At that time Belfast was ablaze. Newspapers were full of Celtic tedium and blood in the street. So the book was rejected on the assumption it was about the provisional IRA.

IF THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A NICE IRONY, ONE IS THAT THE BOOK OF INTRUSIONS WAS PUBLISHED BY DALKEY ARCHIVE PRESS. YOU HAD DESIGNED THE DUST JACKET FOR BRIAN O NOLAN'S THE DALKEY ARCHIVE.

Yes.

DID HE REQUEST YOU SPECIFICALLY?

Yes. The editor contacted me. At about that time I had modeled and cast a head of Joyce. One of the few photographs I had was from a death mask. All Brian said was that it had to be "under water" No one knew what he meant. When asked, he would say I told you: Under water.' He said, You didn't put a miter on its head.' I said, Well I meant to. Wasn't it obvious?"'

A CRITIC PRAISED YOUR BOOK FOR MAKING FUN OF ARTIFICAL BOUNDARIES AND UNNECESSARY BARRIERS, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL.

All nations are composed of lesser aggregations and they tend under stress to protect themselves, and to some extent to isolate themselves. That's how it is and that's how it has been throughout history.

SO YOU PIT SUBVERSIVE COSMOPOLITANISM AGAINST KNEEJERK NATIONALISM.

Well, that is so.

I GATHER FOR THE WEREWOLF NOVEL THAT IT WASN'T LON CHANEY YOU HAD IN MIND.

I was taken by the title. There were a few stories I know from the early Irish from around Kilkenny, which was a Norman town. It was famous for witchcraft. There was a story of three werewolf sisters who slept in a cave who lured passersby and ate them. They were particularly fond of pilgrims. I returned to Bram Stoker. I knew the Stoker house very well. Then he was a well-known surgeon. I remember seeing a collection of risqué slides. Not very dirty.

IT IS A MURDER MYSTERY WITH THE WEREWOLF PLAYING DETECTIVE.

Well, I didn't plot anything out. At one time he was a surgeon in the early nineteenth century. He sets out to find out what he suspects – that an artist's model wasn't drowned but murdered. But in the course of this he discovers this Sapphic ring, which published this highly naughty magazine [in order to support themselves and their cause].

THE SOFT PORN OF ITS TIME.

I've seen some of them. They are artful, and rather beguiling indeed. He goes to Paris at the time of the siege of the Commune. He hopes to pursue the matter further. He goes to their Sapphic headquarters and finds them completely guileless and cooperative. He also discovers, after starting out as a fairly orthodox werewolf who couldn't pass a day without a chubby child or a meaty piece of male or female venison, as it were, that, like society, as the centuries pass, his moral attitude toward eating has been affected. A degree of enlightenment begins. Just as in the time of the Crusades, barbaric things were happening to entire cities, entire populations were starved, slaughtered, burnt alive. As we came to an age of more enlightenment this became less acceptable. Similarly he prides himself on the fact that his taste for blood over the centuries is decreasing, and is less intrusive. He does not have to kill. He still does occasionally

because that's his nature. He follows the urges of his palate but never very seriously. Very often he happily subsists on ordinary fare.

SO HE BECOMES A SYMBOL OF A MORE CIVILIZED SOCIETY.

Yes. In many ways Western society is becoming more civilized. It's unacceptable to eat each other. It still happens, you know, but only on extreme occasions.

DO YOU MEAN THIS NOVEL TO BE A KIND OF COMEDY?

Patrick Kavanagh corrected me and said, The real truth lies in comedy. You wouldn't find much of it in tragedy." I believe it to be profoundly true – using comedy in Dante's sense of a happy or a hopeful ending.

LIFE DEATH OR RESURRECTION: ANY PARTING REMARKS ON ANY OF THESE TOPICS?

I seem to recall that when old Jack Yeats the painter was nigh unto death, about three weeks before he died an American critic wanted to meet him. This was rather difficult because he was bed-ridden at that time. But finally he consented: Yes, come along for sherry or whatever. And this rather eager young man – I've forgotten his name if I ever knew it – sat down respectfully by his bedside with the sherry and said, "Tell me, Mr. Yeats, what advice have you got for rising young artists?" Yeats looked around the room and then out the window at the mountains and he said, Ah, well.'

WELL?

That's all. Just, Ah, well.' As soft as the end of Ulysses: Yes. Yes. Yes.'

NOTES

1 John Ryan, born to a well-off Dublin family, was an Irish renaissance man: literary editor, theatrical producer, and painter. He edited A Bash in The Tunnel: James Joyce An Irish View (1970) and is author of several books, most notably, Remembering How We Stood: Bohemian Dublin in the Fifties'(1975). See my interview in the January 1988 issue of The Journal of Irish Literature. I regret there was no room for it in these pages.

2 A Fenian is a 19th centurty Irish nationalist, of a particularly vigorous kind.

3 The Curragh was the County Kildare site of an internment camp.

4 The site of the today's Irish parliament.

5 Behan died in 1964.

6 Patrick Kavanagh, born in rural Monaghan, is author of The Great Hunger and other Poems, Tarry Flynn,, The Green Fool, and many other works

7Brian O'Nolan, aka, Myles naGopaleen, aka, Flann O'Brien (1911-1966) was a legendary Dublin satirist and wit. He was an Irish Times columnist and author of The Dalkey Archive, The Poor Mouth, The Third Policeman and At-Swim-Two-Birds

8 Erwin Schrodinger, Austrian physicist, supplied the mathematical basis for Einstein's theory of relativity. He was the author of What is Life and other Scientific Essays' (1956).

[i] The IRA split in 1969 between the Provisional IRA who waged the nationalist war until the mid-1990s, and the Marxist-oriented Official IRA who had called a ceasefire in 1972.

Confessions of an Irish Werewolf

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

Chapter 1

The horse tram rattled and jerked to a stop as two passengers rushed from the curbside and mounted the steps on to the platform, the man helping the lady past a pile of fresh horse droppings and puddles in the more sunken parts of the cobbled road. The fare was a penny from near the Stoker house at Marino to the Five Lamps on the North Strand: a straight run across the River Tolka and then the steeply embanked canal bridge. The city of Dublin had been spreading in size since the latter part of the century. With the Act of Union in 1800, induced by Protestant panic and colossal bribery, Dublin lost its well-intentioned Protestant Commons and Lords and became the administrative centre for the four Irish provinces of Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connacht. The brandy continued from France, thanks to O'Donnell, the smuggler of national salvation during England's wars with Napoleon. The Irish fought on both sides: anything to pay the rent or entertain lofty Jacobin ideals.

The city slumbered for a few decades, until now, the late 1860s; but the failure of the potato harvest for successive murderous years jolted it into life again. Lawyers were in demand, and corn merchants, as well as linen weavers and civil servants. The city started to spread, north, south and west, along the vale of the Liffey. The east was blocked by Dublin Bay, ringed by the Hill of Howth in the north of the bay to the Wicklow hills to the south.

I should not go on with these panoramic perspectives. But then I am very different from the others, or so I tell myself. I do not feel different from my fellow beings apart from living longer and a tendency at times to yield to an urge to tear apart the flesh of strong wayfarers and, in the early days, this in itself counted for little in this blood-soaked and lovely land. Things improved slightly through the long centuries of change.

It's not as if I lack feelings of tenderness, affection – you might even call it love at times. Does a fox feel love for a vole or a rabbit, as it follows its deadly chase? I doubt it. But I often feel a reverent awe and something like love for a slim girl or a plump girl or a sportive and lightfooted lad. I often wonder if what amounts to the Gothic term Werewolf applies to me at all. There was a cat demon or non-human entity somewhere in Sligo, before the Contention of the Bards at Drum Cett: name of Irusan. A sharp-clawed creature that tore people asunder if they couldn't answer a riddle. Heaven knows how far back his murky past went.

I must keep my eye on the girl with the galoon ornament on her tightly-buttoned swelling bosom, chamfered into an insect waist. Quite well-dressed when you come to think of it. She climbed on at Annesley Bridge over the River Tolka. Oh the smell. Rotten eggs. Disgusting. These Home Rulers on the Dublin Corporation. Just as corrupt and snobbish as the Anglo-Irish

lot.

Imagine planting a vitriol works on the estuary of a trout stream. The trout are still there about two miles upstream, but from Annesley Bridge the water boils corrosively. Brian Boru's son was drowned there at the Battle of Clontarf, 1014. Before my time. His bones wouldn't be worth crunching if he fell in now. They would have been seething bubbles in ten minutes.

I must keep to the main object, but an excessively long life has made me reflective and a prey to memories. I was once a man of action. What else is a werewolf? But now my thoughts stray: not so much with pleasant memories but with items of interest.

It should be and was my obsessive predilection to tear flesh asunder and, a long time ago, consume it. Then followed a century or two of just ripping asunder. The intimations of middle age came to me during what the English call the 1641 rebellion: O Neill's War. Terrible things were done and one morning I found a young woman weeping by a burnt-out castle. Everyone seemed dead or dismembered. Great beams still smouldered and she had a fragment of blown cinder in her eye. It was agonising but had probably shielded her mind from shock.

When I approached her, in something like English dress apart from my shoes and headgear, she was not frightened. I deftly flicked her eyeball clear. As the reflex tears flowed from her eyes I became carnivorously detumescent as it were. I lost entirely my desire, my need to tear her pink and juicy flesh and swallow it down in glorious jawfuls. It was a strange and disturbing feeling and as I took her arm tenderly to lead her to the haven of some peasant's hovel I tried to suppress my lupine howl as much as I could. She probably mistook it for half-smothered lamentations of sympathy.

Things are coming to a pretty pass when the Damned turn to virtue out of boredom or impuissance.

My little quarry is sitting circumspectly beside a large woman with an extravagant bonnet trimmed with imitation jet. This is a great age of imitation. Electroplated silver on copper, imitation ivory, pearls, stone, Egyptian tombs, Greek mausoleums; even imitation male members for Sapphic women to play the man or girls of the demi-monde to amuse their lovers on jaded afternoons.

Several growlers pass us in either direction, their jarveys pretending to flick their long whips over the trotting horses to make them lift their knees in a braver showing. The passengers are usually invisible in the leather-smelling upholstered carriage. My girl watches them carefully: jealousy, curiosity or expectation? But none of them pulls over to slow the tram or diminish the crested panoply of the clopping shires, their harnesses jangling with ornamental brasses, corporate, municipal or even religious. The curling tresses at their fetlocks twirl and gyrate like the sea foam beneath the hooves of the steeds of Mananan Mac Lir, the shadowy sea god who gave his name to the Isle of Man and Mona, which the English call Angelesea, the island county. The Romans crucified the members of the druidic colleges there, but what did the Angles do? And how did they claim the Menai Straits as their sea? All before my time, of

course, but one becomes so provincial, living in Ireland so long. The fate of England was decided, I suppose, at a battle near Dumbarton. I can't recall anything about it, except for the defeated Gaels and Picts. Doubtless every English schoolchild can recite its legend by heart. I can hardly remember my Welsh or my French. 600 years is a long time, even for a semi-immortal like me.

My young lady is getting restless. Descending from the vehicle? Large Palladian boulevards stretch north west. Visiting there perhaps. One road is blocked by a herd of lowing cattle, another with herds of bleating sheep, pushing traffic and pedestrians to the walls and railings: on their way to the steam packet to Liverpool to reappear in the cities of the Empire builders. Not very proud of their Empire, are they? Within days these cack-rumped beasts will be dissected and displayed in butchers shops labelled Prime English Beef or Yorkshire Lamb.

There seems to be an awful lot of dairy shops selling milk, bread, bags of coal, small bottles of castor oil and elixirs for ladies or the petit mal. Everything for a penny, except the coal. Best Wigan nuts, fourpence a stone. The thickening commerce means that we are nearing Amiens Street railway, the terminus for Belfast and the nine counties of Ulster.

The tram rattles and jangles to a stop outside the railway terminus. A flight of steps in fine-cut stone lead to the ticket offices and departure platforms. Foot passengers must climb these as German and English gentlemen climb the Spanish Steps to Trinita del Monte and the Villa Borghese in Rome. Even people like me have done a trans-alpine tour, since the advent of the steam locomotive, apart from a few daysí coach journey across the Alps. Travellers who arrive by growler, jaunting car, trap or vis-a-vis, ascend to the lofty platforms by a cobbled ramp in a side street. Again an echo of the Rampa by the side of the Spanish Steps in Rome. The engineers who built the station were self-conscious Romantics.

I must still my mind to the task in hand. It bubbles like pink champagne. The girl has arisen and is moving towards the steps. Other passengers jostle behind her and I join them, but in time to descend before her as she hesitates because of her restrictive skirts or the shining piles of horse ordure left on the road by a hundred cabs and lorries and drays. As if by a courtesy offered by sheer chance I offer her my hand, which she bends slightly to take. She smiles, not shyly but in a friendly manner. Her hand has strong bones but is adequately covered with soft flesh, and cushioned. I take her leaning weight for a second or two and she is on the wood blocks which pave the road. Smiling and nodding and then relinquishing her eyehold, I lead her deftly past the horse droppings, take her weight for a second by the kerb, let go her hand, bow slightly and say brightly, "A pleasant journey, Mademoiselle" and leave her at once, starting towards Sheriff Street which runs by the side of the station.

I stopped there, halted by a small herd of bullocks bound for the steamship on the North Wall of the River Liffey. This gave me an opportunity to see that she had ascended the steps out of sight. I changed course and tripped rapidly after her. She had apparently bought her ticket and was walking towards the side platform, not the main platform throughout North Leinster to Ulster and the teeming city of Belfast.

In Belfast people work in industry, unlike Dublin, where those who work, excluding the professions and the British administration at Dublin Castle and the Vice Regal Lodge, are servants, grocers, purveyors of all kinds and to the British Army, with its red-jacketed soldiers, smart with their swagger sticks and tightly sheathed bottoms. These are greatly admired by the servant class of young women.

Oh hand me down me petticoat

Oh hand me down me shawl

Oh hand me down me petticoat

For Iím off to the Linen Hall.

If you go to the Curragh Camp

Just ask for Number Nine

Youíll find three Redcoats in a row

And the best-looking one is mine.

They live short lives, these humans, and they gambol like lambs in an upland meadow, fecklessly thoughtless of the winters and miseries ahead.

My little lamb has stepped up into a Ladies Only carriage in the first coach, flashing a pretty ankle as she mounts the step. Hastily buying a ticket, I enter the last carriage of the last coach. On a midday noon there are not many passengers bound for Howth, a mountainous peninsula, almost an island and about three miles long. Only half a dozen miles from Nelson on his high-fluted column in the centre of the city. "The one-handed adulterer" he was known as; apt, since he adulted himself royally from the Caribbean to Naples and back to Picadilly and Wimbledon. Must have been tricky with only one arm, but sufficient, one assumes.

After a long delay, during which my mind generally races, we exuded a little steam amongst the wheels, puffed and clattered bumpers and then began to thrust and retract our pistons with greater and greater rapidity, along an embanked railway, past the backs and yards of grimy houses, our own sharp-smelling smoke adding to the acid grime. Safe on our highly embanked track, which traps a large area of sulphuric puddles from the vitriol works, mixed with tidal rivulets of salty scum, we entered the mainland again, heading towards the narrow isthmus of Sutton, with the sea visibly lapping on either side.

Passengers descended onto the platforms at Killester and Raheny and sand-silted Sutton itself before we plunged into a cutting to emerge into Howth Terminus by the west pier of the harbour. The humps and perpendiculars of the island of Ireland's Eye lay a mile or so across the rising and falling tides. Fishing boats were lowering their sails and a steam launch

chugged and spat its way towards the steps on the West Pier. Seagulls circled and screamed at the fishing boats unloading their creels of fish. “Fresh Dublin Bay prawns. Thruppence a dozen. Stiff mackerel.”

My girl descended rapidly and walked impatiently along the harbour front, beneath the village on its steep hill and the ruins of the old Abbey. Fishermen are still buried there.

In the bright distant sea light she seemed slimmer (or thinner) than before. Maybe she was thin, and her bosom and bum were stuffed more acceptably by a skilled tailor. I’ve seen many strange fashions come and go and should be more accurate in my estimates.

Anyway she stopped by the east pier end near the hamlet of Balscaddon and spoke to a fisherman or harbour hanger-on. There are always such people residentially contemplating the tides and the gull-circled sky in such places. They both set off together along the lower tier of the pier to a flight of granite steps leading down to the water.

I stayed near the Balscaddon hilly path watching the top of the steps about 100 yards along the pier. Vision was screened by the granite blocks into which the steps were built. Then I saw them both in a wooden boat, dinghy or whatever they call them in Howth. Every few miles of coast boats have different names and styles. Howth is an old fishing village where the native Irish of Ben Edair intermarried with Norsemen from Dublin. To begin with the “Strangers” may have used a little force on the native girls, but within a few generations they were speaking Norse-Gaelic and cohabiting lustily to replenish the yearly toll of drowned sons.

I realised that she was being rowed to the Island by the harbour lounger. One of his functions, perhaps. Why? To sketch the landscape of the mainland, to compose verse or to meet somebody? Impossible to guess.

Realising that she could not escape unseen over the wide expanse of water, I dallied for a while over a pot of stout at the harbour tavern. Shebeen is perhaps a better word. The fishermen who have spoken English for a couple of centuries were engaged in a mock argument with the kipper-smokers and paid little attention to me. I was dressed in a coat and cape, typical of a Dublin professional gentleman, like Sir William Wilde or Surgeon Stoker, who took some interest in early history. I appeared to be in early middle age, dark-haired and well groomed and neatly bearded. I had a choice of beer or goatís milk from the old lady by the boatslip, and had little difficulty choosing which. I had to delay before requesting a boat to Ireland’s Eye.

I was in that strange state of intoxicating optimism which comes with these obsessive needs and moods. After all, I intended to kill, dismember and perhaps eat a young woman: a breast or a half buttock maybe. Raw meat requires a lot of chewing. I have never been caught. Suspected a few times, but that was long ago. And yet I behave very openly, as I was then doing. It is a state of mind, and innocent certainty that turns people’s minds away from rational suspicion. But in my quieter moments I can see the risks.

As it happened this time I overheard the arrangements being made for an egg harvest on the

island cliffs by a group of locals, some boys, some sinewy men. Expressing an interest is sea birds, quite truthfully, I sought a passage with them, and was accepted. A half crown was the signet to the agreement.

We embarked with coils of rope, wooden stakes and baskets in a tarry and well-patched skiff, and were soon clear of the harbour lighthouse and on a fairly smooth sea, but our rise and fall relative to the pier breakwater suggested a deep swell. There was a rocky landing in an inlet across the island, but the best port was the silvery strand, about a quarter of a mile long with a Martello tower at one end. With moderate waves, this was most convenient, since the boat could be drawn up, releasing all eight men and boys and, of course, me. These Martello towers were impregnable, circular cut-off towers, originally mounted with cannon on the roof. They dotted Dublin Bay to protect the Viceroy and the Lord Lieutenant from Napoleonís fleet about 70 years ago. Some were inhabited by tenants now, but some, like this one and another on Dalkey Island, on the south side of the bay, had been abandoned.

We duly landed in the ankle-deep wavelets and made our way to the high cliffs on the other side of the island. I went with them. I was curious about the egg collecting and the behaviour of the guillemots, puffins and razorbills that inhabited the ledges. It also gave me an innocent chance to spot the girl, who did not appear to be near the strand or its circle of dunes.

Treading our way through goat paths in the bracken, we reached the lower cliffs on the seaward side and followed uphill until we stared down at the distant water and the tops of birds, diving, circling and screaming warning to each other. On the northern horizon the larger hilly island of Lambay was lit by sunbeams that parted the changing clouds and invited apostolic fingers of light to streak the sombre sky and make the blue sky above us seem more transitory and perilous.

Ropes were unwound and fixed to leather harness straps around the egg collectors. One by one they were lowered over the edge, far above the screaming razorbills and guillemots. The ropes were braked by passing them around a wooden peg hammered into the thin dense turf which lived on the night mist on the clifftops. The collectors called out their fortunes, movements and complaints to the ropemen and their bags began to fill with sturdy pointed eggs. Nature had designed these to roll in a circle and not off the sparsely cushioned ledge.

By this time one of the egg crews had finished its mission, leaving enough inaccessible nests to ensure the next generation of birds. None of the Howthmen would admit the prudence of this, but some would reveal it as a folk gesture of good luck under remorseless questioning and a few pints of black porter. St Fintan was the local saint and his thorn bush was aflame with fluttering rags of offering: birds' eggs, fish, ladies' complaints, broken bones, rheumatism and tertiary fevers.

I had wandered westwards down the bracken paths towards the bare bones of an old church. Who founded it? Norse Christians, native Irish. Both favoured islands for organising bloody forages or communing with God on a diet of shellfish and eggs. My companions attributed it to

St Fintan. Maybe so. What drove people all those years ago, long before my time, to fly to desert caves and rocky islands to affirm their faith? The latest fashion from Alexandria or, in Ireland or Scotland, a tradition of contemplation before a poem or a prophecy?

When I feel this urge rising through my body, my loins, my jaws and my hands, my mind races. I observe keenly, my mind accurately editing the inessentials and I speculate on causes or chains of causation. It is a strange condition of being, the sheer efficiency of which is the most satisfactory aspect of living. I have no certainties, of course, but I have also no doubts.

I strode with certainty, unconcerned that one of the young men was following me. The urge was so strong that where deeper soil had collected on one side of a boulder and the bracken grew very high, I saw something gleaming: a twisted piece of linen or cotton. Such fragments of town life are constantly being washed up on these shores from coastal steamers, the Holyhead mail packet or even from the Atlantic emigrant ships out of Liverpool.

I lifted it carefully. It was a single leg from a pair of womenís drawers, made of very fine bleached linen. Petticoats and chemises are frequently lost by ladies, at remote bathing places: amorous couples disporting alone with the sand martins or giggling girls taking a skin splash for invigoration or to stay a consumption. An incoming tide soddens a dropped garment which cannot comfortably be resumed and is often abandoned to be carried out by the receding tide. The losers return home decently covered by skirts or dresses, feeling a little draughty up their legs but none the worse. But what do they tell their anxious mothers, I wonder.

This piece of underwear was of a fine white material with quite heavy lace at the bottom of the leg: about knee level for the wearer. The top was finished with a hollow seam through which the drawstring once ran and which joined the piece to the other leg by the same drawstring running through the seam around its top. The two separate halves of the garment were therefore joined together by the drawstring tape which was tied by a bowknot across the belly. This is why they were called drawers, one supposes: two separate legs of a pair of frilly breeches joined at the top by a drawstring.

I examined the half garment. The lace was about an inch and a half deep with quite an attractive pattern, fashioned on crochet needles rather than on a lace cushion. Furthermore the fabric was not cambric cotton but very fine linen, as light as any silk. I pondered on all this, as I stood in the bracken-covered slopes. Why was it abandoned? If the owner had undressed, why only one half of her buttocks? Where was she? Was she my quarry? There was no sign of the girl having left the island unless she returned with the hired dinghy and oarsman who brought her there. There was no sign of her from my vantage point, but the island abounded with cliffs, fissures and rocky inlets, as well as the Martello tower.

By this time the boy or young man from the egg harvest had joined me: Michael McConkey. I held up the frilly leg and he sniggered. He knew well enough what it was although it is unlikely that anyone in his family or neighbourhood wore anything like it. These women and girls wore nothing under their petticoats, and passers-by thought nothing when one of them

straddled slightly and peed noisily onto the granite floor of the Howth peninsula. But young McConkey must have picked up fashion gossip, as children do, apart from spying on courting couples from Dublin playing nymphs and shepherds on the island or under the rhododendrons by Howth Castle, the bastion of the St Laurences, an old Norman family.

A tumult of shrieking sea birds circled overhead, possibly to warn their kin on the Big Rock that marauders were coming. I continued downhill towards the Martello tower, followed by Michael, who was still sniggering guiltily about what city people get up to. What do these fisherfolk do in the rutting season, I wondered, but then stopped myself. They may be unlettered, or most of them, but they build their homes, sell their hard-won fish, fresh or smoked, and build their boats. Anyone who has ever seen a boat built can feel the poetry and the intricate grammar of the process. These people have been building fishing boats since Dublin was a Norse city and every bended plank was a family skill like that of a skald or a bard.

Slightly chastened by my thoughts, I reached the tower. I ordered Michael to give me a stirrup to the entrance door high on the wall, and I scrambled into the interior. It was very dark after the sea sky without, but after a while I was able to see around the circular room, lit by small puddles of light from door and window slits sunk tunnel deep in the massive stone structure. There was no furniture, of course, but a fire grate for domestic and defensive purposes was in fair trim and full of charred remains of picnics or fishermenís debris.

The spiral staircase drilled upwards through the massive walls to the roof. I ascended it. At the top it joined the cannon ball hoist and led onto the heavily walled roof, the stone floor edged by a breast-high wall, the top of which sloped downwards over about 8 feet of surrounding wall. In the centre there was a stone mount for a swivelling cannon and a circular track of wrought iron on the floor to take the supporting wheel. The gun had long since been removed by the government or the locals. Napoleon had been dead for fifty years and his nephew was building new empires for France. Anyway there was no sign of the girl from the train.

Descending the narrow spiral of cold stone, I found Michael McConkey poking around the cold embers of the fireplace. A half burnt shoe, some driftwood and unidentifiable charred detritus. Nothing suspicious or even revealing.

I stood in the doorway looking down at the rocks beneath. Why only one drawer leg? Who abandoned it and was it relevant to my quest? Fine linen rather than Manchester cotton suggested an Ulster link. Thatís where Irish linen is grown and where it is spun and woven so excellently. The stitching was neat and even, betokening a skilled seamstress, and the lace was in crochet, a method more easily done by hand, on a hooked needle and a cotton ball. All this suggested to me a neat family home on a northern farm: by the shores of Lough Erne or the tidy fields of Tyrone or North Armagh. I fancied the gloaming light where a loving mother or aunt stitched swiftly against the fading light; or stitched in the last few inches of cotton yarn into a length of lace. Lace to make the knees of the wearer more enticing, for trousseau purposes only, of course. So, the wearer had marriage in mind? But what young woman has

not?

Perhaps all this reasonable supposition was no more that airy speculation. After all, Limerick is famous for its lace, and the O Driscoll women of Baltimore are skilled seamstresses, I am told. Nonetheless I have a feeling about the neat circumspect sensuality of Ulster about the garment, or half garment.

By now, most of the eggs had been collected at ropes' end from the dangerous cliff ledges. The fishermen judge things very accurately, by experience and astute observation, and not many eggs would prove addled when tested against the dawn light from over the Welsh mountains, seventy miles to the east.

I joined them for the return to the mainland, helping to push the sea skiff into the modest waves and clambering aboard with wet feet. I resolved to return on the following day to search for further clues. I felt certain that the girl had not returned to Howth harbour and, indeed, nobody had seen her. She might have gone to Sutton creek, to the west, but by swimming – surely not. She could hardly have done so naked because of social problems after landing. Fully dressed, except for one drawer leg, seemed equally unlikely. All this called for an unlikely answer, which I proposed to seek on the following day. I arranged with one of the men to row me out next day, and sought advice on comfortable lodging for the night.

By now the destructive blood lust had cooled in my veins and I was no longer perturbed at possible actions on my involuntary part. Indeed, I felt quite exhausted and momentarily frail.

All of Howth village is on a steep hill and paths stray beyond it onto the heathery heights of the summit ridge. Another Martello tower looks down on the main street and the ruins of the old Abbey. They were really worried about Napoleon a generation or so ago. The joke was that when he did send fleets they came to the West and SouthWest. Napoleon wasnít a great general for no reason. He had thousands of Irishmen eager for his help and accurate at spying. "The best laid schemes oí mice and men/ Gang oft agley." But the worst laid schemes more often, I protest. I have always revered, as a gemstone of human folly, the employment of the Patriarch of Constantinople and a boatload of Metropolitans to throw divine curses on strips of paper, stuffed into dead mackerel. This was to destroy a whale that threatened shipping in the Bosphorus.

This command came from the Emperor of New Rome, chosen by God, the green chariot clique and the eastern legions. Ah me. I recalled those years when I eagerly awaited the next volume of Mr Gibbonís splendid volumes. How the months dragged between one volume and the next. From Geneva to Galway the world waited. The Duke of Devonshire, to whom this library of wisdom was dedicated, stuck to his dual pursuits, card playing and horse racing.

I stayed overnight with a Protestant lady, a widow who kept spotlessly starched rooms for gentlemen taking the sea air. Of Huguenot stock, she filled her house with cold sea air through every open window, despite the general knowledge that consumption and fevers were carried by dark heavy night air.

The following morning I breakfasted on fried rashers, and slices of cured ham. After a bout of ìmy old troubleî I felt the need for flesh, to prevent my blood thinning too much. More usually I ate toasted bread. There are few morning pleasures as great as watching a skilled woman crouching over a glowing fire with a slice of bread on her wire trident. I happily paid her five shillings, twice the usual price, but I was beginning to feel elated and benevolent.

The morning sun had not yet dispersed the dew and my young boatman looked chilled and hungry as he waited. I dispatched him to the old lady who sold milk from her cow at the bottom of Tower Hill. He chose a mug of sharp buttermilk and a quarter of a soda farl to warm his veins, and I ordered a jugful to take with us and a fat disk of appetising wheaten bread to serve us later.

The air warmed as we crossed the swelling sea to the rocky island. A flock of herring gulls followed us hopefully and wheeled off in search of strayed cliff-bird chicks when we had no offal to lighten their day. The beach is silvery and fine and is flanked by rocky outcrops at either end. The slightly tapering bulk of the Martello tower is anchored to one of these outcrops and the sand on the quarter-mile stretch of beach rises to low dunes and marram grass which changes to bracken as the island rises to high cliffs on the opposite side. Our keel touched the sand and we splashed out and dragged the boat up beyond the tide mark.

The young boatman answered to the name of Ricky, a corrupt Norman form of Richard, there being no ëchí (as in church) in the Irish tongue. I didn't ask him for help but he followed me along the streak of dried tide wrack.

"I'm looking for signs of a woman, a young woman, who may have got lost yesterday," I explained. He was quite observant, and excavated odd scraps of jetsam from the tide line. Pieces of wood, decayed pieces of canvas from the sails of fishing boats, the odd bottle: nothing of consequence.

As we burrowed and busied behind the rocks and boulders and in and around the massive tower, we encountered the kind of oddments one might expect on a desert island, accessible to boat owners and fisherfolk; or people in search of the solace of wild nature conveniently close to man. For months, nobody might set foot on the island, although it dominates the seascape from the village of Howth and from the summit of the mountain of Ben Edair. Then comes the brief puffin season and then the odd courting couple seeking privacy or the bucolic parties of both sexes, often family groups in search of a convivial dejeuner beneath the skies, and above the waters that lashed the cliff base far below the wheeling birds.

We found ITEM 1: a part of the Book of Common Prayer in old typeface on antique paper, ITEM 2: a fragment of a suicide note, unsigned, undated and uncollected. ITEM 3: a combined penknife and pencil holder in German silver. This in itself is interesting, since the proliferation of the steel pen with detachable nib will, one imagines, soon make penknives obsolete and the geese happier. The trackless acres of bracken were beyond our searching capacity.

Within the tower there was surprisingly little. People climbed into it, explored its darkness in a

cursory manner and then climbed the spiral stone stairs to the to view the memory of a French fleet that never sailed into Dublin Base to dethrone the Viceroy or the Lord Lieutenant. The view was splendid. On the horizon was the larger island of Lambey, another Norse stronghold. A Viking marauding post where the distant raiders could rest, get fat on seal meat and make bloody excursions to the rich pastures of Dublin and Meath. It lay like a humpbacked whale on the horizon, which was lightened by the sails of fishing smacks out of Lough Shinny or some pocket-sized port of a couple of hunched inhabitants and a Dublin train connection. Aspects of rural life had vastly changed in the last thirty years, thanks to steam locomotion. But I digress. Stray thoughts crowd my mind, already crammed with centuries of memories. What goes on in the human brain, let alone the brain of a reasonably intelligent lycanthropist . . .

I, or rather we, rigged up a stretch of abandoned sailcloth inside the narrow door of the tower, six feet up its wall. Angled on bits of flotsam, this served to reflect a considerable amount of light into the main floor. As noted the previous day, there was the embered remains of an earlier and possibly irrelevant fire in the stone and iron fireplace. On a stone hob, however, I found a scrap of paper, a letterhead with some writing ending in a deckled char. On the floor flags nearby I found a small apothecary's bottle, as for rhubarb juice or the Oil of Radium or laudanum, such as could be purchased in any medical hall or a well stocked village shop. I pocketed these carefully since they could have belonged to a more recent miniature bonfire.

On the top of the spiral staircase leading to the roof there was a small side compartment, for holding charges of powder, wads, saltpetre tow, who knows? Later wars in the Crimea or America have introduced new designs and practices in ordinance. But on the flagged floor of this alcove I found a half of a lace handkerchief. Crocheted lace, like the leg drawers from the previous day.

The bracken maquis up to the cliffs would need an army to search, systematically. We returned to the boat, drank our buttermilk and set off home towards the massive harbour of Howth. I gave the boy a florin, a princely payment, and feeling a little queasy bought a few fresh mackerel which I carried up Balscaddon Hill onto the heathery slopes and devoured raw, spitting bones and fins onto the ground, to the delight of an army of insects. This may be cheating, in werewolf terms, but it assuages the bestial appetites which a long unsuccessful pursuit can arouse.

Feeling that the bird-shrieking cliffs of Howth had nothing to offer me in evidence at that moment, I paid off my decent and scrupulous Protestant landlady, and walked along the harbour to the railway terminus, admiring the pattern of brown and russet sails being raised on the fishing boats as they prepared for their trawl across the eight miles of bay to Dalkey Island.

I am not sure what the landlady made of me. I can pass as Protestant, a civil engineer perhaps, or a brewery official. But I can be a convincing Papist as easily, although a loyal Castle Catholic, of course. Every forty or fifty years I have to disappear, sell my property or leave it to a "nephew" who arrives from overseas to claim it. Relative immortality requires preplanning. The greatest offence in this world is to be "different."

As an established “werewolf”, I belong to neither persuasion, of course, but generations of robust living have rounded off my sharp Norman corners and I can pass myself off agreeably in hall or hovel. Always, though, people find me a bit “apart”. But that’s no problem. Mostly they respect you for it. One could be an English spy or an Irish Jacobin. Who can be sure?

I waited on the platform, which was as modernised as the Dublin terminus with its advertisements for patent liver pills, spring elixirs, Ladies’ Pills and Tullamore Dew Whiskey. The efficient locomotive pulled our coaches at a spanking 17 miles an hour through outlying villages. At one point we passed a wild graveyard by the sea. A ruined church was in its centre. I remember when the New Religion took over in the reign of Edward VI which rejected it as too poor. Now, desolate, a thousand Brent geese cackled and gobbled by its grassy verge.

I have an extensive farm about 30 miles north in County Louth: light soil, suitable for vegetables. It was in the care of Mrs Whelan and her husband Packo. Reliable people. Packo came from a squireen family: a large cavernous house, large debts and no pretensions. He managed my land and the remnant of his own that the duns had left him, and everyone was content. I must arrange for his continuation when next I “die”, and a new “nephew” arrives from the goldmines at Ballarat, Australia, to take over.

Two poems by James Scully

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

Two poems by James Scully — There Is No Truth to the Rumor Donatello's Version

THERE IS NO TRUTH TO THE RUMOR

there is no truth to the rumor
the Constitution's
a goddamned piece of paper
it's not vegetable, but animal
dressed as parchment–

invented in Pergamon
in not yet Turkey
3rd century BCE
when the papyrus ran out

Ionian Greeks called sheets of it
diphtherai, or 'skins'
by the time of Herodotus
writing on skins was common

Assyrians and Babylonians
in what for now is called Iraq
were already writing on skins

writing and rewriting
past traces of earlier writing
on recycled skins
they'd scrubbed and scoured

they wrote what they believed
mattered
on something meant to last

rabbinic books weren't books
but scrolls of parchment, as
were, later, early Islamic texts

great civilizations as living cultures
writing themselves on skin

writing rewriting
laws, histories, religions, all
on cured skin: split
sheepskin, goatskin, cowhide,
horsehide, squirrel and rabbit

aborted calf fetuses
hairless through and through
as is the skin of angels
would be reserved
for especially precious stuff

yet regardless of grade, without exception,
skin being mostly collagen,
the water in ink or paint
would melt it slightly
creating a raised bed for the writing
like welts on a body
showing what's been done to it

even today, to write on parchment
or color it
the tiniest bit watery
is to bring all this doing up

each writing a rewriting
overwriting the life of skin

so if its breath is gone, its muscles
having lost all sense of purpose
bereft of heart and liver, still
in the heat and humidity
of human and meteorological exertion
it buckles, shifts, sweats and squirms

uplifting a little,
like from a death bed,
giving lie to the rumor
the Constitution is a piece of paper
damned or not

because, even dead, it will let us know
this was a living matter
that was being painted up, written off on
chewed by dogs and lied over

DONATELLO’S VERSION

1
is unexpected:
the boy David shamelessly naked, one adorable leg cocked at the knee
nonchalant vulnerable soft-bodied a true killer
he wears his helmet like a bonnet, its pointy peak garlanded with laurel leaves

2
the kid’s a winner
little penis big sword
standing astride the craggy winged head of the giant, Goliath

3
Goliath’s head is peaceful, his death like any death is restful, untroubled by desire or regret

4
David’s skin glistens, obscurely under a patina of melancholy
what’s wrong with him
he should be dancing up and down with joy

5
poor David the good guy
victory is the worst thing that could befall him

6
in the glass of his great victory, through the loathsome mist of world weariness
he sees himself becoming King David

7
sees strings of victory twining into distance with strings of defeat
how he will conquer and flee
how puff himself up to hide
how he will dance around the sociopathic Saul
how marry, sire, beget betrayals, adulteries, murders, torture prisoners raked through the brick kiln
a weakness for poetry will have him writing psalms again and again—
for all he has won by this great victory is his own disaster:
his family, his kingdom, his people tearing apart and apart

8
he will go through life eating flesh by the fistful
choking on shadows

9

in the improbable blood of his great victory
he sees all this and is famished

JAMES SCULLY is the author of nine books of poetry, including Raging Beauty: Selected Poems (1994), and three works of translation. He has also published two critical collections, including Line Break: Poetry as Social Practice, and was the founding editor of Curbstone Press's "Art on the Line" series. The poems in this issue of Logos originally appeared in Scully's new collection, Donatello's Version (Curbstone Press, 2007, www.curbstone.org), and are reprinted here by permission of the author and publisher. He is a Professor Emeritus of the University of Connecticut and lives in San Francisco.

Deconstructing the Lobby: John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, The Israel Lobby, Farrar, Strauss ,and Giroux, 2007

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

Most people are local in their orientations. They spend their days focused on work, school, the kids and their friends. They go to the movies and out to dinner. Under normal circumstances the attention paid to what is happening on the other side of the proverbial hill goes little beyond an occasional tut-tut at the morning headlines. One consequence of this inclination is that most of us do not pay much attention to foreign policy. This is particularly true in a country like the United States which is isolated by two oceans and has not been invaded since 1812.

In the United States this localism is reinforced by a sense of distance from politics in general. Thus, unless quite rich and well-connected, individual citizens feel that they cannot have a significant impact on policy, be it domestic or foreign. We can see a consequence of this belief in low average turnouts for elections. However, there is always a minority who retain an interest in politics and, for varying motives, try to influence policy formulation. They found that the best way to do this, and thereby overcome the localism of the general population, is to come together in groups – in interest groups and lobbies – through which they pool their numbers and financial resources for common goals. Influencing policies in this manner has proven remarkably successful throughout the history of the United States. James Madison identified this trend as early as 1787.

In this way, the United States is best (if disputably) described as a democracy of competing well-heeled interest groups. It is against this background that John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's (hereafter M/W) important book The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy should be understood. In America's world of competing interest groups, the Zionists, both Christian and Jewish, who make up the Israel Lobby have, to date, won the competition for influence over policy not only relating to Israel but, seemingly, most of the Middle East. What does this dominance mean? It means that this interest group has long been in a position to dictate the parameters – what can and cannot be said – of American "national interest" in that region of the globe.

Investigation and Evidence

In their investigation of the Israel Lobby M/W are careful and methodical. They know that their topic is one wrought with emotion and ideological overtones bred of a mixture of culture, religion and propaganda. Thus they take great pains to line up their evidence (there are 106

pages of notes) and, as we shall see, they bend over backwards to emphasize that the Israel lobby operates legally and that they (the authors) support of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. The Israel Lobby does not constitute a cabal or a conspiracy and its activities are similar to other lobbies such as the National Rifle Association and the American Association of Retired Persons. Of course the Lobby's specific focus is on a particular aspect of foreign policy, U.S. relations with the state of Israel. Its aim is to assure America's continued wholehearted support for the Zionist state. That is to maintain what is popularly known as the "special relationship" between the U.S. and Israel. As M/W point out, what sets the Israel Lobby apart from its peers is "its extraordinary effectiveness." As a consequence the United States supported Israel uncritically and unconditionally at least since 1967. Others have noticed this level of success and, as a result, the Israel Lobby or parts of it like the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), have been imitated by other ethnic interest groups such as that of the likewise formidable Cuban Americans.

What does unconditionally and uncritically mean? M/W lay out the impact of the Lobby's influence: 1. the billions of dollars (as of 2005 the total stood at approximately $154 billion [p. 24]) given to Israel, which is, after all, a developed and modern society – and given mostly as grants; 2. official U.S. government financial assistance at the rate of about $3 billion a year which "amounts to a direct subsidy of more than $500 for each Israeli"(p.26); 3. granting Israel the privilege of being the only country that does not have to account for how it spends American taxpayers money (such as subsidizing illegal settlements in the West Bank that impede a peace settlement with the Palestinians); 4. government loan guarantees that allows Israel to borrow from American private banks at artificially low interest rates; 5. military assistance that gives Israel assess to most of America's high technology weaponry; 6. almost no oversight as to what the Israelis do with these weapons (say, selling some of it to the Chinese in violation of U.S. law); 7. turning a blind eye to Israel's nuclear weapons program and its refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; 8. the designation of Israel as a "major non-NATO ally"; 9. supplying diplomatic protection at the United Nations through U.S. vetoes in the Security Council; 10. and, last but not least, the historical refusal of the U.S. government, at least since the Kennedy administration onward, to use any of this largess as leverage to induce Israel act in ways that promote peace in the Middle East. M/W quote Yitzhak Rabin as stating that "America's generosity towards Israel is beyond compare in modern history" (p. 23).

For this "generosity beyond compare" the United States has gotten remarkably little back. M/W methodically take apart Zionist arguments to the contrary. The major argument used by supporters of Israel to assert that Israel is worth all of America's support is that the Zionist state is a "strategic ally." M/W point out that this notion did not exist in the American political or diplomatic lexicon until the 1970s. At that time Zionists and their supporters began to paint Israel as America's only reliable ally in the region and one that served to keep the Soviet Union out by "inflicting humiliating military defeats on Soviet clients like Egypt and Syria…."(p. 51). M/W believe there may be qualified reasons to go along with this assertion as long as the Cold War lasted. Actually, even this argument is weak. There is no documented evidence that the Soviet Union had serious designs on the Middle East, much less the Persian Gulf. Indeed all

the evidence points to the USSR's consistent efforts to urge caution on their Middle Eastern clients. And, when it came to supplying arms, the Soviets were much less generous. The Soviet Union tended to supply their allies in the region with mainly defensive weapons and their quality never matched that given to Israel by the Americans. In other words, the Soviet Union's intent in the region seems to have been to protect their allies from aggressive neighbors rather than see allies themselves become aggressive.

M/W reject the "strategic ally" argument for the post-Cold War period. At that point they assert that Israel became an outright strategic liability. This fact became most noticeable during the first Gulf War when the United States had to ask Israel to stay out of the conflict so as to hold together the mostly Arab coalition that pushed Iraq out of Kuwait. Subsequently, Israel and its Lobby supporters claimed that the U.S. and Israel were "partners against terror," a position stated officially in a Congressional resolution of in 2002. Yet M/W convincingly show that association with Israel is a principle source of America's terrorist threat. They detail "abundant evidence that U.S. support for Israel encourages anti-Americanism throughout the Arab and Islamic world and has fueled the rage of anti-American terrorists" (p. 65). The 9/11 Commission report confirms this assertion by pointing out that a good number of those Arabs now in custody for conspiring to commit terrorist acts against the United States testify that they were largely motivated by the nation's support of Israel (p. 91ff). Finally, M/W point out that while the Lobby sing the praises of Israel as an ally, Israel often does not act like it. For instance, in the Lavon affair of 1954 Israel conspired to bomb U.S. owned property in Egypt (that is conspired to commit terrorism against the U.S.); and during the 1967 war actually did attack a well-marked U.S. intelligence ship off the Egyptian coast. Israel knowingly sold weapons to enemies of the U.S.; illegally transferred U.S. technology to third countries; blocked investigations of the embezzlement of U.S. funds by Israeli nationals; and suborned American citizens to spy against the U.S. M/W's conclusion is that an objective consideration of the evidence points to the fact that America's unconditional support of Israel "no longer defensible on strategic grounds" (p. 77).

Nor is it defensible on moral grounds. The moral argument for America's unconditional and uncritical support for Israel is based on the assumption that the two nations have "shared values." That both have a "strong commitment to freedom" and that Israel is a beleaguered democracy whose people are "morally superior" to their adversaries. W/M show that these arguments are based on assumptions that do not hold up to inspection. Israel is not beleaguered. It has never been in danger of being "pushed into the sea" not even in during its "war for independence" in 1948 when, throughout the struggle, the Zionists maintained a "clear advantage in manpower" (p. 82). Thereafter, Israel maintained military superiority over enemies and used that superiority with punishing aggressiveness. In the struggle with the Palestinians, M/W show clearly that it is Israel which is the victimizer. In the 1967 Six Day War Israeli leaders knew that Nasser had no plan to attack their country (p. 85). Serious diplomatic efforts were underway to end the crisis when Israel choose to initiate war anyway. In 1973, the Egyptian and Syrian attacks were well known to have limited military objectives-basically to force the Israelis into peace talks on what the Arabs hoped would be more favorable terms. Hamas and Hezbollah, while refusing to recognize Israel's right to exist do not represent an

"existential" threat to the Zionist state. In other words, the notion that Israel is in a struggle for survival is a myth.

W/M also show that Israel may be a democracy of sorts, but it is not the same kind of democracy as the United States. In 1992 Israel's Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty was purged of language that created equality for all Israelis. The absence of any legal guarantee of equality for its non-Jewish citizens makes more difficult any legal challenge to the all but ubiquitous discrimination practiced against Israeli Arabs. In this regard the closest parallel one could find to present day Israel in terms of the United States is the American south before the Civil Rights reforms of the 1960s. Though M/W do not mention the fact, it is the case that American democracy and Israeli democracy are diametrically opposite in terms of their long range ends. In the long run American democracy, however imperfect, seeks ever greater inclusiveness of a diverse population while Israeli democracy seeks ever greater exclusiveness so as to create a purely Jewish nation. Those who assert that we have a moral obligation to support the Zionist state because "they are just like us" are simply wrong.

Finally there is the emotional argument that the United States is morally bound to support Israel as a sort of "compensation for past crimes" committed against the Jewish people (p. 92ff). As to this argument the authors' ask if sympathy for the Jews ought to translate into utter disregard for Israeli dispossession and oppression of the Palestinians? In this regard, the Zionist leaders who established the State of Israel knew what they were doing. M/W quote David Ben Gurion telling Nahum Goldman, President of the World Jewish Congress, in 1956, "If I was an Arab leader I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we took their country" (p. 96). Ben Gurion's ally Berl Katznelson put it this way, "The Zionist enterprise is an enterprise of conquest" (p. 96). Over the years the Israelis have not shown any serious accommodation of Palestinian demands for a viable independent state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Instead they imposed upon the Palestinians a regime which Desmond Tutu (a man who knows racial oppression when he sees it) has likened to South African apartheid. Under the circumstances, M/W conclude that "the past suffering of the Jewish people does not obligate the United States to help Israel no matter what it does today" (p. 98). In particular it does not obligate the United States to assist Israel in exacerbating the suffering of the Palestinians.
M/W examine a number of other common rationales for America's unconditional and uncritical support of the Zionist state. In the end they conclude that these, as well as the points detailed above, are sufficiently flawed arguments that they can not fully account for America's historic generosity to Israel.

If that is the case, why does the U.S. government give away the house, so to speak, upon the drop of the Zionist hat? M/W's answer comes back to the political reality of lobbying. The Israel Lobby uses money, and lots of it, to reward those who cooperate and to punish those who do not. Reward comes in the form of funding help for political campaigns. The Lobby uses public pressure in the form of mass write-in campaigns, organized call-in campaigns, and coordinated personal visits to senators and congresspersons. The Lobby supplies most of the written background information about the Israel, the Palestinians, and other related Middle

East subjects that inform, or misinform, the Congress. The consequence of this effort, which has been going on for roughly ninety years (counting from 1917 and the Balfour Declaration) is that, as Senator Ernest Hollings put it, "You can't have an Israel policy other than what AIPAC gives you around here" (p.162). The situation replicates itself when it comes to both the Republican and Democratic political parties and the executive branch of government where one must be pro-Israel to attain any position that impacts Middle East policy.

As M/W demonstrate, the influence of the Lobby has succeeded for two additional reasons. One is that it has practically no opposition. The state of political development of Arab American and Muslim American lobbies are evolving but nowhere near mature enough to challenge the Israel Lobby. The second reason is that the pro-Israel message, delivered in drum beat fashion by a cooperative mass media, fits into an overall American informational environment which is largely supportive of its position. In this process the mass media outlets practice a form of self-censorship that hides the nastier aspects of Israeli behavior. For those who somehow manage to avoid this self-censoring environment and deliver a critical view of Israel and the Lobby, like Mearsheimer and Walt themselves, the Lobby's spokesmen regularly use slander and libel (mainly the charge of anti-Semitism) to try to silence or discredit opponents.

The Lobby and the Invasion of Iraq

The end product of this process is a Lobby that can shape, in terms of its own parochial ends, how the U.S. government defines its national interests in the Middle East. To demonstrate just how damaging this manipulative influence can be M/W make the controversial assertion that the Lobby was largely responsible for launching the invasion of Iraq. "Pressure from Israel and the lobby was not the only factor behind the Bush administration's decision to attack Iran in March 2003, but it was the critical element" (p. 230).

M/W begin by establishing that, among experts on the region, there was a relatively widespread awareness that Iraq was never a direct threat to the United States. However, there was a strong belief that, as Philip Zelikow, a member of the president's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board in the crucial years 2001 to 2003, put it that Iraq was a "real threat" to Israel (p.231). The urge to go to war came consistently from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon who had Israeli intelligence temporarily switch their attention from Iran to concentrate on providing damning, if exaggerated or outright false, intelligence on Iraq to the American government. This information often amounted to "alarming reports about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs"- programs that mostly did not exist (pp. 235-236). Sharon's manipulation of the intelligence data was part of a larger campaign of persuasion in which such notable Israelis as Ehud Barak, Benjamin Netanyahu and Shimon Peres took part. Indeed, as M/W show, so energetic was the Israeli push for war that some of its American supporters had to urge discretion on the Israeli leaders lest it begin to appear that the war, when it came, was being waged on behalf of Israel (p. 238).

The push from the Israeli government coincided, and indeed was coordinated with, a push from

the neo-conservative branch of the Israel Lobby. The neo-conservatives had the distinct of advantage that a large number of them were strategically positioned within the Bush administration as well as within think tanks used by the government for information and advice. Here the list of boosters for war runs too high to itemize. However, among the neo-conservatives whose actions M/W document are Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, the numbers two and three civilian administrators in the Defense Department; Richard Perle, Kenneth Adelman, and James Woolsey who were members of the Defense Policy Board; Scooter Libby, the vice president's chief of staff; John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control; Elliott Abrams who was in charge of Middle East policy at the National Security Council; and on the list goes. All of these men consistently urged an invasion of Iraq on the President Bush and Vice President Cheney. Feith even led an effort to set up a special "intelligence" gathering effort in the Pentagon, the Office of Special Plans, to try to counteract the fact that the regular intelligence agencies could not find the information on WMDs that would support a decision to go to war against Iraq.

These insider Lobby operatives were joined by outside Lobby leaders such as Mortimer Zuckerman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Jack Rosen, president of the American Jewish Congress, and the New York Times columnist Charles Krauthammer. AIPAC, operatives, of course, backed the war as well. Howard Kohr, AIPAC's executive director listed lobbying for Congressional approval to use force against Iraq as one of his organization's "successes" in the year 2003 (p. 242). M/W point out that the leaders of the major American Jewish organizations, which are themselves integral parts of the Israel Lobby, pushed for war using the same language as the Israelis used. Subsequently they also refrained from criticizing American actions in Iraq. They consistently took such a stand despite the fact that polls showed that "American Jews are significantly more opposed to the war in Iraq (77 percent) than the general American population (52 percent)" (p. 243). Thus, M/W conclude that it is wrong to believe that it was "Jewish influence" that helped launch the war in Iraq. Correctly making the distinction between Jews in general and the Lobby, M/W places the emphasis on the organization, "the war was in large part due to the lobby's influence" (p. 243).

In making their argument that blame for the Iraq debacle can be mostly laid at the feet of the Israel Lobby, M/W reject the notion that the war was launched to secure control of Iraqi oil. They point out that Saddam Hussein had never ceased to be willing to sell Iraqi oil, that there is no substantial evidence that American oil companies were pushing for war in 2002-2003. Indeed, M/W quote Peter Beinart writing in the New Republic as reporting that "it isn't war that the American oil industry has been lobbying for all these years; it is the end of sanctions [against Iraq]" (p. 255). Finally, except for Kuwait, the oil producing countries of the Middle East opposed the war.

In the end the ideas that motivated war were, according to M/W, not about oil but rather about ends very much more fanciful. Ideas of transforming the Middle East into a region friendly to both the United States and Israel by conquering "rogue" states such as Iraq, Iran and Syria. This effort was to be followed by installing "democratic" governments in the place of their

autocratic regimes. Such aggressive action would "trigger a cascade of democratic dominoes" that would rid the region of its bad behavior. No more terrorism, no more Israeli-Palestinian conflict, no more anti-Americanism. All would go away once the United States began the transforming process. And it all began with Iraq. Both the Bush administration, the Israel Lobby, and Israeli leaders too appear have been caught up in this dream that has now turned into a nightmare.

It is the nightmare, the "stunning failure" as M/W describe it (p. 259), that now has the Lobby and Israelis running for cover. According to spokesmen for both groups they never urged war. It is "simply a falsehood" according to Martin Kramer of the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy (p. 261). Prime Minister Sharon "had serious reservations about invading Iraq and he privately warned Bush against it" claims Yossi Alapher, an Israeli strategist with the Jaffe Centre (p. 262). M/W call these statements and others like them efforts to "rewrite the historical record to absolve Israel" and the Lobby (p. 261). Such efforts are, of course, predictable.

M/W go on to demonstrate the Lobby's influence in the shaping of a threatening and aggressive American foreign policy toward Syria and Iran, as well as American government behavior during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006. Even now, in the face of disaster in Iraq, the Lobby urges expansion of the war into Iran and Syria.

Finally, in a chapter evocatively entitled "What is to be Done," M/W offer suggestions about how to deal with the distorting influence of the Israel Lobby. M/W's objectives in this regard demonstrate their essentially conservative stance. What they want is that the United States treat Israel "as a normal state" (p. 341) and that it use its "considerable leverage to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end" (p. 342). In other words, in order that a pro-American stability be established in the Middle East, the "special relationship" with Israel has to go. The neo-conservatives may see Israeli behavior as a model to be imitated, but for M/W it represents a disaster bigger than the one in Iraq. They understand that for U.S. interests in the Middle East to thrive in the long run, the Israelis must be pressured into allowing the creation of a fully independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel must go back behind the Green Line. The Palestinians, for their part, must give up the Right of Return. They come to this position as noted foreign policy "realists" and not as idealists.

But how is one to weaken the Lobby so that U.S. government policy can move in these realistic directions? Alas, the only suggestion that M/W put forth is the "fostering" of "more open dialogue" (p. 350ff). Journalists should be more independent in their reporting, open debate should be encouraged, aspirants for high office should be aggressively confronted about their dependence on the Lobby's PAC money, etc. M/W's book is itself a contribution to this desired debate. However, coming after such a tour de force demonstrating the malevolent consequences of the Lobby's influence over foreign policy, this suggestion seems weak, even naive. The authors dismiss the ideas of campaign finance reform and the developments of counter lobbies as efforts that are unlikely to prevail. Yet, if special interest money plays an important part in influencing the behavior of politicians and policy makers, and the Israel

Lobby has a lock on influence over the mainstream media outlets, how does one create open debate and have it lead to a change in political behavior? Even if an environment of open debate does slowly evolve would the American people, most of whom are ignorant of foreign affairs, pay much attention? And if they do pay attention, will listening to the debate be sufficient to overcome cultural, religious, and allegedly political similarities that have, for the last 90 years shaped the perceptual universe of most Westerners when it comes to Zionism, Israel and Palestine? If such a debate does not catch public attention and does not persuade the public to side with M/W, then influence will continue to default to the most powerful lobby, the Zionists. The feebleness of M/W solution to the problem is demonstrated in the fact that their own work, and the similar efforts of other academics, have let loose a veritable new MaCarthyism against those who would criticize Israel and its Lobby. And the public, outside the universities, apparently does not care very much.

PART II
The Reaction

Zionists in general, and American Zionists in particular, have an historical record of using the tactic of "verbal beating" against anyone who might question their positions or the behavior of Israel. Jimmy Carter found this out when he published Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid. But the Zionists' verbal aggression goes back much further. For instance, in 1926 a Carnegie Institute of Peace report critical of Zionist discrimination against Palestinians was met with hysterical finger pointing and shouting and accusations of anti-Semitism. The same reaction was aroused by journalist Vincent Sheen's critical reporting from Palestine in the late 1920s early 1930s. The State Department's Near East Division got the same treatment in the 1940s. Historically, the American Zionist establishment has run with the motto, "sois mon frere, ou je te tue-be my brother, or I kill you." Thus the Lobby has known only one way to react to its critics and that is to demean and silence them.[1] It is now the turn of M/W.

Let us look at some of this reaction.[2] Abraham Foxman in his book The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control accuses M/W of promoting a "pernicious theory about a mythically powerful Jewish lobby." Congressmen Eliot L. Engel calls M/W "dishonest so-called intellectuals" who are "anti-Semites" but nonetheless "entitled to their stupidity." An Ant-Defamation League "analysis" of M/W's thesis describes it as "amateurish and biased critique of Israel, American Jews, and American policy" as well as a "sloppy diatribe." Professor Eliot A. Cohen of Johns Hopkins, sees M/W as expressing an "obsessive and irrationally hostile belief about Jews." Alan Dershowitz, the infamous Harvard Law professor, in an uncharacteristically mild assertion, accuses M/W of "embarrassingly weak logic." Ruth Wisse, a Harvard professor of comparative literature, says that M/W are "classic conspiracy theorists." Benny Morris, the Israeli historian, writes that M/W are "pro-Arab propagandists." And, on it goes. Much of this mimics the criticism of Carter's book and, in both cases, are so wide of the mark that one must suspect that some of the critics have not read the work of the authors they are slandering. No doubt reading the work in a serious manner is irrelevant to what these verbal beatings are meant to accomplish-to warn other authors not to follow the lead of those who critically investigate Israel and its American lobby.

Other critics have taken a somewhat kinder, if no less questionable approach to the M/W's work. For instance, Daniel Lazare has asserted that while M/W are not "anti-Semites" but that their work is nonetheless "a mess."[3] Lazare writes that M/W "seem to know little about how the American government works, how lobbyists function or how the United States interacts with the world at large." This alleged ignorance leaves M/W open to assigning responsibility for the debacle in Iraq to "a knot of wily Zionist agents" whose removal from the scene would turn the "U.S. role in the region…benign." These are strange accusations against two scholars who are widely recognized experts in international relations, and again they suggest that the reviewer has not really read the text. M/W's investigation of the influence of Israel and its Lobby shows them to be anything but a "knot" of "agents." The picture they paint is of a large, decentralized yet coordinated array of players at many official and unofficial layers of government and society. Nor do they assert that all of America's or the Middle East's or Israel's problems would disappear if the influence of the Lobby was overcome. They specifically assert that this would not be the case and call for a policy of "offshore balancing" to help manage issues of import to the United States even after the Israel-Palestinian and Arab problems are settled (p. 338ff). M/W do give a picture of policy formulation that emphasizes politics and lobby pressure at the expense of the professional foreign policy establishment such as the State Department and National Security Council. My own work on this subject shows them to be close to the mark.[4] In the case of Israel and the Zionists, the foreign policy bureaucracy began to be purged of those critical of Israel under the presidency of Harry Truman and, with a possible hiatus under Eisenhower, the process has been going on ever since. Thus, even if one faults M/W for de-emphasizing these structures, it makes little difference. You are not going to find one strong critic of Israel in contemporary decision making positions anywhere in the American government's foreign policy establishment.

There are other, more interesting objections raised about M/W's work. Some have seen it in the author's alleged exaggeration of the facts. For instance, Noam Chomsky of MIT, Joseph Massad of Columbia University and Stephen Zunes of the University of San Francisco, all serious academics whose opinions are worth considering, think that the Israel Lobby is not the dominant player M/W make it out to be. They credit the oil lobby, arms manufactures, corporations such as Halliburton and the like with much more influence than is given to them by M/W.[5] M/W do consider the influence of most of these groups. However, one might take the position that M/W assertions are exaggerated, but to demonstrate that assertion necessitates more than opinion. There needs to be much more research and therefore the open debate that M/W call for, if their thesis is to be successfully and honestly challenged.

Conclusion

M/W have given us a well documented, well organized, well written and thought provoking work that should alert us all to serious flaws in our foreign policy formulation process. The process of policy formulation as it is now pursued (both in terms of domestic and foreign policy) allows successful interest groups to make their parochial interests the country's "national interest." The Zionists are not the only ones who do this. Cuban Americans, and at times other ethnic groups as well, have done so too. This ability on the part of powerful interest

groups is tied in with how Washington politicians go about their policy formulation business which in turn is connected to how they go about the business of keeping their jobs. In effect, the lobby system has gotten out of hand and become so powerful in certain cases as to result in the periodic privatization of foreign policy. When an interest group is able to capture foreign policy formulation, the result is such skewed behavior as to call into doubt the very concept of national interest for America.

M/W's work calls other, related problems to our attention. There is a problem with the way the public receive its information, particularly about foreign events. The components of our free press are businesses. They produce the "news" for profit. If producing certain kinds of news hurts the bottom line they shy away from that news. In other words they self-censor. An assumption has grown that delivering news that is critical of the Zionists gets one into trouble with a powerful category of consumers who can hurt your business. And the news business reacts accordingly.

M/W present us with a picture of all these problems. In doing so they are not bigots (they assert that the Israel Lobby is as bad for Israel as it is for the U.S.), they are not incompetents, they are not stupid, and they are not ignorant. They are brave and honest academics who no doubt love their country and are alarmed at the way its foreign policy is being run. They hope that their work will spark further debate on the seminal issues they raise. It is yet to be seen if they shout louder than the McCarthy style Zionists arrayed against them?

Notes

[1] See, Lawrence Davidson, America's Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood (University Press of Florida, 2001).

[2] Sources for these and other reactions can be found on the Engage website (http://www.engageonline.org.uk/archives/index.php?id=17)

[3]See his "Lobbying Degree Zero" in The Nation, October 22, 2007.

[4] See Endnote # 1 above

[5] See Noam Chomsky, "The Israel Lobby?" On Znet, March 28, 2006. Also see Kurt Jacobsen's comments in Logos on these objections, "The Great Israel Lobby Fuss." Logos: A Journal of Modern Society & Culture. Spring 2006.

Misleadership Triumphant

By | 2008: Vol. 7, No. 1

Review Essay

Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush by Robert Draper;

Vice: Dick Cheney and the Hijacking of the American Presidency by Lou Dubose and Jack Bernstein

Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall, and Catastrophic Legacy by Andrew Cockburn.

When George W. Bush became president, an Australian friend wrote to me, perplexed. She asked, "How could so few people do this to the rest of the world?" Little did she, I, or anyone else realize just how badly things would turn out. The first few months of the Bush administration – corporate takeover of energy policy and other key parts of government; appointment of conservative party loyalists; disavowal of international arrangements on global warming, arms sales, and war crimes; and tax cuts to the investor class – certainly lived down to all our expectations.

Yet there were signs of hope that things might not go on getting worse. The length and frequency of presidential vacations promised to limit the occasions of his poor decision-making. The Bush team, astute at running campaigns, exhibited little interest in policy or governing. John DiIulio, Jr. head of the White House's splashy Faith-Based Initiative, resigned in mid-August and later confided to Ron Suskind in an interview, "There is no precedent in any modern White House for what is going on in this one: a complete lack of a policy apparatus. What you've got is everything-and I mean everything-being run by the political arm. It's the reign of the Mayberry Machiavellis." When Senator Jim Jeffords bolted the Republican Party and gave the Democrats a majority in the Senate, it seemed that the Bush people might even do themselves in. It seemed that the Republic would not be threatened. We could grit our teeth and tough it out for four years. Our consolation was the endless material for late night comedy the administration provided.

We didn't laugh after 9/11. Most Americans rallied behind the office, if not the person, that spoke for us. President Bush, who has thrived all his life by encouraging low expectations, did very well by most standards immediately after the terrorists' attacks. Polls reported 90 percent popularity ratings. Within a week, however, Bush started on a path that transformed the world's empathy and sorrow on 9/11 into fear and loathing of U.S. foreign policy. His own popularity eventually sagged to a level so low that it became prima facie evidence for his case to be the least competent president in U.S. history.

At the urging of Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and their

staffs, Bush gratuitously escalated a criminal terrorist act into an act of war and declared a global war on terrorism. The collateral damage has also been, to say the least, extensive. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, two fronts in that dubious 'war,' will cost anywhere from one to three trillion dollars. We have borrowed that money, in largest part, from foreign nations, the Social Security funds, and from forfeited domestic spending. Tax cuts have made the deficits and national debt increase enormously and exacerbated the severe differences of domestic rich and poor, worsned the financial insecurity of the middle class, and raised its tax burden (to pay off this folly) for at least two generations to come.

The global war against terrorism carried costs far greater than money. Within two years of its declaration and Bush's assuming de facto war time powers, he busily eroded Constitutional civil liberties to citizens; stretched our military forces beyond breaking point; approved torture, extraordinary rendition, and detention without *habeas corpus*; altered the true North of the moral compass of the U.S. in international affairs; encouraged preemptive warfare in international conduct, invaded a nation on bogus grounds, and transformed it into an unwinnable war of counterinsurgency and a travesty of occupation and reconstruction. All the while he continued to ignore the inconceivably intractable problems of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which fell into the hands of the most radical elements on each side. These weren't laughing matters and were, very much, threats to the Republic and to hundreds of millions of people around the world, such as my alarmed friend in Australia.

Type IV Leadership and Folly

How could an administration be so relentlessly inept? How could it do so much damage in so short a time to this country and the rest of the world? That question will engender a small industry of inquiry in the future. If the books under review here are indicative, we will see many accounts that aim to remove responsibility from Bush for the colossal failures of his administration, as in Draper's account, or, as in the other two volumes, implicitly remove it by pointing fingers at other mighty culprits in his administration. A fourth category, not represented in these volumes, are second-rank insiders-George Tenet, Paul Bremer, Scott McClellan, Paul O'Neill-blaming Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and occasionally Condoleezza Rice for great misdeeds while exculpating themselves with the familiar post-Nuremburg plea, "I only worked there."

The Bush administration also displayed colossal ineptitude in Hurricane Katrina relief, stem cell research policies, and virtually every other matter that crossed its desks. All of these instances might be dissected illuminatingly by applying basic principles of good leadership. The choice to invade Iraq and the consequent hideous occupation go far beyond the merely inept and suggest a distinct form of leadership stubbornly in play: a Type IV leadership. Type IV leadership persists in applying purported solutions that obviously don't work. It cuts off any avenues to learn from its mistakes. Its' adherents like to appear nonetheless as fully-informed paragons of technical competence-adeptly handling a clear problem, or in sober Type I leadership. This (fleeting) public impression is, however, the deceptive shadow-side of true technical competence. In many ways, Type IV leadership is what Barbara Tuchman called

"folly": the pursuit of policy contrary to the self-interest of the constituency or state involved. This arrogant course is about more than incompetence, which can be remedied when identified as such, or making mistakes, which can be corrected or at least not repeated. Folly, like Type IV leadership, requires that counter-productive policies are recognized for what they are in their own time, not merely by hindsight,; the availability of feasible alternative courses of action; and dogged persistence in counterproductive action and policies.

Ronald Heifetz's important study *Leadership without Easy Answers*, suggests only three scenarios of leadership. Type I requires no new learning because the problem is clear and the solutions are known-storm water treatment, for example. Type I leadership is technical work, Heifetz explains, the realm in which experts apply their acquired knowledge and the authority it imparts. A Type II scenario, however, does require learning to find the right solution, if one exists. Returning to the example of water quality, we may know exactly what effluent and emission reductions we need but getting agreement among stakeholders on a solution that has parity in cost and benefits for all is a matter mostly of the political work of influencing others to consent. The Type III scenario requires a good deal of learning because the problem is not clear and consequently neither is the answer; an inexplicable fish kill may illustrate this leadership challenge. Learning – a willingness and ability to learn – is key to all three leadership types. Prior learning establishes a level of technical competence while real time learning ferrets out the actual nature of the new problem so as to fashion the correct solution. Heifetz emphasizes that leadership is not a solo act but requires the mobilization of group resources in this form of learning and in selection of a solution.

Yet Heifetz gives us a good start in depicting a new Type IV leadership scenario. Suppose a problem is not clear, a solution is not apparent-a Type III leadership scenario-and a wrong solution is applied. Our first efforts to end the inexplicable fish kill fail; our solution is inadequate or even makes matters worse. What our failure should tell us is that more learning about the problem is required to find the appropriate solution – and to muster the political will to apply it. Type IV employs the opposite learning style, which Tuchman plainly calls "wooden headedness." Power simply, and stupidly, pushes reason aside. Those in authority replace reason with wishful thinking; use fixed and biased notions; refuse or are unable to learn from experience; choose power over interdependence; eliminate alternatives; and underestimate the complexity of the problem. Remind you of anyone?

Leadership always entails acting in the face of some degree of doubt. So neither uncertainty about a problem nor the choice of a wrong solution distinguishes Type IV leadership from other types nor does the choice of a wrong solution. Nor does assigning a problem to a solution distinguish Type IV; legislators often have their own pet solutions searching for a problem. Type IV leadership comes from choosing an unreasonable solution that obfuscates an unclear and complex problem with a false clarity and simplicity. It by-passes learning and goes directly to a Type I scenario of technical work. Wooden-headedness rules. Type IV leadership persists until the solution becomes part of the problem that it was intended to address and only supplies more reasons to persist in it.

Heifetz explains Lyndon Johnson's failed leadership in Vietnam as cleaving to technical work, Type I leadership, when adaptive work, Type II and III, is called for. But it seems that Iraq, like Vietnam too, represents a Type IV leadership scenario. Solving Al Qaeda terrorism by invading Iraq simplified the complexity of Middle East politics, especially the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It substituted a surrogate for Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and a substitute for Al Qaeda, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the hands of Islamic terrorists. When the WMD problem disappeared, our invasion and occupation became the means to liberate Iraq from a despot, to fight terrorists in Baghdad so that we did not have to fight them in our own streets, to build a secure and democratic Iraq as a model for the Arab world, to demonstrate to the world that the U.S. does not cut and run, to honor the ink stained thumbs of Iraqi voters, to keep faith with the many who had already died, and on and on, further and further from effective responses to Islamic terrorism and the Arab-Israeli hostility that fuels it. Now why would former energy and defense industry executives in charge of the White House want do that?

Another part of Type IV leadership is goal displacement. Type IV leadership substitutes unrelated personal needs and desired policies for the problem at hand, and one can readily imagine how this substitution applies to Iraq and to the Bush administration. However inappropriate a worldwide war against terrorism and the invasion of Iraq have been as the solution to the terrorism of Al Qaeda, they fit perfectly with the personal needs and policy goals of the key players.

Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall, and Catastrophic Legacy

Andrew Cockburn finds a disconcerting pattern in Rumsfeld's administrative career. Rumsfeld "devoted most of his energies to imposing his unchallenged political control on the organization while cultivating an ill-merited reputation for administrative competence" (p. 17). His penchant for confusing issues, complicating decisions, and for intimidation supposedly indicated a probing mind and demanding standards, but Cockburn portrays him more as the wizard of Oz hiding behind a curtain of authority and purging people who had "wrong" ideas.

Prior to 9/11, Rumsfeld had thrown the Pentagon into turmoil with his big new idea of military transformation; converting the armed forces into smaller, high tech, and agile fighting units-or something like that. No one was sure what Rumsfeld's big idea meant. Cockburn recounts Rumsfeld's aide Stephen Cambone meeting with high level officers and trying to figure out what it meant and how to do it. His style, emulating Rumsfeld, was one of bullying each of them to define the ethereal project that Rumsfeld had forced on them. Cambone thereby made them feel "like morons," as one participant complained (114). Four years later, at a meeting at the U.S. War College, which I attended, high ranking officers were still discussing what heck the Rumsfeld's project of military transformation amounted to. One participant described it as the effort to change the engine of a car while it was moving.

Rumsfeld seems to fall between Bush and Cheney on the personality spectrum. He is less congenial than Bush but more so than Cheney and more certain, despite ambiguity, than the

President and is less intentionally deceitful than the Vice President. Rumsfeld needed to appear in control as much as Bush does but far more so than Cheney (who probably really is in control). In his need to appear to be the smartest guy in the room, Rumsfeld differs from Bush and Cheney. Bush understood very well that he was not the smartest guy in the room. So he took satisfaction in knowing that he was the most powerful person there and surrounded himself with people whose loyalty made him the center of attention. Cheney understood that he did not have to be the smartest guy in the room or the center of attention. He only had to fill the chairs in the room with his people who were smarter than everyone else.

One proof of being for Rumsfeld of being the smartest guy in the room required, is surrounding himself with able (if not admirable) protégés. A young Dick Cheney attracted Rumsfeld's attention as a Congressman. Rumsfeld took Cheney with him to the War on Poverty's Office of Economic Opportunity and to be his deputy in the Ford White House. That Stephen Cambone became Rumsfeld's protégé at Defense in 2001 suggested how far behind his former student he had fallen. Cambone first worked with Rumsfeld at the Commission to Assess Ballistic Missile Threat, created by Congressional Republicans in 1997 to counter the National Intelligence Estimate that the U.S. faced no immediate threat. Rumsfeld's first and second in command-Paul Wolfowitz and Doug Feith-were hios associates at the Project for the New American Century (PNAC). Both men had longer histories with other PNAC neoconservatives and with Cheney than with Rumsfeld. Thus we find Rumsfeld left with a loyal aide who was outside the more powerful network of aides that bound the Defense Department to the office of the Vice President and other parts of the administration.

Vice: Dick Cheney and the Hijacking of the American Presidency

DuBosed Bernstein unequivocally find Dick Cheney is the power behind the throne; outmaneuvering a naïve Bush at every turn. They detail how Cheney learned the craft of inside fighting on a very imposing stage: protégé to Rumsfeld at the OEO; Rumsfeld's deputy White House chief of staff, to President Ford, and then chief of staff, the youngest person to hold that position. The authors provide details of early indications of what we know now about the vice president's obsession with secrecy. They instruct us in his similar obsession with power. Some of the parallels even seem too neat; a matter of fast forwarding thirty years to current events-disclosure to Congress, differences over the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), outflanking other members of the administration, and so on – and watching the patterns repeat.

Two strong threads do connect events though those thirty years. Cheney was baptized into the creed of the imperial presidency; a term coined during the Nixon administration. Cheney witnessed what he took to be heretical excesses of checks and balances during Watergate, opposed them while he was in Congress, especially during the Iran-Contra hearings, and ignored them when he got the chance in 2001 to fashion a new set of clothes for the imperial president. In this, we may find a root cause for the endless struggles about legal jurisdiction and powers-including rights to information-of the Bush administration with Congress, the courts, the international community, and even other departments of its own administration.

Second, Cheney worked for the interests of his employers-Rumsfeld at OEO and the Ford administration; Congress; Halliburton; and President Bush. In his ten years in the House of Representatives, Cheney maneuvered adeptly but not in a doctrinaire manner. He even set aside a wilderness area. As vice president, he commenced encroaching on it. He has managed to change policy preferences several times-for and against the invasion of Iraq and for and against sanctions, for instance-without attracting the "f-f" moniker hung on John Kerry: flip-flopper.

These changes may suggest adaptability but really hide a consistency of purpose. The institutional context established parameters of his power but within them he worked to increase it to serve those to whom he reported. He has run roughshod over checks and balances as vice president but while in Congress he moved with some subtlety towards power and the position of minority leader. He often voted with the small minority on landslide votes, including his notorious vote against Head Start, not so much as a diehard conservative-although his voting record certainly was that-but as a tactic of protesting the procedures of the Democratic leadership within a strategy to gain control of the House (pp. 145-46). Policies, for Cheney, were tactics to get what he wanted, and often meant nothing to him in themselves.

DuBose and Bernstein see Cheney's time at Defense in Bush I's administration as a dress rehearsal for his vice presidency. Certainly we find the repertory cast that became familiar to us in the second Bush administration. David Addington, Cheney's chief of staff, had been in that role when Cheney was in Congress and now has moved to the Pentagon. Paul Wolfowitz joined the team, bringing in Scooter Libby, later Cheney's first chief of staff. Stephen Hadley served as Condoleezza Rice's deputy on the National Security Agency before replacing her. Then there is Richard Perle, who joined Cheney to oppose Kissinger's détente policy in the Ford administration. Zalmay Khalizad, later ambassador to Iraq, was in the mix. Colin Powell, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had a role in the Gulf War but was not in inner sanctum of the repertory company.

The cast was assembled but they needed a script. Khalizad, Wolfowitz, and Libby drafted it as *The 1992 Defense Planning Guidance,* which envisioned a U.S. superpower "so dominant that it could intervene in and resolve any conflict." Wolfowitz had been preparing it for a long time. Beginning with his work in the office of Henry "Scoop" Jackson, Wolfowitz represented the military-industrial complex inside and outside of government. In 1976 he took part in the nakedly partisan effort to recast intelligence to show that the Soviet's were more a threat than intelligence agencies portrayed them. The Committee on the Clear and Present Danger morphed from that notorious 'Team B' report.

Out of office, Wolfowitz, along with Feith, and William Kristol of *The Weekly Standard* continued to labor on the script with a new Act set in the Middle East. *The Project for the American Century* and its later reports, including the 1998 open letter to President Clinton, called for the military overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Three of the signers-Richard Armitage, deputy to Colin Powell at State, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz-were among the "Vulcans" who were tutoring Bush in 1998 while he launched his presidential campaign. Seven of the fifteen signers

of that letter gained positions of great authority in the Bush administration. The actors set out to perform a script they had written.

DuBose and Bernstein propose that Cheney found what he was looking for in Bush-a pliable person with power through whom he could achieve his goals. But Draper shows the Bush side of the Bush-Cheney relationship and suggests that Cheney has not taken anything from the presidency that Bush was not willing to give. The new president sought out some savvy advisor such as Bob Bullock, the lieutenant governor of Texas. Bullock saw to it that the inexperienced governor, not given to serious deliberation, succeeded in Texas (48). Now Bush saw in Cheney someone who, like Bullock, "would not let him [Bush] fail." Bus was "comfortable with Cheney. He would be comfortable with his VP running the transition, vetting key personnel, sitting in every Oval Office meeting, building his own national security apparatus and integrating his senior staff with that of Bush-sharing speechwriters, mouthpieces, and legislative aides-so that no bright line fell between Number One and Number Two as it had between Reagan and Poppy…Secure in the knowledge that Cheney would be Bush's man and not his own, the president saw no harm in giving his VP unprecedented run of the palace (Draper 90).

Draper's book stands out because of his unprecedented access-six hours of one-on-one interviews with Bush. Bush comes across as determined that his presidency will be seen as his own, not shared with anyone-including his father or father-figures-except of course when things go wrong. Katrina? Mike Brown, head of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), and the governor of Louisiana unaccountably did not let Bush know the gravity of the situation and their need for help while Donald Rumsfeld, in his "trademark passive-aggressive" manner, withheld federal troops for disaster relief. Post-invasion Iraq? Gerry Bremer made poor decisions on his own. It seems that the President is comfortable with power and authority but not responsibility for the consequences of its use.

Draper is very gentle in his interpretations or so it will seem to those who disagree strongly with the President and question his competence. Yet Draper offers genuine insight into both the overt and shadow self of the President. Bush comes across as a charmer; a person who is easy to like especially when he sets out to win your favor. We learn that he is extraordinarily disciplined and has a strong preference for routine. He is most comfortable among people with whom he is familiar enough to have assigned nicknames – often demeaning ones – and in whose loyalty he has confidence.

Draper shows us Bush's insecurities as well. His discomfort in public appearances, complete with logical lapses and grammatical gaffes, comes from being among unfamiliar people and increases in unscripted settings. He seems to need to prove himself tough and competent whether it is bicycle riding with Secret Service agents, conducting a war, or claiming singular responsibility for his presidency. Some of this may come from being the son of a famous father, as Draper interprets, but there also appears to be a need to prove himself the most powerful person in the room precisely because he is aware that he is not the smartest or, as in

the case of Colin Powell, the most popular.

The Confluence of Personal Goals and Policy Needs

Taken together these books suggest it is a mistake to think Bush was duped into his Iraq policy for ideological reasons. Clearly, though, members of the administration are deeply committed neoconservatives and it seems that Bush had little idea that his choices were part of a grand neoconservative design. As late as 2006, Bush still seemed innocent of that knowledge. Cockburn recounts Bush 43 asking his father, "What's a neocon?" Bush 41 then offers a one word description, "Israel" (219). Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld had suggested deposing Saddam Hussein in the 1990s. But DuBose and Bernstein make a convincing case that the neoconservative foreign and military visions "fell into place" (p. 169) on 9/11. Here was a provocation to enable war in the Middle East and to aggrandize presidential authority by invoking war powers. All it needed was the right manipulation and tweaking. He had a new set of buttons and knobs with which to work-Fox News, radio talk shows most especially Rush Limbaugh, and a compliant Congress with a Republican majority or near majority.

Bush's team was no match for the policy skills of the well-drilled and experienced team, many of them former Vulcans, that Cheney and Rumsfeld brought to the "war council" at Camp David. The two remaining legs of Bush's Iron Triangle, Karen Hughes and Karl Rove, were not much help on this or any other policy matter. Their domain was electoral politics. Cockburn observes, "[Bush] found himself confronting what six years as governor of Texas had least prepared him for: a room full of intelligent advisers steeped in the political culture of Washington pressing him for a decision on war" (181). DuBose and Bernstenote that Bush was "sitting in the owners' box seats of the Texas Rangers ballpark" in 1992 "while the men who would define his foreign policy ten years later were sitting in their Pentagon offices, writing the foreign policy that they would hand him after the 2000 election" (p. 95, 177). Many of them had been his tutor Vulcans. Outmatched, Bush employed his particular genius which, according to Draper, is "the facility to wipe out in milliseconds the distance separating himself from total strangers" (29). In this room of familiar people, he wiped out the distance separating him from their grand design of changing the Middle East. Reason was shown the door by power at that meeting.

Type IV Leadership

The global war on terrorism and wars in the Middle East gave purpose to the Bush presidency. The invasion of Iraq differentiated Bush from his dad. His plan was bolder and his secretary of defense, his father's nemesis, was his consigliere. Cheney's support for the war provided Bush another difference with his father-president. The vice president explained that he had agreed with Bush 41 and his advisers not to invade Iraq in 1991 but now he allegedly realized that was the wrong decision (DuBose and Bernstein 173). Bush believed that he was correcting his father's mistake. Rumsfeld, for his starring part, had the irresistible chance to play the smartest guy in the room. During the Gulf War Cheney, Colin Powell, and theatre commander Norman Schwarzkopf appeared constantly on the media. In the Afghanistan and Iraq wars,

Rumsfeld would be front stage parrying media with confusing technical expertise about known unknowns and unknown unknowns, even as he disregarded the wisdom of clinging to an awareness of the latter. For Rumsfeld's the victories in Afghanistan and Iraq vindicated his big idea; the low-ball estimate of the troops necessary to invade Iraq; and his dismissal of those who disagreed with him. He even instructed us all about old and new Europe.

Yet it is not clear that Rumsfeld was master of his own house. The administration sought slam dunk certainty about justifying an invasion of Iraq. Feith and Wolfowitz, an old hand at reinterpreting intelligence into a worst-case, terror-filled scenario, began a selective search for intelligence to do so. Feith, with Wolfowitz's support, set up the Office of Special Plans (OSP). When Cambone, under secretary of defense for intelligence, was not included, he protested. Rumsfeld let Wolfowitz and Feith have their way rather than entangle himself in a network far stronger than his. Genuine learning met another impediment.

Learning was not necessary when you could create facts as Feith and Wolfowitz were doing. Cockburn observes, "Nobody could say nasty things and make them sound measured and matter-of-fact" like Cheney (146) or make a clear case for war that was untrue (176). Cheney contrived legal justification for the extension of presidential authority, including torture and extraordinary rendition, through war time powers. John Yoo in the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel would do that just as Antonin Scalia, now U.S. Supreme Court Justice, had provided legal justification for extensions of presidential authority twenty-five years earlier. Virtue is rewarded in this realm. The Bush team, Rove and Hughes, understood good electoral politics when they saw the polls. They could mobilize their base by fear even to the extent of portraying Max Cleland, a triple-amputee from wounds incurred in Vietnam, as inadequately tough on terrorism. They closed a 22-point lead that Cleland had over his opponent.

Bush persisted in a global war on terror despite cascading adverse consequences and possible new fronts. One antidote to persistence in a mistaken policy – giving voice to doubters and heeding them – was not available for several reasons. First, the Bush administration did not need to listen. Rumsfeld always knew better than others. Knowing what he needed to enhance the president's power was all Cheney wanted. To feel that he was taking his own bold measures met Bush's need for knowledge. Bush's optimism stoked his wishful thinking and both substituted for serious deliberation. Bush's ease with power included not second-guessing himself. We find little self-reflection by Bush in Draper's book. Draper's access cost him the opportunity to ask the president any tough questions. Perhaps Laura Bush put her finger on the central truth, Bush is impulsive and "does pretty much everything to excess" (p. 39). Second, the Bush team eliminated skeptics and voices of doubt. Rumsfeld beat the Pentagon brass over the head with "transformational leadership." People who expressed doubts didn't "get it.'. The way to early retirement was to ask to stop the car or at least slow it down. Other parts of the Bush administration brought pressure to bear on those who asked hard questions, Joseph Wilson and the yellow cake uranium, or who could not provide the answers sought-the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

Third, they recruited credible voices. By February 2003, after a year of banging the war drum, Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld still did not have the collective credibility to make a convincing case for invading Iraq. Bush used Powell's to persuade the U.S. public, through a U.N. speech. Cheney and Rumsfeld, astute stage-managers, were happy to have Powell take center stage as long as he played the part they had devised to make Type IV leadership look like Type I. Powell obligingly provided a case for invading Iraq based on "facts not allegations" of weapons of mass destruction, ties of Hussein to 9/11 terrorists, and a program to develop nuclear weapons. Iraq was a clear problem with a clear solution. Powell's own proclivity to rank and order weakened this voice of doubt.

Finally, DuBose and Bernstein emphasize the decline of checks and balances. The informal ones within the administration had been eliminated. The formal ones fell into disrepair from the neglect Republican majorities in Congress gave legislative oversight. It looked the other way as executive signing orders gutted legislation. The decision in October 2002 by the Democratic majority in the Senate to provide the president with war powers in Iraq indicated that it too could use the war as an electoral tactic. In this case, the rationale was to take Iraq off the election table. This was a gross strategic blunder that reverberated into the 2004 presidential election.

The Fault Lies Not in Our Stars, Only

Failing all else, elections are the ultimate check and balance. Type IV leadership is impossible in democratic societies without informed voters. The reelection of Bush in 2004 was a shock. Why? Barbara Kellerman and Jean Lipman-Blumen explain bad and toxic leadership, respectively, in terms of the needs of people to believe in leaders and the promise of simple and clear answers to otherwise complex and unclear problems. Given a high enough level of fear, an electorate can be as wooden headed as the officials they elect. Especially if the choice for the electorate of the world's most powerful nation comes down to power or interdependence.

The color-coded threats and the astute campaigning skills of the Bush team provided U.S. voters with plenty to fear. The team had wielded innuendo against opponents to deadly effect. The candidate who avoided service in Vietnam disparaged, by proxy, the war record of John McCain. The team found a proxy to tar the service record of John Kerry. But fear is not enough unless a significant portion of an electorate is eager to escape from freedom, in Erich Fromm's memorable term. Fromm cites John Dewey in this regard: "The serious threat to our democracy is … the existence within our own personal attitudes and within our own institutions of conditions which have given a victory to external authority, discipline, uniformity and dependence upon The Leader … The battlefield is also accordingly here-within ourselves and our institutions."

The failure of the Bush administration is perhaps the failure of our concepts of leadership. Our myths of heroes, at least in the U.S., emphasize warriors. In an uncertain world we want to believe in them. The Bush team obliged the public. Cheney explained the Bush administrations

would stand up to the atomic weapons of Saddam Hussein, even if he had none. Rumsfeld was the technician with snappy answers. Draper mentions Bush's Paul Newmanesque pose of virility in his flight suit. All three exuded the confidence people wanted in leaders in tough times, overlooking the telltale signs of clay feet.

By 2006 the public grew restive with the human and financial costs, corruption and ineptitude, torture policies, Abu Ghraib, warrant less searches, outing covert CIA agents, the ceaseless talk of attacks on Iran and other Muslim countries, and the endless detention of prisoners in Guantanamo. The Pentagon rebelled against their civilian bosses. Whistle blowers at Defense, the CIA, and the FBI fed stories to a media mostly dozing for five years. The voters established Democratic majorities in Congress. This meant a new degree of accountability and oversight by Congress, and new fights over secrecy, access to information, and executive privilege like those prior to 9/11. I can now say to my Australian friend that the U.S. might be forgiven Bush because of the fraud rampant in the 2000 election, and the likely the 2004 election too. We are working to understand how things could go so bad so quickly. We know, thanks to these books, that part of the downward spiral has to do with a remarkable confluence of coincidence of personalities and their needs and wants that reached center stage against the backdrop of 9/11. These persons maneuvered a global war on terror to serve their purposes. But in the end, after all is said and done, we gave these people the authority to do these things or at least held them insufficiently accountable for the policies in which they persisted. The fault therefore lies in too many Americans putting too much trust and faith in our leaders to carry out their responsibilities, and placing too little in our own civic responsibility.

The election in 2006 may be a start in correcting course. Our system of checks and balances is working better even if not well enough yet. The election of 2008 will be a measure of how much of our freedom we want back. It will take strong political parties and advocacy groups to hold leaders accountable for continual learning about the problems we face and the efficacy of the solutions that we choose. It won't do to say then what we might have said in 2000, "Don't blame me, I only live here."

American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America, Chris Hedges, New York: The Free Press, 2006

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Chris Hedge's new book joins a burgeoning library on the worrisome rise of the radical Christian right in the United States. It is partly a journalistic account of the movement and partly a warning of the grave dangers it poses. As the title makes clear, Hedges sees the Christian right as a direct ideological heir of 20th century fascism. Hedges' argument rests on the thesis that the Christian right "has, like all fascist movements, a belief in magic along with leadership adoration and a strident call for moral and physical supremacy of a master race…" (p. 11) Given the fuzzy way that Hedges defines fascism – his definition applies to any number of pre-fascist reactionary movements – the argument is hardly novel. Michele Goldberg's recent Kingdom Coming draws similar parallels between the extreme Christian Right and totalitarianism. While providing a few insights and interesting anecdotes, he never moves beyond description into the realm of solid analysis.

Each chapter begins with a tone-setting quote from a political thinker on the appeal of fascism or else from a theologian espousing the Christian beliefs that Hedges argues represent the true essence of Christianity in contrast to its widespread right-wing perversion. Christian Dominionism, for a particularly malignant example, is a politicized manipulation of Christianity. Behind this distortion, Hedges finds, is a suffocating vision of America as an inhumanly Christian nation, perfecting intolerance and authoritarianism. The addled dominionists hope to make America what they imagine the far from reverent founders intended. But, Hedges notes, these contemporary zealots "have no religious legitimacy. They are manipulating Christianity, and millions of sincere believers, to build a frightening political mass movement with many similarities with other mass movements, from fascism to communism to the ethnic nationalist parties in the former Yugoslavia." (p. 35) If the radical Christian right lacks "religious legitimacy" and seeks to impose a "frightening" new political order, what explains the strong appeal of the movement? Hedges' answer: despair. "The stories many in this movement tell are stories of failure – personal, communal and sometimes economic' He writes. "They are stories of public and private institutions that are increasingly distant and irrelevant, stories of loneliness and abuse. Isolation, the plague of the modern industrial society, has torn apart networks of extended families and communities." (p. 41) This intense experience of failure and of alienation (not Hedges' word) engenders despair.

Hedges cites decreasing wages, higher unemployment, slaving to get by, and a loss of leisure time over the last few decades to explain why ordinary Americans have reason to feel hard done by; particularly since the assault from Reagan onward upon Keynesian economic policies

and the social safety net. However, a socio-economic account alone hardly explains why members of the upper or middle class turn to ultra-conservative Christianity. For these people, Hedges argues, the problem is less material than existential. Although Hedges does not explicitly say so, what draws people to the movement – rich or poor – is their loss of certainty in the flux of the modern world (a very old ailment, by now). The people Hedges interviews frequently tell how economic woes and/or abuse made life too difficult to bear. They lost confidence in public life and even begin to blame personal problems on a vague socio-cultural malaise they are unable to pinpoint or understand. Before they joined the Evangelical movement they felt lost and hopeless. Modern life was cold and devoid of any comforting moral absolutes. These poor souls therefore become ripe for the picking by fundamentalist salesmen seeking "lonely sinners." These missionaries offer a sense of community in the congregation and absolution from sin and guilt through conversion. Fundamentalist Christianity peddles the powerful illusion of certainty in an uncertain world.

Hedges' treatment would have benefited greatly by bringing in Marx, Durkheim, Weber, or Freud, to name only a few preceding analysts of this sort of angst or anomie. These thinker understood that modernity decimates religion's capacity to explain or enchant' the world. At the same time, modernity increases religion's appeal as a shield should society fail to shield people from harmful repercussions. Unrestrained capitalism, social fragmentation, and bureaucratization are only a few of modernity's products that, in the absence of social forces buffering their effects, might drive people back into the eager arms of the priest, rabbi, or mullah.

Any useful engagement with the revived phenomenon of Christian fundamentalism must begin with a reconsideration of the thinkers who addressed the role of religion in a modern world where "all that is solid melts in air." To examine religion in any other way is to abstract the fundamentalist movement from its socio-historical context, making it impossible to explain how and why dogma answers social or psychological needs. This means that a critique of fundamentalism must be complemented by a critique of the modern world of which it is a product. Further, there must be a renewed commitment to the as yet unachieved socio-political promises of modernity – what Habermas has called the unfinished project of modernity. Hedges' analysis, unfortunately, is not quite that ambitious. Hedges does not explain why some people choose the solutions provided by Christian Evangelicalism, as opposed to, say, political action or inertia. Ultimately, for him, despair is a feeling that some people are prey to and others are strangely immune.

Hedges takes a course that has by now become conventional among journalists who write on the subject of the Christian right. He describes how, within the movement, women are subjugated by a patriarchal hierarchy, persecution of homosexuals is encouraged, and science and reason are shunned. Without acknowledging his debt to Weber (whom he may not have read), Hedges devotes a chapter to how capitalism nervously is crowbarred into Christian fundamentalist ideology. Wealth, conveniently enough, signifies God's favor. Because God's will is serendipitously expressed through the market, capitalist consumption is encouraged and blessed. Hedges notes that this "is the apotheosis of capitalism, the divine sanction of the free

market, of unhindered profit and the most rapacious cruelties of globalization." (p. 133) Hedges neglects to point out the sad irony that, through the alignment of capital and the religious right, the despair-ridden flock celebrates the achievements of those same guys who bear much of the responsibility for their socio-economic woes.

The final chapters explain how the Christian media industry exhorts its audience to defend themselves against moral degeneration. Hedges, however, closes with his own call for a crusade for democracy against authoritarianism, for tolerance against intolerance, for reason against blind faith, and for a renewed ethical Christianity. His book is most provocative when Hedges grounds popular discontent in economic developments or explains the odd alignment of interests between fundamentalist leaders and capitalist elites. But missing is an account of how Reagan allied with evangelical leaders to get formerly unmotivated fundamentalists to the polls. Also missing is an explanation why Christian fundamentalism enjoys growing recruitment while mainstream Christianity is rapidly losing adherents.

Rather than undertake a critique of religion, Hedges compares the religious right to non-religious movements. Equating Christian fundamentalism with fascism is spurious. Fascism, with its mainly secular vision (barring the cases in which dictators used religious leaders to further their programs), was a uniquely modern reaction against modernity. Indeed, fascists also blamed feminists, homosexuals, and scientists for destroying civilization, but those are merely superficial affinities. Christian fundamentalism's roots lie in a much older authoritarian vision – the pre-Enlightenment world in which, as Kant put it, one cravenly turns to the local priest's mystical and mythical answers rather than rely on the power of one's own rationality.

Ironically, Hedges does argue for upholding the Enlightenment values that engendered modernity, but is unclear exactly what aspects of the Enlightenment need to be upheld. The religious right's success is due in no small way to the fact that it embraced two legacies of the Enlightenment: capitalism and liberalism. It aligned itself with capital and used liberal language to defend the right of its flock to doctrinaire belief. What it vehemently opposes is the Enlightenment's ethical vision and devotion, if that's the word, to reason. These legacies are problematic for Hedges too since part of his program for confronting the religious right is a renewal of progressive Christianity. The rub is that the Enlightenment, and the modernity it helped usher in, poses a challenge to faith in general, not just to one specific politicized manifestation of it. Even formidable thinkers like Kant, who tried in vain to secure a separate sphere for religion outside of the realm of knowledge, failed at that endeavor.

Hedges is not only a journalist, but a graduate of Harvard Divinity School. So perhaps the book might offer an immanent critique of the movement. There is an argument to be made that modernity and faith can be reconciled, that is, if Hedges had given progressive theologians like Niebuhr more attention. But Hedges doesn't bother to expose internal contradictions in evangelical arguments. Instead, he tells readers to accept that "God is inscrutable, mysterious and unknowable." (p. 8) Recommended is the Christianity that Hedges' says informed his father, a progressive pastor, in support of the Civil Rights Movement, homosexuals, and opposition to the Vietnam War. It is surely preferable that the Bible imbue its readers with a

similar ethical sensibility, but the Good Book is infamously rife with ambiguities. R.J. Rushdooney, an intellectual forefather of today's far-right, read the same book and came up with radically different saber-toothed opinions. Indeed, if the falling mainstream church attendance is any indicator, it is precisely Hedges' tame Christianity that people have lost interest in.

Hedges is correct to fear the threat that the movement poses to democracy. But, sharing anecdotes and describing a few features of the movement does little to help. The real task is to provide viable solutions for confronting the movement, which Hedges fails to do. This cannot be done without more studies that explain why this socio-historical moment has produced a successful Christian fundamentalism and requires a multi-leveled analysis that engages the history, sociology, politics, and ideology of the movement. Of course, the most difficult part is providing reasons for why these faithful should embrace a progressive political alternative instead.

Paul Joseph, Are Americans Becoming More Peaceful?

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Paul Joseph readily acknowledges in his preface that the argument embodied in the title, *Are Americans Becoming More Peaceful?*, seems a paradoxical questionto pose today. In the aftermath of the attacks of September 11th the United States started two major wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It remains in both areas, fighting intractable insurgencies while a conflict with Iran over its nuclear program simmers away. In response to September 11, the Bush administration championed preventive or preemptive war in Iraq. It also arrogated for itself the right to confront and forestall any rising power that might challenge the US preeminence. Moreover, the global war on terror is defined in such broad terms as to appear perpetual in nature and boundless in scope. As Joseph notes, the US went to war with Iraq with an overall 70% of the public behind the president's decision. The antiwar movements in the US seemed modest compared to the massive outpouring in Europe in early 2003. In London well over a million people demonstrated on 16 February 2003 against Tony Blair's support for Bush's move to invade Iraq. Only after four years and with over thirty-five hundred American dead and anywhere between 50,000 to 650,000 Iraqi dead, the American public's support appears to have waned.

Joseph is not dealing with the question of whether the American government is becoming more peaceful. That would be daft. He is interested, rather, in demonstrating that a majority of the Americans are trending towards an aversion, if not outright hostility, toward war as a policy option, especially as a gratuitous one. Joseph divides the opposition to war among the American people into two groups. Type I, comprising 15-20% of the population, rejects war on principle and prefers diplomatic solutions. They believe in the value and necessity of international organizations such as the United Nations Security Council for the use of force, the legitimacy of international norms and the international criminal court, and desire reductions in nuclear weapons and the arms trade. Within this group one finds the more militant antiwar activists who lead the effort to organize, protest and petition the government for a change in policies centered on force.

Those comprising Type II, approximately 50-60% of the public, do not reject war for idealistic reasons, as do those in Type I. Their main concern lies in the costs of war in terms of (their) lives and economics. They are less inclined to support war as a tool of foreign policy, yet are likely to consent to humanitarian interventions, as in the cases of Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Aside from Type I and II, only 25-30% of the public consistently supports policies that favor war as an instrument of statecraft. Whether out of loyalty, patriotic duty or managed perception, they believe that the United States can only remain safe through military might against "evildoers", and so lends its support regardless of costs. As Joseph argues, even at the height of

the antiwar movement during the Vietnam War and when the majority of the public opposed the war, a persistent third not only wanted to continue the war but even endorsed escalation. Indeed, even today with the war in Iraq going badly and a majority of the public wanting to pull out, there appears to be the same intractable fraction supporting the war.

The obvious problem is that though a significant majority of the population might be against war either in principle or out of self-interest, this stance has not translated itself in an attenuation of the use of force. The sociology of militarism, the recruitment and training of class of warriors, and the cultural celebration through film or television of the role of the military within society have all played an important part in the legitimizing force. Joseph argues nonetheless that a structural change in the form of warfare since the Second World War influences public attitudes in negative ways toward militarization and, consequently, translates into a growing antiwar constituency, even if it is not always apparent ion the streets.

Joseph divides war into two categories, mobilized and conditional. A mobilized war connotes a heightened militarization to the point that the war absorbs all civilian, economic and social relations within its scope. World War Two exemplifies this experience of total war and the mass mobilization of society. The public accepts the necessity of casualties and accompanying high costs as a matter of national survival against an enemy constructed as the incarnation of evil. By contrast, a conditional war is one where militarization is relatively small-scale, the threat less obvious or mortal, and the demands on the citizenry less burdensome. The enemy is no longer construed as the citizenry of the opposing nation, but as particular leaders or "outlaw" regimes. Under such conditions, the public appetite for war becomes restrained and can easily shift to outright rejection. Given the 24-hour news cycle, and media mages circulating the globe in a flash, the public can have unprecedented audio-visual proximity to the battlefield (except when governments do not permit them to see it). As Joseph writes, "At key moments, either through modified coverage by mainstream media or via independent sources that are increasingly able to distribute visuals across the Internet, a more critical message comes through." (26)

Public opinion then becomes an important concern for the government to deal with if it needs to sustain a conditional war. Thus the bulk of Joseph's text is an examination of ways in which government tries to manage the public's response to war. Through propagation of fear and the control of the information, policy-makers have the ability to set the terms of the debate. The message out of the White House from mid-2002 to the March 2003 invasion tirelessly conflated Iraq with terrorism and with weapons of mass destruction and thus created an impression of threat.

Even as the war in Iraq progressively got worse, the administration's rhetoric was so persistent that there remains a belief among many Americans, even after it was conclusively shown that Saddam Hussein was not in possession of weapons of mass destruction and had no relationship to speak of with Al-Qaeda, that the administrations claims were true. Joseph shows all this clearly and demonstrates the lengths to which the White House has gone to manage the news media and the journalists reporting by putting pressures on those that refuse to conform. Still,

if the public were truculent and unquestioningly obedient, there would be no need for this massive apparatus of propaganda.

Because of self-censorship there are rarely television scenes showing the gruesome effects of war on soldiers or civilians that one more easily can find on Arabic channels such as Al-Jazeera. The importance of imagery cannot be underestimated for its effects on policy, Joseph arguies. The images of detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib did an incalculable amount of damage to American legitimacy. If the American public turned so dramatically against the Iraq war it is in part because of a fundamental disconnect between the daily reporting of violence coming from Iraq versus the rhetoric of success from the White House, which ultimately created a deep cynicism – a credibility gap,' to tap a 60s expression.

Joseph's final chapter attempts to demonstrate the material consequences of a public preference for "peace" on the ability of the state to make war. Because, according to Joseph, a majority of the American public sides with the "dovish" view of international relations: "War as an acceptable policy is thus in a state of limbo." (234) Contemporary war managers have four means of subverting or at least neutering this opposition: One is the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs,' the technological capacity of precision guided munitions to avoid casualties. This resort, however, has largely proven to be a chimera in both Iraq and Afghanistan. A second way is the use of special operation soldiers as a way of increasing deployment mobility and adaptability to on-site circumstances. A third means is the use of third party proxies as was seen in Afghanistan with the Northern Alliance. Fourth, a greater emphasis is placed on subcontracting to private military companies such as DynCorp and Blackwater for logistics, training and security. Given all of these Machiavellian options, along with the albeit imperfect ability of the American government to manage the perceptions of the public, Joseph acknowledges that even if the majority of the American public is peace-oriented that this "are not equivalent to the *political will* to embrace an explicit peace program." (237 my emphasis)

Therein lies a major problem with Joseph's argument. The idea that a citizenry dislike the costs of war and is inclined toward peace is nothing new. Immanuel Kant argued as much in his *Perpetual Peace* (1795): "if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared (and in this constitution it cannot but be the case), nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war." The real problem is that the people simply cannot decide such matters. A majority of the British opposed the invasion of Iraq, but that did not stop Blair. The essence of sovereignty, Carl Schmitt reminds us, is the ability to make a decision during exceptional circumstances in order to protect the state against internal or external political enemies. In a nutshell, the peaceful views of the American people cannot be actualized into a peaceful *political* program to mitigate, let alone abolish war, because that implies the end of the state and the end of international politics as such – or it does, at least, if Schmitt has uttered a timeless and inescapable truth. Perhaps. Perhaps not.

Young Stalin by Simon Sebag Montefiore

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When Mel Brooks had Hitler tripping across the stage in the “Producers,” the campy banality makes the horror manageable and laughable. Hannah Arendt’s thoughts on the banality of evil almost had her burning at the intellectual stake, but the concept is indispensable for understanding the real world – and perhaps no more so than the present.

The sight of Karl Rove doing a song and dance routine at the White House Press roast, despite its superficial resemblance to Young Frankenstein and the Monster tapping the boards, evokes nausea because its aim is to conceal the horror behind the banal.

However, there is a reverse to Arendt’s thesis, which is the filtration from subsequent history of the *charisma* of evil, the retrospective denial of the appealing characteristics that put leaders in the position to do so much harm.

In the *Young Stalin*, Simon Sebag Montefiore has come to exhume Stalin, not to praise him. In the process, he has rescued one of history’s most influential characters from the caricatures of both his disciples and his enemies to give a rounded picture of his development, which does much to explain why he and the Soviet state became what they did.

Young Stalin shows how, although undoubtedly evil in his behavior, the Soviet leader was far from banal. He was a complex and charismatic figure, who commanded loyalty that, certainly in the early days, was not just based on fear and terror. The book’s well researched portrait of a complex, courageous, glamorous but ruthless rogue, philanderer and poet, intellectual and ideologist contrasts sharply with the common view of a boorish, uneducated and savage peasant whose animal cunning allowed him to prevail against his moral and intellectual betters.

Young Stalin is bound to disturb many in world where the bad guys are supposed to be bad in every aspect. In a recent review of “Mao” I praised the authors for revealing the depth of the Chinese leader’s crimes, including the deaths of millions of Chinese, but cautioned that their unremittingly negative depiction of the founder of modern China was unconvincing, and failed to explain how he had gained the unflinching support of so many of his victims. I was promptly accused of being an apologist for genocide.

The Manichaean view of history has deep roots in our culture and its dualism morphs easily into crude Marxism: good versus evil, thesis versus antithesis, heroes and villains. It is a rich vein in the popular imagination but it is always distressing to see it extended to the decision-making classes. Goodies and Baddies may be an effective paradigm for writing a Hollywood Western or a James Bond film, but are much less so for explaining history or politics.

In an American presidential context, a clean-living, non-drinking, anti-smoking, pet-loving, vegetarian, faithful war veteran prepared to go to prison for his belief that his people had been wronged would certainly score points with pollsters – if his name were not Adolf Hitler. We do indeed have examples in the current White House team of charming, affable people who neither rant like Tamurlaine, nor kick the dog, but have committed some very serious crimes and are directly responsible for perhaps hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Indeed, since real politicians rarely behave like the villains in a melodrama, or even in a Iago-like impulse of pure evil, the popular persistence of this model poses serious political problems, as the successive demonizations of Fidel Castro, Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, or even Hugo Chavez have shown. On the other hand, their expedient canonizations by opponents of American foreign policy are equally dangerous. Our popular memory of Che Guevara is of the martyr in the jungle, not the supervisor of firing squads in Havana.

Facile comparisons with Hitler and Stalin are often part of such demonizations, so perhaps books like the *Young Stalin* will help exorcize such diabolical thought processes from the public consciousness.

It is not easy to find an objective view of Stalin. During his reign, he and his acolytes buried much of the earlier "achievements" that Sebag Montefiore reveals – the messy business of bank robberies and direct action, not to mention his serial seductions occasionally tending to pedophilia. Such deeds were not conducive to painting the icon of the leader of the world's proletariat, nor, indeed with their hints of underlying Georgian clannishness, were they useful for the leader of the Russians. Unlike the warts on Oliver Cromwell's portrait, Stalin and his official iconographers painted them out – and sometimes expunged the very witnesses as well.

Since Khrushchev's 20th Congress speech essentially confirmed the anti-communist charges against Stalin, the number of defenders of his record or his motives has shrunk considerably, even if there are probably still more than there should be. Leon Trotsky's personal animus against the provincial "mediocrity" who supplanted him, still permeates many on the Left, who remain romantically attached to an idealist vision of the October Revolution, and seek to portray Stalin as an aberration from the purity of the Bolsheviks' aim and methods.

But Trotsky's own critique of Stalin's ability, his "mediocrity," was self-evidently contrafactual. It was Stalin who sat enthroned in the Kremlin while his bitter exiled rival frittered and fretted at the other end of the globe, stricken down by an assassin who died thinking he had committed an heroic deed. As Sebag Montefiore says, "Trotsky's view tells us more about his own vanity, snobbery, and lack of political skills than about the early Stalin." Both sides since have rewritten history, but it is clear that within the Bolshevik Party, Stalin commanded a support that Trotsky could not.

The snobbery of Trotsky's dismissal of Stalin comes oddly from a would-be champion of the proletariat. Sebag Montefiore reemphasizes what other recent historians have pointed out, that Stalin was a voracious and minutely attentive reader, with a personal library of over 20,000

volumes, many of them with marginal notes scribbled in the censorious leader.

He was already a renowned and published poet in Georgian despite his humble origins, but that too was an inconvenient accolade for the helmsman of the Russian-based Soviet empire and was lost from the official historiography.

As an autodidact after his expulsion from the Tiflis seminary Stalin was able to wage class warfare within the Bolshevik Party to isolate Trotsky and other intellectuals and call upon the loyalty of those who had stayed. Sebag Montefiore shows how the Bolsheviks who stayed inside and did the dirty work, wrestling in the mud and blood with the Okhrana had their own cohesiveness and loyalties, which did not necessarily extend to the intellectuals who lived safely abroad.

He demonstrates how Lenin, more than the other exiles, maintained contact and encouraged this sub-culture back in the Empire, and has no truck with the idea that Bolshevism in practice was some forced aberration from cozy social democracy. The exiles lived off the proceeds of the banditry of Stalin and his comrades, even as they snootily despised them.

Stalin was at the core of this group of Committeemen who “had been raised on the same streets, had shared gang warfare, clan rivalries, and ethnic slaughter, and had embraced the same culture of violence.” Sebag Montefiore demonstrates the extent to which the Bolsheviks on the ground shared Stalin’s gangster origins, so that the sectarianism, ruthlessness and perpetual paranoia that we associate with Stalin was in fact an integral part of Bolshevism rather than a personal aberration.

He summarizes, “Leninism-Stalinism is comprehensible only if one realizes that the Bolsheviks continued to behave in the same clandestine style whether they formed the government of the world’s greatest empire in the Kremlin or an obscure little cabal in the backroom of a Tiflis tavern.”

Far from being the “colorless gray Blur” of legend, Stalin was in fact a colorful and almost heroic figure in those underground years, mixing attributes of James Bond with the Scarlet Pimpernel. Women found him attractive, and he responded often, but was often callously exploitive of them, abandoning them and the children he fathered, several of whom Sebag Montefiore has tracked down. While he was never a “nice” person, he was murderous, but not a psychopath, although the cover blurb on the book calls him such. On the one hand he could see inconvenient friends and relatives die with nary a tear, but then he could send gifts and money to old acquaintances down on their luck.

In fact, what Sebag Montefiore shows was that quite apart from Stalin’s personality, he shared with other Bolsheviks a psychopathic philosophy, in which family, friends, indeed any person, was disposable for the cause.

Compare for example Hitler and Stalin, the twin demons of the Twentieth Century. I suspect that most readers would tilt the balance of evil towards Hitler. Rationally, how do we

distinguish between them? What made rational people choose one over the other, often as if there were no other choices?

In any calculus of evil, Hitler may have killed his tens of thousands by 1941, but by then Stalin had slaughtered millions. Hitler had swallowed up Czechoslovakia and much of Poland, but Stalin had by then committed the crime of aggression against Finland, the Baltic States, and by the end, Poland. The Holocaust was yet to happen, and it could be argued that the fate of the Kulaks in Russia until then was worse than that of the Jews in Germany.

One can only conclude that at least part of this inclination to regard Hitler as further beyond the Pale than Stalin derives from intentions. Despite the folk wisdom about the paving material for the Road to Hell, we tend to excuse good intentions and sincerity.

Aryan supremacy was not a cause that most progressive or liberal thinkers see deserving human sacrifice on such a huge scale. But Stalin's degenerate worker's state, as even exiled cofounder Trotsky saw it, and the promised socialist commonwealth to come allowed people to don moral blinkers about the sordid and cruel reality of the road that purported to lead to it.

Was Stalin sincere in his desire to bring about a socialist paradise? Sebag Montefiore does not directly answer this question, but his work suggests that Stalin was indeed a true believer, a romantic who wanted to reshape presently imperfect humanity into a more suitable form, no matter the cost in individual human lives. For most of us, in a culture where sincerity is seen as a virtue outside of any connection to reality, that poses much more of an intellectual problem than a caricatured villain out of James Bond or Batman.

It is a question with deep roots in politics. Sebag Montefiore has done the world a service with his portrait of young Stalin – not because of any concern about rescue the dead dictator from libel, but to remind us that in the real world poets and bibliophiles can be gentlemanly and genocidal at the same time and that they might even profess desirable ends. It should be evident that in any rational political analysis, we cannot separate the end and the means. It is not what politicians, governments, guerillas or terrorists profess that matters. It is what they *do*.

Frances Fox Piven, Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America

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Starting in the 1960's, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward elaborated their own powerful and distinctive analysis of political change in the United States. They began with the protest movements of the 1960's, and gradually expanded the scope of their argument to encompass much of 20th century U.S. history. After Richard Cloward's death in 2001, Frances Fox Piven has carried on this project and in this most recent book, she extends the argument back to the founding of the Republic.

Piven's previous book, Bringing the War Home (2002), was a direct response to the Bush Administration's rush to wage war on Iraq. It offers an astute analysis of the domestic roots of the Iraq War, and it makes sense of some of the more inexplicable elements of the Bush Presidency. Her new book pushes forward the line of argument that she developed with Cloward in two important ways. First, it provides a theoretical foundation for their sustained emphasis on the political uses of disruption by social movements. Second, it provides a kind of master key for analyzing U.S. politics from the Revolution down to the present.

The master key has two prongs; one explains the logic of reaction and the other the logic of reform over roughly 230 years. Piven reminds us that U.S. political institutions were, from the outset, structured to favor conservative interests, especially business, over the popular will. The Founders sought to insulate the Federal Government from the pressures of the mob through separation of powers, the indirect election of Senators, and an independent judiciary with lifelong terms. While Senators are now elected directly, the original design survives since business interests continue to use the multiple veto points provided by this system to block reforms favored by a diffuse and unorganized electorate.

In this, they have also been aided by something that the founders had not anticipated-a two party system that consistently reproduces non-ideological, catch-all parties, both of which are dependent on business support. It follows that the default setting of U.S. politics is conservative; significant social reforms or proposals for deepening democracy are consistently defeated by conservative interests-from slaveholders to globalizing corporations-because they exercise privileged levels of influence over both parties and government.

The second, more optimistic prong of Piven's argument identifies a powerful counter force that lies behind the successful movements of reform in U.S. history. This force is not popular mobilization in itself. In fact, Piven does not think that movements achieve their ends by signing petitions, holding rallies, and turning out more voters. These weapons are not sufficient to overcome the institutionalized power held by the opponents of reform.

But popular movements can exercise what she terms "interdependent power" when they break the rules and disrupt the status quo. The abolitionist raid on Harpers Ferry, the CIO's sit-down

strikes in the 1930's, and the ghetto rebellions of the 1960's are examples of protest movements engaging in disruptive actions that eventually forced the political system to grant very substantial concessions that would not have otherwise occurred.

During the Revolutionary era, the dynamic was slightly different. The colonial elite of planters and merchants had no choice but to mobilize the populace in their struggle against the English. But once mobilized, the people took the democratic rhetoric of the revolution seriously and insisted on the elimination of property restrictions on the suffrage. Piven writes of the revolutionary era:

What was remarkable about these events was not only the intelligence and ambition of the elites, but that the mob had played a large if convoluted role in the construction of a new state with at least some of the elemental features of democracy.

Piven argues that the capacity to exercise interdependent power is always present in social life. The society's ability to function requires that workers do their jobs, students go to classes, tenants pay their rent, and the urban poor meekly acquiesce. But if people decide to withhold labor, refuse to fight in the military, stop going to classes, engage in rent strikes, lie down on the highways or riot, they can exercise interdependent power.

To be sure, in politics, timing is everything. Disruptive protests that occur when conservative elites and political leaders are closely aligned are likely to face fierce and overwhelming repression. This was the recurring fate of the radical labor movement from the end of the Civil War through to the Palmer Raids. But there are times when the party in power cannot risk repression against a portion of its own political base. It is in these moments when disruptive action or the threat of such action can overcome conservative resistance and force elites to grant enduring reforms.

Piven also suggests that the actions of insurgent movements can help to create these favorable moments. In the case of abolitionism, for example, the movement's powerful moral indictment of slavery and its continuous agitation succeeded in polarizing public opinion. The resulting divisions broke apart the duopoly of Whigs and Democrats and made possible the rise of the Republican Party. For one brief moment in U.S. history, a dominant electoral party was organized around an explicit project of reform-the end of slavery. When this party won the Presidency in 1860, there was no turning back from Civil War and the ultimate emancipation of the slaves.

But in this case, and every other one, the epoch of reform was followed by a period of reaction when conservative elites regained the offensive and reversed earlier concessions. After Reconstruction, gains were almost completely reversed with Jim Crow and African American disenfranchisement in the South. Similarly, the New Deal victories of the labor movement were followed by seven decades during which those gains were gradually reversed. By the current decade, unionization rates had fallen to pre-New Deal levels.

But while she does not address it explicitly, Piven hints at the argument that gains won in an earlier epoch of reform survive to enhance the capacity for effective mobilization in future rounds. For example, the Constitutional Amendments adopted in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War proved invaluable for the Civil Rights Movement in the decades after World War II. Similarly, despite decades of reversals, legal protections won by the labor movement in the 1930's can still prove strategically valuable in new efforts to exercise interdependent power.

Piven's message for the future of American politics is very clear. She does not believe that the rightward march of U.S. politics will be halted by the simple expedient of electing a Democratic President in 2008 or even by intensified mobilization by labor, minorities, or other groups. Those steps are certainly desirable, but the indispensable element for real change is the exercise of interdependent power. Given the structural advantages that conservative interests enjoy, significant reforms will only come when social movements are willing to break the rules and engage in disruptive actions.

Moreover, Piven directly challenges those who argue that the globalization of production has fatally weakened the strategic power that social movements can employ. While acknowledging that some strategic levers might atrophy, new ones are constantly emerging. She cites the case of Wal-Mart's supply lines that make this corporate behemoth extremely vulnerable to disruption by a relatively small number of longshore workers, truck drivers, and warehouse employees.

But Piven ends this short book without telling us how we can apply these historical lessons to our own era. She doesn't explain, for example, under what conditions long shore and port workers could exercise their interdependent without suffering severe repression. She doesn't explore strategies for assuring that elites will be divided when disruptive mobilizations erupt. Nor does she tell us how social movements can frame the kind of morally resonant arguments that gave these earlier movements considerable political legitimacy. Nevertheless, she has done an outstanding job of mapping the theoretical and strategic territory that we need to be exploring. Thomas Pynchon said: "If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about the answers." The strength of Frances Fox Piven's book is that she raises the right questions about how entrenched power can be challenged in the United States.