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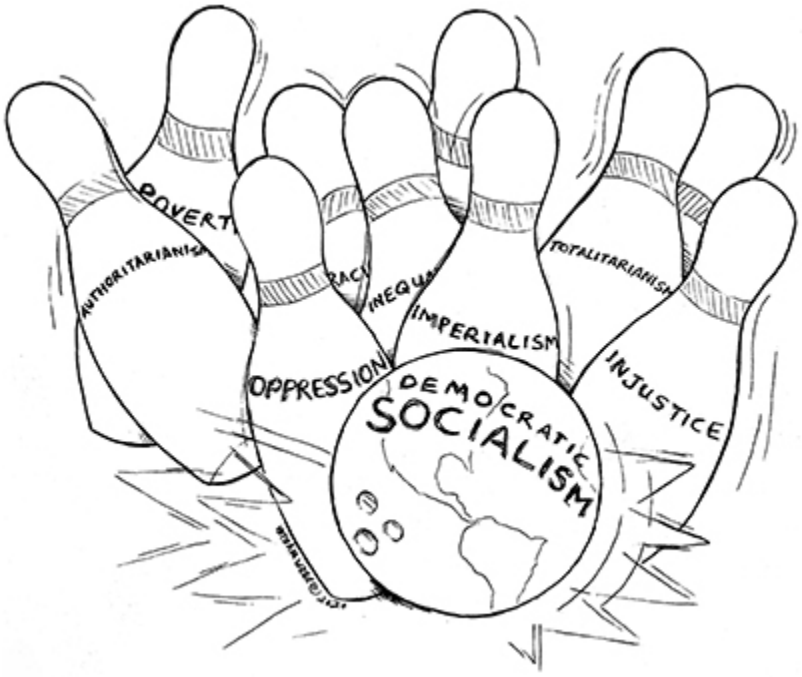

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Rolling Back the Global Advance of the Far Right

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In recent years, there have been many articles by socialists and left-liberals noting with alarm the advance of far-right regimes and parties. These include the United States (Donald Trump), Europe (the National Front/Rally in France, UKIP and the Brexit Party in the UK, the League in Italy, Vox in Spain, the Law and Justice Party in Poland, AfD in Germany, Freedom Party in Austria, Viktor Orban in Hungary) and indeed throughout the world: Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel, Vladimir Putin in Russia, Xi Jin-ping in China, Narendra Modi in India, Recep Tayyep Erdogan in Turkey, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines – the list goes on and on.[1] If we add regimes that were already extremely authoritarian, like the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Gulf Arab monarchies, the picture looks bleak indeed.

One common explanation for the growth of the far right and simultaneous decline of centre-right and centre-left parties is the espousal by the latter of neoliberal policies which have led to job losses, widespread poverty, and growing inequality. In many instances, they have also pandered to anti-immigrant sentiment instead of combating it. Since they are seen as the mainstream or 'the establishment', it becomes understandable that people hurt by these policies should turn to other parties which have previously been less popular.

There is some truth in this explanation, but it begs the question why the number of people turning further to the left has been so much smaller than the number turning further to the right. One reason why this could be the case is that the left has been badly divided, with a section of it converging with the far right on many issues. For example, the supporters of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria include former KKK leader David Duke, the white supremacists demonstrating at Charlottesville, British National Party leader Nick Griffin, Greek fascists of Golden Dawn, the French National Front, the Belgian Vlaams Belang – all neo-fascists who see their own politics reflected in Assad's ruthless totalitarian regime. Yet at the same time there are people who are seen to be on the left – figures like Seymour Hersh, Robert Fisk, David North and Alex Lantier of WSWS and Max Blumenthal – supporting Assad by spreading his propaganda. Again, Putin invited observers from European neo-fascist parties like the French National Front, Italian League, and Freedom Party of Austria to endorse a widely-boycotted referendum preceding the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, yet this annexation was also endorsed by people seen to be on the left like John Pilger. [2] A third example is Brexit in the UK, fronted by far-right ideologue Nigel Farage, whose campaign poster picturing a long queue of refugees bore a striking resemblence to a Nazi poster.[3] Yet some MPs in the Labour Party as well as sections of the extra-parliamentary left also supported Brexit.

In each of these cases, the far right takes a stance compatible with its politics: in support of a brutal dictator, in support of an imperialist annexation of a weaker country's territory, and in support of anti-immigrant nationalism. The left, on the other hand, is divided, with one section adopting the positions of the far right. The reasons they give for doing so may be different from those of the far right, but the objective outcome is the same. How has this happened?

Convergence between the far right and a section of the left

Perhaps the most emblematic historical example of a right-left convergence, and one from which more recent examples can be derived, is the Hitler-Stalin pact signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov on 23 August 1939, which lasted until 22 June 1941. The pact did not merely guarantee mutual non-aggression; its secret protocols committed the Soviet Union to providing food products and raw materials to the Nazis in return for finished products like machinery from Germany, and, crucially, Hitler ceding Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and part of Poland to the USSR. Thus Stalin was effectively a Nazi collaborator for almost two years despite being well aware of Hitler's fascist policies: a fact that is sought to be covered up by referring to World War II as the 'Great Patriotic War' which began only in June 1941 when Hitler abrogated the pact.

Stalin's agenda of converting the USSR into a new version of the tsarist empire was already evident to Lenin before he died, although by then he was too ill to be able to prevent it from happening. Yet he kept dictating his 'last testament', protesting against the oppression of Georgian communists by the Russian leadership and accusing Stalin of violating, 'in substance, the interests of proletarian class solidarity, for nothing holds up the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice.'[4] The same theme – that proletarian class solidarity requires support for national liberation struggles in tsarist colonies – had surfaced as early as 1914, when Lenin declared that 'What Ireland was for England, Ukraine has become for Russia: exploited in the extreme, and getting nothing in return. Thus the interests of the world proletariat in general and the Russian proletariat in particular require that the Ukraine regains its state independence, since only this will permit the development of the cultural level that the proletariat needs.'[5]

By 1941, Stalin had exterminated almost all opponents, dissidents and rivals (including the entire Bolshevik leadership), arresting and executing well over a million and sending millions more to the Gulag, where many died as a consequence of the cruel conditions. This was accompanied by a war on the truth and rewriting of history. He also propounded the theory of 'socialism in one country', according to which the USSR was already socialist and it was the duty of socialists/communists everywhere to subordinate their own struggles to defending the Soviet Union, which by this time meant following Stalin's orders. This effectively made Russian nationalism the ideology of all Stalinists and their followers. It was the totalitarian character of the Hitler and Stalin regimes that allowed them to come together in the pact, although their competing goals of imperial expansion led to the breakdown of the relationship. Post-war, a prolonged period of inter-imperialist rivalry between US imperialism and Russian imperialism came to be known as 'the Cold War'. The authoritarianism, nationalism and imperialism of the

Stalinist definition of ‘socialism/communism’ was the very opposite of what Marx and Engels had meant by these terms.

There was a short-lived attempt to return to a more democratic notion of socialism when Mikhail Gorbachev was in power, and his rejection of Russian imperialism led to real changes in the relationship between Russia and some of the former tsarist colonies as well as Soviet-dominated regimes in Eastern Europe. But hardline Stalinists staged a coup against him, and he was replaced by Boris Yeltsin, who in turn was followed by Vladimir Putin. Putin can be called a neo-Stalinist: unlike Stalin, he made no claim to Marxism and openly rejected Lenin, but like Stalin he was wedded to authoritarianism and saw the tsarist empire as a lost paradise on which the present and future should be modelled. In pursuit of these goals, he has wooed and endorsed neo-fascist groups and parties throughout Europe with the aim of bringing about the collapse of the EU, and has also lent crucial support to authoritarian dictators in other parts of the world like Syria.[6]

Old-style Stalinists and Putinist neo-Stalinists form the core of the section of the left that has converged with the far right, but they influence a much larger number of socialists. Even in Stalin’s day there were social-democratic ‘fellow-travellers’ who admired the Soviet Union and believed it was a socialist society, and they have their modern counterparts. The most charitable explanation for this is ignorance, which is to some extent understandable, given the extremely active, well-resourced and sophisticated drive by the Kremlin and some of its allies to propagate their alternative facts on the media they control and on social media.[7] Their pseudo-anti-imperialist narrative, opposing only Western imperialism and supporting imperialist powers opposed to the West, requires as much critical scrutiny as anything published by Western mainstream media.

Even some Trotskyists and other anti-Stalinists, who might be expected to be more resistant to such propaganda, are swayed by it. In North America and Western Europe, a knee-jerk reaction against mainstream media propagation of the lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, which was used to justify the US-UK invasion of that country, has been the conviction that ‘Everything reported in the Western media is a lie, everything done by Western governments must be opposed, and everything done in opposition to Western governments must be supported.’ This provides cover to the ‘anti-imperialist’ claims of neo-Stalinists and the despots they support. For example, the uprisings of 2011 in Egypt and Tunisia were supported by virtually the whole left, whereas the uprisings in Libya and Syria – with the same causes and the same slogans – were assimilated to the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq by this pseudo-anti-imperialist section of the left, just as they dismissed the Maidan uprising in Ukraine as engineered by Western imperialism: the very same narratives propagated by the neo-Stalinists.

Failure to support struggles that are not directed against the West is also justified by the argument that ‘Our fight is against our own imperialists’. At first sight, this sounds eminently sensible: we concentrate on fighting our own state because that is where we can have the greatest impact. But when we look more closely, we find that this stance puts a question mark

over international solidarity, because the corollary of saying that we fight only our own imperialism is that we show solidarity only when people are oppressed by or fighting against our own state and its allies. The anomaly is best illustrated by the Palestinian liberation struggle. When Palestinians are being incarcerated, tortured and killed by the Israeli state, a US ally, there are large demonstrations in solidarity with them; but when Yarmouk refugee camp, 'the capital of the Palestinian diaspora,' is bombed by the Assad and Putin regimes, when its inhabitants are driven out, starved and slaughtered, most of these demonstrators do not protest, nor do they protest when hundreds of Palestinian political prisoners are tortured, raped and killed in Bashar al-Assad's jails.[8] This reveals that their real agenda is not solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle but opposition to US foreign policy.

Many American socialists in particular believe that opposing every foreign policy intervention by the US absolves them of responsibility for bloodshed, but this is a delusion. If the man next door is battering his wife, shouting 'I'll kill you!', she is screaming for help, and you are unable to break in and rescue her, the only way to save her life might be to call in the police: the same sexist, racist, bigoted police you normally criticise and oppose. If you fail to do so, you become a passive accomplice in her murder. If another neighbour calls the police and you block them, claiming that the woman routinely lies about domestic violence, you become an active accomplice in her murder. This is an apt metaphor for what happened in Bosnia. The Holocaust survivors and others who called on a reluctant Clinton administration to intervene and save the Bosnian Muslims from genocide were the good neighbour, while those who covered up the crimes and opposed the intervention – which, despite all its faults, did halt the carnage – were accomplices of genocide. Similarly, those who oppose any help from the US to Syrians pleading for protection from crimes against humanity by Assad and his allies, and/or propagate the myth that all those supporting the opposition (including the rescue workers known as White Helmets) are Islamists or imperialists, are guilty of passive or active complicity in those crimes against humanity.

Such positions reveal an incapacity for dealing with complexity: for example, that it is possible to oppose military action against Iran and sanctions against its people while simultaneously opposing the atrocities its theocratic regime inflicts on Iranians and neighbouring peoples, or that it is possible to oppose US imperialism while also opposing Russian imperialism. Like George W. Bush, who famously said that 'Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists,' these pseudo-anti-imperialists believe that if you condemn the Iranian state's crimes you must be supporting a military assault on Iran, and if you criticise Russian imperialism you must be a supporter of US imperialism. Completely missing from this geopolitical framework is the notion of solidarity with the working people of these countries in opposition to *all* oppressors. Indeed, willingness to believe that the huge crowds of protesters in Syria and Ukraine were created by Western intervention implies an Orientalist attitude towards non-Western peoples, seeing them only as victims or dupes of imperialism, lacking any agency of their own, and incapable of fighting for the democratic rights and freedoms taken for granted in the West.

Pushing back against the far right

The far right has been advancing internationally because it has 'a shared message, a shared vision of social change, shared adversaries and now a shared political platform… Instead of classes it speaks of nations, instead of politics it speaks of culture, and instead of capitalists it speaks of immigrants.'[9] In contrast, part of the left converges with the far right on crucial issues, part is solidly opposed to the far right on all issues but struggles to communicate its message to a wider public, and a significant section is confused by the mixed messages. Unless the left is able to overcome these divisions and confusions, it will continue to lose out to the far right.

There are some practical measures that can be taken to remedy this: for example, instead of *a priori* rejecting everything reported by Western media and accepting everything reported by anti-Western media, looking at a variety of news media and subjecting them all to critical scrutiny; and recognising that the enemy of our enemy may be equally our enemy, and both may need to be opposed. In general, this implies thoughtful rather than knee-jerk reactions to what is happening in our countries and the world as a whole.

However, there are also principles that should define the left, which have been abandoned by those who converge with the far right. Democracy, for example. Stalinists and neo-Stalinists have always been hostile to democracy, but the problem runs deeper. Most social democrats and revolutionary socialists see socialism as being introduced from above by the state, in which case only a relatively small number of people would be making decisions and democracy is not necessary. But if socialism is seen as being introduced by *all* working people, then the need for democracy is obvious. How can they all be involved in government unless unequal and oppressive relationships among them have been eliminated, and they have the experience of electing representatives and holding them to account? How can they control production without vigorous debates on how labor power and other resources should be allocated?

Another defining principle is internationalism, based on the understanding that capitalism is global and therefore the struggle against it can succeed only if it is equally global. Hostility to immigrants and refugees is a defining feature of the far right, and some socialist politicians, while refraining from echoing the far right's hate-speech and violence, have implied that immigrants are responsible for the unemployment and low wages of locals instead of pointing to other factors like technological change and neoliberal policies. Again, many socialist politicians have joined forces with Donald Trump in denouncing globalisation for shifting jobs to lower-wage countries. It is, of course, in the nature of capital to maximise profits, and if this means shifting production to low-wage countries, that is what capitalists do. While trying to protect local jobs as much as possible by demanding and winning information and consultation rights, it is the task of socialists to explain that low wages in developing countries are the legacy of imperialism, and the internationalist remedy is to help workers in them to win at least the basic labour rights embodied in the ILO Core Conventions;[10] this would, of course, entail supporting their struggles for democratic rights in general in countries where these are denied. Underlying these retrograde positions of socialists is an implicit belief in 'socialism in one country', and a failure to understand that socialism can be won only by the working people of the world. The left can roll back the global advance of the far right only if it unites around a

clear and unambiguous platform of always pursuing the truth, siding with the oppressed, promoting democracy, and standing in solidarity with the working people of all countries.

Notes

[1] See, for example, Nick Robins-Early, 'How far-right extremists abroad have adopted Trump's symbols as their own,' *Huffington Post*, 7 April 2019. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/trump-extremism-maga-hat_n_5ca5075be4b082d775dfca37 ; Elif Shafak, 'From Spain to Turkey, the rise of the far right is a clash of cultures not civilisations,' *The Guardian*, 6 May 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/06/spain-turkey-far-right-vox-culture-war ; Noah Millman, 'Why are far-right populists winning everywhere?' *The Week*, 30 October, 2018. https://theweek.com/articles/804453/why-are-rightwing-populists-winning-everywhere

[2] Rohini Hensman, *Indefensible: Democracy, Counter-revolution, and the Rhetoric of Anti-imperialism*, (Chicago: Haymarket), 2018. pp. 263–268; pp. 52, 9–10

[3] Heather Stewart and Rowena Mason, 'Nigel Farage's anti-immigrant poster reported to the police,' *The Guardian* 16 June 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants

[4] V. I. Lenin, 'The question of nationalities or "autonomisation"', 1922. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/testamnt/autonomy.htm

[5] Zbigniew Kowalewski, 'For the independence of Soviet Ukraine,' *International Marxist Review*, Autumn 1989. Transcribed and reproduced by Louis Proyect, 20 April 2014, https://louisproyect.org/2014/04/20/lenins-party-great-russian-chauvinism-and-the-betrayal-of-ukrainian-national-aspirations/

[6] This trajectory is discussed at greater length in Rohini Hensman, *Indefensible: Democracy, Counter-revolution, and the Rhetoric of Anti-imperialism*, (Chicago: Haymarket), 2018, pp. 28–93

[7] Terry Burke, '"Russiagate," Syria and the left,' *Countervortex*, 2019. https://countervortex.org/node/16383

[8] Budour Hassan, 'Yarmouk: a late obituary for the capital of the Palestinian diaspora,' *OpenDemocracy*, 22 June 2018. https://www.opendemocracy.net/north-africa-west-asia/budour-hassan/yarmouk-late-obituary-for-capital-of-palestinian-diaspora ; *Middle East Monitor*, 'More than 560 Palestinians tortured to death in Syria's prisons,' 19 December 2018. https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181219-more-than-560-palestinians-tortured-to-death-in

-syria-prisons/ ; *Women's UN Report Network*, 'Syria: Thousands of Palestinian women raped, tortured, killed in Syrian prisons,' 4 April 2019. https://wunrn.com/2019/04/syria-thousands-of-palestinian-women-raped-tortured-killed-in-syrian-prisons/

[9] Lea Ypi, 'The far-right international is here – when will the left wake up?' *Social Europe*, 26 June 2019. https://www.socialeurope.eu/the-far-right-international

[10] See Rohini Hensman, *Workers, Unions, and Global Capitalism: Lessons from India*, (New York: Columbia University Press; New Delhi: Tulika Books), 2011, pp. 278–336

Why Democracy and Socialism Need Anti-Racist Socialist Feminism

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Amidst the right wing white supremacist challenges to democracy resides both a new embrace of socialism and its vilification. Amidst this cacophony exists the rare possibility of radicalizing the meaning of democracy and, with it, socialism at a time where the meaning of each is fractious and also rich with possibility.

I imagine a loving, socialist, anti-racist feminism. My wish is to open and enlarge the possibilities for seeing more creatively, while using and being rooted in the historical limits *and* possibilities that can be newly mobilized.

Democracy has never been emancipatory—meaning democratic enough. And socialism is never socialist—egalitarian enough. Neither can fully actualize itself without the radical stance of the other. And neither can be attained without a robust anti-racist and feminist agenda.

After four decades of anti-racist socialist feminist activism, I am more committed than ever to a socialism that is fully democratic but this necessitates an end to sexual and racist violence that nurtures economic violence. My kind of socialism demands an end to economic exploitation and the inequities of wealth and power derivative of the selfishness of profit-making. And this necessitates the dismantling of white supremacist misogyny that structures all profit, from chattel slavery to the carceral state. Much of this argument about the foundational role of chattel slavery in everything U.S. has recently been spelled out in the acclaimed New York *Times* project “1619.”

I argued early on for a socialist feminism—that capitalism was always mutually dependent on patriarchy, and therefore socialism would have to be feminist as well as Marxist.[1] I have further specified this argument, clarifying that patriarchy always has been white supremacist, so that socialism needed to be anti-racist and abolitionist of racist and gender hierarchies and inequities.[2]Neither democracy nor socialism has been fully representative and inclusive of the gender and racial varieties of humanity.

In order to be inclusive of humanity, socialism must become fully democratic, free and/or liberatory. Liberation is more radical than democracy as people of color and the poor have known it—liberation points to the inadequacies and exclusions of democracy as it has been lived. Liberation requires an end to patriarchal racism and capitalism, while democracy often has protected aspects of each structural system.

In order to be democratic, socialism must dismantle the racist and misogynist structuring of the division of labor, both waged and domestic. This requires an explicit assault on white supremacy and its intimate structuring of sexual violence. Their interdependence with capitalism reproduces power systems that are most often hidden and occluded. This naming of misogynist racism allows it to be seen, and problematized for restructuring.

As such, socialism has the potential to become radically democratic and liberatory. This specified critique directs us to look at the newest divisions and structures of power and profit across the globe creating complex transnational patriarchal family structures. The poorest of the poor today are women of color as they become the newest migrants and refugees—trying to escape sexual violence as they do the domestic and familial labor of the rich.

Sexual violence, embedded both in the workplace and domestic labor in the home, glues the entire power nexus together. There can be no liberatory democracy with sexual violation, sexual harassment and rape. Each of these violations is threaded through the structures of racial segregation, racial violence, and racial exploitation. S/exploitation is endemic and structural. Hence, no socialism can be democratic enough without being anti-racist and feminist. In its naming, socialism singularly focuses on economic exploitation and occludes its multiple underpinnings and tentacles of power

There is more than one kind of democracy, although democracy is most often equated with its liberal, bourgeois and Western forms. This particular solipsism hides the racist and misogynist class-based underbelly of bourgeois and liberal structures. Socialism is under siege today by liberals and right-wing conservatives, but not for its exclusivity. The critique charges that there will be a mind-numbing egalitarianism of mediocrity and sameness, with no individuality. In this instance, bourgeois individualism is equated with individuality. A liberatory socialism dis-allows the selfishness and greed of bourgeois individualism, but nurtures the individuality of the social being. The Eastern European revolutions of 1989 only heightened the confusion that democracy needed to be Western and liberal.

Democracy did not work out for the revolutions of 1989. People in the former Soviet Union wanted their lives to be like the rich Western model, not the South Bronx. Socialist revolutions abided women's equality and bodily autonomy until they needed an uptick in the population/labor force. Abortion became illegal for too long in Russia after the 1917 revolution. Post-'89, women were made equal, which meant they entered the labor force alongside all they already did, leading to the triple day of work for most women: wage labor, domestic labor, and consumer labor. Oppression—the stealing of labor in unpaid form—underpinned this newly socialist exploitative system.

After the fall of the Soviet Union I found the term "socialist" more problematic than helpful. The promise of (Western) democracy became further compromised with the inequities of capitalism. In this period—the 1990's—I stopped identifying as a socialist, because it no longer was helpful in naming the critique of capital accumulation as a core commitment.

By never actualizing full equality, democracy has not worked out for the U.S. civil rights and women's movements. Democracy is not working for the people in Philippines, Venezuela, India, Turkey and Poland or the U.S., as authoritarians and despots take over.

It is interesting to now once again ponder the meaning of democratic socialism, or socialist democracy in the present right-wing context of the U.S. and much of the globe. Why wonder about the relationship between democracy and socialism in 2019? Socialism has new legitimacy, as several U.S. presidential hopefuls either identify themselves as such or borrow socialist elements for their platforms. And there is now broad support for programs such as "Medicare for All," often described as socialist. And, of course, Trump takes every opportunity to say that the U.S. will never become socialist, making the concept intriguing to many voters who detest all that he represents.

Given the context of the 2020 presidential election and the identification of Trump as anti-democratic, authoritarian, racist, and misogynist, socialism as an idea has new efficacy. It looks kinder and fairer. It looks more like democracy than Trump. I am not sure you can legitimize socialism with democracy in this fashion. But given the present presidential dialogues, there is new efficacy for using this radical possibility to jump-start a radicalizing of democracy with socialism.

Although I do not think radical enough notions of democracy or socialism currently exist, I do think that extant partial politicized fragments may help show the way towards a vision of a radicalized democratic socialism. Bourgeois, liberal democracy has never been socialist enough, and yet it instigates new struggles towards inclusivity: peoples of every color, and gender, and sexual identity.

2019-20 is a time of political and economic upheaval where nations have been exploded by global capital, and white supremacy and its misogynist base has been exposed by the Black and Brown world. Nations appear powerless against global demands, and yet nation states sputter forward—looking inept and yet doing great harm. So, I have more questions than I have answers about political paths to take in this period.

I once thought that the struggle for liberal democracy might radicalize itself by its own promissory beyond its class, race and gender structural constraints. But I no longer think that liberal democracy can deliver on socialist democracy, so to speak. Neo-liberalism has been the response to the most democratic/egalitarian demands of the civil rights and women's movements. Neocons and neoliberals argued that democracy had become too democratic and therefore ungovernable. Democracy for the people has been under relentless attack in the U.S. since the mid-1970's.

But as the rich have gotten richer and the poor and middle classes feel the pain, this trend may be changing. These newest excesses expose the very power that the powerful wish to keep hidden. And these exposures—of and by people of color as a majority force, and the changed constellation of white supremacy and its excessive economic greed, may just lay the basis for a

liberatory socialist democracy.

A liberatory model of socialism that demands abolition of profit and the color line and gender hierarchies may already be in process, and needs nurturing. It is quite possible that a liberatory socialism will emerge from the newest constituencies—especially women of color in the present struggles of the day. Let us look to the future, rather than the past, in order to develop these initial imaginings.

It does not help to assume that political identities and structures are static and unchanging. The modes of production continue to change with new global arrangements and cyber technologies that don't recognize old borders of countries or public and private realms. So control of the *modes of producing/exploiting* requires new ways of seeing and knowing where power, specifically economic class power is located. There are new layers of mystification and protection that keeps the power grid brilliantly functional.

Socialism is an economic system based on human needs rather than profit motives. Profit negates the humanity of production and the new ways to exploit labor are endless. So I know that socialism cannot allow the stealing of labor in any of its forms: economic, sexual, gendered, raced, etc. The hierarchies of labor divisions must be dismantled and repaired with reparative models. "Equal pay" as a feminist slogan is no longer sufficient.

Democracy has morphed from liberal, to neo-liberal, to fascistic. None of these varieties can assist socialism. If we are going to use the left-overs of the present war on socialism and democracy as a starting point for a liberatory socialism, we might mobilize around: taxing the rich; protecting the climate; providing housing to all in need; offering free access to health care and day care and the care of loved ones; nurturing healthy environments; providing a guaranteed income; ending exploitative profit-driven labor and consumerism; and so forth. Such a program would necessitate a rethinking of labor and its relationship to knowledge, robotics and AI (artificial intelligence), and a plan for the organization of everyday labor and the production of needed goods without dehumanizing jobs.

Would this be more democratic? Yes. Would this be socialist? It would be a start towards socialism. I am asking for a process that will define itself out of the options that are created out of the struggles to find a more humane way to sustain the planet and its people. I agree with Rosa Luxemburg that we need theory to guide our practice; but our practice must also guide our theory, and naming/s.

There is no established checklist that declares "socialism exists." How do you take control of the modes of production when systems of production sometimes no longer have "modes" that are recognizable? The new constructions of power, exploitation and oppression require new imaginings of socialism/s and anti-racisms and feminism/s. When present day progressive thinking so often privileges economic justice and the problem as one of "class," too much else that defines the hierarchies of class is silenced and hidden. This repetitive problem may explain the insufficiency of past socialist struggles.

When I think of the long history of struggle about the meaning/s of the welfare state, the debates between reform and revolution, the severing of articulated demands like the Green New Deal that underline the democratizing of socialism—I see a long difficult process of radicalizing democratic struggle.

I want to embrace the elasticity of political identities by making sure that their silent specificities—often of exclusion by silence—are named explicitly. The more specified the notion of democracy and socialism, the more inclusive and universal their meaning. So the democracy must be anti-racist and feminist and anti-capitalist.

I continue to think that this may be a rare and unique moment for radicalizing socialism towards egalitarianism and radical democracy, because of the traumatic and punishing level of hunger, desperation, and climate crisis for a majority of the globe. The U.S. is more racially diverse than ever before. Huge numbers of women of color are super-exploited in the labor force, while their daily domestic and consumer labor remains unpaid and completely stolen. One cannot fix this oppressive exploitation without addressing its racist and misogynist structuring.

Not surprisingly, women of color, especially Black women, are the most mobilized and radical voters today. Stacey Abrams, who came close to winning the 2018 governor's race in Georgia, is now committing her full political power and attention to addressing voter suppression. Other women of color, especially recently elected Democratic women Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, Ihan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, lead a radical electoral assault today while embracing socialism, whatever that might particularly mean to each of them. Trump has singled these WOC out for special ridicule, calling them "the Squad" and telling these American born elected officials, except for Omar, to return to their crisis-ridden countries.

These four WOC bring a serious indictment to the neoliberal Democrats. They stand with and for a progressive socialism—one that practices egalitarian commitments—a Green New Deal, pro-Palestinian politics, and a guaranteed income. It is no surprise that these women are supported by, and come out of and represent, progressive movements of and for democratic socialism and socialist democrats.

It may now be possible to take the electoral politics of socialism and radicalize it beyond the usual liberal or welfare state conception. It may be possible to use the serious indictment that the "Squad" has leveled against neoliberalism to build a radical electoral politics that hopefully can defeat Trump, and lay the basis for an extra-legal/reform movement towards a revolutionary anti-racist socialist feminism.

That the concept of "Medicare for All" has taken hold in the 2020 election cycle is a rare offering, and must not be ignored. Activists must use the attacks on socialized medicine to make clear why socialism and curbing private profits and its excesses are needed. Right wing Republicans jab away at Democrats as socialists when most of them are hardly either. But why not use this entry point to demand a radical politics of health care that includes food and

shelter for all, while embracing the need for socialized medicine? Use this politics of the possible, while also demanding the seemingly impossible radicalized notion of an abolitionist socialist feminism.

“Health care for all” is a radical demand because it focuses on our bodies; and bodies are always a truth-telling site. Organize from here to fight for a socialism that is not white supremacist and misogynist. Sickness and illness could not be more democratic in that everyone is susceptible; and yet our options once ill are gravely unequal and punishing.

In this vicious right wing moment infecting the globe, I stand firmly committed to a radically liberatory socialism while recognizing that the revolution we need is unknown to me at this time. So I embrace as much love and integrity and imagination as is possible, to see what the complexity of a democratic anti-racist socialist feminism might look like. Maybe we might get it right this next time.

Struggles are always defined and limited by existing conditions, although they do not have to be circumscribed to these limits. So for this moment, let us make radical liberals and electoral radicals into radical socialists. It should be no surprise that out of the shifts and upheavals it is young women of color showing the possibility of a radically democratic politics.

This promise of a radically democratic socialism and a radically socialist democracy lies in the liberatory practices and demands of WOC that may allow for an abolitionist socialist feminism, one that is truly democratic, and hopefully liberatory.

Notes

[1] In *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah Eisenstein, Monthly Review Press, 1979.

[2] In my book *Abolitionist Socialist Feminism: Radicalizing the Next Revolution*, Monthly Review Press, 2019.

Claudia Jones and the Emancipatory Promise of Socialism

By | 2020: vol 19, no 1

In the 1930s, the American Communist Party (CPUSA) was the center of the American Left. Capitalism seemed to have failed, evidenced by the Great Depression, and socialism in the Soviet Union was unfazed. The rise of fascism made securing equality a new imperative, and the CPUSA put itself in the forefront of the anti-fascist movement.

As historian Michael Kimmage has argued, the Party was also intellectually dynamic and appealing producing thinkers that interpreted Marxist theory for a wider audience. This popularity continued into the early Cold War years and the Party drew in women and minorities because it was one of the only interracial organizations that called for the demolition of sexist and racist institutions. It was also during this period it would come under attack. Nevertheless, communists expanded traditional Marxist concepts of class conflict to include a more nuanced theoretical framework that articulated an inclusive emancipatory program.[1]

Claudia Jones was one of the Party's leading theoreticians and a central voice for anti-racism and anti-sexism. Her writings focused largely on the potential of socialism to liberate all oppressed peoples. One particular idea she has been credited with popularizing was the concept of Black women's triple oppression. Jones took an idea that had been circulating for decades among Black women activists, that their oppression was three-fold based on race, gender, and class, and articulated it for a wider audience. Triple oppression, she argued, defined Black women's experiences within American capitalism as well as in both Black and white society. Jones pushed the CPUSA to recognize that as the most oppressed population in the United States, Black women, and not working-class men, were the vanguard of the working-class revolution. Within her analysis was the commitment that by freeing the most oppressed, everyone would be free. She expanded traditional Marxist concepts that working people would need to rise up and the shop floor would be the site of revolution, and instead emphasized that working for the liberation of the Black woman would benefit all women and all workers. She argued that it was only socialism that held the promise for emancipation, but that the revolution had to begin with Black women's freedom.[2]

She also identified a problem that plagued the left then, and today, racism and sexism within its own ranks. Jones argued that socialism was the only true guarantee of equality, but that socialism would never be achieved while capitalists kept working people divided among themselves using race and gender. She argued that white leftists had to confront their own racism, and men had to understand that so-called traditional gender roles were bourgeois constructs. Jones believed that socialism could never be achieved without first confronting the

divisions in the left. The growing interest in socialism today offers an opportunity to revisit Jones' most important contributions to socialist thought. Many who identify with Democratic Socialism today, including Bernie Sanders, have fallen into the same trap that Jones' white contemporaries did, arguing that class oppression is the tie that binds all people exploited under capitalism and demolishing the capitalist economic system would/will eradicate social differences and usher in equality. The danger in these assumptions is putting forward a colorblind and gender-blind analysis that ignores the intersections of race and gender-based oppression alongside class, not within it. In other words, Claudia Jones warned in the post-World War II era that without first confronting race and gender inequalities, there was no way that working people could be unified against capitalist forces and therefore there would be no way to achieve socialism.

Claudia Jones was born Claudia Cumberbatch in Belmont, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad in 1915. When she was nine years old, she and her sisters moved to New York City to join their parents who preceded them. As a youth Jones worked in a local NAACP youth branch and also on the defense of the Scottsboro Boys, nine young Black men falsely accused of rape who were tried and sentenced to death in Alabama. She was drawn to the CPUSA both because of its work on the Scottsboro case and its anti-racism, and because it was a leading voice in calling for women's rights. Jones was arrested in 1951 with sixteen others, she and twelve of them would be tried, found guilty and sentenced. At a time when calls for equality were linked to communism this was enough to convict and eventually deport Jones to England in December 1955. She left behind a body of work that articulated a Black Left feminism that focused on recognizing the common oppressive threads all workers shared and how they were embodied in Black women's triple oppression. Jones' written work outlines an emancipatory ethos that focuses on the expansion of democracy as the key to liberation; embedded within her triple oppression paradigm is the argument that to demolish race, gender, and class oppression, social justice advocates had to focus on Black women's freedom and in that struggle, all people would be freed.[3]

A common refrain of many women in the American Communist Party, dating to the Popular Front period (1935-1939) was that the shop floor was not the primary site for revolutionary change, the home was. Women leaders argued that to revolutionize the working-class home regarding gender relations, consumerism, production in the form of reproduction and maintaining worker's health, and for Black families, securing the safety and protection of their family members, would incorporate the full working-class into the drive for socialism. The language of revolution was refocused on the expansion of American democracy via the eradication of oppression. Some have interpreted this emphasis on the home and women's reproduction as an essentialist construction that defined women as bound by their reproductive capacity. This is an unfortunate dismissal of an important theoretical construct that recognizes the household as a political site where gendered constructions limit women's political and economic potential. Differences did not imply weakness, Jones would argue, instead, differences had to be reconciled in order to understand the full spectrum of working-class exploitation. Women were not exploited as laborers alone, women were exploited as bearers of children, and as wives bound to the domestic sphere, regardless of whether they worked

outside the home. This was often referred to as the “double shift” – the combination of having a job and the domestic responsibilities placed solely on women’s shoulders. Communist men rarely questioned this, and for Jones and other Party women, this reflected their bourgeois hang-ups and prevented the organization of the full working class.

By the postwar years, Jones would make a name for herself by openly criticizing CPUSA policy and men in the Party for the general neglect and dismissal of women, particularly Black women, and the household. She forcefully argued that the Party largely ignored the central role women played as leaders and organizers of the people and the revolutionary potential to organize the working-class home. She admonished the Party leadership to realize that “Wall Street imperialism” recognized the power of women, even if the Party did not. This was especially true in the postwar drive to push women out of the wartime industries and into the home. In a 1948 article discussing the CPUSA’s draft resolution for its future tasks, Jones argued that the Party failed to recognize the potential of engaging women. It is here where she begins to outline the triple oppression paradigm. Jones notes that women in general faced “two strikes” – that of their gender, and their class status. But it was Black women who were more disadvantaged in the workforce as the last hired and the first fired. In addition, Jones noted that Black women faced lower wages and were often concentrated in low wage industries like domestic work. This was compounded by postwar reconversion when women were expected to leave well-paying industrial jobs and return to the home, but for Black women, returning to the home was not the option. Because of the low wages of Black men, women had to remain in the workforce without protection, and representation from trade unions. Jones wanted the Party to step into that void and push its allies in trade unions to reach out to women to organize them. Despite Cold War repression, unions remained an institution that embodied the potential for change. The organization of women and Black Americans was one way to seek cross-racial unification, a necessary requirement to organize against capitalism.[4]

In these early years of the Cold War, Jones and others were also increasingly concerned that the same forces that defeated fascism and “Hitlerism” in the war, were adopting fascist practices that encouraged women’s domesticity. Jones warned of the “fascist triple-K” – *Kinder, Kuche, Kirche* – a German slogan that referred to women’s role as mothers, domestics, and devout Christians. She argued that while fascists insisted that women remain in the home as dependents, socialism recognized that household relations had to be revolutionized in order to usher in socialism. In other words, long before later feminists coined the idea that politics are personal, Jones and others knew well that the home was where socialist revolution could begin and changing personal relationships there was a revolutionary act. Not only was it a revolutionary act, but it was essential for men in the left to recognize women as their equals in the struggle for change.[5]

Jones believed that the emphasis on women’s so-called traditional obligations to remain in the household was an ideological attack to prevent women’s political power and organization. Women in the postwar world faced an emerging military state and limited economic opportunities. Jones sought to organize women against further war and to resist the “worsening…of their economic status.” She noted that criticisms of women’s activism and

growing political demands were often masked as attacks on “woman’s femininity,” her “womanliness” and her personal and “family happiness.” In other words, not unlike today, women in politics were degraded for taking positions outside the bounds of expected feminine roles. But Jones believed this was often a reflection of men’s own hysterical fears of women’s power. Organizing womanhood against the war machine and capitalist interests would be formidable and Jones counseled the CPUSA to cultivate it and to reject sexist biases in its own ranks. Male progressives, she feared, ignored women’s oppression and their work for change at their own peril. There was no way to achieve democracy without addressing women’s oppression.[6]

It would perhaps surprise American women today that Jones and her peers rejected the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), not because they rejected equal rights, but because they recognized the inability of the constitution to ameliorate oppressive conditions and guarantee equality. What Jones called “Left-progressives” wanted to preserve the limited labor legislation that protected women and children in the workforce, and they feared that ERA passage would eliminate those protections. The protections were in place not because women were weaker, but because women were more vulnerable in the workplace and for Jones, short of socialism, there was no guarantee that without legislation they would be shielded from total economic exploitation.[7]

It was Black women’s exploitation that concerned Jones the most and led her in 1949, to write perhaps her most well-known article “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Women!” In many of her articles she articulated Black women’s triple oppression, but it was here that Jones laid out the issue more clearly in another admonishment meant for the CPUSA leadership. She took the Party to task for failing Black women, but the article is also valuable in understanding Jones’ emancipatory politics. She saw in Black women the worst forms of exploitation, but she also saw the greatest potential to seek freedom and achieve democracy.

Jones argued that the bourgeoisie was afraid of Black women because they had always been leaders in their homes, in their communities, and in the larger movement to gain equal rights. She offered a history lesson outlining Black women’s importance dating to slavery when their children’s status legally followed their own. Because slaveowners did not preserve family units, it was women who were left with the care of Black children. This role led white society to assign the “mammy” stereotype to the Black woman. This “white chavunist ideology,” a phrase used by the Party to describe racism, perpetuated a belief that the Black woman was “backward” and “inferior,” but Jones argued that this belief had to be “combatted and rejected” as a device of “imperialists” who sought to confine Black women to menial labor in white people’s homes.[8]

The Party was equally guilty of ignoring Black women’s historical role and its neglect in confronting their continued oppression. Jones wanted her comrades to recognize the Black woman as a worker, as Black, and as a woman, as the “most oppressed stratum.” She pointed to the tendency among Party members to use degrading language calling all Black women, despite age or status, “girl.” The tendency on the part of even radicals to ask their Black

comrades if they had any family that could clean their homes, and the failure of white men to recognize Black women at all, even in social settings where they were looked over for women with light skin. Racism, she argued, remained a barrier among progressives and prevented change.[9]

Jones pointed out that white women, including progressives, were as guilty of white chavunism as men. White women, though economically disadvantaged, still had the advantage of their race in the workplace. This was particularly true in the home where white women would hire Black maids. This "madam maid relationship" was not strictly confined to the home. In failing to see Black women as anything other than laborers, white women failed to have "close ties" with Black women. This, she said, prevented any real progress among progressives. She argued that the fight for Black women's equality was in the "self-interest" of white women, because the "super-exploitation" of Black women depressed the standards of "all women." White progressives had to begin to shed their own prejudices in social relations, including in inter-marriage, in order to embrace real progressive change. This is an important contribution Jones and her generation made to the later women's movement, a contribution that is often ignored and misunderstood. Jones did not believe that gender was a unifying force when race remained a divisive issue among progressives. Women did not have the same needs politically or socially because of their gender and differences had to be accounted for to achieve equality. The notion that "sisterhood is powerful" used by white feminists could be more destructive because it failed to acknowledge that Black women's experience had to be accounted for to realize true democracy.[10]

Jones believed that it was white men and women's responsibility to challenge white chavunism, in the white community and in themselves. She argued that ending racist policies and practices was in the self-interest of all working people because racial equality was "prior to, and not equal to" women's issues. Only by fighting for the emancipation of Black people could women ever gain equality. Because Black women combined the status of "worker, Black, and woman," she is therefore the "vital link" in creating a "heightened political consciousness." Black women had to take leadership in the movement for liberation to achieve the true goal which was to create a "Socialist America" the "final and full guarantee of women's emancipation." This was key to Jones' emancipatory vision, that in order to find freedom for all working people, undermine monopoly capitalism, and achieve a democratic society, progressives had to embrace Black women as the revolutionary vanguard.[11]

Jones did recognize that despite the Party's flaws, it was still a leader in pushing for Black women's rights and the emancipation of all women. On the thirtieth anniversary of the CPUSA founding, Jones hailed it as a leader in the struggle to free women from male oppression. She argued that "Marxism-Leninism" revealed that not all women's oppression is the same everywhere, but that it does come from "women's relation to the modes of production." Marxism-Leninism viewed the "woman question," a pejorative used to describe women's issues, as a special question that derived from women's economic and social dependence on men. Referring to Friedrich Engels' famous and much-loved essay among CPUSA women, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State," Jones argued that women's oppression

was rooted in her sexual exploitation in the home and her subjugation as the proletariat to the male bourgeoisie.[12]

The Party's strength, Jones argued, was in recognizing that the bourgeois and proletariat household condemned women to "drudgery" both in terms of labor performed there, and her economic and sexual dependence on men. Confronting personal relationships as reflections of political, particularly capitalist, imperatives was central to the Party and what made it appealing to women. One of the most important contributions of the CPUSA was in getting white women to recognize that Black women's triple oppression was a "barometer" for all women's status. Jones gave credit to the Party when it was in fact she and other Black women in the Party that pushed for women to recognize that Black women's oppression was a way to measure not just all women's oppression, but all people's liberation. [13]

But Jones believed that real progressive change and real emancipation was only possible under socialism. She did not mince words on this point when she stated in several articles that "complete emancipation" of women would only occur in a socialist America. She argued that bourgeois democracy guarantees of equal rights under the law was impossible when "capitalist exploitation" undermined these rights. Only under socialism where "class divisions and human exploitation are abolished" could there be a full and final guarantee of equal rights. Under capitalism, women's equality was "at best" a "programmatic demand" to seek, but it required constant struggle to defend those rights. Equality under capitalism was an illusion because economic relationships guaranteed the uneven distribution and expression of power. Jones argued that capitalism required unending war and colonial expansion, it also fed off divisions within the working classes. To keep working people divided by gender and race and regularly stoking the embers of hate secured the perpetual power and wealth accumulation of capitalists at the expense of working people. For Jones, democracy and capitalism could not coexist because the wealthy needed to keep working people focused on hating each other instead of the real enemies, "Monopoly imperialists" who exploited others labor for their own greed.[14]

This was one point in the communist opposition to blanket legislation like the ERA. Constitutional amendments required constant struggle to defend, something that remains true to the present. Democracy under capitalism meant that working people had to make regular claims to their rights, often to the detriment of their safety. A constitutional guarantee to grant women equality would require an entire legislative program to uphold, and even then it would not guarantee equality, much like the 15th amendment failed to guarantee Black people the right to vote, or the 14th amendment could not guarantee the full rights of citizenship. Marxist-Leninism, Jones wrote, rejected "all petty-bourgeois equalitarian notions." Equality did not serve capitalism because it opened the possibility of challenging elite's power. Only with the destruction of the capitalist state and social divisions could true equality be secured and finally enjoyed.[15]

Jones believed that it was her job, and the job of her fellow communist comrades to heighten the socialist consciousness of women, both Black and white. The organization of women was necessary to mobilize the entire working-class against capitalist exploitation. She counseled

the Party to refine its theoretical understanding of Marxist-Leninist teachings on the "woman question," combined with the need to undermine all "male supremacist ideas" that prevented progressives from attaining socialism in America. She argued that proletariat men needed this education because many still subscribed to "ruling class" ideologies that convinced them of women's "biological inferiority." This failure to understand the "special social disabilities of women under capitalism" was the worst damage done by male supremacy. She believed that it was CPUSA men who had to become the "vanguard fighters" for women's rights.[16]

The lack of inclusivity in feminism was, Jones argued, another barrier to true progress. She argued that "bourgeois feminism," the same feminism that held the ERA up as one key for women's emancipation was a false flag because its basic premise was that women's oppression stemmed from men and not capitalism. Bourgeois feminism tended to see struggles against racism as separate from the larger movement for emancipation as evidenced by an equal rights campaign that failed to mention race or class. Jones believed that feminists ignored Black women's equality at their detriment. She counseled that to undermine "Wall Street imperialism" and attain a true political and socialist consciousness was to understand that Black women's emancipation was key to liberation struggles. Therefore, the struggle for Black women's "social, political, and economic" equality was (and is) in the "self-interest" of the white working-class. This is the heart of Jones emancipatory politics, that to free Black women was to free all women and men, all colonized people, all working people, and to finally achieve the socialist promise of true liberation and democracy.[17]

Even as Jones was deported to Europe, her emancipatory vision would inspire later generations of Black women activists who saw in her ideas true revolutionary promise. Philosopher and communist Angela Davis wrote about Claudia Jones in her book *Women, Race, & Class*. She noted that Jones' liberation thesis about Black women, was a plan for the "multi-racial working class." Davis noted that it was earlier generations of Black thinkers, like Jones, that articulated feminist ideas that would become central in the Black feminist movement of the 1970s. Historian Erik McDuffie argues that Cold War repression did lead many Black feminists to "reinvent the wheel" before they finally discovered the written work of Claudia Jones and others. Nevertheless, Jones' ideas could be seen in Frances Beal's Third World Women's Alliance and her article "Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female," and the Combahee River Collective and its seminal statement that outlined Black women's troubled relationship with white feminism. These activists, and arguably feminists until our own historical moment, continue to struggle with what Jones would describe as "bourgeois" sentiments that equality could be achieved via legislation. Legislation coupled with the capitalist state meant constant struggle, often among workers rather than those that were the true enemies of liberation, capitalists. Meanwhile, the divisions between and among working people sustained capitalist power and made liberation an impossible dream.[18]

Jones died in 1964; today she is buried next to Karl Marx in Highgate cemetery in London. Carole Boyce Davies has argued that Jones' grave is literally left of Marx, but her theories were also left of Marx. A devoted Marxist, Jones expanded Marxism by outlining what she believed was the true path to the liberation of all people. She insisted that the true socialist

revolutionary promise was the emancipation of the most oppressed group in a capitalist society, Black women. Jones' focus on Black women's oppression was two-fold. She argued that progressives had to recognize that as the most oppressed population of Americans, the freedom of all people would follow Black women's freedom. She also regularly argued that the Party, and all progressives, had to foster women's leadership. Women, particularly Black women, were already leaders and had been leading, but without recognition. This leadership was necessary to ensure that the full spectrum of issues working people faced would be recognized. While male progressives focused on union organizing, or radicalizing industrial workers, women's focus on the family and social issues, were the only avenue toward ushering in real democratic change that would encompass all working people, and all people of color. Democracy, Jones believed, could not be achieved without fostering women's leadership, ending capitalist exploitation, and recognizing that both racism and sexism were barriers to progress. Until her death, Jones believed that women's organization against capitalism was the key to liberation, and that liberation meant the destruction of race, gender, and class oppression.[19]

Today, capitalism's critics often ignore that race and gender oppression are markedly different from class oppression, and that ending class exploitation would not address the racist and sexist sentiments that keep the left deeply divided. These divisions arguably delivered a Donald Trump presidency as so-called progressive men could not stomach voting for a woman, and some progressive voters hold up Bernie Sanders as their savior, though he regularly downplays race and gender and was even accused of ignoring sexism among his own staff in the 2016 election. Dismissing these allegations and ignoring the prejudices among the left has helped to usher in a right-wing nationalism that exploits these divisions to secure its own power. Contemporary audiences would do well to revisit the socialist thinkers of the past like Claudia Jones, who already spelled out a path to liberation, which we ignore to our own detriment.

Notes

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[1] Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and the Lessons of Anti-Communism.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[2] Erick McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[3] Claudia Jones to William Foster, 6 December 1955. Claudia Jones Vertical File, Tamiment Library, New York University, New York and Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, pp. XXIII-XXVII and Carole Boyce Davies, 'Deportable Subjects: U.S. Immigration Laws and the Criminalizing of Communism,' 100:4 *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Fall 2001, pp980-985.

[4] Claudia Jones, "For New Approaches on the Woman Question," August 1948, *Political Affairs*, pp. 739-740.

[5] Claudia Jones, International Women's Day and the Struggle for Peace," 1950 *Political Affairs*, p. 34.

[6] Jones, International Women's Day and the Struggle for Peace," *Political Affairs*, p. 35.

[7] Jones, "International Women's Day and the Struggle for Peace," *Political Affairs*, p. 39.

[8] Claudia Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Women!" 1949 *Political Affairs*, p. 32-33.

[9] Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Women!" p. 35.

[10] Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Women!" p. 35.

[11] Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Women!" p. 39.

[12] Claudia Jones, "We Seek Full Equality for Women," 4 September 1949, *The Daily Worker*, p. 11.

[13] Jones, "We Seek Full Equality for Women," p. 11.

[14] Jones, "International Women's Day and the Struggle for Peace," p. 39.

[15] Jones, "International Women's Day and the Struggle for Peace," pp. 41-42.

[16] Jones, "International Women's Day and the Struggle for Peace," pp. 43-44.

[17] Jones, "We Seek Full Equality for Women," p. 11.

[18] Angela Davis, *Women, Race, & Class*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), p. 169 and Erick S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 209.

[19] Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Prostitution, the Sex Trade, and the COVID-19 Pandemic

By | 2020: vol 19, no 1

The COVID-19 pandemic has had immediate and severe impacts on women in the sex trade who are already among the most vulnerable women on the planet. Because of quarantines, social distancing, governments' neglect of the poor, systemic racism in all walks of life including healthcare, failure to protect children from abuse, and the predation of sex buyers and pimps – the coronavirus pandemic threatens already-marginalized women's ability to survive. Even before the pandemic, sex buyers and pimps inflicted more sexual violence on women in the sex trade than any other group of women who have been studied by researchers (Hunter, 1994; Farley, 2017). The greater the poverty, the greater the likelihood of violent exploitation in the sex trade, as noted 26 years ago by Dutch researcher Ine Vanwesenbeeck (1994). This article will discuss the impact of COVID-19 as it increases harms resulting from the poverty and violent exploitation of prostitution, an oppressive institution built on foundations of sexism and racism.

Women in the sex trade are in harm's way for many reasons including a lack of food, shelter, and healthcare, all of which increase their risk of contracting COVID19.

Understanding what it's like to be anxious about access to food and shelter is key to understanding the risks taken by people in prostitution. Knowing they were risking their lives, many women prostituted during the pandemic. "Poverty will kill us before the coronavirus," said an Indian woman in prostitution (Dutt, 2020). A woman in the US explained, "You might survive the virus, but you won't survive not eating for two months. If you ask any rational person if they'd rather take the virus, or not eat, that's not even a thought" (Gentile, 2020).

The pandemic reveals the exploitation and violence in all forms of prostitution, including sugar daddy/sugar baby prostitution, cell phone/escort prostitution, massage parlor prostitution, street prostitution, webcam prostitution (Moran & Farley, 2018; Farley, 2016). A San Francisco group mainstreaming prostitution as work admitted, "People who are doing street-based sex work may not be able to stop doing sex work to survive," (Naftulin, 2020). But this comment obscures the overlap between all arms of the sex trade whether street, cell phone/escort, massage, strip club, webcam/porn. Women don't stay in one location, they move from one physical and online location to another – wherever the sex buyers are located or where the pimps send them (consumer electronic conferences, sports events, military bases, escort to street and back again).

Prostitution is a microcosm of all imaginable forms of patriarchal violence played out on a body of a woman. It combines dehumanisation with economic inequality, reproductive exploitation with hate speech, sexual violence with racial discrimination. In prostitution all of this is done to a woman while her right to freedom of speech and expression is taken away. Prostitution is a multiple and intersecting victimisation that produces some of the most extreme mental trauma that women are not allowed to name, or seek help for, because society would rather see it as "women's choice." In this there is a difference with many other forms of violence or discrimination – domestic violence, rape or racism – that, at least on paper, have been recognised as illegal acts.

In the countries that have not implemented the Nordic model and where men's paid sexual access to women is not seen as socially unacceptable and legally a crime, the coronavirus pandemic for women in prostitution means that all the aforementioned violence will be cast aside in all the state measures supporting any discriminated group, such as victims of male violence. And this means that the women in prostitution will not only continue suffering the consequences of the sex trade, but will have no provisions protecting them from COVID-19 as a particularly vulnerable group. The lack of protection may take different forms – it may be evicting the women from the flats where they are being pimped, depriving them their legal status, or denying access to social benefits – in all these scenarios, the underlying logic is that women are the agents of their own exploitation and as such should not be entitled to protection. On the other hand, in states that follow the Nordic model, women are permitted to claim and receive protection as a victimised group. In this Nordic model approach, NGOs that offer assistance to women in the sex trade can hold states accountable for supporting – not abandoning – women in prostitution. This means that women are offered a genuine choice to escape prostitution, and not a choice between homelessness or contracting COVID-19 from their sex buyers.

– Anna Zobnina, European Network of Migrant Women April 3, 2020

Disposable Humans

Some people are considered more disposable than others. Some people have long been treated as if they were disposable, for example, African Americans in Michigan whose water supply was knowingly poisoned while white city fathers drank bottled water and the Yakama in Washington whose water and food was knowingly contaminated because they lived downwind from a nuclear power plant, and Puerto Ricans who were not given aid in the devastating wake of the 2017 hurricane. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Far Right politicians and their media allies[2] in the US have suggested that there are some peoples' deaths that should be tolerated or permitted, some old people who should be untreated, some children who will "inevitably" die.

Billions of women in Africa, South Asia and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean have erratic work and live on the margins with no social safety net (Tharoor, 2020). These women are at high risk for both coronavirus and entry into prostitution. A South African survivor of prostitution explained that no one would willingly "take on a job where their life is guaranteed to be at risk" (Naik, 2020). Poor women in Scotland and Germany do not have the option to quarantine at home (McEwen, 2020, Nasr, 2020). Some women may be forced to "choose" between COVID-19 exposure and their family's starvation. Recommended practices for avoiding the COVID-19 virus are impossible. "Wash our hands frequently?" said a woman in Mumbai, "Sometimes I have to skip bathing to save water for cooking" (Tongia, 2020).[3] Thai women in the sex trade feared for their own and their families' food supply since tourist/sex buyers were scarce during the pandemic (ASP, 2020). Taking nightmarish risks in order to feed their families, prostituting women in Cameroon sought sex buyers in hotels that were being used to isolate European men who reported symptoms of coronavirus. Their pimps took a large bite out of the women's survival-earnings (Ndi, 2020; Larnyoh, 2020).

For some women in the sex trade, COVID-19 is lower on the list of dangers than the violence of prostitution. A woman prostituting in Florida explained that she's "always worried about "serial rapists and killers" but she is not so concerned about being exposed to the virus"(Avanier, 2020). "Anytime there's this type of panic," said a prostituted woman, "clients [sex buyers] understand that as a shift in power." For women with no alternatives, "some clients try to take advantage of that. They will push for lower prices, they will push for not having to screen, they will push for unsafe work practices — whether that's bareback or meeting someone you don't know or meeting in an unsafe location or being forced to push your own personal boundaries of what you're willing to do," she explained. "Because they know that workers are really desperate for money" (Steadman, 2020). Amplifying their abuse of women, sex buyers exploit the coronavirus pandemic.

Sex Buyers Chat about the COVID-19 Pandemic

When sex buyers themselves discuss the sex trade, their exploitation of women during the pandemic is explicit. Their posts on online forums highlight exactly how they dehumanize women in the sex trade. German sex buyer forums were reviewed in April 2020 by sociologist Manuela Schon.[4]

German legal sex buyer #1: "Today I was strolling around and of course went after our hobby…To everyone who will now be outraged: Yes I am aware of the current situation and I will not complain if there will be no intensive care bed or ventilator for me, just as I will not complain if I someday will catch the HIV virus." *Willing to risk his life in order to exploit a woman in prostitution – in this man's calculations of risk, he does not consider her risk*. Some men who buy sex are sexually aroused by the danger of intimate contact during the coronavirus pandemic (see Boroff, 2020).

German legal sex buyer #2: "I'm afraid the brothels won't reopen before next year… there will be more sexual assaults on women, since a lot of guys can't get rid of their pressure. A lot

will change. Maybe there will be a lot of fresh meat." *Some men's rationalization for prostitution is: if I don't get to rape a woman who is available to me because she needs my money to survive, then I'll rape the "nice women" out there. So give me what I want or I'll have a rapetantrum.* Of course prostitution does not prevent rape. But even women in prostitution have internalized this lie. A woman in Seattle escort prostitution pointed out that during the coronavirus pandemic, "As things get stressed out, we can be a lot of peoples' outlets" (D'Adamo, 2020, March 13).

German legal sex buyer #3: "I still fuck the whores without a condom. OA can lick the caviar from my ass." *This man hates women.*

German legal sex buyer #4: "How do you fuck catholic [no condom] in corona times? One could take her doggy, hoping that the virus doesn't enter through the glans. Allegedly it is a respiratory virus, which is only absorbed through mouth, eyes and nose" *He wants what he wants and to hell with her health, his family's health, his community's health, his own health. He lies to himself about the risks.*

German legal sex buyer #5: "Anita is worth a lot in times of crisis (which means now). She only does outdoor meetings. Not without condom sorry needs to be said. But she offers a quite good oral service without condom with cumming into mouth or on the tits. What can I say? Beggars can't be choosers." *For this man, women's value is based on how fuckable he perceives them to be. He feels sorry for himself because he can't get her to do *exactly* what he wants her to do.*

German legal sex buyer #6: "At the moment they are all scared. Usually here in the Bremen area you need to pay 200€ when ordering someone to your place. I only paid 130€. The whores need money, so they make it for less money to have customers at all." *Did he think to himself: I saved some money by bargaining with a woman who was scared and hungry. What fun!*

German legal sex buyer #7: "I found a good solution [to the closure of German legal brothels], I now fuck my secretary. I always wished for that, but now it has happened due to the Corona Crisis. I am very satisfied with her" *All women are whores according to this man.*

German legal sex buyer #8: "Clubs and brothels will not be reopened anytime soon… we were afraid of the Nordic Model… now we get the COVID-model…. zero prostitution. *The Nordic law on prostitution arrests sex buyers and pimps, but decriminalizes the prostituting woman and offers her exit services. This sex buyer complains that COVID-19 prevents him from buying sex even more than the Nordic law does.*

US sex buyer forums were reviewed in April 2020 by researcher Megan Lundstrom.[5]

US sex buyer #1: "Some of these fat old grandmas are going to quickly figure out what their old coochies are really worth…..nothing!!!! Half the population has them and most know how to spread their legs or suck a cock for 30 minutes…so good luck with all that $300 an hour BS we've been putting up with lately…let me know when your rent's due and we'll have a

discussion about your preconceived 'rate'." *Except for sexual use, women are worthless to this man. He enjoys degrading them.*

US sex buyers #2: "I'll still go to restaurants, drive Uber, maybe go to sporting events, etc. I will still hobby [buy sex acts] as before. No changes there." And another man: "I'll comply with most reasonable request to be safe. But a mask means no oral and that would be a bit too much for me. Back during the AIDS crisis had a provider insist on using two condoms. I had no issue with one, but two was too much and I never called her again." *Sex buyers demand sexual access to women during health crises. The second man fails to understand why a woman in the sex trade would use multiple condoms. Women have said that condoms are barriers between her body and his intrusive assault on her. For her, the more barriers the better.*

US sex buyer #3: "Providers who are seeing clients in this time are CHOOSING to engage in high risk behavior with potentially deadly consequences. The reasons for doing so are immaterial, the outcome is the same. It's still a choice….Plus, I'm a little bit annoyed at being constantly bombarded with this 'poor hookers are desperate, have lost all their income' meem. There are jobs out there that you can apply to right now." *This is victim blaming of the highest order. He understands that she is in the sex trade at a point in time when there may be lethal consequences to her. There is a willful denial of her poverty, her pimp, or other factors that have compelled her into prostitution.*

US sex buyers #4: "they won't get any of MY money. I'm a GFE guy. If our tongues don't touch, then I'm outta there." And another man, "Time to wake up ladies. Over the last ten years, the prices for time with a lady has more than doubled: too bad that most of the ladies have no idea about how a girl friend treats a guy." and another "What if said gentleman has a family crisis. Two kids lost scholarships and need a financial attention to continue med school and another family member is in the hospital with cancer, does he continue with his re-occurring $3k/month to his sugar baby? Does she in this difficult time provide him comfort and solutions to these family problems or is she going to just do what she does and buy clothes and mind her business in her expensive condo – fucking other guys too." *These men expect a convincing performance of an intimate relationship by a woman they pay for, a "girlfriend experience." They fail to understand the emotional stress generated by such a performance, or the financial stress she experiences during a pandemic. GFE sex buyers demand that she fool him into thinking it's a "real relationship," but it's actually a pretend-relationship, one that he designs and controls. The entire relationship on her part is a lie, except for her need for money.*

New Zealand sex buyer forums were reviewed in April 2020 by Ally-Marie Diamond[6] and Angie Henderson[7]

NZ sex buyer #1 "Lets just say that at the moment, they are tracking down every source of infection. It could be very sticky for me, and I suspect a lot of others, if I had to disclose everybody I had been in close contact within a given time…" *Because of the stay-at-home order in NZ, and because sex buyers could be tracked via contact tracing during the pandemic, some men obsessed about whether the police could locate them.*

NZ sex buyer #2 A NZ sex buyer listed COVID-19 protections for customers: "washing hands, wearing a mask, and placing cash on a table like a fan so it can be easily counted." Another NZ man quoted sex trade practices in Australia, where prostitution is also legal. "See in oz [Australia] some SWs are still taking bookings with the only requirement you dont have a cold or cough. *Ineffective 'precautions' against COVID-19 were mentioned by sex buyer*s *in all locations.*

NZ sex buyer #3 "Girls get back to work .. You have clientele who need to unload stress…This is essential to stop the spread of depressions. Heartaches from stress… even psychological issues, saving marriage's." *Ignoring health risks to women he seeks to buy, the narcissistic focus of this sex buyers is commonplace*

NZ sex buyer #4 *A sex buyer hinted that raping a sheep would be a means to survive the pandemic.* "For the guys we can invent a number of ways to relief from porn to other ways (I am writing this watching a sheep walking on the paddock next door)."

NZ sex buyer #5 After becoming annoyed at the many calls she received from men who wanted sex in person, a woman who advertised webcam prostitution reported the following exchange during the COVID-19 quarantine in New Zealand (Conner, 2020).

SB: Are you meeting for sex at the moment?
Woman: Only with people who already have the virus, what about you?
SB: I don't have the virus but want to have sex
Woman: If I give you a discount what about both?
SB: Do you have the virus?
Woman: Do you have cash?
SB: Yes I do
Woman: Perfect I can probably find the virus for you then
SB: Wtf

Racism, Prostitution, and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prostitution causes exceptional harms to women of color and formerly colonized women in the sex trade (Nelson, 1993; Carter & Giobbe, 1999; Butler, 2015). Racism is a factor compelling many women's entry into prostitution, since they lack alternatives. Pimps and johns are especially vicious toward women of color. There are fewer exit and escape options for women of color who often receive substandard or culturally irrelevant support and treatment**.** For many years pornographers have eroticized racism and monetized slavery in filmed prostitution. The harms against all women in prostitution are amplified based on their race/ethnicity and their poverty.

Women of color are overrepresented in prostitution and they are also overrepresented as COVID-19 victims in the US (Lindsey, 2020), with environmental racism contributing to their victimization (Cabrera, 2020). The greatest number of deaths from COVID-19 are among racial groups who have historically suffered more from chronic health conditions and had less access

to healthcare (Durkin, 2020; Johnson and Buford, 2020, Horton, 2017). In April, 2020 African Americans were approximately 81% of the COVID-19 deaths in Milwaukee County whose population is only 26% African American. Latinos were suffering from the same high rates of COVID-19 morbidity and mortality in New York as African Americans in Milwaukee. Black and Latino New Yorkers were dying from coronavirus at twice the rate of white people in early April (Mays & Newman, 2020).[8]

In April 2020, 31% of all New Mexico COVID-19 cases were Native people but they are only 10.6% of the state's population (Childress, 2020). The Zuni people once again expressed concern about extinction of their Nation (Agoyo, 2020; Chisolm, 2020). Brazil's indigenous people are especially vulnerable to respiratory infections (Fellet, 2020).

Anti-Asian racism has increased during the coronavirus pandemic, with politicians and sex buyers alike blaming "the Chinese" for COVID-19. This recent outbreak of racist behavior merges with the well-documented racism of sex buyers who stereotype Asian women as submissive, exotic, or newly-immigrated, that is, more vulnerable, a quality sought by sex buyers (Asian Women Coalition Ending Prostitution, 2020; Bindel, 2017). PornHub, which distributes elaborately articulated racist pornography – moved quickly to market anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Racist pornography sells well; in March, 2020, there were at least 115 racist COVID-19 uploads to PornHub alone. The PornHub coronavirus pornography fused xenophobia about Asians being 'diseased' or 'foreign' with fetishization of Asian women as compliant and hypersexual (Lopez, 2020).

Sex Trade Businessmen Exploit the Coronavirus Pandemic for Financial Gain

Pimps' marketing skills were evident during the coronavirus pandemic. Promoting themselves as good guys who were "helping women increase their cash flow;" Atlanta strip club pimps transferred the women online where they sold $20 Instagram lap dances (BET, 2020). Some pornpimps offered to serve as women's "central bankers." "By acting as a central bank, we can increase the money supply and help the new wave of performers survive the crisis," said a London pornographer (Shehadi & Partington, 2020). When legal locations for prostitution (massage parlors, strip clubs, bars) were closed down because of quarantine, pimps kept the cash flowing by moving to another location. When his Portland strip club was closed because of COVID-19, the club's pimp shifted his women over to topless food delivery jobs. A strip club in Las Vegas sold drive-up window strip shows during the pandemic (Campamour, 2020). PornHub's distribution of masks to hospitals during the coronavirus pandemic is the same maneuver as Nevada pimp Dennis Hof's handing out turkeys at Thanksgiving (Kaye, 2020). The goal is to appear humanitarian: *I'm a nice pimp, just an altruistic guy trying to help the girls. Look at the turkeys, look at all these masks! Don't look in the women's eyes!*

Pimps are flexible in their messaging. In the past, sextrade promoters have trumpeted the funpartytimes and mythical high income from "sex work." Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, the sexwork and pimp unions shifted the focus to messages about the economic survival of the

prostituted. Even some prosextrade groups acknowledged how dangerous prostitution is and how extremely vulnerable women in the sex trade are (Agence France-Presse, 2020). “Without financial security or any safety net, sex workers are some of the hardest hit by COVID-19,” noted UK sexwork unions (Wilson, 2020). In addition to seeking cash for emergency relief, sexwork promoters simultaneously sought support for unions promoting decriminalized pimping and sex buying (SWOPLA, 2020).[9] This same deception is seen in April 2020 in Argentina, where Alika Kinan reported that sexwork lobbyists received emergency funding targeted for prostituted women, but surprise! the funds were diverted and somehow did not get to the women.[10] The exploitation of emergency funding for the purpose of promoting prostitution as “work” for poor women is not a new tactic; it was also used during the HIV epidemic (Farley, 2004). This tactic is being expertly deployed by Trump, as well as sex trade pimps. Trump promises support for “workers” and fails to deliver to them, but pours millions of dollars into the coffers of his wealthy corporate sponsors.

Pimps and Sexwork Unions Have Strongly Promoted Online Prostitution/Pornography and Webcamming During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Porn pimps have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since indoor sex businesses like strip clubs, massage parlors, and hotel/cell/outcall prostitution have (allegedly) shut down, online prostitution has increased.[11] Online prostitution includes pornography uploaded either via a private website or a pimp/distributor’s site like Chaturbate, StripChat, or MindGeek’s PornHub. Online prostitution includes webcamming or real-time streaming of prostitution via computer or phone. A survivor explained that “camming was worse than the rest of the porn industry because we had direct contact with the consumer, people who were often very cruel and demanding by threatening to leave negative reviews and therefore affecting your pay if you didn’t perform exactly as they wished” (Anonymous, 2018). In webcamming as in GFE prostitution, survivors experience intense distress from having to playact whatever the sex buyer asks for, and having to be nice to abusive men. “The emotional labour that goes into camming is unreal – constantly chatting, trying to be yourself [and] pleasant” (Shedahi & Partington, 2020). Research on prostitution and trafficking from 9 countries supports what women tell us about the traumatic stress caused by pornography production. When we compared hundreds of people in prostitution who performed sex acts with and without being filmed, we found that the women who had pornography made of their prostitution had significantly higher rates of PTSD than women whose prostitution was not filmed (Farley, 2007).

Many online sites sell images of women who are coerced or enslaved by pimps and organized criminal groups. Pornpimps exploited women during the pandemic just like other pimps. “They buy a good image, generate clicks and advertising revenue but nothing will be redistributed to us,” said a porn survivor. Traffickers advertised “work for coronavirus layoffs” on Craigslist (Moseley, 2020). Another pimp recruited unemployed women for a job as “models” at his porn site (Baah, 2020). Romanian and US pornpimps reported large increases in new models during the pandemic. The pimps hustled webcam prostitution as “a live interactive experience in

which models rely on communication and empathy" or as a "virtual girlfriend experience" (Barbera, 2020). PornHub, a distributor of online prostitution, also recruited models and sold pornography that they produced, taking a 35% cut of profits, just like other pimps.[12]

Photo courtesy Iniciativa Pro Equidad, 2020

In women's real lives, the various tentacles of the sex trade are indistinguishable. Colombian media[13] actively promoted webcam sites as a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic, hyping webcam prostitution as a 'privilege' for those who can work from home. Colombian and trafficked Venezuelan women in Bogota's red light districts live in overcrowded pay-per-day rooms. The women try webcamming only to discover that they have no control over the use and resale of their images on porn sites. Because they lack Internet skills or access to banking, they are deceived and often not paid. Many solicit sex buyers while naked on the streets because they are desperate for survival cash. Others are coerced by pimps to go to sex buyers' homes or parties where they are often subjected to violence, sometimes death. One woman explained, "coronavirus is just another, barely noticeable, danger added to the dangers we face in our daily lives in order to send money to our families (Iniciativa ProEquidad, 2020).

There are many dangers and disadvantages for women in the sex trade who move to online prostitution.

> *….the demand for new content from viewers with more than the usual time on their hands may prompt criminal groups to coerce sex workers, drug users, or other vulnerable persons into live and recorded sexual exploitation. Similarly, those with more deviant tastes may use the time to seek out sites offering live child sexual exploitation (CSE) online, where there is a ready supply developing as children are kept home from school, and both criminal groups and impoverished families look for new sources of income.The FBI has issued a warning that children who homeschool, play games online and use social media during school closures may be targeted and groomed by sexual predators, as they spend extended time online. (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2020)*

Women who prostitute online via webcams encounter "privacy breaches, potentially dangerous interactions with clients, and laws that are not designed to protect them" (Drolet, 2020). Many expressed fear about the lack of privacy in online pornography, with some resigned to the inevitable privacy violation (Deliatto & Fenton, 2020). A woman she feared harassment, blackmail, or being subjected to revenge porn if she uploaded videos to porn sites. Videos are often stolen from porn sites. "The platforms lack security and confidentiality. Anyone can take a screenshot and then share it," she said. In February, 2020, 1.5 TB of women's pre-recorded videos and images were stolen and leaked from the UK porn site OnlyFans (Shehadi & Partington, 2020).

Women were upset by pimps' siphoning-off their earnings. Income from porn and webcamming is significantly lower than other types of prostitution, and many do not have the funds to buy video equipment in the first place (France24, 2020). A woman who was not earning enough to cover her basic expenses via private webcam prostitution, decided to upload her videos to OnlyFans where sex buyers pay for what is allegedly private content. But, she said, "with cams, your face is out there." She decided not to show her face, then discovered that sex buyers paid even less for that.

Whether it's during a pandemic or not, women in the sex trade usually plan to get in, obtain urgently needed money, and get out as fast as they can. They do not want their images infinitely circulating on the web where their children, future employers, future boyfriends or husbands, might view them. Nonetheless, sexwork unions have promoted online prostitution. A New Zealand sexworker union which includes pimps in its membership, urged women to move from brothels to web cam pornography during the pandemic. To counteract the deceptive campaigns of the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective regarding online prostitution/webcamming, survivor groups in New Zealand described risks of cyberprostitution and also the financial barriers to moving online from street, escort, or brothel prostitution (Shehadi & Partington, 2020).

Sexwork Unions Exploit the Pandemic to Mainstream Prostitution as Work

Pimps and their neoliberal political friends exploit the coronavirus pandemic in order to promote and mainstream the sex trade. In the early weeks of the pandemic, with a Trumpian fact-free approach, the New Zealand prosextrade union and the Dutch prosextrade unions sought to minimize the harm of the pandemic, advocating business as usual. In March 2020, the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC) suggested that women in prostitution should take "extra care" during the pandemic and recommended "screening clients for symptoms and travel history before booking them." The NZPC falsely reassured women that this "will reduce risk and clients may feel more comfortable booking if they know you're taking sensible precautions" (African News Agency, 2020; Hendry-Tennent, 2020). Like the US president's suggestion to ingest disinfectant for protection against COVID-19, the NZPC was later forced to walk back their dangerous advice. Lies about prostitution's safety, hygiene, and "harm reduction" from prostitutes' and pimps' unions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and any time, are dangerous. Another New Zealand pimp, attempting to normalize the sex trade in the midst of a pandemic, declared, "Hygiene-wise, the sex industry is quite possibly the safest place to be." A UK sexwork union recommended the following techniques for COVID 19 harm reduction: bleach, disinfectant, avoiding kissing, and changing bed linen whenever possible (Bindel, 2020). Sex trade unions in Russia handed out lists of healthy positions to use in order to avoid being close to a sex buyer's face. A Canadian sexwork advocate said, "There are services in there that a lot of us are trying to avoid, such as kissing or missionary position. Any way you can deter your client's face from being near your face, is a must .." (Grossman, 2020). These harm reduction techniques fail to protect women in the sex trade from COVID-19 and fail to protect women from the rapes, beatings and verbal abuse that are perpetrated by sex

buyers and pimps.

The usual "zombie ideas" have been trotted out by sex trade businessmen during the pandemic. "Zombie ideas" are ideas that have been proved wrong by overwhelming evidence and should be dead, but they somehow keep shambling along, eating peoples' brains (Krugman, 2020). These sham ideas resurface because they generate a lot of money for pimps and their free-market cronies. Especially popular is the zombie notion that prostitution can be made safe by legalizing or decriminalizing it (Moran & Farley, 2018). "When sex work is treated as actual work and fully decriminalised, sex workers will have access to the same human rights as every other worker" (Shehadi & Partington, 2020). The zombie messaging here is that in the face of a pandemic and financial catastrophe, women in prostitution will be saved by decriminalizing pimps. But there is no evidence that decriminalization of pimps protects women from homelessness and financial crisis – or from the sex trade's racism, sexism, and violent exploitation. Supporting pimps as managers via decriminalized prostitution is a deceptive and confusing maneuver that exploits anxiety about economic survival during the coronavirus pandemic. Yes, women in the sex trade need emergency support during the pandemic because they are on the margins*, but not because they have a need to legally define themselves as "sex workers."* What women in the sex trade need – they have told us clearly – is exit from prostitution, housing, medical care, and meaningful, sustainable employment. The last thing they need is a slick and oh-so-pimpish maneuver that tries to redefine a human rights violation – prostitution – as "work." Decriminalized pimping helps pimps, but it does not pay the women's rent or put food on her table. Decriminalizing pimps when people think you're decriminalizing women in the sex trade is a Trumpian maneuver akin to the COVID-19 "stimulus bill" that bails out billionaires (airlines and banks), but fails to bail out the people who urgently need economic aid to pay rent, mortgages, and household expenses like food.

Another COVID zombie theme is "Breaking the stigma around sex work and campaigning for decriminalisation are other routes to making sure sex workers survive in times like this and are provided for in the future" (Wilson, 2020). Sextrade promoters are correct that the person who is sold in prostitution should be destigmatized and never arrested. But pimps and sex buyers *should be stigmatized*. Pimps and sex buyers *should be arrested*.[14] There is no evidence that decriminalization of prostitution ensures women's survival during a pandemic or other crisis, or that decriminalized prostitution provides for women in difficult times. The stigma remains regardless of prostitution's legal status: women in New Zealand and in the Netherlands avoid joining the prostitute unions and they avoid signing up for government benefits because the government keeps records and because they do not want to be socially labeled as prostitutes. During the pandemic, prejudice against women in the sex trade prevents them from receiving economic and health benefits like other citizens. The solution is economic equality and social support *for all people*, *including* those in the sex trade.

Despite the myth that somewhere there's a place where "sex workers are safe and condoms are always used" the fact is that women in the sex trade are not safe and johns will always demand sex acts without condoms with physical threats or by paying more (Rao, Gupta, Lokshin, & Jana, 2003; Farley, 2004; Brody, Reno, Chhoun, Kaplan, Tuot, Yi, 2020) This is as true during

the COVID-19 pandemic as it was during the HIV epidemic, when that crisis was also exploited by pimps who used HIV funding to promote their own decriminalization. The same misogynist stereotypes about women being dirty or "vectors of disease" during the HIV epidemic, were evident in the 2020 coronavius pandemic when neighbors in Brussels referred to prostituting women as "spreaders of disease" (Chini, 2020).

Women in prostitution do what they can to avoid HIV, COVID-19, and the ever-present threat of extreme violence. They use their intuition, ask for or demand condom use, ask for masks to be used, carry a weapon for protection when violently threatened, tell a pimp or a friend where they are, try to locate johns who aren't too intoxicated (because the ones who are drunk or meth'd up can be the most violent), follow sex worker unions' rules for checking under the pillow or bed for weapons, never wearing a necklace or a scarf because you can get choked to death (Farley, 2004). But none of it works. Women in the sex trade are raped, even killed, at the highest rates of any women on the planet. Women in prostitution have high rates of HIV because johns rape them and also because johns pay much more for a sex act without a condom. Women in the sex trade will be struck down with COVID-19 for the same reasons: their lives are worth little to sex buyers and pimps. Their lives don't seem worth much to some governments either.

Even humanitarian billionaires have drunk the zombie kool-aid. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, working with Indian health officials, sought to mainstream prostitution for poor Indian women for more than a decade (Farley & Seo, 2006). In a Kolkata brothel complex, Gates has implemented condom distribution programs and supported unions that promote the sex trade as a way out of poverty.Yet when Indian women in the sex trade are interviewed, they tell us they want to have bank accounts that are not controlled by Mafia pimps. Their life goals do not include putting condoms on correctly and continuing in prostitution until they age out with nothing left. Instead, the women seek housing away from brothels, and they tell us that they want a small plot of land for farming or to start a small business. No Gates funding has gone toward these preferences made clear by the women themselves. The zombie idea that condom distribution solves the problems of prostitution – keeps shambling along. Mickey Meji quoted South African survivors who firmly state, "condoms don't change our fate; we're still poor."[15] On the heels of the Gates Foundation, George Soros funded numerous campaigns to decriminalize prostitution but utterly failed at providing housing or options for escaping prostitution (Raphael, 2018).

A Failure to Protect

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the failure of legal and decriminalized prostitution to protect women from the violence of pimps, traffickers, and sex buyers. In response to COVID-19, Germany closed down its legal brothels and threw women out because the women could not afford to pay the brothel pimps for the rooms they lived in.[16] Nevada also closed its legal brothels and kicked women out[17] with no city, state, or federal financial assistance, no food assistance or shelter. The financial crisis of women in German legal prostitution is much the same as the financial crisis that women suffer in illegal prostitution. In March 2020, the

Berlin Senate and the Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth asked an association of legal pimps (BesD) whether women who flee domestic violence could be sheltered in the closed brothels during the pandemic. Because women were quarantined with their abusers and sought to escape, there was a national shortage of shelter for battered women in Germany.[18] Since their brothels were closed, the pimps welcomed the paid opportunity to house battered women in their brothels. The irony and the insanity of the government's proposal was not lost on historian Inge Kleine (2020) who pointed out that *prostitution itself* is a cruel variant of domestic violence. Although the Senate's proposal for pimp-sponsored housing for battered women was quietly rescinded, an alternative solution was not even considered: municipalities could have taken over the brothels, kicked out the pimps and transformed the buildings into long-term housing for trafficked women.

After closing the legal brothels in response to the pandemic, Stuttgart prohibited prostitution entirely. This meant that if a woman with no means of survival had been kicked out of a legal brothel, and if she then resorted to turning a trick in order to feed herself or her family, she could be arrested. The cruelty of this policy was protested by survivor Huschke Mau, who noted that in addition to being coerced into the sex trade by poverty, 80% of the women in the German brothels had been coerced into it by abusive pimps, boyfriends or husbands. Thus, to arrest the women would be to compound the harm and to blame the victims, not the perpetrators. Mau described this arrest policy as a "catastrophe" that endangered women's health and their survival. She also noted that the pandemic provided an opportunity for German cities to implement the Nordic law on prostitution. Under the Nordic law, sex buyers, brothelkeepers, and pimps are charged with crimes, *but the victim of the crime* is not arrested. Mau noted that the pandemic presented an opportunity for Germans to show solidarity with the most vulnerable – those who are paid for in prostitution – providing support and exit services rather than arresting them (Mau, 2020).

Although legal brothels and window prostitution were closed down in response to the pandemic, many women in the Netherlands who had been coerced by poverty or by pimps, continued to prostitute at home, in hotels or illegal brothels. Online advertisements for prostitution were commonplace during the pandemic (Pieters, 2020). Journalist Renate van der Zee observed that Dutch prosextrade groups encouraged women to continue prostituting even though legal prostitution was shut down. Women leapt at the opportunity to escape prostitution even with a small government stipend of €1050 per month during the pandemic. "Many women are asking for help and some use the pandemic stipend as an opportunity to exit prostitution," van der Zee said, "Now is the time to fortify the prostitution exit programs because they are the first priority. Counseling is not enough. Women need apartments and a job." In the last 5 years, van der Zee and coalitions of Dutch citizens, outreach workers, and progressive politicians have proposed that the Netherlands adopt the Nordic prostitution law, rather than continue with its failed experiment in legal prostitution.

While the prostitute-and-pimps' union in New Zealand promoted web cam prostitution as a solution to the closing of legal brothels, a survivor-led abolitionist organization, Wahine Toa Rising Aotearoa, sought emergency stipends like those provided in the Netherlands, so that

women in prostitution “don’t feel like the only choice they have is to remain active in the sex trade to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table” (Kronast, 2020).[19] Along these lines, a global coalition of survivors and nonprofit organizations sent an urgent message to the UN Secretary General proposing a similar and multilateral fund for women seeking to escape prostitution.[20]

Homelessness, prostitution, and the pandemic

The lethal capitalism of pandemic pimps who beat women if they resist prostitution provides a grotesque parody of similarly inhumane US state and federal policies that affect people who are homeless during the pandemic. While one US governor sought to use hotels for people without homes during the pandemic, other cities strongly resisted the proposal to compassionately share resources even temporarily (Har & Nguyen, 2020). In Las Vegas, *while the city’s hotels were empty*, Las Vegas officials painted “social distancing boxes” on a concrete parking lot for homeless people to sleep on (Lee, 2020).

Photo credit: Damairs Carter, 2020

Pope Francis criticized the Las Vegas response to the COVID outbreak, saying the homeless should be quarantined in hotels and not in parking lots. The Pope noted that people in need are often treated like “rescued animals” (Gallagher, 2020). Meanwhile West Bengal Minister Panja handed out food to 1500 hungry, prostituted, and despairing women in the Sonagachi brothel complex in Kolkata. With an attitude reminiscent of a zookeeper, Panja said, “We will make them understand what to do or what not to do. We will make them understand to follow social distancing” (Sonevane, 2020).

“How do you wash your hands without a sink? Stock up on food without money? Or shelter in place without a home?” asked an Italian homeless advocate (Povoledo, 2020). People without homes and people living in cars or shelters are more vulnerable to highly contagious diseases like COVID-19. The US National Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2020) attributed much of that vulnerability to “close quarters, compromised immune systems and an aging population” as well as the fact that “without adequate, permanent and stable housing, people lack a restroom for frequent hand washing, laundry facilities, and personal hygiene.”

Conclusion

“The biological virus afflicting individuals is also a social virus,” Viet Thanh Ngyuen (2020) wrote, “whose symptoms include “inequality, callousness, selfishness and a profit motive that undervalues human life and overvalues commodities. Our real enemy is not the virus but our response to the virus — a response that has been degraded and deformed by the structural inequalities of our society.” These structural inequalities affect everyone, but for women in the sex trade during the pandemic, the inequality is life-threatening, and the transformation of oneself into a sexual commodity inflicts a gnawing sense of degradation and shame.

The coronavirus pandemic has vividly exposed the failure of capitalism. “Who’s going to pay for it?” were the last words of a dying man as he was put on a ventilator (Elassar, 2020). “I think that [the pandemic] has highlighted how we systematically fail to protect really all freelance workers and *people in general*,” a woman in US prostitution said (Campoamor, 2020). Vast numbers of poor and working class people in the US are threatened with food and housing crises. [21] Financial relief from the economic damage caused by COVID-19 arrived quickly for the rich, but not the poor (Goldstein, 2020).

The failures of malignant capitalism were on full display during the US pandemic where the least vulnerable rather than the most vulnerable are cared for by the state (Ngyuen, 2020). Referring to the sex trade as “prurient services,” the first package of US economic aid excluded from emergency support: women in legal prostitution, stripclub prostitution, women in porn and webcam prostitution (Mansfield, 2020). The coronavirus aid bill excludes many other classes of people including the homeless, incarcerated people, and indebted students (Poor Peoples’ Campaign, 2020). South Africa and Japan also proposed policies that restricted subsidies to women in the sex trade. Women’s human rights lawyer Yukiko Tsunoda (2020) criticized the exclusion of prostituted women from the program, saying “it is like telling them to go die.”

Toxic and hypocritical disinformation campaigns about who deserves food and water and who does not, who deserves to be sacrificed to prostitution or not – must be challenged. We must reject the notion that there is a class of women – mostly young, mostly poor, mostly ethnically and racially marginalized – who deserve prostitution in order to survive. And we must reject the Republican administration’s cruel budget that includes removal of healthcare for coal miners with respiratory disease (Taylor, 2020). These political maneuvers are symptoms of a system that sets aside some categories of humans as less deserving than others.

The made-for-media responses of many capitalist states to poverty are often inadequate and corrupt. Emergency stipends, boxes of food, and short-term housing all fail to address the real needs of class-segregated cultures that have been decimated by corporate capitalism. In many “global south” countries women are shuffled through “social integration” programs where local governments turn a blind eye to the fact that women are brutally exploited in prostitution. Protection (by the government or by civil society) simply does not exist for trafficked, migrant, poor women and girls who have been traumatized by civil war and/or family abuse. As in Nevada and Germany, corrupt local officials in Latin America work closely with pimps. The harms of prostitution are ignored while the women are used up in prostitution and discarded. At that point, they are sold to drug trafficking networks or other criminal enterprises. The system is designed to disappear the poor while exploiting them throughout their lives.

Life-threatening inequality has become more visible because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While there has not yet been a serious challenge to the wealthiest class in the US, Colombia, or elsewhere, there are signs of resistance. The failure of billionaire Jeff Bezos to pay his Amazon and Whole Foods employees a fair wage, his refusal to provide them with sick time and safe working conditions – has caused outrage and strikes in the US. In April 2020, the Trump

Republican administration legally forced a meat packing plant to reopen, despite multiple COVID outbreaks and dangerous working conditions. Workers are refused to give in to the demand to work in unsafe conditions (Telford, Kindy, & Bogage, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic provides some urgent lessons. We need coronavirus *harm elimination* (via vaccine), not stopping at coronavirus *harm reduction* (via social distancing, treatment of medical emergencies). We also need prostitution *harm elimination*: the abolition of the racist and sexist institution of prostitution and provision of meaningful, sustainable alternatives. We are not satisfied with stopping at prostitution h*arm reduction* with its condom distribution, "bad date" lists, and a friendly coffee. Emergency donations of food and shelter reduce the harm of prostitution only briefly. Is that all prostituted and trafficked women deserve? No. Poor women and men – those who are in the sex trade (and also those who are not) deserve universal health care, a universal basic income, secure housing including an indefinite moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, the cancellation of student-loan debt, and the reversal of all cuts to food stamps (Taylor, 2020). Wealthy citizens in the US have more than their share of resources which should be shared equitably. This requires major financial restructuring that would promote equal distribution of resources to all citizens. Prevention of poverty and homelessness would decrease the flood of women and girls into prostitution, and would permit women's survival so that we can join them in challenging the sexism and racism that are baked into their poverty.

Notes

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[1] The author is grateful for editing and content from Harvey Schwartz. She thanks Debra Boyer for inspiring and supporting this essay. Author email mfarley@prostitutionresearch.com

[2] Texas Republican politician Dan Patrick (Stieb, 2020), Dr. Phil, Dr. Oz (suggesting there are "tradeoffs" for children's deaths) (Scott, 2020). See also Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, and Georgia Republican politician Brian Kemp (Mull, 2020). The malevolent attacks on WHO by the Trump administration will soon result in more deaths in Yemen, deaths in parts of Africa, and deaths among Palestinians in the Occupied Territories (Polychroniou, 2020).

[3] Race/ethnicity affects the rate of exposure to coronavirus. Social distancing is a privilege that many do not have, especially poor or working class, people of color. Those who are economically and racially privileged can afford social distancing, can access healthcare, and can avoid public transportation, and often can work from home. (Blow, 2020)

[4] Manuela Schon is co-founder of Abolition 2014: For a world without prostitution https://abolition2014.blogspot.com/

[5] Megan Lundstrom is Executive Director of Free our Girls, in USA www.freeourgirls.org; www.gettingoutthegame.com

[6] Ally Marie Diamond is co-founder of Wahine Toa Rising Aotearoa, a survivor-led abolitionist organization in New Zealand.

[7] Angie Henderson is professor of sociology at University of Northern Colorado, USA.

[8] As in nursing homes, the coerced proximity of people in prisons place incarcerated women and men at highest risk of COVID-19. Many women are incarcerated for crimes resulting from racism or poverty such as theft of food or clothing. They are also charged with the "crime" of being victimized by pimps. The US incarcerates overwhelming numbers of Latino, African American, and poor people. US prisons are a for-profit business rather a system of justice (California Coalition for Women Prisoners, 2020).

[9] These groups also promote decriminalization of the person paid for in prostitution. The author agrees with this, and has made it clear that no one who is sold for sexual use should ever be arrested. But pimps and sex buyers are predators and should be both stigmatized and arrested.

[10] Alika Kinan, April 30, 2020. At the Edge of the Margins: COVID-19's impact on women in the sex trade. Online conference sponsored by Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW).

[11] According to reports from advocates, survivors and law enforcement sources, the United States sex trade stayed steady or increased during March and April 2020. Detective Joseph Scaramucci from McLennan County Sheriff's Office in Waco, Texas said that he saw no significant change in response to prostitution ads and no change in the extent of sex trafficking. In Phoenix, Arizona, men's demand for paid sex *increased* during the pandemic, possibly because Phoenix was one of a minority of US cities which remained open during the pandemic. Sergeant Mark Doty of Phoenix Police Department reported that street prostitution, trafficking and also online prostitution all increased as pimps transported women and girls from quarantined cities (Houston, Miami, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles) to Phoenix, because it remained open during the pandemic. Activist Nick Lembo from JustMenAz reported that he had no difficulty making massage brothel appointments in Phoenix.

[12] Thanks to Laila Mickelwait, Director of Abolition, Exodus Cry, for information about PornHub. ModelHub is part of the online prostitution and trafficking business run by PornHub and MindGeek. ModelHub advertises its production of porn at https://www.modelhub.com/model-program and https://www.modelhub.com/information/about and https://www.modelhub.com/blog/7341

[13] For example, Agence France-Presse (2020, April 19) glamorized Colombian webcam prostitution. Many US media sources take a similar proporn stance.

[14] The Nordic model law on prostitution does just that: women in prostitution are decriminalized and pimps and johns are criminalized.

[15] Mickey Meji is a leader of the Kwanele survivor movement and advocacy manager at

Embrace Dignity, Cape Town. She spoke April 30, 2020, at an online conference sponsored by Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW), At the Edge of the Margins: COVID-19's impact on women in the sex trade.

[16] Prostituting and trafficked women rent rooms in the brothel where they live. "Pascha's [German brothel] main income is the rent we get from the girls," explained Hermann Müller, the pimp/manager of Pascha. Women pay €175 for 24 hours' use of a room at Pascha. They must service least four men to break even. (Dia, 2015)

[17] As in Germany, many women who would otherwise be homeless, live in the Nevada legal brothels.

[18] Battered women are in great danger from abusers when they are quarantined with no escape from the abuse or have no privacy for phoning for help.

[19] There were barriers to emergency funding for women in the sex trade in NZ. Ally-Marie Diamond, a co-founder of the organization explained, "Many women in the sex trade don't have the records and evidence that the government requires to show what their earnings have been before having access to financial support, and many women in the sex trade in New Zealand are not New Zealand residents, therefore, may think they do not qualify" for government assistance (Kronast, 2020).

[20] The letter to the UN Secretary-General is accessible at https://prostitutionresearch.com/un-response-to-covid-19-must-include-exploited/

[21] During the pandemic, a mile-long line of cars in southern California waited for emergency food donations (Nicholson, 2020).

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The Dutertefly Effect and the Philippine Stub Universe

By | 2020: vol 19, no 1

Nothing exemplifies the hallucinatory universe created by Rodrigo Duterte in the 7,400 islands of the Philippines better than Imee Marcos, daughter of the late dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos, running for the Senate under the banner of the PDP-Laban party.

"God works in mysterious ways," she said, an irony on the irony of being with the party which had been founded to overthrow her father. [1] But this reversal of fortune and the enshrinement of the absurd for the archipelago has become an everyday happening since 2016, when the country entered what the Tibetans would call the "red line" – that ruby gash at sunset which presages really bad times. The sunset has been constant since then, as the Dutertefly Effect[2] rushes like tarantula venom among the 100 million Filipinos sardined in a territory the size of New Mexico, their sense of vastness coming only from a sea that sings in perpetual azure. But that too is vanishing, as China occupies one islet after another and bans fishing by the brown people in a growing area of the West Philippine Sea.[3]

She won, despite a roiling scandal of her claimed degrees as pure fakery – from a Princeton undergraduate degree to a University of the Philippines law degree, cum laude. Heck, it seemed she didn't even graduate from high school, though she claimed to have done so as a valedictorian. None of these mattered, as the Duterte Regime's senatorial slate was of the most violative, if not the most violative, of those qualities and credentials Filipinos had hitherto taken as preferable for senators. An uber-rich candidate who turns rice lands into subdivisions was joined by former officials with graft and corruption cases, do-nothing senators, third-term senators violating the two-term mandate of the Constitution for the Senate, one senator known for booking dishabille dancers for political rallies, the police chief in charge of the "drug war," and the president's factotum whom he himself characterized as "a billionaire" despite or because of his one lifelong job of being a "special assistant."

In contrast, the opposition Liberal Party fielded a slate of knowledge, skills and commitment – ranging from the Dean of the College of Law of La Salle University to the economist who helped the previous administration lift the country from a debt-paying to a lending one, to a military man who spent seven years imprisoned for mutinying against corruption, and the lone Muslim woman to resign from the Duterte government to protest rape jokes and the bombing of Marawi City, the only Islamic city in the archipelago. Three family names – Diokno, Tañada and Aquino – among the eight candidates bore a legacy of fighting the dictator. They all lost, some more resoundingly than others, in an election marked by massive vote buying, fraudulent voting and a 7-hour non-functioning of the tallying machine. Administration candidates swept

the election. Allegedly.

William Gibson used the idea of "stub universes" – parallel realities sprouting from decisions made/not made, events which happened/didn't happen – in his 2014 novel *The Peripheral*. The Philippine "stub universe" born of the Dutertefly Effect is more of a horror picture show. While running for president, Mr. Duterte had repeatedly declared his willingness to become the country's Hitler by murdering "three million (meth) addicts," to make the population more "manageable."[4] Human Rights Watch had documented the similar use of murder as "policing" in Davao City, where Mr. Duterte had kept a firm grip on power as mayor for 30 years. More than a thousand were executed, including street children.[4] True to his word, upon being declared the president-elect, the killing started in Central Luzon, notably the Metro-Manila area. Bodies started piling up – under bridges, in rivers and the sea, in alleys, at intersections; some with heads totally shrouded in masking tape, like unfinished mummies; some, tortured and stabbed innumerable times; some, in pools of blood in the open streets, alongside cardboard signs with the words "*adik, huwag tularan*" (addict, do not emulate). The killers were usually a two-person team, helmeted and riding in tandem on a motorcycle – a means of transport ubiquitous in the traffic-clogged country. Occasionally, a killing orgy by as many as 14 men would be reported. Occasionally, too, when the shock and horror of single assassinations no longer reached the decibel desired by some unknown murder director, killing sprees would be held, like the August 2017 "One Time, Big Time" (OTBT) police operation which Arab News reported thus:

In the first major One-Time Big-Time operation this week, police in Bulacan province neighboring Manila reported killing 32 people on Monday night. While human rights activists and other critics voiced outrage, Duterte quickly praised the police involved and urged more of the same. "If we could kill another 32 everyday, then maybe we can reduce what ails this country," Duterte said on Wednesday. Police reported killing another 25 people that evening, then overnight Thursday and into the early hours of Friday an AFP team witnessed nine other bullet-riddled corpses in funeral parlours, inside slums or on nearby roads.[5]

While the police would admit to only 5000 "kills," some 25,000 murders are "under investigation"[6]– probably more, since the murdered poor and very poor would not even be reported. A whole murder economy has grown around Mr. Duterte's avowed "war on drugs;" the tandem-riding assassins are said to be paid for each kill and while Government denies complicity in the on-going carnage, the reality is that only a very few of these murders are actually investigated; in the rare instances when the targeted person did fight back and managed to kill or wound the assassins, the latter were discovered to be connected with the police.[7] Assassins were paid, no question asked, from five thousand pesos up per kill. No wonder the trillion peso ($18,938,974.32 at current exchange rates) savings left by the previous administration disappeared and the Duterte Regime is resorting to loans from China, which can only be deemed usurious and which demand "national assets" as collateral.

Despite this continuing killing spree – 38 lawyers have been assassinated, for one – Mr. Duterte's favorable rating remains high, per poll surveys. Rather surprising, as the hundred

million Filipinos are tolerant, by and large, living in the diversity of 187 ethno-linguistic groups and tribes, engaging in the occasional rebellion and dissidence, and accepting, even, of Asia's longest Maoist guerrilla war. Therein lies the insidiousness of the Dutertefly Effect – its destruction of what had been factors of stability in the last 30 years, despite the chronic crises of poverty and steep class divisions; a warping of what had comprised the normal, all replaced by rage, insults and by a ludicrous loyalty to one person who could do no wrong, or if he did, was all the better for it – a direct appeal to the usually somnolent id of the national psyche.

A Construct and A Digital Populism

Neither the city (Davao) nor its then mayor boasted of singular achievements as to have inspired the fanatical devotion seen in the 2016 presidential elections. But in 2010, Facebook entered the Philippines offered free connection via the cell phone. It was a mind-boggling success. Within a short period, Facebook had 30 million Philippine-based accounts; today, it has over 70 million, with a recent study showing Filipinos spend an average of ten hours a day on the Internet. The "free data mode" of this was supposed to enhance connectivity – and for a while, it did, until the connection among millions itself was weaponized. What has developed is a disconnected labyrinth of narcissistic "stub universes", with Duterte idolatry as religion. This digital "ir-reality" is augmented by click farms, a troll network, advertising agencies – all churning "fake news" and historical revisionism

Former Cambridge Analytica CEO Alexander Nix was in the Philippines the year before the presidential elections and, in a speech, stated, "Election campaigning will never be the same again due to the advent of cutting-edge technology. "The traditional and conventional methods that have been employed through all the elections in the last century may still work, but they will be unlike new strategies and tactics that are products of behavioural micro-targeting, psychographic profiling, predictive analytics and many other modern tools."[8] It would subsequently be revealed that Facebook shared the personal information of 1.1 million Filipino FB users with Cambridge Analytica.

The tools and medium may have been readily available but content was a matter of invention: what would best appeal to an electorate and how to maintain that appeal. From the website of the Strategic Communications Laboratories came this text (subsequently deleted) which is generally deemed to have referred to Duterte: "In the run up to national elections the incumbent client was widely perceived as both kind and honourable, qualities his campaign team thought were potentially election-winning," the SCL web content said. "But SCL's research showed that many groups within the electorate were more likely to be swayed by qualities such as toughness and decisiveness. SCL used the cross-cutting issue of crime to rebrand the client as a strong, no-nonsense man of action, who would appeal to the true values of the voters."[9]

Mr. Duterte was said to have run a "near-perfect social media campaign" – whose message consisted of themes hewing closely to – ironically enough – a Hollywood archetype of the bad boy, the outsider, the rebel, the defiant one living a thug life. Davao City, thereby, morphed

into “the safest city in the world,” thanks to its murderous ways. He was declared by NASA to be “the best mayor in the solar system” (not true). He was The Punisher – in a leather jacket, cradling a monster assault weapon, or perched on a motorcycle. Three motifs ran through his political bad boy song:

1. “I hate drugs,” he said, and his social media churned up stories of heinous crimes supposedly committed by drug addicts. When one anti-narcotics official took issue with his “three million addicts,” stating the actual figure was half of that, he was fired. Whenever Duterte’s poll rating fell, the number of addicts would rise. Whenever the shock and awe of the killings waned, a new repulsive crime would be committed, allegedly by an addict, the latest being the killing of a 16-year old female, her face flayed to the bone.
2. “I hate the US and the West.” He shifted Philippine foreign policy from its Western connections toward subservience to China and proceeded to borrow billions of dollars, once more sinking the country into a new debt trap.
3. The political and sexual subservience of women are one and the same.

All three draw from bad moments in his life. Fentanyl was and is said to be his drug of choice. Because of the Human Rights Watch report on extra-judicial killings, he was refused a visa to visit his current companion, then working in the US as a nurse. His mother was said to have punished him severely and his first wife had their marriage annulled, based on psychological battering. A psychiatric evaluation for the annulment called him a narcissistic sociopath. All these appear to have been inputted into the Regime’s way of politics, governance, and foreign policy.

Populism Rooted in Misogyny

The “bad boy” archetype is rooted in misogyny, a direct contravention of the strong women mythology of pre-colonial Philippines, where gender equality, in governance, war and possessions, was more the norm than the exception. Despite Mr. Duterte’s near-pathological disdain for the West, in this wise, he was the bearer of a legacy of Spain and the United States. His first “political kill” was Senator Leila de Lima, who dared to open hearings on the Davao Death Squad and brought two witnesses, former DDS members, who blew the lid off Davao’s secret. The Regime’s viciousness was on full display for maximum intimidation; de Lima was portrayed as a drug lord, a sexual outlaw – the male chortling over a purported sex video of the senator must have reached the moon. It was only after Every Woman, an ad hoc network of women activists, took countermeasures, calling on women to issue a declaration[10] declaring she was the one on the sex video that the Regime’s then Secretary of Justice admitted there was no such thing. Convicted drug lords were used to testify against de Lima; one was stabbed and nearly killed before he would agree. The one drawback the Regime did not anticipate was that everyone would proclaim, at the Congressional hearing, that the drug source was either China and/or North Korea.

But the campaign against powerful females – i.e., women wielding power – continued. The first

female Supreme Court Chief Justice of Asia was removed by a vote of the supreme court justices, majority of whom had come to power during the administration of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, now a Duterte ally. Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales was subjected to threats and insults. She pushed back and managed to serve out her term, retiring in 2019. But the most celebrated attack waged by the regime was on Rappler, an on-line news magazine; its staff and publisher, Maria Ressa, were the recipient of bans on coverage, libel cases, threats, and all manner of harassment.

Ms. Ressa has had eleven cases filed against her, was been in jail twice and has had to post bail on eight cases.[11] The most recent case of libel was filed by an immigrant from China to the Philippines, who, shortly after acquiring Philippine citizenship, made it to the Forbes list of the Philippines 40 wealthiest with assets worth $100 million. Mr. Duterte claimed not to know Mr. Keng, despite the latter's having received a government contract for land reclamation in the Manila Bay.Such contracts are the exclusive pervue of the office of the president. For all the Regime's pains, Maria Ressa was declared one of the Hundred Most Influential People of the World by Time Magazine, an irony. Rappler still operates. "We live our mission," said Ms. Ressa, in explaining how she and her staff had taken and survived the Regime's blows.[12]

The take-away from this, both for observers, critics and the Regime, is that gender war trumps class warfare any time. A population where the majority are powerless, wielding power over the female and marginalized genders can be a potent distraction. Mr. Duterte continues to employ blatant misogyny to commit crimes against both nation and humanity, calling his audience bitches at an event to celebrate the Philippines' scoring high on the gender equality index; calling his critics *bakla* (homosexual literally but faggot idiomatically), stupid, etc., etc. It's an endless stream of cuss words in a country where protocol is so engrained historically that the common language has a third person plural pronoun to addressed those who must be addressed in deep respect.

The Maninilong

The archetypal creature for dictatorships and petty tyrants in the Philippines is the *maninilong* (closest translation: he who hides beneath the house, in reference to the old architecture of elevating reed huts on bamboo stilts). A feeder on the sick and on corpses for its energy, the *maninilong* is also a master hypnotist, replacing the corpse it steals with a banana trunk, thereby maintaining a semblance of normality in the village. Under Duterte, the killed and the murdered are morphed into the label "addicts" and the three plagues ravaging the country – Dengue, Measles, HIV – do not even enter official awareness. Instead of the tens of thousands of cases for each, attention has been focused on the ten who supposedly died from an anti-dengue vaccine disseminated by the previous administration of Benigno Aquino III.

Under the latter's administration, the country had emerged from the economic illness caused by the massive loans taken out on the country's future by the Marcos Dictatorship. Such a state of health, the *maninilong* cannot tolerate; hence, the orgy of borrowings from China.

*In the last 12 months, Beijing has entered discussions to provide funding for two Philippine railway projects with a combined cost of **US$8.3 billion**. They have also discussed the possibility of helping fund up to 30 smaller projects with a combined value of **US$3.7 billion**….If (Budget Secretary) if Diokno's estimation of US$167 billion is sourced from China at a rate of 10% interest, in ten years the Philippine debt to GDP ratio would soar to **197%**, which would give them the **second worst debt: GDP** ratio in the world.*[13]

What Is At Stake

Beneath Duterte's performative politics and the consequent "mass consensual hallucination" – to use another Gibson phrase – is a cold-blooded experiment in social engineering, one already being done in some Southeast Asian countries. This is certainly far beyond the ability of Duterte's people to plan but within their power to implement. All governmental checks-and-balance institutions are being re-aligned toward monolithic governance. All value systems which made for rational politics are subverted. All remnants of the history of Western colonialism and liberal democracy are being erased, historical landmarks either demolished and replaced, or defiled, as with the monument of Jose Rizal, popularly considered the national hero. The very topography is being altered, with land reclamation projects slated for Manila Bay, which coincidentally looks out into the West Philippine Sea, toward that part of the South China Sea being claimed by three contending countries. From the chaos, a new order is being pushed forward, beginning with the changing of the Constitution itself. In the last hundred years or so, the country has had five constitutions, the constant replacement stopping democratic processes from taking root and becoming institutionalized. The struggle being fought is not only over political power but over identity, the essence of history, what comprises the social contract between the governed and the government. Ironically, despite Duterte's own rants against Western colonialism and imperialism, left unchanged is the capitalist character of the economy – though one fueled by cronyism, corruption and the continuing self-entitlement of petty tyrants.

On the Poverty of Philosophy or the Black Hole of Factory Farming

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Animals are the main victims of history, and the treatment of domesticated animals in industrial farms is perhaps the worst crime in history.

Yuval Noah Harari[1]

I. Philosophical Controversies in the Antagonistic Area

Since the beginning of the first decade of this century, three among the leading philosophers of the leftist galaxy, Antonio (Toni) Negri, Giorgio Agamben and Slavoj Zizek, deeply committed to challenge the contemporary architectonics of power on behalf of the oppressed, have been engaged in an ongoing debate. One interest of this discussion lies in the fact that all three of them, in various degrees and with distinct nuances, find themselves at the crossroads between what are probably now the major sources of theoretical antagonistic politics – the entrenched neo-Marxist tradition and the more recent horizon of biopolitical thought.

The general focus of the discussion is the possibility of opposition to a system that is characterized as late global capitalism, sovereign power, empire, biopolitical control or disciplinary power. This opposition should be carried in the name of the dominated, the forgotten, the excluded and the discriminated against – of those who are subjugated, and reduced to a bare life which deprives them of their specific kind of existence and is stripped of every right, or of those who are exploited, and fall victims to reification and commodification.

The different approaches issue in different positions. Antonio Negri, the most Marxistically oriented, argues that Communism is possible, and that its achievement is tied to the constitution of a *common* which includes the shared wealth of the material world and the shared substance of our social being, and which should be affirmed against the current global system by the multitude – a network that acts in an organized way where all differences can be expressed freely and equally. Agamben, on the other hand, widely acknowledged as the leading continuator of the biopolitical line of thought initiated by Michel Foucault, with his thesis of an original tie between sovereignty and the state of exception, and of the constant risk of the political production of bare life, aims at envisaging a political action which is merely destituent, rather than being constituent of a new political and legal order. Finally, Zizek, whose eclecticism blends Lacanian psychoanalysis with Marxian thought, and whose intellectual path is somewhat tortuous, fundamentally reaffirms the dominant role of class in contrast to race and gender, and, focusing on the struggle against the new apartheids in the

form of walls and slums, asserts that the main task of the new century is to politicize the "destructured masses" of the Excluded.

About what, then, does the debate among these authors revolve? Here are some of their mutual criticisms. According to Zizek, Negri and his co-author Michael Hardt are too Marxist, as they do not abandon the Marxist scheme of historical progress, and their notion of the pure multitude ruling itself looks like the "ultimate capitalist fantasy", while Agamben is too Foucauldian in arguing that the realm of bare life tends to be the realm of politics, and in seeing the modern project of political freedom merely as a deceptive mask for the disciplinary mechanisms of biopower.[2] For his part, Negri is suspicious of Zizek's possible endorsement of elitist forms of political leadership like that of the Bolshevik party,[3] and argues that an important weakness in Agamben's reflection is his conviction that power reduces every human being to a state of powerlessness, thus flattening "the reality of the biopolitical onto the fabric of a negative ontology" which totally misses history.[4] Finally, Agamben maintains that Negri fails to show that the movements' constituting power is so different from sovereign power as to be immune from the latter's sinister connotations, adding that "a political theory freed from the aporias of sovereignty is unthinkable" until the ontology of actuality is replaced by an ontology of potentiality,[5] and observes that philosophers like Zizek too easily refer to communism as if it were a clear concept, which after Stalin is hardly tenable.[6]

Do such discussions confront the hard facts of an age dominated by a mode of production that has surpassed all previous systems in terms of the capacity to bend reality to its ends? No. As Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker and Michael Thompson recently argued, this is a moment when the philosophical Left is detached from the mechanisms of power and of political reality, so that politics tends to collapse into culture.[7] Since at present antagonistic thinkers, unlike most of their precursors, are not also political leaders, the tone and content of their debates somehow bear the hallmark of that "scholastic view" which approaches the world as a text that must be interpreted rather than as a source of concrete problems eliciting urgent reactions.[8]

To this, it might be replied that, in a situation when there seems to be no critical mass to sustain political struggles, the existence of a texture of distinct but overlapping perspectives is surely important, and that the worst concrete problems, though not directly confronted, are at least identified and diagnosed. This may be true, but only partially, for there is a crucial problem which is totally overlooked.

II. Factory Farming

In the last seventy years, industrial societies witnessed the rise of an exploitation system which involves an unrivalled quantity of victims: each year, about 60 billions of individuals are killed all over the world.[9] The involved individuals are animals who, alienated from their forms of life, are bent to human ends in a new way – a way that, through the scientific production of malleable bodies capable of enduring extreme conditions, marks the apogee of that mode of enframing in which living beings are used as raw material to be unrestrainedly tampered with.[10]

Within this system, also known as the "animal industrial complex,"[11] individuals are for their whole life confined in cubicles too small even to turn, crammed into pens where they defecate on one another, or kept chained in the dark. They are drugged to grow so large that their legs and organs cannot keep up, and, if unwanted, they are ground up alive or tossed into bags to suffocate.[12] Here, it is possible to fully grasp the assertion that technology violates the very nature of the beings over whom it holds sway. For what emanates from such visions is the ontological horror at the technological processing of life – at life usurped, mechanized, and appropriated."[13]

The final destiny of the beings forced to lead such a kind of life is the abattoir. Archetypical *capitalist* Henry Ford draw inspiration for assembly-line production from a visit to a Chicago slaughterhouse, where animal bodies passed from worker to worker.[14] Nonhuman bodies keep passing from worker to worker – shackled upside down, dragged through electrified water baths, or hoisted up on to the killing line for the death cut.[15] Comparing the treatment of animals from factory farms to slaughterhouses to the treatment of humans in the death camps, James Stanescu argues that, if the camps seemed especially concerned with the disposal of corpses, what characterizes the animal industrial system is not just the production of corpses, but the fabrication of lives to be part of the production of corpses. Within this realm, "it isn't just that we experience death that can't be called death, but also life that cannot be called life" – an entirely new phenomenon which resists the parallels with intra-human atrocities and which can be defined as "deading life," or life that is not living.[16]

Paraphrasing Hannah Arendt on American slavery, one might claim that, in the face of this, no one can ignore "the primordial crime upon which the fabric of [our] society rests." [17] And yet, the question of the mass subjugation and exploitation of the members of other species is virtually nonexistent for our critical thinkers. In this sense, far from being antagonistic, their stances appear as supportive of the existing order – they might be seen as the left wing of the conservative camp.

III. Facing the Problem

The matter is essentially one of moral consideration. To regard something as an injustice, one must first grant moral consideration to the involved beings. And when some beings are denied consideration, the matter becomes one of establishing whether such denial is justifiable. Is it justifiable, then, to draw between human and nonhuman beings, as our authors do, a discriminatory line which condones dominion over the latter but not over the former?

Philosophy – the intellectual field traditionally charged with offering reasoned grounds for societal choices – while most often working *ex post*, advancing justifications for the prevailing doxa, is sometimes able to produce new horizons of moral consciousness, bringing out more just and universal principles. This is what occurred with the rise of the animal question. In connection with the elaboration of the rationale of the doctrine of universal human rights, many analytic moral philosophers argued that the expansive force of the egalitarian principles therein formulated could not be confined within the boundaries of our species, and produced

arguments to the effect that we should extend basic equality, in the form of the fundamental negative right not to be interfered with, to nonhuman beings. On account of this connection, such arguments, although independently founded,[18] can also be expressed in the form of ad hominem reasoning, that is, by showing that the humanist egalitarian premises, if consistently applied, lead to extensionist conclusions.[19]

Do the authors under consideration, notwithstanding their unconventional positions, subscribe to the contemporary paradigm of human equality? Though outright references to it may be inconspicuous in their work, an up-close inspection shows that the paradigm looms large in the background. This holds both for the neo-Marxist and the biopolitical trend. Marxism is no longer what it was – a perspective centered on the redemptive role of a class in a historical process guided by the conflict between productive forces and productive modes – since, with the appearance of what was not haphazardly called Marxist humanism, the idea of the "new human being" increasingly overshadowed abstract entities like the laws of history,[20] thereby making the theory permeable to contemporary human egalitarianism. Thus if Negri praises Renaissance humanism as the initiator of the notion of human equality, and lists human rights among the counterpowers that can guarantee the continued flourishing of humanity, Zizek states that human rights express the right to universality as such, and recoils in horror at the possibility that a human being may not be "recognized and/or treated as human."[21] Analogously, notwithstanding Michel Foucault's wager that man [sic] would be erased like a face drawn in sand,[22] biopolitical thoughtis not as anti-humanist as it is presented, as evidenced by the fact that, in his late ethical work, Foucault himself engaged with human rights discourse, revaluating "what we call human rights or freedom." Consistently with this, Agamben, after denouncing the camp as the place where the most absolute *conditio inhumana* is realized, focuses attention on the juridical procedures by which human beings can be completely "deprived of their riaghts and prerogatives," while his notion of *Homo sacer* – a human being reduced to bare life – is tellingly seized by Zizek to condemn the idea that there can be humans who have no rights and are regarded as "inhuman."[23] In the light of all this, it is clearly possible to bring into play the ad hominem logic showing that a consistent application of the very premises of the intra-human egalitarianism these authors espoused must lead them to reconsider the status of animals.

What the recently developed egalitarian arguments radically undermine are ingrained attitudes in mainstream customary morality whose faults we now see as fairly evident. Amongst them, two have been particularly devastating. The first one is the legitimation of inferior treatment for some human categories – such as non-Western peoples – on the basis of grand metaphysical narratives invoked to make sense of the cosmos. Against this, it was argued that it is unacceptable because *arbitrary* to rank human individuals according to their alleged level within idiosyncratic hierarchies of value. Needless to say, this implies the delegitimation of inferior treatment for nonhuman individuals according to equally idiosyncratic hierarchies, be they metaphysical, natural or even religious. The second critical target, whose influence cast a long shadow over our history, is the sanction of discrimination against some human beings founded on their membership in a particular biological group. Against this, it was argued that purely physical attributes such as skin color, eye shape or genital structure are morally

irrelevant characteristics,[24] thus substantiating the present indictment of racism and sexism. Since, however, also the discrimination founded on species membership is a form of biologism, *speciesism* too is discredited, and it becomes inadmissible to treat the other animals as inferiors merely on the ground that "they are not human."[25]

To these philosophical rationales for extending basic equality to nonhuman beings, some leftist philosophers – among them Negri's co-author, Michael Hardt –[26] object that ethics is one thing, and politics quite another, and that thereby their perspectives cannot be accused of ignoring animals, dealing as they do with different problems. And, whether they focus on the facet of the political concerning end-states and the realm of desirable political institutions, or on the dynamic sphere of the struggles conducted by political forces to alter society, two considerations are regularly invoked to exclude nonhuman individuals, and both revolve around some construal of the notion of agency.

When what is at issue is the functioning of society, exclusion is normally justified by appeal to the perfectionist approach that differentiates on the basis of cognitive levels, sanctioning disqualification for less mentally endowed individuals on the grounds that they are unable to govern themselves and – a fortiori – to lead a life of public participation implying forms of reciprocity and a commitment to reasoned discourse. Since, however, it was just this sort of perfectionism which underlay the institutionalization or outright elimination of cognitively non-paradigmatic members of our species, a further reference to contemporary human egalitarianism comes into play here. For it was just the realization that, irrespective of one's intellectual level and of one's capacity for agency, from the subjective point of view of each individual human being one's life and welfare have just as much importance as those of any other, so that to ignore the interests of the mentally disabled implies flatly giving up ethical *impartiality*, that led to the present creation of programs of appropriate protection and involvement for the weakest among us. Consistency thereby requires not only the repudiation of the exclusion of nonhumans based on forms of perfectionism, but also, as it was recently argued within *English-speaking* political philosophy,[27] the adoption of parallel policies of inclusion.

If, on the other hand, one turns to the dynamic sphere of the fight to alter society**,** the attempted exclusion of nonhumans tends to be referred to the view, arising in the political debates of the 1960's,[28] that the oppressed cannot become free if they do not develop their own political project through their own agency, and that it is both wrong and paternalistic to fight in the name, and on behalf, of other subjugated groups. However, even leaving aside the fact that not only do animals display their own forms of resistance[29] but new concepts for analyzing forms of animal dependent agency are now being developed,[30] it is once again the full ethico-political acceptance of the children's and disability rights movements standing up for immature and non-paradigmatic humans which bespeaks the blatant *unfairness* of a view claiming that just the most helpless victims of discrimination – those who cannot defend themselves[31] – are not entitled to defense by concerned others.[32] This cannot but dispel the attempt to delegitimize nonhumans as a group deserving resistance and mobilization on the part of a genuine political movement.

If these arguments have the effect of unearthing the inconsistencies which mar the perspectives in question, however, the unacceptability of the leftist blindness to a practice like factory farming – and of course to other forms of nonhuman exploitation like "scientific experimentation" which, though not involving such staggering numbers of individuals, are structurally analogous – can be highlighted also from a different angle, that is, by considering whether the main critical categories employed to diagnose and denounce social pathologies can be suddenly dropped as soon as the species boundary is reached.

Such critical categories revolve around two main families of concepts which, though somehow intertwining, remain different in that they place emphasis on differing aspects of the powerful-powerless relationship, since one is centered on the idea of being in the power of, or wholly subject to, someone else, and is captured by the notion of subjugation, while the other focuses on the aspect of being objectified and converted into an instrument to others' ends, and is summarized by the notion of exploitation.

IV. Subjugation and the Reduction to Bare Life

The notion of bare life, present in Walter Benjamin as *bloßes Leben*, or the "nothing but life" as contrasted to historical life,[33] adumbrated in Arendt's idea of the "mere existence" of those whose exclusion from the legal regime is "an invitation to murder"[34], reinterpreted and popularized by Giorgio Agamben, and then widely adopted in biopolitical discourse, is now the main theoretical tool employed to denounce and challenge subjugation in the intra-human context. Can such a category be confined to the members of *Homo sapiens*? In order to answer this question, the present use of the concept must be clarified. To what exactly does it refer? Though "bare life" is actually used in different ways,[35] and even lends itself to some conceptual acrobatics, it seems that its various senses can be referable to two basic construals, which are often two sides of the same coin – one focusing on subjective impotence or even spoliation, and the other focusing on objective impotence tied to exclusion. In the former case what one faces is an either contingent or structural condition of deprival with respect to some kind of existence, and in the latter case is instead a state of rightlessness which may include the liability to be killed with impunity.

When bare life is construed in the first way, the kind of existence the involved individuals are stripped of is, of course, their distinctive kind of existence. Within the humanistic framework of most biopolitical thought, thus, the specific kind in question is the *human* kind of existence, which tends to be translated into the possibility of being a political actor when the deprivation is relatively minor, or into the possibility of exercising allegedly distinctive human capacities when the deprivation is thoroughgoing. Thus, one is confronted with bare life when human beings are incapacitated with respect to their active engagement within society, or, worse, when they are divested of such attributes as rationality or the linguistic capacity.

Though in the literature examples of the former instance range from refugees to stateless people, and examples of the latter range from the Muselmann in the camp to the overcomatose attached to life-support systems, in all cases there is a tendency to negatively equate what

remains – what is left after the deprivation – with animality, or, more hazily, with a "inhumanity" that surreptitiously redirects to animality. It is clear that if animality is a priori assumed as the negative term of comparison – the very image of deficiency – bare life as a critical category referring to deprival with respect to one's kind of existence cannot be applied to nonhumans either in the sense that they cannot be *reduced* to that state or in the sense that their being in that state is politically neutral as it is their natural lot. But this assumption is unwarranted: it is not only outdated, but mistaken, to maintain that "animal life" is what remains after social agency or even attributes like rationality and language are erased, since there is ample evidence that nonhuman individuals display all these abilities in various degrees. Moreover, with what coherence can one revolt against the subjection of a totally unconscious being like the overcomatose, while ignoring the subjection of intelligent and communicative beings like cows, or pigs, or chickens? Lastly, the idea of kind of existence here at issue is derived in character, as it is obtained by coupling the abstract notion with a concrete reference to a specific bearer – the human being. If, however, the notion is not epistemologically constrained by such an anthropocentric framework, and is used instead in its basic sense of what governs the way a being dwells in the world, it is undeniable that the deprivation of one's specific kind of existence – the fact that an organism is prevented from performing those actions which it is natural for it to perform – is a harm, and must be condemned, whatever the being in question. Indeed, without this basic moral judgment, it would impossible to refer to the derived judgment that substantiates the denouncement of such a deprivation in the human case.[36] Ultimately, a defense of the mere intra-human applicability of the category of bare life based on the construal in terms of *subjective* deprivation is untenable.

What, then, of the *objective* construal, referring to a state of rightlessness and exclusion, whose prototypical adduced cases are mass denaturalizations or denials of the right of asylum resulting in internment? In this case, the exclusion of nonhuman individuals from the application of the notion is normally advocated by appealing to the idea that animals are not the kind of beings of whom a situation of divestment of rights can be predicated, either because, descriptively, they enjoy no rights, or because, normatively, they cannot have rights.

The first claim is both false and inconsequential: it is false since in our societies animals enjoy some albeit limited rights, and it is inconsequential because one cannot derive the evaluative conclusion that a being cannot have rights from the factual premise that it doesn't have them. And the second horn of the objection – the claim that nonhumans cannot have rights – far from being self-evident, stands in need of justification. Such a justification is lacking, for, as outlined above, all the traditional rationales for downgrading animals and, by implication, for denying them the protection of those products of moral and legal theories called rights, appear unacceptable on the grounds of being affected by arbitrariness, irrelevance, lack of impartiality and unfairness. Needless to say, moreover, any argument against granting basic rights to nonhumans can also be an argument against granting basic rights to some humans. Thus, also the attempt to exclude nonhumans from the application of the notion of bare lifestarting from its rendering in terms of *objective* deprivation fails.

But if nonhumans are the kinds of beings who can be both reduced to a condition of wretchedness and sunk in a situation of rightlessness, in the face of industrialized farming and analogous institutions it is difficult not to agree with Cary Wolfe's claim that animals are today, on a scale unprecedented in human history, "the site of the very ur-form" of that absolute powerlessness which the notion of bare life epitomizes.[37] And such a diagnosis becomes even more sinister if, still following Wolfe, one adds to this line of biopolitical thought the approach focusing on the subjection of beings to disciplines, technology and, especially, to the dispositifs established between discourses, institutions and laws whose function is a global exercise of power. Procedures routinely performed in the animal industrial complex like eugenic interventions, artificial insemination, inoculation or pharmaceutical enhancement can indeed be viewed as the exemplary expression of that maximization of control over life and death that Foucault termed as *making live*, so that "from the vantage of a Foucauldian biopolitics… we are forced to conclude that current practices of factory farming and the like…constitute not just some embarrassing sideline of modern life that has nothing to do with politics proper.. [but] must be seen… as in fact constitutively political for biopolitics in its modern form."[38]

V. Exploitation and Reification

If the biopolitical category of bare life confronts the question of subjugation, the Marxist category of reification (from the Latin *res*, "thing") squarely confronts the question of exploitation, for exploitation occurs on a continuum involving a growing scale of damages which reaches its limit in the conversion into a thing. And while even the umbrella category of exploitation is under revision, as recognized by Zizek himself, who admits he doesn't have an answer to the question of how the such a notion functions today,[39] the category of reification – already complex and multifaceted since its first deployment in critical theory – has undergone several changes in the transition from classical to contemporary Marxism. Within the context of such changes, one can clearly detect a tendency to shift from a focus on abstract entities like mental or social processes to a focus on concrete individuals. Thus, the Lukacsian stress on the impenetrability of reified concepts and on the erasure from the life-world of all qualitative and historical aspects that the rationalizing dominion imposes on capitalist societies[40] gives way to Horkheimer and Adorno's emphasis both on the process which, guided by instrumental reason, turns everything, including subjects, into something repeatable and replaceable, and on the connection between the technological dominion of nature and reification as "blindness to torment;"[41] until, more recently, in Axel Honneth one assists to an overshadowing of the traditional aspect of ascribing the blame to the social system in favor of a construal of reification as a violation of moral principles involving the abandonment of "recognition", or of the empathetic engagement owed to individuals "not possessing thing-like characteristics."[42]

As a result of these alterations, which are in consonance with Marxist humanism's propensity to abandon its classical metaphysical baggage, the notion of reification acquires new potentialities. Revitalizing Marx's claim that "the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities,"[43] it enables the development of a comprehensive critique of the damages inflicted to actual individuals exposed to reification. Can one say that animals are excluded from the number of these individuals? Even though,

since to deny the possibility of nonhuman reification implies that animals already possess thing-like characteristics, and given that the conditions of application of the concept of thing relate to passiveness and unawareness, to see (the other) animals as things seems – contra Kant[44] – wholly implausible, attempts to secure exclusion have nonetheless been made. Axel Honneth, for instance, after claiming that recognition of *the emotional states of others* is an elementary form of intersubjectivity having the status of "original" or "primary" recognition, defends the conclusion that one can only *indirectly* speak of a reification of nonhumans by recognizing other persons' feelings about them –[45] a conclusion that is clearly reached only at the price of plain circularity, that is, by preliminarily a) dividing the world into human beings and "nonhuman *objects*", and b) conceptualizing reification in terms of a typification that refuses to grant "specifically human qualities" to individuals.[46] In the face of such a petitio principii, nothing appears sounder than the standpoint of Adorno and Horkheimer, who, vindicating both reason and commonsense, unhesitatingly counted animals among the subjects apprehended in terms of manipulation and administration.[47]

In the light of all this, far from losing the destabilizing potential of the initial formulation, the challenge to reification that focuses on turningselves into things is in fact immediately a social critique of capitalism. For while a thoroughly anthropocentric version of this critique currently starts being addressed to the looming technological commodification of *human* beings by "the conjunction of capitalism, informatics and genetics,"[48] it is just the critique of the reification of *nonhuman* beings which brings into full light the destructive power of the modern capitalist market. On the one hand, albeit animals have long been items of property, it is their recent status as commodities that has attained the result of a total de-subjectification and of an actual reduction to the thing-like reality of an instrument. On the other, as it has been aptly remarked,[49] with the emergence of the animal industrial complex the process by which the thingification of the commodity permeates and structures society as a whole reaches its apex, reinforcing the epistemological condition of a distortion of consciousness and giving free rein to the abstract, quantitative mode of calculability intrinsic to the rise of modern societies. In this perspective, the struggle against reification in action can empower the struggle against reification in thought.[50]

Edward Said once noted that, like people and schools, ideas and theories too travel, and crucial changes, due to times and places, occur between their successive elaborations.[51] A construal of reification focusing on the actual treatment of nonhuman beings in late capitalism would clearly leave behind the vague leftist mentions of the need to fight against a "world reified by biopower,"[52] or of the tie between the reification of interpersonal relations and the "personalization of .. objective social processes,"[53] recovering instead the radicality of a critique that, by attacking factory farming, points at the heart of the exploitation system. For the animal, not the worker, is "the most wretched of commodities," and, as Horkheimer observed, the basement of the present capitalist house is the slaughterhouse.[54].

VI. An incongruous (and reversible?) silence

Wingless, featherless, blind, and brain-damaged, entrapped in the hell of humanity, do they

recall their wholeness in the phantom limbic soul of themselves? And if they do, are such memories of their essential identity, eluding the procrustean blades of annihilation, experienced as a compensation or a curse? When hens in a battery cage fall asleep, perchance to dream, how do they feel when they wake up?

Karen Davis[55]

That those who arrange, take profit of, or benefit from, the horrific reality of the animal industrial complex might minimize or even defend it, is prima facie in the order of things: they are the enemy. But that those who are critical of contemporary society and fight against injustice overlook it is nothing short of scandalous.

It is time that the antagonistic thinkers stop advancing patronizing comments on "the complex—and not always edifying—economy of relations between men [sic] and animals," or vague and condescending remarks on the suffering of animals, [56] and get once and for all rid of such distortions as the identification, contra any ethological evidence, between animality and an inferior and egotistical realm of being.[57] It is time that what remains of the politico-philosophical opposition confronts the fact that no one who doesn't stigmatize and challenge the capitalistic and biopolitical monster of factory farming can be considered either a serious political analyst or a serious opponent of that which exists. For if the very principles of contemporary egalitarianism logically imply an overcoming of the species barrier, and the main tools for the critique of society can be directly applied to the nonhuman plight in late capitalism, the liberation of animals from the institutions that reduce them to mere means to human ends turns out to be an urgent and universal political task.

Going back to his previous self in Italian 1968, Antonio Negri nostalgically mentions those "adventures of bodies and minds" that characterized the times when there wasn't simply a theory but a transformative practice, when intellectual reflection produced experiences and laboratories of life and the biopolitical field was "explored in all its ethico-practical intensity." [58] It is astounding that the contemporary Left doesn't realize that, despite the difficulties of challenging an overarching paradigm and of fighting something so pervasive as animal subjugation, those who take up such a struggle not only become immediately practical in eliminating from their lives the by-products of the industrial commodification of nonhumans, but have also created, in the present desert of the real,[59] a thriving movement that is gradually developing its own political praxis, and that conspicuously asserts its willingness to engage in constant, transformative activism.

Notes

[1] Yuval Noah Harari, "Industrial farming is one of the worst crimes in history," *The Guardian*, September 25, 2015, at

[2] Slavoj Zizek, "*Objet a* as Inherent Limit to Capitalism: on Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri", https://www.lacan.com/zizmultitude.htm; Zizek, "Blows against the Empire", https://www.lacan.com/zizblow.htm.; Slavoj Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real. Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 95

[3] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude*, Penguin, 2004, p. 404

[4] Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri, "It's a Powerful life", *Cultural Critique* 57, 2004; A. Negri, "Giorgio Agamben: The Discreet Taste of the Dialectic," in Matthew Calarco and Steven De Caroli, eds., *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press 2007) p. 123; A. Negri, "The sacred dilemma of inoperosity. On Giorgio Agamben's Opus Dei", Translated by Jason Francis Mc Gimsey and edited by Matteo Pasquinelli, originally published on *il manifesto* on the 24th of February 2012, https://www.uninomade.org/negri-on-agamben-opus-dei/

[5] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 1998) pp. 43ff.

[6] Giorgio Agamben, "La democrazia è un concetto ambiguo," Intervista al Red Notebook e agli Ενθέματα της Αυγής, 4 Marzo 2014, at https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/interviste/giorgio-agamben-la-democrazia-%C3%A8-un-concetto-ambiguo

[7] Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker and Michael J. Thompson, "The Treason of Intellectual Radicalism and the Collapse of Leftist Politics", Logos 2016, vol. 15, at https://logosog.chrismordadev.com/2015/thompson-zucker/.

[8] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Scholastic Point of View," *Cultural Anthropology* 5/4 (1990): 380-391.

[9] "Beyond Factory Farming: Sustainable Solutions for Animals, People and the Planet," 25 November 2009, https://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/animal-welfare/news-detail/en/c/37597/; this figure excludes all aquatic animals. An example can render this unfathomable figure more comprehensible: in September 2018, a single hurricane, Florence, killed in North Carolina an estimated 1.7 million chickens – see https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2018/9/19/1796994/-Toxic-coal-ash-rancid-hog-waste-and-fetid-sewage-spill-across-Carolinas-in-wake-of-Florence?detail=emaildkre.The annual numbers involved in the parallel use of animals in medical and bio-pharmaceutical experimentation amount to the 0,02% of the number of animals annually killed for food; the underestimated figure of 115.3 million animals excludes all invertebrates. See "How many animals are used in experiments around the world?" at https://lushprize.org/many-animals-used-experiments-around-world/.

[10] Richard Twine, "The industrialisation of animals: What happened to ethics?", *The Scavenger*, 12 December 2010, at https://www.thescavenger.net/social-justice-sp-24912/animals/538-the-iindustrialisation-of-anim

als-where-are-the-ethics-89912.html) On enframing see in particular Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012), p. 3.

[11] The phrase "animal industrial complex" comes from Barbara Noske, *Human and Other Animals (*London: Pluto Press 1989).

[12] P*e*ta, "Chickens Used for Food," at https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/chickens/

[13] Bruce V. Foltz, "Heidegger, Ethics, and Animals," *Between the Species* 1993, vol.9, at https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1841&context=bts

[14] Charles Patterson, "Animals, Slavery, and the Holocaust," Logos 2005, vol. 4, at https://logosog.chrismordadev.com/issue_4.2/patterson.htm

[15] P*e*ta, "Factory Farming: Misery for Animals," at https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/; Vegan Outreach, "Even if you like meat," at https://www.veganoutreach.org/EIYLM.pdf

[16] James Stanescu, "Beyond Biopolitics: Animal Studies, Factory Farms, and the Advent of Deading Life," PhaenEx 2013, vol. 8 (2): 135–160, at https://phaenex.uwindsor.ca/index.php/phaenex/article/view/4090.

[17] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 71-72.

[18] The literature is now extensive, but see at least Paola Cavalieri, *The Death of the Animal. A Dialogue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Steve F. Sapontzis, *Morals, Reason and Animals* (Philadelphia, Pa*:*Temple University Press, 1987); Evelyn Pluhar, *Beyond Prejudice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); and Edward R. Johnson, *Species and Morality*, Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, July 1976 [University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Mi].

[19] The classical definition of the ad hominem argument is offered by John Locke in terms of pressing someone with consequences drawn from her/his own principles or concessions. See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Book IV, Chapter XVII, 21.

[20] There had been of course previous hints in this direction. See e.g. Georg Lukacs' early reference to how "Marx's 'humanism' diverges from all the movements that recognized how capitalism violates and destroys everything human." G. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Mit Press, 1968), p. 190.

[21] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000) p. 76; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (Kindle Edition, 2012), at https://antonionegriinenglish.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/93152857-hardt-negri-declaration-2012.pdf; Slavoj Zizek, "The Obscenity of Human Rights: Violence as Symptom", 2005, at

https://www.lacan.com/zizviol.htm

[22] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 422.

[23] Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End. Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis, Mn: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) p. 35; ibid., p. 39; Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, Mass: Mit Press, 2006) p. 110-11, 401-2, at https://libcom.org/files/Zizek-The%20Parallax%20View.pdf

[24] See e.g. James Rachels, ed., *Moral Problems*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979 [1964]), p. 6, or Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1972, Vol. 2 (1), p. 51 ff, at https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/PPP504/Michael%20Tooley,%20Abortion%20and%20infanticide.pdf

[25] For a recent investigation of the philosophical concept of speciesism as a psychological construct, see Lucius Caviola, Jim A.C. Everett, and Nadira S. Faber, "The Moral Standing of Animals: Towards a Psychology of Speciesism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* , Mar 08 , 2018, no Pagination Specified, also at https://www.jimaceverett.com/publications/the-moral-standing-of-animals-towards-a-psychology-of-speciesism/

[26] Massimo Filippi. Michael Hardt, Marco Maurizi, *Altre Specie di Politica* (Sesto San Giovanni: Mimesis, 2016), pp. 40 ff.

[27] Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, "Make it so: Envisioning a Zoopolitical Revolution," in Paola Cavalieri, ed., *Philosophy and the politics of animal liberation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[28] See e.g. on paternalism "How and Why Did Women in SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) Author a Pathbreaking Feminist Manifesto, 1964-1965?" at https://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/SNCC/intro.htm.

[29] On animal resistance see.g. Jason Hribal, *Fear of the Animal Planet: The Hidden History of Animal Resistance* (Oakland, Ca: CounterPunch, 2010); Éric Baratay, *Le point de vue animal. Une autre version de l'histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 2012); Paola Cavalieri, "Animal liberation: A political perspective", in P. Cavalieri, ed., *Philosophy and the politics*, cit.; and Eva Mejer, "Animal Activism and Interspecies Change", 2016, at https://www.animalliberationcurrents.com/2016/11/29/animal-activism-and-interspecies-change/.

[30] On dependent agency, see Donaldson and Kymlicka, "Animals in Political Theory," in Linda Kalof, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) also at

https://www.academia.edu/9064303/Sue_Donaldson_and_Will_Kymlicka_Animals_in_Political_Theory_.

[31] In the words of Brian Barry, of those individuals who are unable "to organize an effective resistance"; see Brian Barry, *Theories of Justice* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1989), p. 163. For a powerful analysis of the analogies and intersections between the plight of disabled humans and the plight of nonhumans and for a critical discourse on the way they are, and can be, incorporated in a struggle for global justice see Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New York: New Press, 2017).

[32] Zizek himself has admitted this: Slavoj Zizek, *Trouble in Paradise* (London: Penguin 2014),p. 143.

[33] See on this Carlo Salzani, "From Benjamin's Leben to Agamben's Nuda Vita: A Genealogy", at https://www.academia.edu/15220558/From_Benjamin_s_bloßes_Leben_to_Agamben_s_nuda_vita_A_Genealogy

[34] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando, Fl: Harvest Book, 1973), p. 302ff.

[35] See among others e.g. Andrew Norris, Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Living Dead," Diacritics 2000, Vol. 30 (4), pp. 38-58, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/1566307.

[36] On the distinction between basic moral principles and derived moral principles see Michael Tooley, *Abortion and Infanticide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 16-7, and id., "Speciesism and Basic Moral Principles," *Etica & Animali*, vol. 9, (1998), p. 6.

[37] Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law*, cit., p. 46.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "Divine Violence and Liberated Territories: SOFT TARGETS talks with Slavoj Zizek". 4 june 2007, athttps://www.softtargetsjournal.com/web/zizek.php

[40] See the famous chapter of *History and Class Consciousness*, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat". But even Lukacs touches on the "individual" facet of reification when he stresses how "the process by which the worker is reified and becomes a commodity dehumanises him and cripples and atrophies his 'soul'." See G. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, cit., p. 172.

[41] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment (*Palo Alto, Ca: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 191, 65.

[42] Axel Honneth, "Reification: A Recognition-Theoretical View", Tanner Lecture on human values in UC Berkeley, 2005, p. 96, at

https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/h/Honneth_2006.pdf).

[43] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), Estranged Labour, also at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm).

[44] The literature which analytically undermines Kant's claim is now extensive. See at least Edward Johnson, *Species and Morality,* cit.; Tom Regan, *The case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1983), Chapter V, sect. 5.5; Christina Hoff, "Kant's Invidious Humanism", *Environmental Ethics 1983 vol.* 5 (1), pp. 63-70; and Paola Cavalieri, *The Animal Question* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapt. III.

[45] A. Honneth, "Reification," cit., pp. 133-34.

[46] Axel Honneth, "Réification, connaissance, reconnaissance: Quelques malentendus." *Esprit* 2008 (July), pp. 96–5. For a different critique see Nathan Everson, "Recognition Theory and the Question of the Animal", https://www.scribd.com/document/45624403/Recognition-Theory-and-the-Question-of-the-Animal

[47] T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic,* cit., p. 65. Curiously enough, Honneth, though devoting much attention to the question of autism ("Reification," cit., pp. 115 ff.), does not grasp the autistic facet of his approach to animals.

[48] See Frédéric Vandenberghe, *What's Critical About Critical Realism?: Essays in Reconstructive Social Theory*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), pp. 248-49.

[49] Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker, "The Problem with *Commodifying* Animals," in Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker, ed., *Strangers to Nature: Animal Lives and Human Ethics* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2012), p.164 ff.

[50] I am here inverting a claim made by Paresh Chandra in "Raymond Williams, Working-Class Struggle and the Jerkiness of History", *Radical Notes*, May 4, 2014, https://radicalnotes.com/tag/raymond-williams/

[51] Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," 1980, in E, Said, *The world, the text, and the critic* (Harvard, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[52] Toni Negri, "Spunti di 'critica preveggente' nel Capitolo VI inedito di Marx", *UniNomade* 28/08/2012, at https://www.uninomade.org/critica-preveggente-capitolo-sesto/.

[53] Slavoj Zizek, *First as Tragedy, then as Farce* (London: Verso 2009), p. 141.

[54] Max Horkheimer, *Dawn and decline: notes 1926- 1931 and 1950-1969* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), p. 66.

[55] Karen Davis, “Procrustean Solutions to Animal Identity and Welfare Problems”, in John Sanbonmatsu, ed., *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011) p. 53.

[56] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 2004) p. 15; Slavoj Zizek, *Trouble in Paradise*, cit., p. 143. See also the incongruous considerations about an allegedly nature-loving Francis of Assisi “posing a joyous life including all of being and nature, the animals, sister moon, brother sun”, in M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire,* cit., p. 413. Actually, Zizek is the only one who quite moderately touched on the topic. But his attitude is not only condescending, but also contradictory. For example, if in *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008, p. 53) he critically refers to “animals slaughtered for our consumption,” in “The Prospects of Radical Politics Today,” (*International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, 2008, Vol. 5, at https://www2.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol5_1/v5-1-article3-zizek.html) he attacks animal rights. And if in a 2010 conference at the Birkbeck Institute, he condemns our disavowal of animal exploitation, he feels the need to specify that he is not “becoming Peter Singer.” See on this JonHochschartner, “Socialist Animalism: Essays, Interviews, and Fiction”, at https://archive.org/stream/SocialistAnimalismPdf/Socialist%20Animalism%20pdf_djvu.txt

[57] Once again, see Zizek, “The Prospects of Radical Politics Today**,”** cit. See also Alain Badiou’s contention that “individuality,” with its attendant selfishness and competition is seen as one and the same thing with “animality,” in A. Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis* (London, Verso, 2015) p. 234.

[58] Negri, “The Italian difference,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 2009, Vol 5, (1), at *https://people.duke.edu/~dainotto/Texts/negri.pdf*, pp. 12-13.

[59] Slavoj Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, cit.

The Filibuster and the Ghost of Calhoun

By | 2020: vol 19, no 1

On October 15 of last year, Elizabeth Warren faced an onslaught from her more centrist rivals in the presidential debate. Speaking about the importance of reaching across the aisle in the spirit of bipartisanship, Joe Biden, Pete Buttigieg, and Amy Klobuchar criticized Warren for being too far to the left, endorsing Medicare for All and other progressive policy measures that do not stand a chance of getting through both houses of Congress.

But what went largely unnoticed were the two times when Warren said, quite emphatically, that it was necessary to "repeal the filibuster" if the Democrats wanted to make government work for the American people. Warren understands that ours is a broken system for which we can partly blame the filibuster. Especially as it has been used over the last few decades, the filibuster has become a powerful tool for conservative obstructionists and apologists for the status quo. And, no doubt, Republicans will continue to stand united in their efforts to stonewall progressive legislation, even if it enjoys widespread popular support, and make sure that nothing gets through the Senate without 60 votes.

But what I aim to show here is that the filibuster also runs contrary to the ideas of the founders, whose concerns about unfettered democracy never compromised their support for an effective and energetic federal government. In truth, the filibuster accords more closely with John C. Calhoun's theory of concurrent majority. Conceived in large part to protect the interests of slaveholders, his theory was a clear repudiation of constitutional principles, at least as Madison, Hamilton, and Lincoln understood them. The filibuster is institutional proof that the ideas invoked by defenders of slavery and white supremacy—including super-majoritarianism, nullification, and states' rights—still haunt us today. Our dysfunctional and anti-democratic Senate, with its long history of forestalling progressive reform, has an intellectual lineage that can be traced back to Calhoun's political thought. Once cast in the harsh light of its Calhounian legacy, the filibuster reveals itself to be morally and intellectually bankrupt.

The widespread reluctance to support repeal of the filibuster largely stems from the idea that it is a longstanding Senate rule that has been integral to defending the rights of minorities. Defenders of the filibuster insist that the procedure captures the spirit of the founders' vision of a system that promotes deliberation, compromise, and incrementalism—and safeguards against majority tyranny. In their view, repealing the filibuster is unthinkable, a proposal so radical that it comes close to being downright unconstitutional. Of course, there is no mention of the filibuster in the Constitution, so such an argument is simply spurious. In fact, there is good reason to think that the filibuster itself is unconstitutional—or, at the very least, contrary to the spirit of the founders' thinking.

The unconstitutionality of the filibuster is debatable, but there is clearly a case to be made here. The looming threat of a filibuster has turned the Senate into a legislative body that requires a supermajority to pass anything with even the hint of partisan controversy. The first problem with this is that the Constitution only requires supermajorities in a few special instances: ratifying treaties and constitutional amendments, overriding presidential vetoes, and removing officials from office. Because more than half of the framers were lawyers, they would have been familiar with, and operated under the assumption of, "expressio unius est exclusion alterius"—a principle of statutory construction which says that when one or more things of a category are explicitly mentioned, all the others of the same category are excluded. So, in this example, laws and other measures should be passed by simple majorities except in those situations where the Constitution expressly states otherwise. The exceptions prove the rule, and the filibuster clearly undermines that rule.

There are at least two other constitutional arguments to be made against the filibuster. One involves the disenfranchisement of the vice president. Article I, Section 3, says that the vice president should cast the deciding vote when the Senate is "equally divided." Making supermajorities a requirement for the passage of almost every measure, the filibuster effectively takes this constitutional power away from the vice president. Even more interesting is the provision in Article I, Section 5, which says that only a simple majority of senators must be present to make a quorum. As the founders were certainly aware, this requirement prohibited a minority from blocking an up-or-down vote on a measure by simply walking out. The filibuster accomplishes precisely what the founders were trying to prevent with this provision.

Of course, anyone who has a passing familiarity with the founders knows that they were wary of democracy and unchecked majorities. Throughout history, said Hamilton, democracies have been beset with instability, vacillating wildly "between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy." Particularly fearful of what Madison called "the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority," the founders devised ways in which to refine and mitigate popular sovereignty and protect individual rights. As Madison pointed out in Federalist No. 10, the Constitution created a large, extended republic, which had the virtue of multiplying the number of factions in the country, thereby reducing the likelihood that any one of them would attain a majority. Getting anything done would require building a majority coalition of factions that would see the necessity of moderating their demands and making compromises. Secondly, it vested power in representatives who, elected either directly or indirectly by the people, would—as Madison put it—"refine and enlarge the public views." Superior in wisdom and education, elected officials would filter the temporary whims and passions of the people. Finally, with its checks and balances and federal structure, the Constitution fragmented power and, as a result, made it even harder for any given faction to achieve dominance. With this new Constitution the founders hoped to promote deliberation, compromise, and incremental change.

Though they were sensitive to the dangers of majority tyranny and sought to slow down the pace of change, the founders believed that the constitutional safeguards in place—the extended republic, representative democracy, separation of powers, checks and balances, and

federalism—were enough to prevent majorities from running roughshod over the rights of minorities. There was little reason to fear any law that had to run the legislative gauntlet of painstaking discussion, negotiation, and compromise. According to Madison, the design of the Constitution ensured that a majority would reflect the public interest. "In the extended republic of the United States," he said in Federalist No. 51, "a coalition of the majority of the whole society could seldom take place upon any other principles than those of justice and the general good." This is why the founders saw fit to create a strong national government that could act on behalf of the people—or, as the Preamble puts it, "to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." While the founders certainly wanted to protect minority rights, they did not believe it required paying the steep price of making government ineffectual.

There is a clear line between deliberation and dysfunction, between incrementalism and inaction, and the founders had no intention of crossing that line. They believed that requiring a supermajority to get anything done violated the principles of good governance. Indeed, the idea that a minority could use parliamentary tactics such as the filibuster to obstruct the legislative process was anathema to Madison and Hamilton. They may have been wary of majority tyranny, but they considered minority tyranny an even graver threat. In Federalist No. 58, Madison argued that although requiring supermajorities to pass legislation may have some advantages, they "are outweighed by the inconveniences in the opposite scale." "It would be no longer the majority that would rule; the power would be transferred to the minority," he said. "Were the defensive privilege limited to particular cases, an interested minority might take advantage of it to screen themselves from equitable sacrifices to the general weal, or in particular emergencies to extort unreasonable indulgences." In the end, he argued, it is a practice that "leads more directly to public convulsions, and the ruin of popular governments, than any other which has yet been displayed among us." Echoing Madison's views about supermajorities, Hamilton said in Federalist No. 75: "All provisions which require more than a majority of any body to its resolutions have a direct tendency to embarrass the operations of the government and an indirect one to subject the sense of the majority to that of the minority." Wherever supermajorities have been the prevailing requirement, he argued, one can point to "a history of impotence, perplexity and disorder."

So, it should not come as a surprise that, in 1789, the House and Senate rulebooks included a provision that is known as the "previous question" motion. This rule allowed a simple majority to bring an end to debate. The House still has this rule, but the Senate dropped it in 1806, thanks to Vice President Aaron Burr, who argued that the Senate would become an even greater deliberative body if it eliminated rules that stifled or shortened debate. The elimination of the previous question rule made it possible for a small minority, even one senator, to filibuster a proposed measure, but senators did not take advantage of this parliamentary tactic for another two decades, and on the whole there were very few filibusters before the Civil War. John Randolph was the first senator to use the filibuster, talking endlessly to block a vote on several measures which, in his view, gave unfair economic advantages to the industrial North. By the 1880s, senators began using the filibuster more often. Despite growing

frustration over the increased use of obstructionist tactics, Senate leaders could never manage to reinstate the previous question motion. But filibuster reform would come in 1917. Incensed by the successful filibuster of his proposal to arm merchant ships, President Wilson called on the Senate to create a cloture rule, framing the issue as a matter of national security. Under immense pressure from the public, the Senate adopted Rule 22, which provided that a two-thirds majority could bring an end to debate.

Rule 22 did not have as much impact as its champions might have hoped. Between 1917 and 1948, the Senate defeated the filibuster only four times. During these years, the filibuster was a favorite tool of southern segregationists, who made certain that the Senate would never override a filibuster on civil rights. Even the most modest measures, such as an anti-lynching bill introduced in 1922, would pass through the House and then die in the Senate. Due largely to the filibuster, the Senate had become—as historian William S. White quipped—"the South's unending revenge upon the North for Gettysburg."

Frustrated by the Senate's recalcitrance, President Truman framed his 1948 election bid around his opposition to the "Do-Nothing Eightieth Congress." On the campaign trail, Truman complained that Congress was "run by a bunch of old mossbacks still living back in the 1890s." "After a new Congress is chosen," he declared, "maybe we'll get one that will work in the interests of the people and not the interests of the men who have all the money." The idea that Congress should be responsive to a majority of the people did not sit well with many Senators, especially those from the South. On the Senate floor, Theodore Bilbo said that "a mob is a majority; without the filibuster the minority would be at the mercy of the majority." When asked on the Senate floor if democracy was in fact "predicated on the rule of the majority," Senator Millard Tydings cried, "The rule of the majority. The rule of votes. Majority to Hades! The rule of the majority! The rule that has brought more bloodshed and turmoil and cruelty on this earth than any other thing I know of!"

According to an often-told story that is probably a myth, Thomas Jefferson, upon his return from Paris, asked George Washington why the delegates at the Constitutional Convention created a bicameral legislature. Washington supposedly answered with another question: "Why did you pour your tea into that saucer?" "Too cool it," said Jefferson. "Just so," replied Washington. "We pour House legislation into the senatorial saucer to cool it." But, by the middle of the twentieth century, the filibuster had contributed greatly to turning the Senate into a body that did not cool off so much as freeze out the will of the people. The Senate had become an institution more committed to obstruction than deliberation, frustrating rather than refining the popular will. In its hostility to majority will and reform, it had become an arch-defender of minority interests and the status quo.

Things have not changed much since the mid-twentieth century, even with the battle over civil rights largely behind us. In 1975, the Senate adopted a rule change which required only 60 votes to end debate. One might have expected that the filibuster would be used less often, but the Senate also added a provision that allowed senators to maintain a filibuster without talking on the Senate floor. All that is necessary is for one senator to say that she is filibustering or

placing a hold on a measure, and then she can go home and binge-watch her favorite HBO show. This will go on until 60 senators vote to end "debate." Senators did not exploit this new provision right away. It wasn't until the early Clinton years, when the parties became unmistakably polarized, that the so-called virtual filibuster started to be used routinely in the Senate. Now, while a filibuster is underway, there need not be even the pretense of a debate. Rarely do we see a senator (grand)standing, wearily but defiantly, at the podium, delivering a thunderous speech about how the proposed bill presents a serious threat to the nation—and when we do, it is pure theater. The virtual filibuster has exposed the parliamentary tactic for what it really is and has always been: a blatant tool of obstructionism.

By the Obama years political commentators would talk about the 60-vote threshold in the Senate as if it were a constitutional requirement. The Senate became so anti-majoritarian that it could not even pass modest gun control measures, such as universal background checks or restrictions on magazine capacity, which received support from 90 percent of Americans after Sandy Hook. Today the Senate is ill-equipped to address the serious challenges facing America today, whether it is inequality, climate change, health care, gun violence, or any other issue over which the parties are invariably at odds.

Speaking to David Axelrod on his podcast, President Obama made it clear what he thought of the filibuster while reflecting on his presidency. "The big challenge that we faced was the filibuster. And it's a weird thing because it's not something that the average American spends a lot of time thinking about," he said. "It's a given that this extra-constitutional thing says you have to have 60 votes to get anything passed." He argued that "the filibuster…has made it almost impossible for us to effectively govern at a time when you have at last one party that is not willing to compromise on issues." Obama's comments about the filibuster echo what Madison and Hamilton believed, and the Constitution makes clear: good governance should not be hamstrung and rendered ineffectual by a procedure that consistently demands a supermajority to pass anything in the Senate.

The founders' beliefs notwithstanding, effective governance was not what Senators Bilbo and Tydings had in mind when they expressed dire warnings of majority tyranny. They feared that an unchecked Senate majority would do away with their cherished system of segregation. Their exaggerated forebodings about majorities run-amok reflect the concerns not of the founders but of John C. Calhoun, the most eloquent spokesman for states' rights and nullification in the antebellum South. A towering political figure from South Carolina who served in the Senate for many years and also had stints as vice president and secretary of state, Calhoun defended slavery as a benevolent institution from which black people benefited greatly, and he characterized abolitionism as a grave threat to the southern way of life. Informed by his political concerns, Calhoun devised the theory of concurrent majority, which justified giving states a veto power over national laws that conflicted with their interests. In so doing, he went well beyond the founders' concerns about democratic majorities and turned obstruction and dysfunction into virtues

Influential twentieth-century intellectual historians such as Arthur Schlesinger and Richard

Hofstadter have expressed admiration for Calhoun as an important thinker whose intellectual achievements can be distinguished from what he said and did as a political figure. But it is not clear that one can so easily separate Calhoun's racism and appalling defense of slavery from his political theory. Calling it a "positive good," Calhoun credited slavery for lifting the "black race" out of barbarism. "Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually," he said in a speech delivered in 1837.

> *It came among us in a low, degraded, and savage condition, and in the course of a few generations it has grown up under the fostering care of our institutions, reviled as they have been, to its present comparatively civilized condition. This, with the rapid increase of numbers, is conclusive proof of the general happiness of the race, in spite of all the exaggerated tales to the contrary.*

Compared to the working class of Europe, said Calhoun, the black slave in America enjoyed "the kind superintending care of his master and mistress."

Calhoun also praised slavery on the grounds that civilization requires a deep division between the laboring and non-producing classes. "I hold then, that there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other." According to Calhoun, slavery in the South was in fact superior, both morally and politically, to wage-labor in the North or in Europe. For the "condition of society in the South exempts us from the disorders and dangers resulting from this conflict" between labor and capital. This explains why "the political condition of the slaveholding States has been so much more stable and quiet than that of the North." Without seeing the irony in his claim, Calhoun saw slavery—that is, "the existing relation between the two races in the South"—as "the most solid and durable foundation on which to rear free and stable political institutions." But if the abolitionists got their way, warned Calhoun, they would stop not at emancipation but would work toward "social and political equality" between the races. The result would be an apocalyptic reversal of race relations in which "[blacks] and their northern allies would be the masters, and we the slaves."

The following year Calhoun gave another speech in which he called slavery "a great political institution, essential to the peace and existence of one-half of this Union." He credited Providence for bringing the two races together, securing the peace and happiness of both. "Each had improved; the inferior greatly; so much so, that it had attained a degree of civilization never before attained by the black race in any age or country." Calhoun even went so far as to characterize slave plantations—those grotesque sites of terror, degradation, and despair—as idyllic communities in which labor and capital were "perfectly harmonized." While many in the South once saw slavery as "a moral and political evil," most now "regard it as the most safe and stable basis for free institutions in the world." This was why it had to be preserved at all costs. Abolition would bring "slaughter, carnage, and desolation" to the entire

South.

Civilization, at least as Calhoun understood it, was in peril. It was in this context that he devised the doctrine of concurrent majority.[1] In *A Disquisition on Government*, which was published after his death in 1850, Calhoun argued that the only way to safeguard against majority tyranny was to give minority interests the power to veto laws passed by a national majority. In this way, no measures could pass unless they received approval from concurrent majorities—from both a majority of the whole *and* a majority of the smaller group whose interests could possibly conflict with the whole. What becomes apparent upon close examination is that Calhoun's theory, while adorned with all the trappings of philosophical sophistication, proves to be little more than a recipe for gridlock and ineffectual government. Why he would devise a political theory that made change nearly impossible, and that served the interests of those who benefited from the status quo, is all too clear.

Scholars like Schlesinger admire Calhoun in large part because his theory demonstrates a certain degree of philosophical rigor. He laid out his ideas in a clear and systematic way, beginning with certain assumptions about human nature. People are innately social, he argued, but they cannot live—and never have lived—without government. This is because each person feels more intensely those things that affect him than he feels those things that affect other people. In other words, "he is so constituted, that his direct or individual affections are stronger than his sympathetic or social feelings." This does not make him selfish *per se*, but it does mean that each person "has a greater regard for his own safety or happiness, than for the safety or happiness of others." The inevitable result of the fact that we are more self-regarding than we are other-regarding is social conflict. This reality makes government necessary. For it is government that functions as the "controlling power" whose sole purpose is to mitigate these conflicts.

Anyone who has read Madison's Federalist No. 51 knows what's coming next. Because government comprises people who have the same frailties as anyone else, it has "a strong tendency to disorder and abuse of its powers." Men are not angels, which is why we need government. But those officials vested with political power are not angels either, so there must also be controls on government. These controls on government, which are meant to prevent tyranny and abuses of power, are what Calhoun calls a constitution. The constitution places restraints on the government to ensure that those in power use their positions not as a "means of aggrandizing themselves" but rather as a way to "protect and preserve society." The only way constitutions can successfully achieve this task is by checking those in power with opposing forces. "Power can only be resisted by power—and tendency by tendency." Up to this point, Calhoun sounds just like Madison, who said that the abusive tendencies of government can only be prevented if ambition is made to counteract ambition.

For Calhoun, the most important feature of constitutional government is the right of suffrage, for it is the primary means of ensuring "the responsibility of the rulers to the ruled." Suffrage allows the ruled to check the power of the rulers. It empowers the people to keep government honest. But while suffrage is a *necessary* feature of constitutional government, it is not

sufficient. The reason is that suffrage merely "changes the seat of authority, without counteracting, in the least, the tendency of government to oppression and abuse of its powers." In other words, suffrage introduces a problem all democracies have faced throughout history: majority tyranny. With popular control of the government, there is nothing to stop the majority from using the levers of power to aggrandize itself at the expense of others.

So, according to Calhoun, another provision must be in place to make sure that this does not happen—and that a true constitution is established. He argued that there is only one way of preventing majority tyranny: "each interest or portion of the community" must give its consent before any proposed law takes effect. The constitution must "give to each division or interest, through its appropriate organ, either a concurrent voice in making and executing the laws, or a veto on their execution." Because any given interest or portion of the community may be injured by this proposed law, it should have the right to nullify anything that emanates from a higher governmental authority. Calhoun called this "concurrent consent" or "concurrent majority" because any proposed law must receive majority approval from both the whole and the particular interests that are likely be affected.

When Calhoun referred to an "interest or portion of the community," he clearly had sectional or geographic interests in mind. He feared that the institution of slavery was vulnerable for the simple reason that the North outnumbered the South. Without the power to nullify laws originating in Washington, the South could be required to abolish slavery. Calhoun envisioned empowering states to nullify federal laws through some kind of convention process. In *A Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States*, he proposed creating a dual presidency as an alternative (and simpler) way of operationalizing his doctrine of concurrent majority. One president would represent the North, and the other would represent the South. Each president would have a veto power to protect the interests of the region he represented.

It is important to note that Calhoun did not limit his definition of "interest" to a geographic region. He admired the British constitution, whose mixed government vested each major social class—royals, lords, and commons—with a veto power. He also saw elements of a concurrent majority constitution in the Roman Republic and the Iroquois Confederacy, and he pointed to these historical examples to defend his theory. The Roman Republic embodied the concurrent majority doctrine by empowering a single tribune, on behalf of plebeian interests, to veto a law passed by the Senate. In addition, most executive actions required assent from both consuls in Rome. (This was the inspiration for Calhoun's proposal for a dual executive in the United States.) Calhoun invoked these systems because they established a precedent for what he envisioned for the United States: impenetrable institutional bulwarks that protected minority interests from overweening majorities.

But his praise for the constitution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the *Disquisition* is most telling. It is "a great error to suppose that the government of the concurrent majority is impracticable—or that it rests on a feeble foundation," he said. "History furnishes many examples of such governments—and among them, one, in which the principle was carried to an

extreme that would be thought impracticable, had it never existed. I refer to that of Poland." Taking the concurrent majority idea to its utmost extreme, the Polish constitution gave each of the 200,000 noblemen in the country a veto power in the election of a new king. Similarly, the supreme legislative body—which included the king, the senate, bishops, nobles, and gentry—gave each member what was called a *liberum veto*, making unanimity a requirement to enact a law or to adopt any kind of measure. And whenever a single member vetoed a certain measure, it defeated all other measures passed during that legislative session. Calhoun conceded that the Polish constitution, which vested individuals with the power of nullification and essentially required unanimous consent to get anything done, may have taken concurrent majority idea too far, but he used it as an example of its practicability. According to Calhoun, rather than making government ineffectual, this system of unanimous voting prevailed at "the period of Poland's greatest power and renown" and "lasted, in this form, more than two centuries."

Although it is true that the Polish constitution allowed the use of the *liberum veto* for about two centuries, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the historical record suggests that it caused far more political disruption and instability than Calhoun was willing to admit. It became increasingly common for legislative sessions to be derailed by the veto, which often made the government incapable of doing its job and contributed to its deterioration over time. According to Harvard political scientist Grzegorz Ekiert, the *liberum veto* "led to anarchy in political life, and contributed to the economic and political decline of the Polish state." The upshot was that these political conditions "made the country vulnerable to foreign invasions and ultimately led to its collapse."

The historical record notwithstanding, Calhoun wholeheartedly endorsed institutional mechanisms that give minority interests a veto, effectively creating a situation where unanimity is required to get anything done. Moreover, his definition of "interest" was quite broad. He called for the protection of "the different interests, orders, classes, or portions, into which the community may be divided." He even went so far as to declare that government should not be put into motion "without the concurrent consent of all." The implication here, at least in theory, is that *any* interest group that opposes a policy measure should be able to veto it.

If we take Calhoun's words seriously, it becomes clear that he was advocating for a system that allows any well-organized group—any portion of the community—to block a proposal that conflicts with its interests, even if the proposal enjoys widespread support and would clearly serve the general welfare. The only people who would benefit from such a system are those whose interests coincide with the status quo. And, even worse, it would make government completely feeble, after which either chaos or tyranny would reign. Abraham Lincoln made this very point in his First Inaugural: "Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy, or despotism in some form, is all that is left."

Yet Calhoun insisted that concurrent majority would lead not to gridlock or governmental

collapse but rather to a coming together between opposing groups which have the incentive to work in the spirit of compromise. He cited trials by jury as an example of how this can work. Even though courts require unanimity to reach a verdict, hung juries are quite rare. Recognizing that consensus is demanded of them, jurors soon adopt a "disposition to harmonize." Calhoun believed that larger bodies would function the same way. Because government of the concurrent majority "excludes the possibility of oppression, by giving to each interest, or portion, or order…the means of protecting itself," the various groups "desist from attempting to adopt any measure calculated to promote the prosperity of one, or more, by sacrificing that of the others." As a result, they have no choice but to "unite in such measures only as would promote the prosperity of all." Unlike Lincoln, for whom nullification meant a complete breakdown of government followed by anarchy or despotism, Calhoun foresaw an idyllic political order in which "the individual and the social feelings are made to unite in one common devotion to country." While numerical majority will always divide the country into two great polarized political parties, said Calhoun, concurrent majority will weaken party attachments and bring people together in a concerted effort to advance the common good.

We face a version of nullification today in the form of the filibuster. Given what we know about the effects of the filibuster, which empowers even one senator to effectively veto a bill unless a supermajority overrides his challenge, it is not too hard to accuse Calhoun of magical thinking. The various tactics that have enabled statistical minorities to protect their interests—and this includes but is not limited to the filibuster—have done nothing to promote comity between the major political parties. In fact, the dramatic increase in the use of the filibuster has fueled partisan rancor and polarization.

When, after the mass shooting in Newtown, the Senate successfully filibustered a bill that would have imposed universal background checks on gun sales, the usually unflappable President Obama was visibly incensed. "All in all, this was a pretty shameful day for Washington," he said in his response to the nation from the White House Rose Garden. He accused the NRA of willfully misinforming the public, stoking fears among gun owners that Congress sought to take away their Second Amendment rights. This is just one example of how the filibuster, or any other device that allows minority interests to nullify the will of a clear majority, exacerbates polarization and bitter feelings. "April is the cruelest month," said T. S. Eliot. On that cold day in April of 2013, when President Obama explained to the country why the government was incapable of responding to an unspeakable tragedy with modest and sensible policy measures, Eliot's words seemed especially appropriate.

Calhoun crafted a political theory that he hoped would preserve the cruelest institution ever devised by human beings. After the abolition of slavery in 1865, the ghost of Calhoun continued to haunt the nation as ardent segregationists invoked states' rights in their defense of white supremacy and deployed various tactics to block civil rights legislation and disenfranchise African Americans. Now we have the virtual filibuster, the most recent incarnation of Calhoun's ghost. Just like the flesh-and-blood Calhoun with his call for nullification, the filibuster today serves to protect entrenched interests, sow division, and render government ineffectual in the face of great moral and existential challenges. The repeal

of the filibuster promises to exorcise this ghost stalking the Senate halls once and for all.

Notes

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[1] While it is true that Calhoun first came upon the idea of nullification when the Tariff of Abominations was passed in 1828, the threat of abolition to the southern way of life was clearly his overwhelming concern during the last two decades of his life.

Christian Cotton and Robert Arp (editors), WikiLeaking: The Ethics of Secrecy and Exposure (Chicago: Open Court, 2019).

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In a new volume titled *WikiLeaking: The Ethics of Secrecy and Exposure*, editors Christian Cotton and Robert Arp collect eighteen short essays intending to explore a series of moral questions regarding secrecy, transparency, concealment, and disclosure using WikiLeaks as their heuristic.

Written in the style of the "Philosophy and Pop Culture" anthologies one finds at bookstores, the essays are written with a general audience in mind: short, accessible, and relatively jargon-free. No doubt, public discourse always benefits greatly from a thoughtful, scholarly volume exploring important moral questions about journalism, democracy, and government transparency.

But Cotton and Arp's *WikiLeaking* is neither thoughtful nor scholarly. While this genre of philosophy book is supposed to connect the public with academic specialists and experts, piercing the wall between the Ivory Tower and the people, most of the contributors, including the editors, do not seem to know any more about WikiLeaks than their intended audience. Aside from Miquel Comas Oliver, who has published scholarship on WikiLeaks elsewhere, none of the contributors – including the editors themselves – are credentialed specialists on WikiLeaks. Nor have the contributors even attempted to develop expertise: documentary films and Wikipedia constitute the main "primary sources" for every essay but one.[1] In other words, the scholarly standards of *WikiLeaking* are lower than those most professors set for their undergraduate students. Even though Assange has published dozens of articles and a half-dozen books, only two of Assange's own writings (short blog entries from 2006) appear in the References in the back of the book. Because the collection lacks expertise, the book is plagued with factual inaccuracies about both Assange and WikiLeaks. And because the contributors failed to conduct research, the collection does not assist the public in conducting its own.

Rather than using moral philosophy to help the general reader think more critically about Assange, WikiLeaks, and journalism, this collection merely reprises anti-democratic rhetoric and national security state talking points under the guise of scholarship. One contributor claims that "free speech isn't a *democratic* value," arguing that "free speech may be regarded as terrorist-friendly." Another accuses WikiLeaks of conducting "cyber-espionage" and

trafficking in “pilfered” documents. Notably, that editor Robert Arp and contributor Brad Patty are consultants for the U.S. military abolishes any pretense to objectivity, for the Pentagon is among the fiercest political opponents of WikiLeaks. Thus, even when this anthology is not actively anti-democratic, its militaristic framing occludes important questions about protecting democracy in the twenty-first century. With philosophers like these, who needs COINTELPRO?

Cotton and Arp’s *WikiLeaking* is not informed and helpful. It is ignorant and dangerous. Not only does it present the reader with a series of completely uninformed attacks on Assange, WikiLeaks, and journalism more generally, it also manipulates reality by pointing the finger at the journalists and whistleblowers who expose war crimes instead of at the political and military leaders who commit them.

Such a dangerous, uninformed, and anti-democratic volume requires a response, for such misinformation – and, in some cases, blatant lies – should not be allowed to stand unchallenged. The first two sections of this review deal with two of the most ubiquitous myths surrounding WikiLeaks: *the myth of harm to innocents*, which claims that WikiLeaks’ publications present a serious risk of harm to innocent people named in unredacted documents, and *the myth of information anarchy*, the anti-democratic claim that journalistic oversight of the government through the Fourth Estate threatens national security.[2] While these militaristic talking points capture the spirit of the collection, the third section below notes the exceptions to that trend, focusing specifically on the moments of praise for whistleblowers that appear in this anthology.[3]

Risk: A Game of Preventing U.S. World Domination

Given the overall lack of rigor that plagues *WikiLeaking*, it comes as no surprise that the singular obsession of the book is the claim that WikiLeaks’ publications have risked the lives of innocent people. I call this *the myth of harm to innocents*.This myth is taken straight from the U.S. government’s imperial playbook, so to the extent that this anthology amplifies this falsehood, it becomes a mere vehicle for military propaganda.[4] This myth is dangerous not only because it implies that “real” journalists do not harm innocents but also because it obfuscates the real violence committed by militaries by instead concentrating on the possible but non-existent harms caused by WikiLeaks.

Cotton uses his editorial power to lead a crusade on behalf of the supposed victims of WikiLeaks. In his own contribution to the anthology, Cotton describes what he calls “the WikiLeaking Problem,” writing, “It is a fundamental point of controversy about WikiLeaks that by releasing the kinds of sensitive information it’s famous for, it exposes many innocent lives to danger through no fault of their own” (230). “Even if we expose the powers that be,” writes Cotton in the “About” section at the beginning of the collection, “the fallout for others may be severe” (xi). Following Cotton, the claim that WikiLeaks risks harming innocents remains the central assumption of the majority of the contributed essays.

Cotton is painfully wrong, however, for there is no controversy regarding the *fact* that

WikiLeaks' publications have never been linked to the harm of innocents. Even the U.S. government – the institution that most frequently promotes the myth of harm to innocents – admits, when forced to testify in court, that not a single of instance physical harm could be traced back to even WikiLeaks' most provocative publications – the Afghanistan War Logs, Iraq War Logs, and State Department cables (Cablegate). In 2013, when Brigadier general Robert Carr (the senior counter-intelligence officer who headed the Information Review Task Force that investigated the impact of WikiLeaks disclosures on behalf of the Defense Department) was asked in court to substantiate the claim that the Manning leaks had caused harm to innocents, Carr stated, "I don't have a specific example."[5]

The origin of this myth of harm to innocents goes back to July 28, 2010, when U.S. Navy Admiral Mike Mullen and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates claimed that WikiLeaks personnel "might already have on their hands the blood of some young soldier or that of an Afghan family." When a journalist asked, "Do you know, have people been killed over this information?," referring to the Afghanistan War Logs, Mullen and Gates pontificated about the possibility of risk and the inability of journalists to understand military documents. The journalist retorted: "With all due respect, you didn't answer the question." As if Mullen and Gates' evasive deflections were not evidence enough, on August 16, 2010, Gates himself admitted that his earlier accusation was completely false: "the review to date has not revealed any sensitive intelligence sources and methods compromised by this disclosure."[6]

In the two-hundred-and-fifty pages that make up *WikiLeaking*, neither the editors nor any of the contributors provide any specific examples of the ostensible harm that WikiLeaks has caused because such harms to not exist. Yet that did not prevent one contributor from simply making it up. In the most pernicious essay in the anthology, "The Double Effect of WikiLeaking," Dan Miori refers to (but provides no quotes from) a 2010 Swedish documentary *WikiRebels*, alleging that Assange admits WikiLeaks has caused harm.[7] At some point in the documentary, Miori claims, "Assange reluctantly agreed that WikiLeaks had caused injury by releasing secret information" (42).

That Assange agreed to this insinuation is completely and undeniably false. In the documentary, during a discussion of the Afghanistan War Logs, Assange said: "We would have had to have released all of this material without separating out any of it, or release none. The value, the extraordinary value, of this historic record to the progress of that war and its potential to save lives outweighs the danger to innocents."[8] Assange is not saying that harm in fact occurred *because it did not*; rather, he is saying that the benefits of publishing these unredacted documents are greater than the *possible harm* that could result. Assange's comment would come as no surprise to anyone who done due scholarly diligence, for he makes this point over and over. In *When Google Met WikiLeaks*, for example, Assange repeats the argument: "Our view is that the material is so significant that even if we released it as is, with no redactions, the benefits would outweigh the harm. But through redacting things we can get the harm down even more."[9]

Now, its possible that Assange is wrong about the balance of benefits and harms when it comes

to publishing the kind of material that WikiLeaks is known for, but no one ever pursues that line of argument. The best we get, unfortunately, are national security state functionaries, corporate journalists, and, now, uninformed scholars mimetically deferring to an absent-minded rhetorical trick. Assange observed this phenomenon himself:

> *If we look at the attacks on us, they always use the words 'placed people at risk.' But risk relative to what? Right now we are at risk of a meteorite passing through the roof of this house and killing us all. That is a risk, it is true, but is it a risk that is significant enough to be worth speaking about? The answer is no. It is similar with the word 'possibility.' There is a possibility that a meteorite could descend on us all in this moment, but it is not a probability. People who are making an argument in relation to security often use these rhetorical tricks—there is a risk of something; there is a possibility of something. People need to engage in an intellectual defense against this manipulation by rhetoric, by understanding that if someone mentions that there's a risk without saying that the risk is higher than crossing the road, or twice that of being stung by a bee, then you must ignore it.[10]*

The majority of *WikiLeaking* depends on this rhetorical trick designed to manipulate the public into accepting as fact that which is merely possible and, in actuality, is patently false. It is easy to tell that the authors are not serious about providing any kind of argument at all. Not one contributor defines the term "risk." Not one contributor explains what standards they are using to conduct their risk assessment. And not one contributor demonstrates that a preferable alternative outcome could have been realized in some particular instance had WikiLeaks acted differently. "Risk" is simply *asserted* as self-evident.

And it is telling that none of the contributors express the same concern about the death and destruction actually caused by U.S. wars that they express about the possible risk posed by WikiLeaks publications. Conservative estimates conclude that the War on Terror has killed a half million people, and a recent analysis concluded that U.S. sanctions on Venezuela have killed 40,000 people; meanwhile, WikiLeaks has killed none.[11] As Glenn Greenwald forcefully noted regarding the Cablegate publications, "many of those running around righteously condemning WikiLeaks for the *potential*, *prospective*, *unintentional* harm to innocents caused by this leak will have nothing to say about these *actual*, *deliberate acts of wanton slaughter by the U.S*."[12]

Ultimately, *WikiLeaking* performs the same inversion of reality that the U.S. government performs, obfuscating state violence by projecting that violence onto those who resist it. "The snap view of people who don't understand our work – who don't want to understand our work – is that we might endanger lives," Assange writes. "But the great thrust of our work is to save lives. By making a contribution, in the public interest, to the ending of wars, by supplying journalists with the means to keep a check on the excesses of power, we aim to limit the hunger for killings, skirmishes and invasions, as well as to limit the effectiveness of the lies

that support them." "How it can be us, or the enquiring public," Assange wonders, "that has blood on their hands, as opposed to the generals and governors who prosecute these wars, is a matter for clairvoyant abstraction."[13]

Even though Assange views redaction as censorship, WikiLeaks nevertheless redacts documents for pragmatic reasons. It is extremely rare for a publication to pose a risk to innocents, but if WikiLeaks did not redact, Assange notes, "our opponents will opportunistically attempt to distract from the revelations that we have published—very important matters—by instead speaking about whether there is a potential for harm."[14] Essentailly, this is what *WikiLeaking* is designed to do – opportunistically distract readers from the important matters. One simply need to compare *WikiLeaking* with *The WikiLeaks Files: The World According to U.S. Empire*, which addresses "the need for scholarly analysis of what the millions of documents published by WikiLeaks say about international geopolitics."[15] While the latter provides scholarship, the former offers only ignorance.

The Machiavellian State versus the Fourth Estate

Not only does *WikiLeaking* fixate on the harm that wasn't, it also frames the debate about WikiLeaks' style of journalism as a choice between security and anarchy, thus providing a platform for authoritarian ideology. The constituent myth here is *the myth of information anarchy*, the anti-democratic claim that journalistic oversight of the government through the Fourth Estate threatens national security. This myth reflects the logic of the Machiavellian state, which operates ruthlessly in the shadows while the public remains ignorant, and poses a direct threat to the freedom of the press. But in between their breathless demands that journalism remain subservient to government, the contributors betray their absolute ignorance about Assange's theory of "scientific journalism," once more exposing this collection's lack of substance.[16]

In an essay tellingly titled "Lied to for Your Own Good" (notice there is no question mark at the end of the title), Frank Scalambrino remarks upon "the tension between the principles of democracy and the principles of Machiavellian statecraft" (109). Though he does not *explicitly* resolve this tension in the essay, he implicitly comes down in the side of Machiavellian statecraft, ending the essay with the famous line from the 1992 film *A Few Good Men*, "You can't handle the truth!"

The rest of *WikiLeaking*, however, explicitly comes down on the side of Machiavellian statecraft. David LaRocca foregoes a direct attack on WikiLeaks and instead takes on journalism as such, making two frightening assertions. First, LaRocca claims that "free speech isn't a *democratic* value" (79) and that "free speech may be regarded as terrorist-friendly" (70). Second, he claims that information should only be disclosed "by those who are trained to handle it" (80). In this context, LaRocca means that citizens and journalists should defer *to* the government regarding matters *about* the government: "we should *want* our journalists to withhold information, even if it's well-sourced, when agencies like the CIA indicate that harm may come if that information is released" (82). Tellingly, LaRocca's argument resonates with

one of former director of the NSA and CIA General Michael Hayden's favorite talking points: "the instinct to distrust government may not be an appropriate response to the modern world."[17]

The interesting thing about deferring to the government about government wrongdoing is that there is an unquestionable conflict of interest involved. No corrupt government will properly investigate itself, and to the extent that the press defers to the government, the public loses its primary watchdog institution. One only need to recall that Bill Keller, executive editor of *The New York Times*, deferred to Michael Hayden when trying to decide whether to publish the 2004 story about the NSA's Operation Stellarwind.[18] Not only did Keller allow the American public to re-elect George W. Bush while concealing that his administration was spying on citizens in a manner that directly violated their Constitutional rights, as we later learned from Snowden, Stellarwind was only the telephony tip of the mass surveillance ice berg. As another contributor to *WikiLeaking* helpfully reminds us, "Professional intelligence officers in clandestine service are trained manipulators, and you must assume you're being manipulated in your meetings with them" (217).

Following the lead of such intelligence officers, two other contributors attempt to manipulate their readers into doubting the veracity of WikiLeaks' publications. Christopher Ketcham worries about the so-called "chain of anonymity," which he imagines inside WikiLeaks. Because the people who submit the documents and the people who authenticate the documents are all anonymous to the public, someone might use the organization to promote some unknown agenda. Echoing this sentiment, Leslie A. Aarons insists, "If WikiLeaks is unable to identify and confirm the sources of the information that it receives, then their entire mission is irredeemably compromised" (159).

These dubious Machiavellian arguments only seem plausible to those who have never read Julian Assange's works, and Cotton and Arp are counting on that. Throughout his interviews and writings, Assange explains that WikiLeaks represents a new type of journalism: "scientific journalism."[19] "If you publish a paper on DNA," Assange notes, "you are required, by all the good biological journals, to submit the data that has informed your research—the idea being that people will replicate it, check it, verify it. So this is something that needs to be done for journalism as well."[20] He is calling for journalism to be subjected to the same evidentiary standards as academia: "things must be precisely cited with the original source, and as much of the information as possible should be put in the public domain so that people can look at it, just like in science so that you can test to see whether the conclusion follows from the experimental data."[21]

Scientific journalism means that Assange does not have to play truth games with WikiLeaks material. Completely ignoring the fact that WikiLeaks has never been successfully duped with false documents, Ketcham loftily asks his reader whether they will view WikiLeaks' publications as "true unless proven otherwise" or "false unless proven otherwise." Yet it is Assange who poses this question to consumers of corporate media, and it is Assange who provides the means by which the reader decides if something is true. "Scientific journalism

allows you to read a news story, then to click online to see the original document it is based on," Assange explains. "That way you can judge for yourself: Is the story true? Did the journalist report it accurately?"[22] Like Ketcham, scientific journalism asks the reader to be skeptical, but rather than merely resorting to *ad hominem* attacks to provoke such skepticism, as Ketcham does against Assange (essentially asking the reader if they would trust someone who has been accused of sexual assault), Assange's method of journalism lets the documents speak for themselves.[23]

Scientific journalism also has an answer for Aarons' concern about verifying sources. Aarons implies that journalists who know their sources are less likely to be tricked into promoting a nefarious agenda. In reality, most corporate media journalists spend their entire careers cultivating close relationships with government agents so they can willingly collaborate in producing official state propaganda. Because these same corporate media journalists often cite only "people familiar with the meeting" or "people familiar with the document" (referring of course to anonymous government officials promoting military and intelligence agendas), the public is left with no alternative recourse for verification; they simply have to take the journalist's word for it.

WikiLeaks, however, is more trustworthy because they provide documentary evidence in the form of authenticated documents, which readers can inspect for themselves. Assange built WikiLeaks with encryption so that sources could circumvent the threat of repressive censorship and retaliation, thus enabling the release of more documents. According to the practice of scientific journalism, such documents provide the only legitimate basis for reporting. As philosopher and media critic John C. O'Day incisively notes, scientific journalism "considerably ups the ante in terms of professional accountability for journalists. While corporate media are content with sourcing 'people familiar with the documents,' for WikiLeaks obtaining and publishing those documents is not just a bonus or a lucky break, it is a requirement."[24]

Journalists knowing but concealing their sources from the public does not prevent abuses, as the case of the Iraq War demonstrates. But the need for blind trust in either journalists or their sources is eliminated by the availability of authentic documents. It is no mystery why the U.S. government wants to silence Assange: if the public had access to the news according to the principles of scientific journalism, it stands to reason that the American people would not have been lied into the Iraq War.

This brings us to the effect of WikiLeaks on political, economic, and military elites. Robert F.J. Seddon claims that "WikiLeaks demonstrates that our elites are as grubbily ridiculous as everybody else…In a way, it humanizes them" (25). This interpretation, however, trivializes illegal wars, war crimes, economic exploitation, and government lying, for these are the very activities exposed by WikiLeaks, and they are not the kind of activities that we can ascribe to "everybody else." Kimberly S. Engels, however, offers a better view. Using Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy, she cleverly argues that WikiLeaks changes the existential situation of the elites, for whom leaks impose a constant threat of exposure. "WikiLeaks has changed the existential conditions through which modern people choose their projects and introduced a

powerful new mechanism of accountability, a virtual Other," she writes (145). That *Other* is the *Public*.

Only one essay in *WikiLeaking* comes close to understanding the aim of scientific journalism. Isadora Mosch and L. Brooke Rudow-Abouharb respond to the worry that the limitations we all have in technical and situational knowledge make it impossible for each individual to be able to read, understand, and analyze WikiLeaks documents. But, they observe, WikiLeaks provides documents to the public as such, allowing collaboration, participation, and sharing among enough people to make sense of the information: "even though many of the documents are inaccessible [to the average individual], *at least they are there*, and accessible to the minority who *can* bring the tools of analysis to the information. Even though I may not be able to work through the material or read Russian, the community at large can. Thus, there's a net *increase of autonomy* for the community" (97-98). Mosch and Rudow-Abouharb elegantly capture Assange's own understanding of what WikiLeaks does. As he explains, "the flow of information [is not] a matter for single journalists alone, or for individual media organizations, but for societies working together."[25]

By framing the debate about WikiLeaks' style of journalism as a choice between security and anarchy, *WikiLeaking* provides a platform for authoritarian ideology. In the end, it is helpful to remember Alexis de Tocqueville's warning: "I agree without difficulty that public peace is a great good, but I do not want to forget that it is through good order that all peoples have arrived at tyranny. It assuredly does not follow that peoples should scorn public peace; but it must not be enough for them. A nation that asks of its government only the maintenance of order is already a slave at the bottom of its heart."[26] By equating democratic oversight of government with chaos, *WikiLeaking* attempts to imbue its readers with deference to a Machiavellian state.

Whistleblowing and Publishing: Moral Hazard for Whom?

Despite the glaring falsehoods and appalling anti-democratic assumptions found throughout *WikiLeaking*, a few of the contributors inject some redeeming insights into the collection. Some essays express sympathy for or even outright defend WikiLeaks and whistleblowers, but even these sympathetic takes on WikiLeaks remain largely trapped inside the boundaries of the Machiavellian vituperations treated above.

In an essay titled, "Blind Oversight," Trip McCrossin and Azeem Chaudry claim that "the most philosophically substantial criticism" of WikiLeaks is the charge that is poses a moral hazard (30). Moral hazard refers to an instance in which someone decides to engage in risky behavior because they are insulated from accountability for and/or harm from such behavior. When applied to WikiLeaks, the argument is that Assange is willing to engage in risky behavior – like publishing document classified documents without redactions – because he will not be harmed by such disclosures.

Like the myth of harm to innocents, the myth of an unharmed Assange cannot be maintained in

the face of the facts. “The evidence is overwhelming and clear,” UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer stated in a recent report.“Mr. Assange has been deliberately exposed, for a period of several years, to progressively severe forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the cumulative effects of which can only be described as psychological torture.” Describing the result of his examination, Melzer added, “Mr. Assange showed all symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture, including extreme stress, chronic anxiety and intense psychological trauma.”[27] Thus, it seems strange to apply the moral hazard argument to Assange and WikiLeaks. It is not the case that Assange acts with impunity while innocent people around the world are victimized. Instead, given that no harms have resulted from WikiLeaks publications, a better conclusion to reach is that the primary person victimized as a result of WikiLeaks publications is Assange himself.

To their credit, McCrossin and Chaudry argue that U.S. intelligence agencies should also be subject to criticisms of moral hazard, given that they largely operate without meaningful oversight. Their error, however, lies in their acceptance of the myth of harm to innocents. Having accepted this myth, McCrossin and Chaudry equate the lack of oversight for U.S. intelligence agencies with WikiLeaks publications, even though those intelligence agencies help the U.S. military with a variety of destructive activities, including waging deadly wars, while WikiLeaks has never harmed anyone.

Where McCrossin and Chaudry fail to debunk the moral hazard charge against WikiLeaks, Joshua Hautala and Adam Barkman succeed, albeit unwittingly. In “Selfless Whistleblowing and Selfish Leaking,” they distinguish between *whistleblowers*, who act for selfless reasons and often against self-interest, and *leakers*, who act for selfish reasons. Juxtaposing Julian Assange and James Comey, the former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who leaked several personal memos (one of which inspired the Mueller investigation), Hautala and Barkman note that Assange’s actions “have had tremendous negative personal consequences,” while Comey landed a lucrative book deal. Assange suffers from the negative health and psychological effects of being exiled in an embassy for seven years; he has been separated from family and friends, persecuted by the U.S. and U.K. governments, and had his human rights violated. But Comey lives freely.

Edward Snowden has made a point similar to that of Hautala and Barkman, arguing that leakers are punished if they challenge the allocation of power and rewarded if they reinforce the allocation of power in favor of the state and its agencies. Sometimes government agents leak classified information to justify state power, as they did when they leaked the “conference call of doom,” an intercepted call between member of Al Qaeda. The intelligence officials, Snowden writes, “likely seeking to inflate the threat of terrorism and deflect criticism of mass surveillance, revealed to a neoconservative website extraordinarily detailed accounts of specific communications they had intercepted, including locations of the participating parties and the precise contents of the discussions.” No one was punished because the story provided continued justification for mass surveillance in the face of popular criticism, even though the revelation meant the government could never use the same surveillance method again. As Snowden concludes, it is the challenge to power, not the act of disclosing, that inspires

criticism of whistleblowers.[28]

This view can and should be extended to those journalists and whistleblowers who fearlessly stare down powerful institutions and refuse to capitulate to the threat of retaliation. Jennifer Baker uses Henry David Thoreau and Virtue Ethics to explain why whistleblower Reality Winner should be understood as "one who has the courage to follow her conscience" (180). Though Baker's attempted synthesis of virtue ethics and transcendentalism fails to be fully developed and thus remains somewhat confused, she nevertheless captures a central feature of whistleblowing ethics, namely, the idea that institutional norms are open to ethical challenge from individuals, and that the outcome of such challenges must be decided democratically.

In the most compelling essay in the collection, Miquel Comas Oliver defends whistleblowing more broadly, saying that e-leaking (ethical electronic leaking) is a form of digital civil disobedience justified by a "participatory conception of democracy" (197). Challenging John Rawls' famous standards for civil disobedience, which require an actor to take legal responsibility for a public and collective breaking of the law, Comas Oliver argues that civil disobedience in the digital age exposes the shortcomings of classical standards such as those offered by Rawls. Unlike the classical conception of civil disobedience, digital civil disobedience is neither collective (because whistleblowers are often solitary individuals) nor public (because cryptology enables whistleblowers to evade the excessive punishments of the state). Likewise, whereas the classical conception of civil disobedience required constitutional loyalty (protestors can oppose individual laws but not the entire legal system) and responsibility (protestors must accept punishment), digital civil disobedience takes place in a post-nation-state age in which the global community is not explicitly governed by a legal system to which individuals are expected to maintain fidelity. Thus, Comas Oliver concludes that new standards for understanding the permissibility of civil disobedience are needed in the digital age.

Although whistleblowers like Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning have exposed war crimes and illegal government activity, a Machiaveillian collection like *WikiLeaking* would not be complete without an essay denigrating whistleblowers. Brad Patty, who has "advised US Army units in Iraq on information operations as part of more than a decade's involvement in America's wars," finger-wags whistleblowers and their supporters, insisting that patriotism – apparently defined as "obedience" – is the highest value. Patty condescendingly instructs his reader to not "rely on the reputation of an outlet that's known to be hostile to your government" (214), even though WikiLeaks has an unimpeachable record of truth telling and the U.S. government has an extensive record of lying. Even though it is well known that Snowden was on his way to Latin America when the U.S. government revoked his passport, thereby trapping him in Moscow, Patty tells his readers that Snowden "fled to Russia," implying that he purposefully defected to an enemy nation (211). He also offensively asserts that "Manning's motivation appears to have been chiefly personal, a passionate sense of victimhood seeking an outlet for revenge" (208), when she has stated repeatedly that her decision was provoked by the United States' criminal activity in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as corporate media's failure to report it. Patty's attempt to pathologize Snowden, Manning, and

WikiLeaks illustrates the sophistic, nationalistic mentality at the heart of this collection.

Concluding Remarks

Only those who find no irony in the fact that the U.S. government – which builds more weapons of war than any military power in history and then uses those weapons to kill millions of people in decades-long wars of aggression – has the temerity to accuse WikiLeaks of endangering innocent people by publishing documents will find value in Cotton and Arp's *WikiLeaking*. Only those who find no irony in the fact that corporate journalists – who have a demonstrated track record of lying to the public about U.S. wars of aggression and regime change campaigns – have the audacity to accuse Assange of harming people will appreciate this anthology. While this book is ostensibly for the public in general, it appears to have two specific audiences in mind: those who are already resolute in their hatred of Assange and their opposition to WikiLeaks, and those who are genuinely curious about WikiLeaks but vulnerable to Machiavellian state propaganda.

As one contributor, Louis Colombo, notes, the problem is not WikiLeaks' publications but the sad state of democracy in the United States. What we need most is the cultivation of a citizenry that is able to read WikiLeaks documents and participate in political reform. Readers interested in learning more about WikiLeaks are better off simply consulting Assange's own writings, and teachers looking for classroom material on whistleblowing or journalism ethics are better off looking to essays by and interviews with Ralph Nader, Daniel Ellsberg, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning – or consulting Candace Delmas's fantastic article "The Ethics of Government Whistleblowing." And those who are curious enough to pick up *WikiLeaking* should also consider checking out *In Defense of Julian Assange*, a forthcoming collection from OR Books, edited by Tariq Ali and Margaret Kunstler.

Cotton and Arp's *WikiLeaking* represents how low philosophy has sunk since the days of Socrates, for Julian Assange is a far better representative of the Socratic tradition than this volume. In fact, there is a distinct parallel between Assange and Socrates. At trial, Socrates was confronted by three accusers: Anytus, representing the powerful politicians and craftsmen; Meletus, who did most of the arguing, representing the poets; and Lycon, who associated Socrates with the pro-Spartan oligarchy that killed his son and perhaps sought revenge.[29] Today, Assange faces a similar triumvirate: powerful political and economic elites (U.S. imperialists and the Trump administration), the intellectuals who do the arguing (philosophers and other academics), and those who want revenge (Democrats who associate Assange with the Russian oligarchy who supposedly killed Clinton's 2016 presidential bid). One might think the practitioners of a discipline that traces its origins back to Socrates – who had no reservations about challenging either received wisdom or powerful elites – would see the similarities between Assange and the father of Western philosophy. After all, both of them have been pursued by powerful states for disturbing the "natural" order of things. Instead of choosing to play the role of philosopher and question the powerful, however, most of the contributors to *WikiLeaking* – including the editors – have chosen to play the role of Meletus and defend the imperial aristocracy.

Long gone are the days of COINTELPRO, when the U.S. government pursued their opponents in secret. These days, philosophers perform that task in plain sight.

Notes

1. The collection's main resource is Laura Poitras' *Risk* (2017), which has been called a "confused, superficial documentary" presenting a "disjointed and superficial treatment" of WikiLeaks and Assange. To be sure, the film is quite good, but it is just as much about Poitras' relationship to her subjects as it is about the subjects themselves. As a result of her disapproval of WikiLeaks' publication of the DNC and Podesta emails in 2016, her concern about the redaction of documents, and her short relationship with Jacob Appelbaum, a colleague of Julian's who appears in the film, the director recut the film immediately prior to its official release. The film therefore offers a fascinating look into the life of a filmmaker who was intimately involved with not only WikiLeaks but also the Edward Snowden revelations (see her 2014 film *Citizenfour*), but it is hardly appropriate to use the film as the basis for volume on WikiLeaks and moral philosophy. If the editors insisted on using documentary films as the basis for a discussion of WikiLeaks' publication practices, a much better (and much more appropriate) documentary would be *Mediastan* (Journeyman Pictures, 2013, directed by Johannes Wahlström), which follows a small group of Wikileaks journalists through Central Asia in an effort to establish publishing partnerships with local media outlets and then to London and New York to meet with editors of *The Guardian* and *The New Your Times*. For the commentary on Poitras's film, see David Walsh and Joanne Laurier, "*Risk*: Laura Poitras' confused, superficial documentary about Julian Assange and WikiLeaks," *World Socialist Web Site*, 11 May 2017. https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/05/11/risk-m11.html

2. These two myths could be considered the two components of what Assange calls "the myth of WikiLeaks' recklessness," which refers to the supposed dangers posed to innocents and to government operations by publishing secret state documents. See Julian Assange, *Julian Assange: The Unauthorized Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2011), 223.

3. Two essays in the collection that I do not discuss below are Marlene Clark' "On WikiLeaks and Bullshit" and Peter Ludlow's "Conspiracies and the Power of WikiLeaks." I do not address Clark's contribution simply because I do not know what the argument is supposed to be. I do not address Ludlow's contribution because his work on Assange's theory of conspiracy is available online. I have archived it here: https://archive.fo/V3P6j. However, readers are just as well off reading Assange's work itself, found here: https://cryptome.org/0002/ja-conspiracies.pdf.

4. There are some curiosities about the anthology's emphasis on the myth of harm to innocents. On the one hand, one contributor, Christopher Ketcham, actually provides an accurate description of WikiLeaks' publishing practices: "In the beginning, WikiLeaks released data directly to the public. As WikiLeaks became inundated with data, they began to hoard it and then send small batches to select news organizations who redact information that might get the news organization in trouble or might 'out' innocent parties" (118). If this is true (and it is),

then one of the underlying premises for the collection (the myth of harm to innocents) is false. On the other hand, Cotton acknowledges that WikiLeaks' publications have never resulted in harm (xii). So why all this handwringing about possible harm? I suppose it is easier to secure a book contract when you have something controversial to write about, even if the controversy is completely fabricated. Ultimately, this whole myth is built upon the notion that WikiLeaks publishes through so-called "data dumps," the frequent, careless, and indiscriminate posts of hundreds of thousands of underacted documents to the Internet. While the concept "data dump" is used to associate WikiLeaks with criminal hackers who dump private consumer information on dark web, the idea that WikiLeaks publishes in "dumps" was debunked long ago by Harvard Law Professor Yochai Benkler. See his "A Free Irresponsible Press: Wikileaks and the Battle over the Soul of the Networked Fourth Estate," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 46 (2011): 311-397.

5. Ed Pilkington, "Bradley Manning leak did not result in deaths by enemy forces, court hears," *The Guardian*, 31 July 2013. https://archive.fo/RXG3Q

6. Assange, *The Unauthorized Autobiography*, 217-220.

7. There are so many problems with Dan Miori's article the fact that it passed review single-handedly disqualifies Cotton and Arp as competent editors of this project. In addition to falsifying evidence – a serious scholarly offense – he also demonstrates his utter lack of knowledge of WikiLeaks by getting even basic but important facts wrong. In a discussion of WikiLeaks' 2010 publications of the Afghanistan War Logs and Iraq War Logs, Miori writes, "The 'data dump' included the names of Iraqi civilians who co-operated with the US government. Assange made no effort to remove information which would identify them, which left those civilians open to reprisals by insurgent groups" (42). There might be a modicum of truth to this statement if Miori had gotten the country right, for this was a controversy not over the Iraq War Logs but the Afghanistan War Logs, which were the first of the two to be published. *Wiki Rebels*, the documentary that Miori relies on to make his claim, is so clear about this fact that even the most casual observer should have understood the situation. Immediately after Assange's comment about the value of the publications (see next note), the film's narrator says: "WikiLeaks now takes steps to avoid making the same mistake again. Their next publication, 400,000 military reports form the Iraq War, are painstakingly edited and names removed. They also start reinforcing their network of experienced journalists" (at 36:02). One would think that someone so ostensibly concerned about the harm that WikiLeaks might have caused would at least get the nationality of the supposed victims correct, yet Miori does not even succeed in that. The fact that Miori made such an amateur mistake in the facts when the *one* source he was using so clearly got the facts right, and the fact that Cotton and Arp were not competent enough to correct Miroi's error, reveals the how little expertise was involved in producing *WikiLeaking*.

8. The documentary is available at https://vimeo.com/206239183 and Assange's comment appears at 35:40.

9. Julian Assange, *When Google Met WikiLeaks* (New York: OR Books, 2016), 93.

10. Assange, *When Google Met WikiLeaks*, 147-148.

11. "US 'war on terror' has killed over half a million people: study," *Al Jazeera*, 9 November 2018. https://archive.fo/e8ttO; Joe Emersberger, "Study Linking US Sanctions to Venezuelan Deaths Buried by Reuters for Over a Month," *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting*, 14 June 2019. https://archive.fo/qtb3W

12. Glenn Greenwald, "Facts and myths in the WikiLeaks/Guardian saga," *Salon*, 2 September 2011. https://archive.fo/S6Pau

13. Assange, *The Unauthorized Autobiography*, 195, 220.

14. Assange, *When Google Met WikiLeaks*, 166.

15. Julian Assange, "Introduction: WikiLeaks and Empire," in *The WikiLeaks Files: The World According to US Empire* (New York: Verso, 2015), 11.

16. For an analysis of Assange's theory of scientific journalism, see Lisa Lynch, "'That's Not Leaking, It's Pure Editorial': Wikileaks, Scientific Journalism, and Journalistic Expertise," *Canadian Journal of Media Studies* (2012): 40-69.

17. Michael Hayden, Alan Dershowitz, Glenn Greenwald, and Alexis Ohanian, *Does State Spying Make Us Safer? The Munk Debate on Mass Surveillance* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2014).

18. James Risen, "The Biggest Secret: My Life as a New York Times Reporter in the Shadow of the War on Terror," *The Intercept*, 3 January 2018. https://theintercept.com/2018/01/03/my-life-as-a-new-york-times-reporter-in-the-shadow-of-the-war-on-terror/

19. Again, Dan Miori reveals his complete disregard for the facts by claiming that Assange denies being a journalist. He writes: "Journalism involves gathering and analyzing information, putting that information into context in a readable form, and making it available for consumption by the public. Part of Julian Assange's argument to avoid responsibility for harm from his release of confidential information involves the fact that he's not a journalist, and truly by the letter of this or any other definition of journalism, he isn't" (48). Now let's unpack this. First, this definition of journalism is so shallow that it barely meets the minimum criteria of what a democratic public should expect of journalists. There is no mention of holding powerful political and economic actors accountable. More importantly, there is no requirement that the information gathered and presented by the journalists be *true*. In other words, Miori fails to understand the tradition of the Fourth Estate. Second, Assange does not eschew the label "journalist"; rather, he wears it proudly, as the discussion of scientific journalism shows. Notwithstanding the lack of expertise and rigor put into his contribution to *WikiLeaking*, I am

sure that Miori considers himself a scholar of some kind. Yet we might paraphrase his commentary on Assange and say that scholarship involves rigorous and truthful research, clear and honest writing, and peer-checked publication. Part of Dan Miori's argument to avoid responsibility for knowing anything about the ethics of WikiLeaks involves the fact that he's not a scholar, and truly by the letter of this or any other definition of scholarship, he isn't.

20. Raffi Khatchadourian, "No Secrets: Julian Assange's mission for total transparency," *New Yorker*, 7 June 2010. https://archive.fo/nspvA

21. Assange, *When Google Met WikiLeaks*, 130.

22. Julian Assange, "Don't shoot messenger for revealing uncomfortable truths," *The Australian*, 7 December 2010. https://archive.fo/SmXpG

23. The story of WikiLeaks is muddled in misinformation, but the story of Assange is even worse, especially his situation regarding sexual assault accusations coming from Sweden. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, the media has reported on this story in the most incompetent way possible, obfuscating the legal and factual particulars of the case. It should come as no surprise that *WikiLeaking* consistently gets this wrong, too, starting in the very first pages (see Cotton's "About"). For a concise an clear overview of the sexual assault accusations, see Andrew Fowler's *Sex, Lies, and Julian Assange* (Journeyman Pictures, 2012) and Jonathan Cook, "Endless Procedural Abuses Show Julian Assange Case Was Never About Law: From the Start, Assange Faced Political Persecution," *Common Dreams*, 29 May 2019. https://archive.fo/rHdHR

24. John C. O'Day, "Corporate Media Have Second Thoughts About Exiling Julian Assange From Journalism," *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting*, 5 June 2019. https://archive.fo/ry6Ik

25. Assange, *The Unauthorized Autobiography*, 114.

26. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Available online: https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/tocqueville-democracy-in-america-historical-critical-edition-vol-3/simple

27. "UN expert says 'collective persecution' of Julian Assange must end now," *United Nations Human Rights Council*, 31 May 2019. https://archive.fo/xZ2Zq

28. Edward Snowden, "Whistleblowing Is Not Just Leaking — It's an Act of Political Resistance," *The Intercept*, 3 May 2016. https://archive.fo/vEA7D

29. This gloss on the trial of Socrates is based on Plato's *Apology* (translated by G.M.A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 17-36) and the account of Socrates' accusers in Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).

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Mary Dearborn, Ernest Hemingway: A Biography (New York: Knopf, 2018)

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In the prologue to *Ernest Hemingway: A Biography*, Mary V. Dearborn recollects "ask[ing]…whether a woman could bring something to the subject that previous biographers had not" (7).

Her question is, at least in part, a response to the looming presence of "the Hemingway legend" in the American imagination, an impression of the man as "the very personification of virility" and a writer whose work lacks "any taint of femininity or aestheticism" (7, 6). As the first woman to undertake a full-length biography of Hemingway, Dearborn is acutely aware that she is "interested in different aspects of Hemingway's life from the ones that drew his previous (male) biographers" precisely because she has "no investment in the Hemingway legend," which she argues remains a prominent example of the sort of "social construction of gender" through which "masculinity gets defined" (6-7).

Thus, unburdened by the sense of obligation some biographers have felt to adhere to a near hagiographical presentation of Ernest Hemingway as the paragon of an uncomplicated brand of idealized masculinity characterized by bravery, honor, stoicism, and razor sharp honesty, Dearborn presents the subject of her book as a deeply neurotic man whose greatest fiction may well be the public persona he so painstakingly crafted. As Dearborn sloughs the mantle of hypermasculinity off Hemingway, she draws upon the evolution of gender discourse as well as contemporary developments in psychology and neuroscience to illuminate aspects of Hemingway's life largely overlooked in previous biographies and, in the process, opens up several promising avenues to future critical inquiry into his fiction.

One of the first aspects of the Hemingway legend that Dearborn dismantles in her book is the author's much-touted tough guy image. In contrast with the pugilistic strongman so many of us envision when we think of Hemingway, Ernest displays "a lifelong tendency towards androgyny" and a profound "ambivalence about and fascination with gender roles and sexuality" in Dearborn's chronicle (251). The biographer traces "Ernest's confusion in these matters" of gender expression "back to his childhood," when his mother dressed the future author in girls' clothing (482). From the moment Ernest Miller Hemingway, the eldest son of Ed and Grace (née Hall) Hemingway, was born on July 21, 1899, the boy's mother sought to raise the child as the twin brother of his elder sister, Marcelline. Because she "wanted the children to *feel* like twins," she not only encouraged the children to participate in the same activities, she also "dressed [them] in the same outfits" (22, emphasis Dearborn's). As a result of Grace's decision to raise her firstborn children as twins, photographs of the young Ernest

Hemingway “show an infant and toddler in dresses, with bonnets and long hair” or “pink gingham frocks with Battenburg lace collars or crocheted bonnets” and “a shoulder-length bob matching his sister’s” (22).

Dearborn is quick to point out that “many boys were dressed as girls at the turn of the century” due to the “general sentimentalization of childhood, wherein innocence–associated with what was thought to be the gentler, fairer sex–was highly prized,” but she notes that while “after the first year boys were generally taken out of dresses and put into male clothing,” it was “remarkable…how often, after the first year, Marcelline and Ernest alternated between being dressed as girls and as boys” (22). The fact “that Grace had clothed them androgynously well after the children were old enough to know what was going on” even resulted in a situation in which the future author “was quite fearful before Christmas…that Santa Claus would know he was a boy, because he would wear just the same clothes as his sister” (23).

Both as a complicated element of his personal expression and as a subject of literary exploration, gender fluidity would continue to occupy Hemingway throughout his life. In public, Hemingway cultivated an image of himself as a hard-drinking man’s man; he was a strikingly fearless soldier, a skilled hunter, and a rugged sportsman. In private, however, Ernest could be quite different.”For a gender-ambivalent man born at the turn of the twentieth century,” Dearborn explains, “there was no escape from the binary, male-female notion of gender except through cross-dressing; role-playing, both sexual and otherwise; and/or fetishism” (486). In each of his four marriages, for example, Hemingway enjoyed erotic play that reveled in reversals of gender roles and embraced a fluidity of gender expression. At the same time, he admired lesbians such as Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas and adopted the “androgynous terminology” with which they peppered their conversations in his own speech (251).

While some previous biographers have seen the author’s abiding interests in androgyny and gender fluidity as reason to speculate on Hemingway’s sexuality, Dearborn takes great pains to resist the temptation to connect dots that may not be present in the author’s life. Although she acknowledges that Hemingway “moved in a setting in which homosexuality was commonplace” and even “seriously considered attaching himself to an older homosexual to further his career” when his wealthy Red Cross captain, Jim Gamble, offered to fund Ernest’s expenses to spend a year together in Europe, Dearborn makes it clear that there simply is no evidence to suggest the author was sexually attracted to men (147).

She does, however, suggest that, for Ernest, his mother’s suspected lesbian relationship with a younger woman as well as his own fondness for lesbians, his androgynous relationship with Marcelline as a child, and his son’s penchant for cross-dressing, among other factors, give scholars sufficient reason to suspect that some of the novelist’s most interesting work may have been forged in a mind in which questions of gender expression burned fiercely. Thus, when Ernest Hemingway’s persistent fascination with gender and androgyny is taken into consideration, the seemingly sudden focus on gender nonconformity in works such as *The Garden of Eden* may be read as more explicit explorations of a theme that, while muted, may be found throughout his *oeuvre*, from the mannish Lady Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises* to

Catherine Barkley's desire to look similar to Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms.*

Just as Dearborn's account of Hemingway peels away the author's singularly macho exterior to reveal an individual with a much more complicated sense of gender than his public persona would indicate, the book also suggests that the author's outwardly confident disposition was little more than an easily-penetrated and highly brittle carapace wholly inadequate for the task of shielding the insecure and often oversensitive man underneath. Indeed, despite his considerable charm, which always drew admirers into his sphere, Ernest Hemingway was largely unable to maintain lifelong relationships because his insecurities about writing produced a wildly mercurial temperament that would sooner or later alienate many of the people who befriended him.

Owing to an almost pathological inability to accept criticism, for instance, Hemingway developed a habit of excoriating fellow writers whose frequently mild suggestions to improve his work seemed to him unjustified attacks on the very core of his being. In a similar vein, Ernest could not stomach the notion that his success as a writer had, in part, been the result of the early championing of his work by more experienced authors. Indeed, because Hemingway had a "constant need to compare himself to his peers [and] always to his advantage," he would routinely direct his most vitriolic attacks at those literary friends who had been his mentors, champions, and most generous editors (549). While a handful of Hemingway's literary friends, most notably John Dos Passos and Ezra Pound, largely avoided the author's vitriol, others such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, and Sherwood Anderson were blindsided by his fierce and often *ad hominem* criticism. Later, when younger writers such as Norman Mailer and James Jones began receiving acclaim as chroniclers of World War II, Hemingway "feared he would be viewed as a hoary chronicler of a long-ago strife" rather than as "one of the all-time great war novelists" and launched a series of brutal attacks on a new generation of authors who not only openly admired him but who also acknowledged his influence (549).

Of course, Hemingway's occasionally vindictive criticism of fellow writers has become part of the Hemingway legend, too, as a sort of verbal manifestation of the author's celebrated ferocity. Where Dearborn's biography distinguishes itself is in its attempt to contextualize such behavior. While previous chroniclers have discussed the "[m]ental illness cours[ing] through the Hemingway family," much of that attention has focused on the depression, suicidal ideation, and alcoholism that likely contributed to the suicides of Ernest's father, two of his siblings, Hemingway himself, and his granddaughter (626). While she does not go so far as to attempt a retroactive diagnosis, Dearborn posits that much of Hemingway's behavior throughout his life is consistent with bipolar disorder. Thus, while many previous biographies examine the melancholy Hemingway dealt with, Dearborn turns her attention to the possibility that the other pole, mania, may have been a major factor in the author's life, though the evidence is fairly thin at times. For instance, "his characteristic quickness, high self-regard, and sheer exuberance," Dearborn suggests, "all might be seen as responsible for…his great productivity and, in a different aspect, even his charisma (519). During his remarkably productive period of the early 1920s, for instance, "Ernest showed a certain amount of…manic behavior" including "excessive energy and grandiosity, racing thoughts, and self-destructive

tendencies," which may be seen both as the engine powering his prodigious literary output as well as the source of the "irritability or hair-trigger temper" that resulted in his scathing attacks on the likes of Sherwood Anderson and Marianne Moore (171-172).

Despite his hypersensitivity to criticism, his tendency to lash out at those writers he considered competition, and an unfortunate habit of alienating his friends during such periods, Hemingway generally managed to ride out his manic episodes without much damage to his literary career. Towards the end of his life, however, Hemingway's manic episodes intensified to the point of delusion. Whereas the author had long been known to "be a bit cavalier with facts, especially when they were not flattering to himself," he eventually evolved into an outright fabulist who would deliver rambling accounts of outrageous events to anyone who would listen (462). As the author grew older, and especially after the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea* in 1951, Hemingway's prose, which had influenced a generation of writers to favor taut sentences and precise wording, loosened to the point of sloppiness, where "verbosity and insufficiently modulated detail" frustrated readers (572). Many previous biographers attribute these developments to the author's worsening alcoholism, which has become a common explanation among Hemingway's scholars. Dearborn, however, proposes a more nuanced explanation, namely that the author's mental illness was greatly exacerbated not only by alcohol but by the same sort of chronic traumatic brain injury that one sees among former boxers and gridiron football players.

Over the course of his life, Ernest Hemingway suffered at least five serious concussions. While he appears to have recovered from his first concussion, the result of of a mortar shell exploding with the force of "a furnace door blasting open" a few feet away from him while serving with the Red Cross in Italy during World War I, a succession of traumatic brain injuries later in Hemingway's life appear to have contributed to the ultimately fatal escalation of his mental illness (59). Months after Hemingway incurred a suspected subdural hematoma after a 1945 car accident in London in which the author's head hit the windshield, he was involved in a motorcycle crash that resulted in a third severe brain injury. Five years later, Hemingway suffered another concussion when he fell on the deck of his boat. Three years after that fall, Hemingway suffered what most biographers consider to be the worst injury on his life. On January 24, 1954, while touring Africa, Hemingway treated his wife to a plane trip into Uganda. In an effort to secure a good angle for photography, the pilot flew into a flock of ibis and was forced to crash land. The next day, the trio found another bush pilot who agreed to fly them back to Entebbe. When they tried to land, the plane's engine burst into flames, trapping Hemingway and the other passengers. When Hemingway found he "was unable to kick [the plane's door] open, [he] butted it open with his own head" (563).

While the author had been suffering from chronic headaches, irritability, sexual impotence, and other common symptoms of traumatic brain injury ever since the car crash in London, it was the African crash landings that affected him the most. In the years following the crashes, he would experience memory lapses, an inability to find the right words to express his thoughts, paranoia, double vision, extreme confusion, and greatly intensified periods of depression and mania. Combined with the cumulative effects of lifelong alcoholism, Hemingway's head injuries

appear to have contributed to the almost total absence of "[d]iscresion and inhibitions" in the final half decade of the author's life (564). While stopping short of another impossible retroactive diagnosis, Dearborn strongly suggests that Hemingway's repeated brain injuries resulted in symptoms that are consistent with chronic traumatic encepholopathy, the degenerative disease associated with the depression, dementia, irrationality, memory loss, and even violence found in many retired NFL players (583). Thus, when Hemingway committed suicide on July 2, 1961, Dearborn observes that "it seemed inevitable" given the severity of his ongoing mental disintegration (615).

While nearly any biography of a great person can, in a certain sense, be read as a tragedy, the life of Ernest Hemingway feels almost archetypically so. There's something Aristotelian in his rise and fall. The same manic energy and braggadocio that fueled his ascent to the peak of literary renown also scripted his demise. What Dearborn does so well in *Ernest Hemingway: A Life* is look beyond the myth of the man into his psyche. What emerges, though presented in an unsparing and dispassionate fashion, is a sympathetic portrait of a man at once supremely confident and astonishingly insecure, whose manic drive to suck the last ounce of marrow out of life enabled him to craft timeless fictions from his experiences while also pushing him to pursue dangerous and self-destructive activities. We could not have the titan of American literature, it seems, without the reckless *bon vivant*. A man of extremes as well as nuance, Dearborn's Hemingway is far more complex a figure than the Hemingway legend would have us believe. In deconstructing the legend, Dearborn introduces us to the man and we are the richer for it.

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Daniel Finn, One Man's Terrorist: A Political History of the IRA (New York: Verso: 2019)

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The Provisional IRA appear now like an almost incomprehensible manifestation from another time. Their militaristic ideology hardly aligns with the current avatars of the Anglophone Left – not the pacific grandfatherliness of Jeremy Corbyn or Bernie Sanders, much less the multicultural intersectionality of AOC or Ilhan Omar.

The Provos' use of violence against civilians has no analogue on the Left anywhere in the West today. The nation they claimed to represent – poor, culturally isolated, staunchly Catholic – is, indeed, a far remove from the Ireland of Leo Varadkar, gay marriage, and ostensibly secular neoliberalism. And there is the obvious phenomenon that terrorism has, from 2001 onwards, become almost exclusively coded with an Islamic vocabulary.

One Man's Terrorist by Daniel Finn – a longstanding contributor to the *New Left Review* – is not exactly an internal history of the IRA's politics; rather it's a history of the political context within which the Provos operated. Material is mainly drawn from external sources – British government reports, memoirs, contemporary newspapers; documents internal to the IRA are either non-existent or, for obvious reasons, not available to researchers. At several other key points, it is not clear if this is a history of the IRA or of their political wing, Sinn Féin, but it is also never clear if such a distinction is in any way meaningful (given the porous borders that separated both organizations). The closing chapters are more tightly focused on internal deliberations within Sinn Féin and the IRA, perhaps due to a greater willingness of those present to talk on the record about peace than about war.

The book opens with an alternating discussion of the IRA's place within the *longue durée* of Irish nationalism, from 1798 onwards, and an investigation of the British state's war with the IRA that situates it in the history of counter-insurgency up to and including the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The latter of these discussions is the more interesting, with the former coming a bit too close to the "800 years of English oppression" school of Irish history. Of surer ground is Finn's tracing of the various radical republican movements and episodes that collectively form a kind of pre-history of the Provisional IRA; the Irish Republican Brotherhood, founded in 1867, Irish nationalism in the years after the Easter Rising of 1916, the abortive IRA border campaign in the 1950s, the growing Marxist and anti-Marxist factions within the IRA from the early sixties on, which in turn provided the ideological backdrop to the separation of the

Official IRA from the Provisional IRA at the close of the decade.

It is really at this point that the book's narrative starts, circulating from the Provisionals to Sinn Féin to the wider context of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and their frustrated attempts to wrest civil rights from the Stormont government. Finn has a broader international sensibility when it comes to re-telling all this (broader, at least, than is usually the case in Irish history-writing). As he points out, the emergence of "The Troubles" at the end of the 1960s was, on the one hand, a part of the "Spirt of '68", on display in Belfast and Derry just as it was also in Paris and Prague. Yet as Finn begins the book by observing, "This devastating conflict unfolded in a highly developed West European state with a reputation for political stability" and is anomalous in the broader currents of Western European political history. Finn also has a perceptive ability to critique Irish republican ideology; on the much-loved comparison of Northern Irish Catholics and African-Americans, he notes that there did come a clear point "at which lessons from the US civil rights movement began to lose their relevance." Black nationalism was essentially a form of "cultural self-assertion" and the Black civil rights movement never called the U.S. state's entire existence into question, in the manner that the IRA would later do for the Ulster statelet. Irish Republicanism never birthed a leader with the charisma of Martin Luther King.

Finn's accounting of the Troubles continues in this pattern; the tripartite story of the Provisional IRA, the republican movement within which it moved, and the broader context of Northern Irish politics; Northern Ireland's place within international developments; succinct and pithy political analyses. And there is a welcome refusal to avoid controversy here, as Finn moves from the introduction of internment without trial in 1971 ("using techniques that had been fine-tuned in colonial wars"), to the use of torture by British forces in the same period, which radicalized and never pacified the target population, and the burgeoning use of car bombs by the Provisionals (which, in Finn's sights was less a sign of IRA strength and more of a plateauing of any hopes for achieving their goal of a United Ireland). Nor does Finn shy away from naming Irish government material support for elements within the IRA or that some agents of the British government almost certainly had a hand in the Dublin and Monaghan Bombings, which killed thirty-three civilians in the Republic in May 1974.

As the violence wore on into the late 1970s, the sheer length of the conflict became a deciding factor in the development of the Troubles; the Provisionals seemed to have recognized that they had reached a political and military stalemate and longed to get back to the dizzy levels of mass protests of the previous decade. A solution presented itself via the Hunger Strikes – most famously that of Bobby Sands in 1981 – when IRA prisoners refused food as part of a push to be treated as political (rather than criminal) prisoners. There were at least 1,200 protests in Northern Ireland during the '81 hunger strikes, attended by over 350,000 people. This was almost certainly a far larger mobilization than occurred in 1968 or 1969. In hindsight, it was probably the high water mark of any kind of popular support for armed republicanism. Bobby Sands' election to parliament during his ultimately fatal hunger strike is also, in hindsight, a portent of what was to come. Finn points out that from the post-Hunger Strikes period onwards, Sinn Féin had two clear objectives: to overtake the Social Democratic Labour Party

as the main voice of nationalist opinion in the North, and to carve out a political foothold in the South. By these lights, the party has been a remarkable success, since both goals are fully achieved. Though it has also come at the "cost" of the party abandoning many of its once sacred shibboleths. Finn deftly unpacks this evolution, in a narrative that remains tightly focused on the IRA (thus perhaps ignoring important changes within – and concessions made by – the British state).

By the 1990s, Sinn Féin was negotiating a peace treaty that would eventually see them sharing power with Loyalists at Stormont and taking seats in the Dáil, the parliament in Dublin. And Finn ends with a resume of Sinn Féin's more recent political trajectories; Left-leaning and certainly anti-austerity but unwilling to enter into electoral coalitions with the longstanding Trotskyist parties of the Irish far-left (though, to be fair, there is much mutual suspicion there); vaguely radical but still enough of a Catholic party that a clear policy on abortion remains impossible; at perennial odds with the Irish establishment, but tacitly open to junior coalition partnership with either of Ireland's two right-wing parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. In Finn's neat summation:

The Provos had been the purest example of an anti-systemic movement in Western Europe: not only did they possess their own army, which doubled as a community police force, they also had their own media, entertainment industry and even transport system (the "black cabs" of West Belfast). When Gerry Adams argued for Sinn Féin to scrap its abstentionist policy in 1986, he referred in passing to the question of "electoralism as a means of revolutionary struggle", which had "affected all struggles in areas where parliaments with universal suffrage exist". Sinn Féin's link to the IRA campaign was, he argued, the true guarantee of its revolutionary character. As the party finally severed that link, the full extent of its transformation since the 1980s should have been readily apparent.

The contemporary context of Brexit – an issue that is as pertinent as it is wearying – is also noted. Daniel Finn is clearly a capable writer and analyst, weaving a wide range of material and viewpoints into a nimble overview of the last forty or fifty years of Northern Irish political history. The result is a solid introduction for those looking to discover the seemingly lost world of militant Irish republicanism.

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Bill Nevins *is poetry editor at Logos.*

Brett Anderson, Afternoons With the Blinds Drawn (New York: Little, Brown 2019)

By | 2020: vol 19, no 1

Brett Anderson was the lead singer with the British pop Group Suede – a successful English group that worked the clubs for years, and finally emerged with all the gleaming trophies: magazine covers, exotic ladies, fashionista pals, backstage ennui, chart topping records, and drug addictions.

As Anderson notes, all bands have histories as predictable as the life "of a frog." It's all biology after some point, and Anderson's first book *Coal Black Mornings*, painted a gritty, grim portrait of life in an English suburban Council flat, subsidized school lunches (his father made barely enough to keep them in respectable poverty) and a family that was ultimately to come apart but not before teaching Anderson some hard and rigorous lessons necessary to his success.

His father and mother were classic 60s characters who "married too young" and produced Anderson, and his sensitive Art School-bound sister Blandine, who helped to inspire Anderson's interest in music. His early favorite LP was the first Sex Pistols album, and it set a determined Anderson on the path to rock stardom. His listening, like his reading, is encyclopedic, intense, diverse. His unsparing critiques of his own and others' works reads like an extremely literate critic's take on the British scene with all its convoluted infighting, obscure rituals, and do-or-die positions, which required all the erudition Anderson could summon, and the nimble attitudes necessary to chart an ever shifting scene which, to my mind, makes the American side of the business seem comparatively pedestrian and stodgy.

For restless English youths like Anderson the Beatles conjured an adolescent's dream of success festooned with American penthouses, English country homes, stardom, tabloid obsessions, and photogenic wives. The Beatles passed quickly from mere musical phenomena to symbols of hip culture, and have since moved to a Rock Valhalla where the two deceased Beatles John and George now reincarnate as sainted idols whose fame and recyclable legend(s) grow with each decade.

Lennon is no longer just a popular musician and songwriter but figures prominently in protest iconography and in aspirational self-help literature, which, with George Harrison he has come, however ironically, to personify: a jet-propelled rise from nowhere to stardom. The Indian mysticism that Harrison embraced has made of him a modern spiritual figure whose life combined millionaire lifestyle and a striving for anti-materialist spirituality. Like so much pop-

based lore it's a confused legacy that enhanced in legend what their actual lives seemed to deny in actuality. In an age that worships celebrity over fact, the late Beatles were an ad mans dream.

The sheer complexity of Brit pop debates are exemplified in Anderson's desperate attempts to find a way out of the squalid poverty that cursed his earliest years and his parents' lives. His mother, after a bitter divorce which left his Liszt-loving father bereft and abandoned, dies of cancer after a stab at a new life independent of the family she had carried forward on her talents as a seamstress, budget busting home maker, and talented painter.

The book provides a candid look at a family living just at the poverty line, an experience often obscured or ignored, where there is never ever quite enough. Only enough to qualify for humiliating subsidized lunch programs at school, and the sense which Anderson never quite shakes of "always being an outsider." He laments this, but also suggests it is something that set him apart- and made for better Art.

Suede's lyrics, which Anderson provided, were check lists of English seediness, airless cheap rooms badly lit, impossible to heat, where the air is thick with cigarette smoke, and breath reeks of bad wine and too many nights chasing muddled gigs at the outermost margins of a rock career that initially never seemed to get off the ground. Audiences often did not quite outnumber the four guys on stage. And then there is the search for management that, when it came onboard, was just not up to the nonstop battle for attention at the core of rock life.

I doubt many Americans can even begin to chart the English scene, Brit Pop and before, with its endless controversies, slaps at American musical Imperialism, and its strange blend of Oscar Wilde-ish decadence (Anderson cites *Portrait of Dorian Grey*, in the afternotes), guitar driven tonalities, *noir* lyrical feel, and the shitty streets and housing, where everything is thankfully blurred by hard-won drink and drugs. He makes no apologies for drug obsessions to the point where he barely functioned. He was unfortunately endowed with sufficient charisma to take others with him on a not so slow descent into Waster-ville. This memoir is a rock confessional cum historical analysis, and a literary *tour de force. W*ithout Anderson's sense of the occasional absurdity of it all, it would be heavy going indeed. The inchoate debates "within the business" can verge on the post-modernism hysteria of the confused academic variety: vague, intense, and ultimately so obscure the reader is left without reference point beyond the author's blinding persistence in the face, initially, of absolute indifference.

Describing the recurrent insanities of any band's interpersonal situation is something even a Balzac might have found daunting. But Anderson doesn't balk at attempting to chart his own odd balancing act, keeping Suede on the charts and in the papers. He comes across as an ever attentive, ever focused, ever present man at the center of Suede's immensely complicated career and self-inflicted fate. Imagine yourself at the center of a band's emotional surges, creating the lyrics that drive the next album, in constant rehearsal, and strategizing with management and record company over the next major move. Yet all of this and more somehow get negotiated in addition to a most complicated love and drug life. The sheer mind-numbing

drain of rock machinations beggar the descriptions that Anderson puts on paper. Americans consistently fail to notice that the Beatles' story is also one of their absolute desperation to escape the Hell of Liverpool, escaping beyond where millions in England are mired. Anderson is laser-clear on the dead end, bottomless nowhere of English life. American musical careers seem in contrast to be awash in a frothy materialism the envious English lads only dream about.

America is for the rest of the world the supreme materialist paradise; it's part of the hype that overlays the complete inequality at the center of life in the USA. The soundtrack to all of that is the Eagles' "Ridin in the Fast Lane" – LA as Chinatown. Anderson's lyrics are a portrait of the tiny moments when some of that sordid suspicion is revealed, which he accomplishes with some finesse. England is ever covetous of an American reality that both affirms and condemns materialism. At the same time, England has never rejected, as occurred in the US, its radical anti-capitalist legacy. England's music and theatrical culture is far more sensitive to the nuances of class and monied differences than what is allowable in media here.

Anderson is precise in fixing the elusive moment when a band at work on a career falters and loses the spur necessary to keep this wobbly life of a traveling group on track and moving single-mindedly toward the success, disillusion, break-up, regrouping and comeback that are the archetypal schema of every band's history. Suede, after years of plugging away, finds a mass audience and winds up on a Melody Maker cover, touted "the Best Band in Britain." It's the kind of coverage that can kill or enable, depending on whether all the other elusive factors necessary to success and stardom kindly manifest themselves. Anderson's bond with guitarist Bernard Barr is at the heart of the bands success. It's an extraordinary collaboration that ends in bitterness and anger—all of these elements are of course part of the Rock scenario, and necessary to the Romance on which the music is built.

Suede worked tirelessly and with some success at cranking out 'product' while touring endlessly. And nothing known to man so enervates as touring: it is the place where everything shreds. Romanticism is always fatal: that's what makes it Romanticism. It's what drives the Romantic- the candle burning furiously down at both ends, and that's part of the story's charm. Anderson is very good at describing that the downs are what draw the myth makers, managers, audiences and reviewers that keep the whole sad dream up in the air until the final, inevitable plummet.

The rock audience of the Suede sort waited for the group to flounder, recover, press on, flounder again in a strange flowing path that sails onto the rocks, ultimately, but not too soon lest the jaded audience be distracted from the entertainingly morbid details. The personal plummets are pictured in Anderson's drug addictions, and tortured relationships, one of them with Justine ("the love of my life") who was to break his heart, leave the band, take up with another lead singer, and form Elastica (an initial success that rapidly bottomed out). There is another deep relationship with Sam, a beautiful girl who follows Anderson in a series of drug-hazed liaisons that end with her in a *gran mal* seizure, saved when Anderson frantically does mouth to mouth. Sam survives but is never mentioned again, another evanescent victim in the

raucous passing scene. All that “romance” that must ever end in sordid escapade, is sudden proof for Anderson that his life is irredeemably out of control. It’s a defining moment.

Anderson runs and charts the entire rock gauntlet, the needy and simultaneously self-abasing and overbearing manager, the producers who attempt to stabilize what must vacillate in order to exist and stay creative, the female fans who succumb to the sheer force of celebrity only to walk away burned and pissed. The players within the group are never at ease as its tension that keeps the machine moving. But it’s the touring and groping for stability that rips Suede apart. Almost comically, it all ends backstage at the Graham Norton show where the battered and bruised collective look at each other in the grim light of the Green Room and mutter a subdued but definitive “fuck it” and it’s over….

The years unreel accommodatingly for Anderson. He goes on to have a successful solo career, but no word of how the rest of the band fared. It’s quite a testament to his power as a storyteller that he can remain sympathetic despite what’s inevitably revealed as the narcissism necessary to the gig, coupled of course with his ruthless ambition. The rock memoir has become a fixed part of our literary life, whether it is Mick Jagger anecdotes, Keith Richards stories, Bob Dylan fables, David Bowie celebrity profiles, Elton John’s Princess Di candles blowing in an endless wind, or Bruce Springsteen conflating Elvis with Woody Guthrie (now there’s a pairing made in hell). And the simple truth is that Rock has now passed all serious consideration and morphed into a Horatio Alger sentimentality contradicted by the bitter dregs of many failed lives lived on long past their sell-by dates.

Anderson brings some clarity to this marvelous fabrication, and in the process ends up a family man, the madness behind him, and yet, and yet– Was it all for a good song? No dream world emerges from this – the utopian longing long since as vanished as the dreams of the Communards. Yet the Art goes on. This memoir is driven like a moth toward the light at the end of the tunnel, a light suffused with the fugue of lived life. Anderson has been there, and done so much more than what was demanded. He is a survivor and the message is, in part, keep moving- there is so much more coming after you than you ever imagined.

Warren Leming *is a writer/documentarian/musician who has made his life in Chicago, London and Berlin. Among other works, he is co-director of the documentary* Ed Asner: On Stage and Off.

The Unconscious in Social and Political Life, (London: Phoenix Publishing House 2019)

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On the morning after Boris Johnson's election as UK Prime Minister in December 2019, one television commentator predicted, correctly as it turned out, that there would now be a 'battle of the narratives' over the reasons for the Tories' success.

One narrative that has so far not figured in that battle is that of psychoanalysis. Nor will this come as a great surprise to many people. While, as Eli Zaretsky has argued in an important study, 'political Freudianism' has often been present as a critical subterranean current within psychoanalytic thought[1], for most of its history the mainstream psychoanalytic profession has adopted a stance accurately described by one contributor to this edited collection as 'Let the politicians fight it out – we are above such ugly hostility'. Where psychoanalysts have engaged with political issues, they have often done so by applying concepts from the consulting room directly to wider socio-political events, with results that have sometimes been frankly embarrassing. As the prominent West German psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich complained at an international gathering in Vienna in 1971 with the Vietnam War raging in the background, 'I fear that nobody is going to take us very seriously if we continue to suggest that war comes about because fathers hate their sons and want to kill them, that war is filicide…collective phenomena demand a different sort of understanding than can be acquired by treating neuroses'[2].

This volume of fourteen essays, written mainly by experienced psychoanalysts and drawn from the Political Mind Seminars which have been running at the British Psychoanalytical Society since 2015, is an attempt to develop that 'different sort of understanding' and to demonstrate the explanatory relevance of psychoanalysis to a world in social, political and economic turmoil. How successful is it in that aim?

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the different perspectives of the contributors and the wide range of topics covered, it is difficult to give a definitive answer to that question. A helpful starting point, however, is offered by R.D. Hinshelwood in his chapter 'Reflection or action: and never the twain shall meet'. Echoing the view of Mitscherlich above, he observes that

> *There is a major problem in using psychoanalysis in political activity. The ways the*

> *individual is influenced by unconscious forces and by external social influences are essentially different, and these categories can be bridged conceptually only with some difficulty. I have been struck for some time by this conceptual divergence.*

The problem which Hinshelwood identifies is evident in several chapters in the book which move, sometimes rather clunkily, between structural explanations which give due weight to 'external social influences' and to alternative psychoanalytic explanations which are rooted in primitive instincts and drives. Consider, as an example, the opening chapter by Philip Stokoe, which is entitled 'Where have all the adults gone?'

To deal firstly with the title, the depiction of politicians such as Donald J. Trump as being developmentally delayed is a fair one and one that many will appreciate. It was well-captured in the huge balloon figure of Trump in nappies which floated over London as part of the protests which greeted his 2017 visit to the UK. But while that characterisation makes a useful (and humorous) polemical point it is of limited analytical value, at least in terms of politics. For one thing, who are the 'adults' who have left the room? Would they include Tony Blair, who led the UK into an illegal war in Iraq and promoted the neoliberal policies which have led to unprecedented levels of inequality? Or Barak Obama, who managed to deport more refugees than Trump so far has?

Secondly, how are we to explain the support for figures such as Trump and Boris Johnston amongst working-class voters? Stokoe suggests one factor contributing to that support, in the UK at least, is the generalised anxiety among people arising from the collapse of the protective structures of the post-war welfare state as a result of three decades of neoliberal policies. This is an interesting and plausible suggestion and one also taken up by other contributors. It is worth recalling, after all, that the title of first biography of the National Health Service, written in 1952 by its principal architect Aneurin Bevan, was *In Place of Fear*, while the system of benefits which replaced the Poor Law in the UK was called 'social security'. Far less plausible, however, and typifying the neglect of external factors noted above, is Stokoe's explanation of the growth of racism which accompanied the Brexit process. He suggests this was due to a combination of 'innate, unconscious' racism on the one hand and on the other, the fact that, 'from early on, we all carry an image of a group of strangers that threaten our survival'. From such an explanation, one would never guess that both prior to and during the Brexit referendum, politicians such as the then Home Secretary (and later Prime Minister) Theresa May consciously whipped up what was officially described as 'a hostile environment' for refugees and asylum seekers. May (at that time, incidentally, still a Remain supporter) was also responsible for the Windrush scandal which saw thousands of long-term British residents originally from the Caribbean being refused treatment on the NHS and in many cases deported to their 'home' country. Here psychoanalytic explanations let such officially sponsored state racism off the hook.

If a neglect of material and structural factors weakens some of the contributions to this book, then conversely the stronger chapters are those which come closer to achieving a fruitful

synthesis of structural analysis and psychoanalytic understandings. Thus, in what is probably the most sociological contribution, Michael Rustin's chapter focuses 'less on the role of political leaders and more on the conditions which have enabled them to gain large-scale support'. He links the current 'structures of feeling' within society, the collective mood of anxiety and resentment, to factors such as the global financial crash of 2008, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere and the refugee crisis of recent years. Elsewhere, David Bell paints a vivid picture both of the way in which neoliberal policies and austerity policies in recent decades have undermined good psychiatric care and also of how a basic human fear of dependence has been exploited by right-wing politicians to make mental health 'recovery' a personal duty and responsibility (albeit that he is rather too uncritical of the limitations of traditional psychiatric services which have been the object of a powerful critique in recent years by critical psychiatrists, psychologists and service users). And in an eloquent defence of psychoanalysis as 'an ethic of listening', Jonathan Sklar makes the case for a psychoanalytic practice based on 'the ability to tolerate the other without allowing domination, and at the same time as recognising complexity', in sharp contrast to the low-cost, CBT-based quick fixes which are often all that are currently on offer from public mental health services, in the UK at least.

As critics of psychoanalysis will be quick to point out of course, the highly democratic and empowering account of psychoanalysis presented by Sklar and other contributors often bears little resemblance to the realities of psychoanalytic practice, past and present. One reason for this is suggested by Stokoe in his discussion of 'the trap'. 'The trap', he suggests 'is the expertise that nearly all human beings have about understanding other human beings: we are very good at reading other people's unconscious…The only unconscious we cannot read is our own'. In principle the lengthy personal training analyses which psychoanalysts undergo should enable them, if not to overcome their own 'blind spots' and prejudices, then at least to be aware of them and prevent their interfering with the process of analysis. In reality, however, what the history of the psychoanalytic profession shows is the extent to which its exponents have been shaped by what Marx called 'the ruling ideas' in society. So, for example, as Dagmar Herzog notes in her excellent *Cold War Freud: Psychoanalysis in an Age of Catastrophes* (2017), before the early 1980s some 500 psychoanalytic essays and books had been written on the topic of homosexuality. Of these, less than half a dozen clamed homosexuality might be part of a satisfactory psychic organization (Freud himself, of course, had a more nuanced view).

In the same way, while several of the chapters in this book contain useful insights into the impact of neoliberal social and economic policies on people's emotional lives, running through many is a kind of left-liberal, Guardian reader 'common sense' that is itself seldom the subject of critical reflection. This sees the EU, for example as unequivocally a 'good thing', despite its institutions being responsible for the immiseration of the Greek working class through the imposition of brutal austerity and for the deaths of thousands of refugees in the Mediterranean. Brexit is deplored but rarely seen as an understandable response to what the journalist Will Hutton has called 'shit-life syndrome', a reality-based sense of despair which, in the absence of a real alternative, can lead in right-wing or racist directions. And in what is one of the most powerful and moving chapters in the book, Fakhry Davids shows that, for all their training and

cultivation of reflectiveness, psychoanalysts are no more likely than the rest of the population to show a deeper understanding of Islamophobia or the plight of the Palestinians or the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

To return to the problem identified by Hinshelwood, for this reviewer at least concepts usually associated with the classical Marxist tradition, such as exploitation, oppression, alienation, class struggle, solidarity, are of considerably greater explanatory value in making sense of the world of 21st century neoliberal capitalism than are those of psychoanalysis. But what the more successful chapters in this collection do show is that, among other things, psychoanalytic insights can sometimes provide ideological support for the political strategies necessary to combat exploitation and oppression and build solidarity. To end with one such example, Sklar skilfully employs the notion of the 'double attack' experienced by child victims of sexual abuse – the initial assault and then the conscious minimising of that assault or the injunction to remain silent – to make sense of the experience of the racist abuse, including banana throwing, experienced by black English footballers at a game in Serbia in 2012. To their credit the other English players refused to collude with any suggestion that this was 'just a bit of fun' and stood by their comrade. As Sklar notes:

> *We can see that the behaviour of the group has a profound significance – that is whether they join in the attack or stay quietly neutral, as if it is nothing to do with them, or whether a critical number stand up with the victim against the double attack. Racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia do not work in an atmosphere in which the premises of the attack are strongly rejected.*

While such insights are not a substitute for political analysis, it is nevertheless encouraging to see a practising psychoanalyst drawing on his professional experience to reinforce the importance of collective action against racism in all its forms and to emphasise the need for a 'critical number' of us to stand in solidarity with the victims of racism. At a time when the threat from the far right across the globe is greater than it has been at any time since the 1930s, that kind of ideological support from psychoanalysis is both timely and welcome.

Iain Ferguson *is author of* Politics of the Mind: Marxism and Mental Distress *(Bookmarks, 2017)*

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[1] E. Zaretsky (2017) *Political Freud: a History*, New York: Columbia University Press

[2] Quoted in D. Herzog (2017) *Cold War Freud: Psychoanalysis in an Age of Catastrophes*, Cambridge University Press, p4.

Peter Riley's Against Vocation: Whitman, Melville, Crane, and the Labors of American Poetry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) and Caroline Hellman's Children of the Raven and the Whale: Visions and Revisions of American Literature (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019)

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Poetry comes from all directions: with Ferlinghetti, to and from Paris, Harold Norse from East Coast to West, from Brooklyn to Paris to San Francisco, recalling Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

Cities are defined by their poets, traipsing from port to embarkation to shore leave, loitering, laboring, waiting, always wondering. "Under thy shadow by the piers I waited; Only in darkness is thy shadow clear," wrote Hart Crane, recalling the men he came to know under the Brooklyn Bridge, near the Navy Yard, arriving there from parts unknown, perhaps meeting someone Jean Genet encountered:

> *"Loved by Querelle, I would be loved by all the sailors of France. My lover is a compendium of all their naïve virtues."*

Like Crane, Genet sees the sailor as a universal subject, connecting his with countless other bodies and subjectivities. He could also be talking about a poem, or bodies electric, or a sweaty mix in between. Such sensibilities help us contend with notions of public space, migrations, ideas, memories and people moving through them, writing, living, observing and being observed. Ferlinghetti imagined a *Coney Island of the Mind*, thumbing his nose at the critics, writing, and managing a luminary bookstore. Writers wonder and work. It is not news. We all have our trades. Keep your day job, I learned. And that has made all the difference.

Enter Peter Riley's *Against Vocation: Whitman, Melville, Crane, and the Labors of American Poetry*recently published by Oxford UP (May 2019), a study of the works of Whitman, Melville and Crane. Excavating ephemera from their working lives, Riley considers the literary careers and day jobs of these authors: alongside literary production, Whitman fixed up houses in Brooklyn, Melville worked as a Customs inspector, Crane labored as a copywriter, and O'Hara put in time as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art. In their own ways, each resist tides, offering counternarratives to what was coming. Excavating their labors, Riley seems to suggest their efforts represent a "'rite of passage' vocational logic that does so much to secure and reproduce the current neoliberal paradigm." Supporting his claim, Riley begins his study with an excavation of a piece of wallpaper in a house where Whitman worked, drafting poetry on the back. "The cheap manufactured wallpaper, with its finials and foliage, hits at bourgeois affection and trifling domestic preoccupation," suggests Riley on the book's first page. The wallpaper is a metaphor for both art and work. "What was the Walt Whitman of 1855 doing with a sample of wallpaper?" wonders Riley, beginning his work of historical criticism, focusing on writers' day jobs. Ultimately, the author tells us that "*Against Vocation* historicizes, and presents an alternative account to, the exceptional poetic labor that underpins this kind of affirmatory thinking." The source of or explanation of this "affirmatory thinking" is anything but clear.

Writers write. Writers work. And? Still, two themes run throughout this study of poets and their labors: the specter of the working writer and the ever-present observer, combing through their unpublished drafts and papers looking for inconsistencies and *meanings*, scolding and judging them by today's standards of race, mining their words. Living here in Brooklyn where people are defined by water and work, creative capital was (is) supported by day jobs painting houses, catering, and waiting tables, even if many of them (us) feel like Bartlebys and "would prefer not to." Poets work, poetry is work; T.S. Eliot spent his days in a bank; Wallace Stevens as an insurance executive; Frank O'Hara at the MOMA (which now houses a permanent exhibit on him). These examples highlight movement of cultural capital as influences find their way from day jobs to the zeitgeist to the pen to paper. Kafka made money at Assicurazioni Generali, an Italian insurance company and later as a clerk handling workers' compensation insurance, each effort informing his understanding of the rules and structures, the iron cage of highly bureaucratic organizations, and by extension, a closed perspective on modernism. Without that experience, it is hard to imagine his writings taking on quite the same complexion.

Robertson Davies made the point over and over again in *The Other Half of Robertson Davies*: "There are as many ways as there are writers," suggests Davies. "I combine writing with other sorts of work…" His day job as a journalist kept him with words, drafting novels all day long as he edited away. "When I had spent the days doing this, I went home and worked, altogether work that filled eighteen volumes." We labor and we write all day long, even if pen does not hit the paper for hours at a time. The two dynamics overlap. The thesis of *Against Vocation* is not novel; it feels bewildering and omits a few important sources, such as David S. Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Oxford University Press, 1988). A vital contribution to American literary studies,

Reynoldspositsthat many of our canonical writers were influenced from both high and low culture, perspectives that informed their support for social movements. I'm not opposed to historical criticism. But words and methods matter. Sentences and questions matter, as does clarity.

In his own manner, Riley mines "The Working Day," chapter ten of *Capital* (volume one) by Karl Marx, among the most compelling of the three volumes. "Whitman rewrites Marx's monstrous, irrevocably compounded bodies as irrevocably concealed poetics that refuses the possibility of commodification's immaculate conception," argues Riley. Work and labor, writing and poetry move hand in hand. The contradictions of capital are many; Karl Marx and Walter Benjamin saw and wrote about them. Most of us, including academics, such as myself, or Riley whose book sells for $65.00 a book, are caught up in them.

At one of Stanley Aronowitz's sessions on the Frankfurt School theorists last fall, I mentioned *Against Vocation* and some of my thoughts on the work. Read *The Dialectical Biologist*, replied Aronowitz, a text (Harvard UP, 1985) by Richard Lewontin and Richard Levins. In it, Lewontin and Richard Levins argue "that a dialectical method was necessary to deal with complexity and change in the social and natural world. Medicine.. divorces itself from the social, and deals in simple linear, causal relationships between biological parts: A causes B and is cured by C. But health and illness are always in dialectical relationship with environment, society, culture and history." So are writing and work. We all are all a part of this dynamic, laboring in a social environment that informs our contradictions and struggles. No one can escape this. Whitman contradicts himself. This is part of what makes his writings on work, and democracy so compelling. Dialectical reason helps us come to grips with this movement back and forth, in constant flux.

"What's Whitman's contradiction? asks Stanley, referring to a queer sensibility he did not see when he read those *Leaves of Grass* when he was 14.

"Maybe I didn't read it closely?" Aronowitz confesses, without looking at the essence, appearance, or "the living contradiction between" what Marcuse sees as " the movement of things from that which they are not to that which they are." Ideas collide with shapes in time, poetry pointing us outside, to something more bountiful.

"If you want to be a secure person, do not take a secure job," Aronowitz continues.

It is hard not to see these dialectical workings in Whitman's poetry, regardless of whether he worked as a real estate developer or handy man or journalist, commenting on issues of his day as his thinking evolved. On and on Aronowitz goes, taking us on a detour away from Marcuse, through a discussion of Whitman, the limits of our thinking, back to the 19th century. Marx's reach extends in countless directions, Aronowitz mumbles, his ideas landing with 19th century French writer Honoré de Balzac. He is said to have wanted to study La Comédie Humaine after completing *Capital*. Afterall posits Balzac: "Reading brings us unknown friends." Marx had few but Engels. Marx's exploration of Balzac's writings on the everyday life of laborers and

revolutionaries alike would not come to be. But imagine if it had? Walter Benjamin's readings of Baudelaire might have found warmer reception.

"All happiness depends on courage and work," concedes Balzac. It is never simple or even possible to separate our labors from our creativity or the influences that form us. They are all part of the totality. Few of us completely conceptualize the whole. Instead we look at fragments. Marx loved Shakespeare stealing some of his best lines for his work. And Shakespeare, in hand, borrowed from Ovid. And on and so on. The secret roads between these texts are well worth traversing advises Harold Bloom in the *Anxiety of Influence.* The point of criticism is to help navigate and illuminate some of these roads, with sentences that invite along.

For an enticing engagement of these travels, consider *Gothic Queer Culture: Marginalized Communities and the Ghosts of Insidious Trauma*, Laura Westengard's investigation of ghosts embedded in queer theory, crypts in lesbian pulp fiction, monstrosity in AIDS poetry and art, and sadomasochism in queer performance (U Nebraska Press, 2019). "The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life," begins the epigraph by Avery Gordon on the first page of Westengard's fascinating, sometimes eerie new work. This is a story about lost souls and trauma, trans icons and the ghosts navigating the often scary, haunted spaces in between the graveyards and shopping malls of our cities.

Another useful example is Caroline Chamberlin Hellman's *Children of the Raven and the Whale: Visions and Revisions of American Literature*. "Nothing changes, through much be new-fashioned…" the work's epigraph, from Melville in *Mardi, and a Voyage Tither*, 1849, reminds us. "In the books of the past we learn naught but of the present; in those of the present, the past. All Mardi's history – beginning, middle and finis – was written out in capitals in the first page penned."

The song remains the same. Literary inheritance "inform[s] how we read, write, and teach," posits Hellman. Place matters. To situate her study, Hellman acknowledges her subjectivity, locating herself as an academic at the City University in Downtown Brooklyn, the locale where Johnathan Lethem's novel *Motherless Brooklyn* takes place, where Whitman and Crane, Hubert Shelby and Arthur Miller labored, making homes for themselves. "[L]iterary inheritance extends to geography, history, and intangible culture," contends Hellman. "My teaching at New York City College of Technology within the City University of New York system has offered me unique opportunities to investigate seemingly incongruous texts within the same space and conversation," writes Hellman. "Our college's annual literary arts festival which has featured writers such as Colson Whitehead, Junot Diaz… among others…influenced my syllabi and my thinking." Over time, Hellman began folding these works into American literature surveys and developed courses that featured constellations or pairs of writers responding to the ideas of the earlier ones. Exploring these works with her students became an increasingly interactive process. "At an institution where it is common to have twenty nationalities in single classroom," notes Hellman, "our conversations regarding American identity and experience,

transnationalism and what constitutes immigrant fiction were especially rich." The result of these conversations is the *Children of the Raven and the Whale*.

Here, Hellman considers at the ways in which contemporary multi-ethnic writers of the United States have responded to nineteenth and early twentieth century texts historically central to the American literary canon. Each chapter looks to constellations of texts, Whitman and Lethem in chapter one, Coates and Baldwin, Melville, and Wright in chapter two, on and on, tracing influences, rewritings and layerings. Hellman's pairings open up countless ways of reading and re reading both early and later texts.

Take chapter three "Short Happy Palimpsest," which compares Junot Díaz's *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wow* and Hemingway's story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." Unearthing lines between Diaz's Santo Domingo and Hemingway's story of a safari in Africa, between the colonized, the colonizers, literary colonialism, dictatorship and evolving ideas of masculinity, Hellman reads Diaz and his ambivalent relationship with Hemingway. "In a dictatorship, only one person is allowed to speak," notes Diaz, referring to Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, Dominican strong man, who ruled the Dominican Republic from February 1930 until his assassination in May 1961. Often referred to as the Goat, Mario Varga Llosa wrote a novel about these years. The literary influences of the era are many. Two of Trujillo's offspring, Ramfis and Radhamés, for example, were named after characters in Aida, the Verdi opera.

In a democracy, we're all allowed to speak, implies Diaz. Whitman's genius is to show us how. In this way, Diaz is an heir, helping expand the notions of what the literature of our dwindling democracy can be, reminding us what can happen if we neglect it, while offering a grim foreshadowing. The canon has long been occupied by white male authors posits Hellman. Contemporary ethnic American authors endeavor to reclaim this American space. Hemingway is an example of the occupier— and so Diaz invokes (and counters) his text quite consciously, in his redefinition of the territory of U. S. Literature. This is a story of contemporary writers forging ahead, into new, more complicated engagements in the spectrum of American experience. Revealing and reveling in the traces of texts once submerged, Hellman invites us to explore.

"The more one judges, the less one loves," Balzac reminds. Throughout this review of *Against Vocation* and *Children of the Raven and the Whale,* we witness the former and the latter. With clarity and finesse, Hellman reminds us that the roads between the stories, the detours matter; the sentences matter.

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Andy Heintz, Dissidents of the International Left: New Internationalist Publications, (Oxford, University Press, 2019)

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In this volume of interviews with an extraordinary range of people identifying with the political left or progressive social movements, Andy Heintz starts out seeking to answer a number of questions which are key to reconstructing a viable and relevant left today.

For example, he asks whether there can be such a thing as “humanitarian intervention”, which, given the nature of power in today’s world, would involve countries such as the United States or powerful European states, if it “could prevent genocide, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity.” While rejecting the hypocrisy with which many western leaders might answer in the affirmative, laced with “selective amnesia, self-righteousness and double standards,” Heintz is equally concerned by the way in which the western “Manichean left” simply inverts “unthinking American exceptionalism” by rationalising or dismissing crimes against humanity carried out by regimes perceived, rightly or wrongly, to be opponents of US power.

While ranging from the simply narrow to the genocide-denying in its application, this mainstream left opposition to any use of imperial power, regardless of context, starts from valid premises: such power is almost always used for malevolent purposes, and therefore, will not have humanitarian motives when occasionally carrying out selective humanitarian interventions. But the importance of this question is not simply a matter of opposing inherited left dogma. Rather, it goes to the heart of what internationalism means to the left – as Heintz states, “at the end of the day, there is only one world.”

Inside the US, the police have a history of racist violence, which the Black Lives Matter movement has brought to light, but this will not stop people facing violence from calling the police, given no alternatives. So why can’t people in other countries do the same, when alternatives are lacking?

Noam Chomsky’s long record opposing the US war machine may be a good place to start. Confronted with the question of what the West should do about genocidal actions elsewhere in the world – as raised by Samantha Power in her book about genocide – Chomsky notes the hypocrisy of many making these arguments. He points out that while some focus on the crimes of “enemies” – crimes he does not deny – they ignore similar crimes for which “we” (western

governments) are responsible, and hence are more easily able to do something about simply by ending financial and military support to such regimes. He gives the example of massive US support to Suharto's 35-year Indonesian military dictatorship and its genocidal war in East Timor.

Yet while that is an important part of the answer, it also skirts the question. Commenting on Chomsky's view, American writer Bill Weinberg notes that "the insight behind this critique is that … there is no such things as humanitarian intervention," as there are no such pure motives in statecraft; that any US intervention, regardless of propaganda or self-deception, will be "about protecting US strategic interests."

While agreeing with Chomsky on this, Weinberg stresses the problem with making it all about US motives. When a people are under attack, their villages burnt down, when forced to flee from their homes, Weinberg suggests "I don't think they have to be immediately concerned about the motives of those who are coming to help them." For example, US hypocrisy was highlighted when, in 1999, it was bombing Serbia to supposedly protect the Kosovar Albanians, while supporting Turkey's atrocities against its Kurdish population with American arms; but as Weinberg notes "if your village has been burnt down and you have been forced into a refugee camp across the border, what difference does it make to you that there are Kurds in Turkey that are in a similar situation?"

In other words, how can we oppose western double standards while supporting the right of people being terrorised to get help from whoever is willing to give it with whatever motives?

Even then, Weinberg does not specifically support actual intervention. In the Kosovo case, he sees the main betrayal – by both western leaders and dominant sections of the old left – was ignoring the decade of civil struggle in Kosovo. Once this betrayal resulted in the move from peaceful to armed resistance, the consequent war, including US-NATO intervention, are all painted as part of the resultant catastrophe.

Catastrophe it was – and one could well argue that the *nature of this NATO intervention* led to greater catastrophe for the Kosovars themselves – yet this does not resolve the question of whether or not any kind of western intervention is ever justified when there are no better options available to a people suffering crimes against humanity; for example, if Kosovo had been done differently.

In similar vein, Stephen Zunes notes that there are many empirical studies demonstrating the success of non-violent social movements, which he has written extensively on. On the question of whether an international intervention is ever justified, he claims it may be in "extreme circumstances" such as Rwanda in 1994, whereas on Kosovo he thinks "smarter diplomacy and preventative measures" would have worked better; leaving the obvious question of, "what if they didn't"? And on Libya, he notes that "NATO went well beyond its mandate to protect civilians through enforcing a no-fly zone to effectively becoming the air force for rebel armies overthrowing the government." Again, raising the question of, what if they had simply stuck to

the mandate?

To these questions, American author Stephen Shalom notes that there was in fact US intervention in Syria, but its primary intervention (before the onset of its war against ISIS in 2014) was "to make sure the rebels didn't get the one weapon they needed in their uprising against Assad: anti-aircraft weaponry." This means the left could have simply demanded the ending of this actual US intervention to effectively aid the uprising. Yet while this is valid, we are no closer to knowing whether any kind of limited 'humanitarian intervention', such as a no-fly-zone to prevent regime bombing civilian populations, could be justified.

Even returning to a seemingly unambiguous anti-interventionist like Chomsky, we get confusion; after skirting the question of what US policy should have been towards Syria in general, he stresses "the US should do whatever is possible to protect the Kurds instead of keeping to past policies of regular betrayal." Given that large-scale US military intervention in Syria over the last five years has been overwhelmingly in support of the Kurdish-led forces, this appears to be a statement *in support of US armed intervention* in certain circumstances, but why it is justified in support of some peoples but not others remains unexplained.

Regardless of this question of concern to western leftists, Weinberg's point that we need to place ourselves in the position of those facing repression was well-taken by Heintz, who claims that this had an impact on his direction, as he made greater efforts to interview activists from around the world.

Thus the book shifts away from these western-centric debates he began with. The range of activists from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America interviewed is impressive, as is the range of issues raised, this being a major strength of the book.

Arguably, this leads to the loss of any clear thematic thread. In each region and country, activists highlighted what was important to them. For example, for activists in Nigeria, the threat of the brutal 'Islamist' terrorist Boko Haram, looms large; in India, the rise of the right-wing Hindu-chauvinist BJP regime of Narendra Modi and the accompanying increase in social violence is a major issue; in Burma, the war crimes committed by the military against the Rohingya; for women's activists in many countries, the rise of religious extremism and its misogynistic messages.

This apparent abandonment of a thematic thread is not necessarily a bad thing, especially given the nature of the project. Rather, what it highlights is the fact that the world is bigger than the arguments among western-based leftists about whether any kind of western intervention into these issues outside the West can ever be justified.

This is not to suggest that this western discussion is unimportant; and given the actual record of western intervention, to even present the dilemma as one of western intervention to protect human rights, versus non-intervention against human rights violations – as one interviewee problematically did – would involve believing a narrative that has little basis.

There is no such dichotomy in the book; many interviews from majority-world describe their own struggles against western imperialism. Mahmood Mamdani, a professor at Columbia university of Ugandan origin, describes the ongoing impact of colonial divide and rule across Africa; Fatou Sow, Senegalese director of the International Solidarity network of Women Living Under Muslim Laws, is concerned with the rise of religious fundamentalism in her country, but equally concerned with western farm subsidies and unfair world trade devastating local farmers; Afghan women's activist Malalai Joya trenchantly fights both the Taliban, other fundamentalist warlords and the US occupation.

But what does one say to Nyuon Susan Sebit, of the National Alliance of Women Lawyers in South Sudan, when, writing about large-scale violence against women and children in her country's civil war, says "it's high time for the international community to support peace in South Sudan" by, among other things, "put(ting) pressure on the warring parties"? Because, without peace and security, there can be no development of any kind. Do we patronisingly remind her that the "international community" have a long record of crimes and therefore have no right to pressure some South Sudanese warlords? Or take the life and death situation she describes seriously?

And here is the book's strength – making us look at the myriad of problems being confronted by leftists and social movements around the world, often posing difficult questions.

Perhaps Syrian writer Yassin al-Haj Saleh, who was jailed in the Assad regime's dungeons for 16 years, puts this point most clearly, quoting his abducted wife, Samira al Khalil, from East Ghouta after Bashar Assad's chemical massacre of 1500 civilians in 2013: "The world is one small village, is not this what you always say? Why are you leaving the population of one neighbourhood of this village massacred, sieged and starved?"

Yet in the same interview, Saleh strongly criticises the actual record of American intervention in eastern Syria; he has no illusions. Yet the question remains about what should be done in such a situation; and it poses the question for the global left: are we internationalist, or nationalist-isolationist? How is it possible that many leftists who would ask the same question about Gaza – why it is being left "massacred, sieged and starved" – react with derision to Khalil asking the same about Ghouta?

Yearning for a new global movement against the deteriorating world system, Saleh stresses that "global responsibility is the political and ethical basis for a different world. There is no us and them. We are all them. We are all responsible." While space has only permitted this review to scratch the surface of the myriad issues covered, this book is an excellent place to begin to gain a broad view of the world as it is from below, essential if Saleh's call is to begin seeing its day.

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