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Title	Terror, theory, and the humanities
Publication date	2012
Original Citation	Di Leo, J. R. and Mehan, U. (eds.) (2012) Terror, Theory, and the Humanities. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press. doi: 2027/spo.10815548.0001.001
Type of publication	Book
Link to publisher's version	https://openhumanitiespress.org/ - 10.3998/ohp.10815548.0001.001
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Download date	2026-11-08 00:11:02
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/5642



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Terror, Theory and the Humanities

Edited by Jeffrey R. Di Leo and Uppinder Mehan



Terror, Theory and the Humanities



Critical Climate Change

Series Editors: Tom Cohen and Claire Colebrook

The era of climate change involves the mutation of systems beyond 20th century anthropomorphic models and has stood, until recently, outside representation or address. Understood in a broad and critical sense, climate change concerns material agencies that impact on biomass and energy, erased borders and microbial invention, geological and nanographic time, and extinction events. The possibility of extinction has always been a latent figure in textual production and archives; but the current sense of depletion, decay, mutation and exhaustion calls for new modes of address, new styles of publishing and authoring, and new formats and speeds of distribution. As the pressures and realignments of this re-arrangement occur, so must the critical languages and conceptual templates, political premises and definitions of 'life.' There is a particular need to publish in timely fashion experimental monographs that redefine the boundaries of disciplinary fields, rhetorical invasions, the interface of conceptual and scientific languages, and geomorphic and geopolitical interventions. Critical Climate Change is oriented, in this general manner, toward the epistemopolitical mutations that correspond to the temporalities of terrestrial mutation.

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OPEN HUMANITIES PRESS

An imprint of MPublishing – University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor

2012

First edition published by OPEN HUMANITIES PRESS 2012

Freely available online at http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.10815548.0001.001

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ISBN-10 1-60785-249-7

ISBN-13 978-1-60785-249-0

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Acknowledgements

Our primary debt of gratitude goes out to the contributors to this volume for sharing their thoughts on terror, theory, and the humanities. It is our hope that collectively their contributions will open up new lines of conversation about this important subject and work to create a more tolerant critical climate for dissenting positions regarding the events of September 11, 2001.

We would also like to single out Katie L. Moody of *symplokē* for her assistance in the production of this volume. Her timely support was instrumental in bringing this volume to publication.

Finally, we would like to thank our families for their unfailing encouragement, support, and patience.

Introduction

Theory Ground Zero

Terror, Theory and the Humanities after 9/11

Jeffrey R. Di Leo and Uppinder Mehan

[F]ear makes people inclined to deliberation.

– Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.

– Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*

Terror is an emotion, a state of mind. Because extreme fear can be provoked at any time, terror cannot be ended.

– George Lakoff, "Beyond the *War on Terror*"

The opening of the twenty-first century was cast in the crucible of terror. The world watched in fear as the clock struck midnight and carried us into the year 2000. Many feared the world was going to end; many others expected a massive computer crash that would bring down the stock market and global markets; the emotion of terror rang in the new millennium. In retrospect, this fear turned out to be only a prelude to the turning loose of this emotion on the morning of September 11, 2001. As planes struck the Pentagon and the Twin Towers, many in America watched—and rewatched—their televisions in terror.

While there was no doubt that the towers were falling—and that many people were killed as a result—the emotions that were aroused by the

media reportage of the events often mirrored those felt while watching a classic Hollywood disaster movie like *The Towering Inferno* or reading a Stephen King novel. Film and literature have long used similar storylines to arouse the emotions and engage the imagination. In fact, *Nosebleed*, a film starring Jackie Chan about a plot to blow up the World Trade Center, was under production at the time of the attacks, and was subsequently cancelled. Of course, the attacks were no movie, but the emotions they brought out (fear and pity), especially for those who were not experiencing these events firsthand, bore an uncanny and uncomfortable relationship with the arts and the emotions associated with them.

One need only recall Aristotle's view that good tragedy "must imitate actions arousing fear and pity, since that is the distinctive function of this kind of imitation" (*Poetics* 1452b31–33) to gain a sense of the type of relationship to which we are alluding. For him, too, the plot of a tragedy "should be so framed that, even without seeing the things take place, he who simply hears the account of them shall be filled with horror and pity at the incidents; which is just the effect that the mere recital of the story in *Oedipus* would have on one" (*Poetics* 1453b4–6). Is this not what most felt when the events were relayed to them by email or phone? Life was imitating drama in these attacks—which films like *Nosebleed* provided an all too proximate reminder.

And what of the fear that was aroused when we heard about the events of September 11, 2001? Aristotle's term for it is *phobos*, and it is sometimes translated as "terror"—or even "horror." He defines it as "a sort of pain or agitation derived from imagination of a future destructive or painful evil" (*Rhetoric* 1382a1). He continues that this evil is near at hand, and not far off, and that the persons threatened are ourselves. But, as Hans-Georg Gadamer has noticed, the translation of *phobos* as "fear" gives it a "far too subjective ring" (130). Aristotle's *phobos* "is not just a state of mind but," notes Gadamer, "a cold shudder that makes one's blood run cold, that makes one shiver" (130). While one may question whether a recital of the story in *Oedipus* still elicits *phobos*—especially after being told and retold for thousands of years—there is no doubt about the presence of this emotion when recounting the story of 9/11, for which, even ten years later, the evil continues to be near at hand.

Perhaps it is this uncanny and uncomfortable relationship that has brought so many scholars in the humanities to think and write about the events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath. Or perhaps it is because contemporary theoretical discussions can provide much insight into the attacks and the emotions associated with them. Whatever the reason, there has been a wealth of work in the humanities over the past ten years that has provided much insight into what happened on September 11, 2001, why it happened, and what and how it means. The attacks not only opened a new chapter for contemporary theory, but also provided the humanities a subject ideally suited to their expertise—and one which theorists could help others understand. From the rhetoric and politics of the attacks to their philosophical foundations and historical roots, the humanities have had a lot to say about the new world order of terror and terrorism that has radically shaped the structure of the new millennium. Perhaps this is only fitting, for as Aristotle contends, fear and terror do not make us irrational; rather, "fear makes people inclined to deliberation" (*Rhetoric* 1383a14).

Theory's Event

Very few historical events define a generation—and fewer still become the central focus of the theoretical energies of its scholars. For example, while the war in Vietnam occupied our attention for most of the sixties and early seventies, and defined a generation, it is still difficult to argue that the war became the *central* focus of our theoretical energies during this same period. In American philosophy, conceptual analysis and analytic methodology dominated the Vietnam era, whereas during the same period, the New Criticism was in vogue in progressive English departments, with structuralism and semiotics just beginning to become more mainstream within the humanities. Given then the dominant theoretical climate of this period, it seems a stretch to maintain that the roots of the New Criticism or analytic philosophy were grounded or determined by the major historical events of the sixties and early seventies. While events like Vietnam, Watergate and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. "shocked" and defined a generation, they did not

become the central focus of our theoretical attention nor did they dominate the scholarly critical agenda.

In fact, only a handful of events across history even seem to qualify for the kind of impact that we are describing, which is namely, the ability of a historical event to configure—or even reconfigure—theoretical discourse around or through it. The French Revolution immediately comes to mind as a good example of the kind of impact a major event can have on theoretical discourse, as well as the two world wars of the last century. With these thoughts in mind, the uniqueness of the theoretical situation brought about by the events of September 11, 2001 should stand out. Even a cursory survey of contemporary scholarship will reveal the extraordinary degree of critical and theoretical attention that has been afforded this event over the last ten years. Consequently, it seems reasonable to at least postulate that the foreign terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 qualify as both defining a generation and occupying the center of our theoretical energies.

One of the sure signs of a historical event dominating the theoretical landscape is when words or concepts associated with that event come to mean something very different after the occurrence of the event—when they in effect become "infected" with or "inflected" through that event to the extent that the event and the word or concept associated with that event become indistinguishable or dissociable with each other. For example, after the French Revolution, "liberty" became dissociable with this historical event in the same way that "holocaust" became indistinguishable from the genocidal events that occurred during World War II. Moreover, these major—or better yet, "extreme"—historical events tend to reify terms and concepts. "Liberty," for example, became reified by the French Revolution in the same way "terror" has come to be reified as a consequence of the events of September 11, 2001. "Terror," prior to September 11, 2011, was simply an emotional state describable as being greatly frightened or being in a state of intense fear. However, after September 11, 2011, terror became more than simply a mental state that most seek to avoid—or to experience through artworks such as horror movies or tragic plays in an act of catharsis. Rather, it was *hypostatized* into something that exists—or persists—in the world; something with which we are at "war."

To notice this transformation is to notice one of the ways in which an historical event can go from being a "mere" event to a "major" one. One would assume that any event that has the power to reify an emotion is one that warrants the term "major." However, this is not an uncontroversial assumption. And it should not be surprising that strong resistance to it comes, for example, from someone who throughout his career sought to undermine or put under "erasure" the difference between the ideal and the real—between the conceptual and the empirical—namely, Jacques Derrida—one of our generation's exemplary theorists.

In a wonderful interview with him on October 22, 2001, just weeks after the US terrorist attacks, Giovanna Borradori asks Derrida whether he regarded them as a "major event." "September 11 [*le 11 septembre*] gave us the impression of being a *major event*," says Borradori, "one of the most important historical events we will witness in our lifetime, especially for those of us who never lived through a world war" (85). Then she asks Derrida whether he agrees with her. Unlike just about everyone else at that time—and after—Derrida will not concede that the attacks were a "major event"—nor will he concede that they were not. "I agree with you: without any doubt, this 'thing,' 'September 11,' 'gave us the impression of being a *major event,*'" comments Derrida, "But what is an impression in this case? And an event? And especially a '*major* event'?" (88). Rather, after a lengthy philosophical commentary on what a "major event" is and is not, he finally says, "A major event should be so unforeseeable and irruptive that it disturbs even the horizon of the concept or essence on the basis of which we believe we recognize an event *as such*" (90).

Derrida is of course right to complicate Borradori (and our) "impression" that September 11, 2001 is a "major" event. However, in deconstructing the ways in which September 11, 2001 is commonly fashioned, Derrida risks deflating his entire response to a mere philosophical quibble or exercise. Derrida, who towered over theory beginning with his criticisms of structuralism in the late sixties and elegant deconstructive readings of literature and philosophy in the seventies and eighties, seems out of place in the wake of the events of September 11, 2011; he appears as a representative of theory's playful intellectual capacities as opposed to its power to bring about social and political change. While it might have been possible for Jean Baudrillard to theoretically play with the notion

of whether the Gulf War "really took place" in 1991—though he took a lot of flack for it—the events of September 11, 2001 don't seem to be as open to similar deconstructive play. Why?

Perhaps it is because September 11 was a *major event*, and hesitation on Derrida's part to regard it as such shows how his approach to historical events might be better suited to a theoretical epoch that is not centered upon a major event. Still, however, his speculation as to what it would mean to regard it "as such"—that is, as a "major event"—is important because it opens up a new vista for theory. By arguing that a *major event* "disturbs even the horizon of the concept or essence on the basis of which we believe we recognize an event *as such,*" Derrida is opening September 11, 2001 up for a species of event for which very few can qualify—namely, one that fundamentally undermines our notion of "event"—and other concepts associated with the specifics of the event.

Later in his conversation with Borradori, Derrida asserts that regardless of whether September 11 is regarded as a "major" event,

> Such an "event" surely calls for a philosophical response. Better, a response that calls into question, at their most fundamental level, the most deep-seated conceptual presuppositions in philosophical discourse. The concepts with which this "event" has most often been described, named, categorized, are the products of a "dogmatic slumber" from which only a new philosophical reflection can awaken us, a reflection *on* philosophy, most notably on political philosophy and its heritage. The prevailing discourse, that of the media and of the official rhetoric, relies too readily on received concepts like "war" or "terrorism" (national or international). (100)

It is this space of "new philosophical reflection" awakened or brought about by the events of September 11, 2001 that we would like to say that "terror" has refigured the landscape of twenty-first century theory. Prior to September 11, 2001, critical theory and philosophy *was* in a sort of "dogmatic slumber." However, this "event" has not only reawakened "reflection *on* philosophy"—it has also reawakened reflection on "theory." In many ways, the events of September 11, 2001 were also theory's "ground zero." But how?

Theory Ground Zero

The events of September 11, 2001 were a wake-up call for theory. Prior to these terrorist attacks, theory was on life support—and toying with the notion of whether it was or should be dead. To a large extent, the question of theory's death was brought about by its continued reluctance to fully embrace its political dimensions—a change for theory that could only be accomplished at the expense of the epistemological net it had cast over the preceding twenty-five or so years. Or, to put it somewhat differently, if the 1970s and 1980s allowed theorists to talk about politics, albeit through an epistemological shadow, and if the rise of cultural, postcolonial, and other studies in the 1990s back-doored politics into theory, then 2001 was the year when theory's political unconscious became conscious—and desperately significant.

Derrida was right to posit in the weeks after the September 11, 2001 attacks that received concepts like "war," "terror," and "terrorism" do not adequately account for what happened. They didn't—and don't—as efforts like those of many contemporary Anglo-American philosophers after September 11, 2001 to deal with these concepts in the "standard" way have revealed. In Anglo-American philosophy prior to September 11, 2001, there was nary any discussion of "terrorism" (and far less discussion of "terror"). However, after this date, there has been a flurry of activity to both "define" terrorism as well as to address the question "Can terrorism ever be morally justified?" However, by and large, work in this area suffers because most of the definitions and moral justifications follow the well-worn and expected lines of response, that is, largely fall into either a consequentialist or non-consequentialist framework.[1]

And, for the most part, they do not, as Derrida says, open up "reflection on philosophy." Nevertheless, they are still valuable as they both reveal the limits of contemporary philosophy to account for events like those of September 11, 2001, and *in toto* demonstrate the need for "a new philosophical reflection"—which we simply prefer to call "theory," particularly if it is a form of reflection that re-grounds speculation on global culture, politics and society. To a large extent, rethinking concepts and questions related to "terrorism" has become the *cause célèbre* for progressive thinkers over the past ten years—and in many ways represents the best of what theoretical work in the humanities has to offer. Not only has

this work taken theory off of life-support, but it has also opened up a fertile debate as to what theory is and should be after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Theory today (as the essays in this collection amply demonstrate) is now more heterogeneous than ever. The post-theory generation of the 1990s opened the path for less doctrinaire approaches to theory. No more is it "By their theoretical camp they shall be known"—or judged. And no more is theory the sole province of English and comparative literature departments. Rather, theoretical work today is distributed across the disciplines more evenly than ever before. And, public access to theory has come to be more important than theoretical rigor and complexity. While well-thought out theoretical work is still valuable, it should not come at the cost of severely restricting its audience. Moreover, in the 1990s, which theoretical approach one utilized came to be secondary to the *object* of theoretical work. "Literary" theory just became "theory" in the post-theoretical 1990s.

In many ways, the events of September 11, 2001 saved theory from complete dissolution by recalibrating its concepts, object, and objective. They also blew theory once and for all out of its social and political amnesia—and foregrounded its engagement with social and political philosophy. Post-9/11, it no longer seems responsible for theorists to engage in *a*political analysis; to dwell on the concept at the expense of the empirical; to ignore the social while reveling in the ideal. Cultural capital gave way to financial capital after 9/11. But something else happened to theory in the wake of 9/11: it became more difficult for theorists to voice dissent without fear of reprisal.

The Terror of Dissent

Not only did the events of September 11, 2001 change the *character* of theory, they also changed the relationship between theory and the academy, and between theory and the public sphere. As theorists began to increasingly comment on the events of September 11, 2001, the academy and the public began to react to them with a weakening sense of free speech and academic freedom, particularly to comments expressing dissenting interpretations of the events. The most well-known instance

of this is the case of University of Colorado humanities scholar Ward Churchill's comments about the events of September 11, 2001.[2]

In an essay entitled "'Some People Push Back': On the Justice of Roosting Chickens," published one day after the attacks, Ward Churchill wrote that the events of September 11, 2001 are "chickens [coming] home to roost in a very big way at the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center." In the increasingly polarized idiom of contemporary American politics, the University of Colorado professor's comments on the terrorist attacks drew much attention from both the "progressive Left" (who aimed to champion them) and the "reactionary Right" (who aimed to demonize them).

Churchill's comments were largely viewed by the progressive Left as clearly within the domain of his First Amendment right to free speech and were staunchly defended by the ACLU. The reactionary Right, however, most visibly represented by the Board of Regents and upper administration of the University of Colorado, David Horowitz, and Fox News, used Churchill's comments as an opportunity restrict academic freedom and intellectual activism that was out of line with their ideology—and the logic of patriotism.

For some, the Churchill's "chickens" incident was just another—albeit more extreme—chapter in the culture wars that had been ongoing between the progressive Left and reactionary Right since the late 1980s. For others, however, something of a different order occurred; namely, the events of September 11, 2001 created a critical climate so sensitive that expressing dissenting views could override one's right to academic freedom—and lead to dismissal from a tenured faculty position. What is most discouraging about this is that tenure was invented in the early part of the twentieth-century, in part, to protect the professoriate from situations like this, where faculty could lose their jobs for expressing politically unpopular opinions. The terrorist attacks in the United States—in conjunction with increasingly neoliberal university administration—changed this.

September 11, 2001 brought about a critical climate for theorists in the humanities such that it was no longer permissible to make critical statements or draw theoretical conclusions without fear of reprisal. Whereas even ten years earlier (that is, in 1991, before the attacks), comments like

Churchill's would have been controversial, but probably would not have triggered a series of events leading to dismissal from an academic position, the reactionary Right used the attacks as an opportunity to make headway in the culture wars against the Left and discourage dissent.

One of the unfortunate consequences for theory and the humanities as a result of the awakening of the spectre of terror in the United States is that humanities discourse now needs to be highly attuned not only to *what* it says, but also to *how* it says it. For some, Churchill's problems came not from simply expressing a dissident position on the events of September 11, 2001, but rather for not doing it more "respectfully" or "artfully." For example, instead of using simple and direct statements, he should have provided more complex and indirect commentary on the events—and in so doing, he would have shielded his dissent more effectively from easy criticism from the logic of patriotism.[3] For others, the problem was not the aesthetics and rhetoric of the essay, but rather its psychology. Churchill should have been more sensitive to the emotional needs of post-trauma.[4] Doing so would have led him to avoid, for example, comparing the financial workers who were killed in the World Trade Center as "little Eichmanns," that is, as cogs in the American gears of financial empire and war. But what does this case—and related ones—mean for theory and the humanities in the age of terror?

The response to Churchill was many times more vicious than the attacks on Baudrillard ten years earlier for questioning whether the Gulf War took place. To us, the age of terror presents a more complicated situation for theorists to engage in publicly accessible discourse. On the one hand, there is an obligation to take theory out of the classroom and the library, and to bring it into the public arena; on the other hand, there are cases like Churchill's which illustrate the new restrictions which humanities academics face in the shadow of the events of September 11, 2001. Balancing rigor with access, and direct statement with respect, is perhaps the best way to sum up the goal of theory, which aims to avoid political confrontation in the age of terror. Dissent is possible without negative ramifications only if it carefully avoids divisive rhetoric and emotional upheaval.

This situation puts theorists whose work touches on both events with direct connections to the attacks—for example, the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan and the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib, and events with less direct connections, such as the increasing restrictions to academic freedom and frequent challenges to intellectual activism—on notice. Though the attacks of September 11, 2001 may be regarded as theory's event, theorists must be more careful than usual in discussing them, especially theorists in Middle Eastern, Near Eastern, and Islamic Studies, one of the few areas of growth in higher education since September 11, 2001 (Wilson A11). Theorists in these positions should be aware that they are both crisis-driven as well as crisis-prone: one misstatement can easily compromise one's academic position.

The essays in this book, however, are all both direct in the positions which they seek to advance, but also highly rigorous in their approach. And those in the first half expand upon many of the critical concerns raised by bringing terror and theory both to bear in the humanities classroom and the university at large.

The first, Christian Moraru's "'Cosmopolitisme ou barbarie'? September 11, Higher Education, and Cosmopolitan Literacy: An Asymmetric Manifesto," stresses the need to teach a cosmopolitan literacy based on an attempt to understand the other in his/her material, particular humanness rather than as an allegorical other. Moraru's essay both establishes not only new classroom imperatives in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, but also suggests that cosmopolitan literacy should be regarded as the preferred literacy in the age of terror.

The next essay, "Universities, Terrorists, Narrative, Porcupines" by Terry Caesar, uses Donald Barthelme's short story "Porcupines at the University" and John Updike's novel *Terrorist* as means of exploring the university as an unlikely site of terror. Caesar suggests that the university is part of two contradictory narratives relative to terror: the self-enclosed physical site impervious to the world, and the ideologically open space that is home to all manner of radical experiments. Rather than see the two narratives as oppositional, we should see them as interacting in troubling ways that Caesar suggests keep the university oscillating between a target for ideological terror and an exception for physical terror.

In "World Bank University: The War on Terror and the Battles for the Global Commons," David B. Downing focuses on the political usage of "the war on terror." According to Downing, the "War on Terror" has

become a cause which licenses all manner of regressive policies. Education has been further commodified and emphasis has been placed on vocational skills. The World Bank and the IMF continue to pursue economic policies which, combined with military policy, lead to a greater proportion of the education commons becoming privatized.

"The Company They Keep: How Apologists for Faith Rationalize Terrorism" by Horace L. Fairlamb considers the epistemic practices that allow for religious terrorism in academic examinations of the links between faith and terror. He suggests that all too often, Western philosophers of religion are actually pursuing an apologetics of faith in place of an inquiry of faith. Apologetics puts certain beliefs beyond question and such a demarcation renders full inquiry impossible.

The final essay in this section, Emory Elliott's "Terror, Aesthetics, and the Humanities in the Public Sphere," opens with the question of speaking truth to power by pointing out that writers past and present have found ways to critique the political and military rhetoric of war. In this paper Elliott suggests that both Don DeLillo and Philip Roth use the aesthetics of astonishment to shock their audience into seeing beyond the well-crafted and simplistic post 9/11 representations employed by the powerful to control popular dissent.

Terror, Film, and Exceptionalism

Terrorism is a form—and perhaps the most extreme form—of political violence. It is violence that is generally regarded as "unofficial" or "unauthorized," though always said to be in pursuit of some political end or ends. In many ways, it is the paradigmatic form of political violence in a group of violent acts that includes demonstrations, revolutions, and civil war. As such, for an event to count as terrorism, it needs to be not only a violent or intimidating action, but, more importantly, it needs to be unofficial or unauthorized. An authorized or official action using violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims is not terrorism but war. As an act of war, such an official action can count on indignation and an attempt at retaliation. The official warrant of an act of violence provides it with a comprehension of moral clarity that is denied the act of terrorism or that terrorism, it might be more accurate to say, denies its target.

The response to terrorism is at first fear and confusion. After the initial casting about for the source of the terroristic attack, the questions circulate around the motivations of the attackers. People ask each other who might possibly have done such a horrible and frightening thing. Even after a group or individual takes responsibility for the action, there is a gap between the professed identity and the action. The gap in comprehension widens and swallows even the professed political aims clearly stated by those responsible. Indeed, for terrorism to function as terrorism, the agents of the terror must claim responsibility and provide a statement of intent.

The significant terrorist attack forces a culture to question both itself and the terrorist. Indeed, many Americans wondered why anyone would wish to harm them. The naïveté of the question is surprising only if it is taken as an actual question seeking a specific answer. The bewilderment has more to do with a key aspect of American identity, exceptionalism, than ignorance of American involvement in world affairs (although that too plays a larger part than one would hope).

The United States is either lucky or—as many in this country believe—divinely favored. For two-hundred and twenty-five years, there has not been an act of foreign terrorism on American soil. It is no wonder that just as many believe that we have "God on our side"—more too believe in America's "exceptionalism." And why not? What other country—now or across world history—can claim to be both free of foreign terrorist attacks *and* to be the most powerful global empire in the world—if not world history?

It is probably only against such an overblown bas-relief that one can begin to understand the type of effect produced when two hi-jacked planes were flown into the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. With this major event, along with the concurrent plane crash in Shanksville, Pennsylvania and the destruction of the Pentagon in Washington, DC, the United States experienced its first act of foreign terrorism on American soil. It also, arguably, experienced the first serious challenge in its history to its alleged "exceptionalism"—along with a severe test to the limits of its pluralism and tolerance.

It is no overstatement to say that the attacks of September 11, 2001 had immediate and significant political, economic, and social effects like no

event since Pearl Harbor. And even though there have not been any reported acts of foreign terrorism in the United States since the destruction of the Twin Towers, a decade later, we are still experiencing the effects of 9/11. In addition to the thousands of lives taken or altered by the terrorist acts on September 11, 2001, the most devastating effects, of course, come from the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan (justified, according to the Bush and Obama administrations, respectively), which have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and injuries (and the numbers continue to mount in Afghanistan and spill over into Pakistan).

Domestically, American rights to privacy have been attenuated as the number of employees and agencies devoted to gathering information has increased dramatically. According to a recent investigative report for *The Washington Post*, "the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency has gone from 7,500 employees in 2002 to 16,500 today. The budget of the National Security Agency, which conducts electronic eavesdropping, doubled. Thirty-five FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces became 106" (Priest and Arkin n.p.). And ten years after 9/11, one need only try to board an airplane with a king size tube of toothpaste for a real-time demonstration of the continuing presence of post-9/11 culture.

As then-President George Bush's response made clear, Americans see themselves in the role of the good in the moral order of the world. Having been attacked unofficially has forced an examination of that identity, with one immediate result being a greater sense of justified aggression against a questionable target. While the Bush administration was making the case for war to a public groping for a response, it was also urging a continuation of another aspect of American identity, consumerism.

Much commentary on the cultural effects of 9/11 has necessarily focused on trauma. While public health therapists and researchers have sought to offer treatment to individuals traumatized by the attacks, many humanities researchers have studied primarily larger cultural effects. Earlier horrific events such as the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis, the Partition of India into Pakistan and India, and the history of slavery in the US can provide a frame of study for the cultural trauma of 9/11. All three have had immediate, direct effects, as well as long-term insidious effects (*common memory* vs. *deep memory* as commonly termed in Holocaust studies).

In cultural terms, national and racial identities, as well as the responsibilities of artists and scholars, have been effected. After despairing at the genocide at Auschwitz, Adorno famously questions the possibility of art and culture to exist in the face of such barbarity. One of the important tasks Indian writers gave themselves in pre-independence India was the construction of a pan-Indian identity. Bollywood films and fiction continue to extol the virtues of a pluralist pan-Indian identity, especially in the face of the provocations of an orthodox Hindu majority that sees its identity under threat by further linguistic and cultural divisions. Postcolonial thought has benefited tremendously from W.E.B. DuBois' understanding that one of the strongest effects of slavery on African American identity is the development of a double consciousness.

While the theorists, critics, and philosophers may have been remiss in trying to understand terror, the writers have been wrestling with its aesthetic and ethical dimensions for quite a long time. As noted earlier, Aristotle's analysis of *Oedipus* gives us our earliest formulation of the importance of the arousal of terror and pity. Not much more is said on the subject until the beginning of the gothic with *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. In the preface to the first edition, Walpole defends his writing by informing the reader that he keeps up the narrative force of the story by the contrasting emotions of terror and pity. Make no mistake, though, terror is "the author's principal engine [by which] the mind is kept in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions" (Walpole).

Edmund Burke's understanding of the sublime in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* makes terror the centerpiece. Contra Aristotle, who believed, as mentioned earlier, that fear makes us more deliberative, Burke held that "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as *fear*" (Burke, "Terror" n.p.). For him, the two qualities that evoke terror in us are size and obscurity, with the latter being more important. Although Burke's focus is on actual visual obscurity, he is clearly also mindful of knowledge or awareness: "When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes" (Burke, "Obscurity" n.p.). Knowing that danger is imminent but not knowing its severity or the time or manner of its realization

produces a variety of emotional and psychic states that were, for the large part, absent from the baby-boomer generation of Americans.

Other people in other lands in other times have become all too accustomed to living with terror. And writers from other lands have certainly been eloquent about the effects of terror. Writing in English alone, Joseph Conrad, Chinua Achebe, Nadine Gordimer, Mulk Raj Anand, J. M. Coetzee, and Arundhati Roy immediately spring to mind, not to mention those writing in other languages, such as Franz Kafka, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. But those with even a passing familiarity with an introductory survey course in American literature know that there are American writers who have explored more than the bored lives of middle-class anglos nattering on and on about self-actualization or extra-marital affairs.

Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, Hemingway's Nick Adams stories, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* and many other "war" stories depict American life that is certainly not charmed. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* portray the lives of those "lesser" Americans for whom the American Dream is more frequently a nightmare. In a recent interview with the magazine *Foreign Policy*, Alice Walker casts such a life as one lived under terrorism: "I know what terrorism feels like—when your father could be taken out in the middle of the night and lynched just because he didn't look like he was in an obeying frame of mind when a white person said something he must do. I mean, that's terrorism…" (Walker par. 24). In that same interview (the occasion for which is her presence on a flotilla planning to disrupt the Israeli maritime blockade of the Gaza strip), Walker offers a succinct definition of terrorism: "When you terrorize people, when you make them so afraid of you that they are just mentally and psychologically wounded for life—that's terrorism" (Walker).

So some American writers have, then, written about what it is like to live in terror, but for the majority, difficult lives are distinguished by a set period of turbulence. Their characters make accommodations to specific conditions that amount to life during wartime. There is a qualitative difference between an awareness of imminent danger in a restricted setting and understanding that the safe contours of your mundane life, the kind

of life that most Americans had learned to take for granted, have been blown away. The fates are back.

The connection between acts of terrorism and terror is apparent to Walker: when your actions make others "mentally and psychologically wounded for life—that's terrorism." But what are these wounds, these signs of terror written upon the self? Since the attacks of 9/11, American writers have begun to explore this altered American psyche.

Americans, post 9/11, have a much more difficult time convincing ourselves and others that the US is an exceptional country, and the fear and anger have brought about a hardening of the categories of good and bad: *24*, the popular television show that debuted two months after 9/11, portrayed torture as an effective means of gathering intelligence. And we have all witnessed the semantic and moral contortions of Bush administration lawyers and spokespersons as they tried to reconcile Bush's assertion that we don't torture with the facts.

Perversely, reactionaries and progressives both looked to the decadence of American culture as our fatal flaw. While not naming specific groups of people or "lifestyles" as the cultural conservatives did, a number of more liberal commentators and essayists in the US announced the death of irony. A columnist for *Time* magazine, Roger Rosenblatt,[5] and the editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine, Graydon Carter,[6] were the quickest off the mark. Rosenblatt and Carter both hoped that the attacks would end a period of superficiality and fascination with surfaces and usher in a return to sincerity, earnestness, and true identity. While the response to Rosenblatt and Carter was quick and correctly pointed out that neither understood the potent subversive power of irony which was needed now more than ever, the proclamation did tap into a feeling that something momentous had happened. If Virginia Woolf were alive today, she too would have recognized that there was now a "before" and an "after"; she may have said that "on or about September 11, 2001 human character changed."

Woolf made her pronouncement a good fourteen years after December 1900 and could include in her selected date the build-up to World War I, the dramatic political shift in Britain, the first show of Modernist art in England, and any number of personal events associated with the Bloomsbury group. Ten years after 9/11, we have a major event, and we also have

military and political "adventures" that might have led to our change in human character.

The essays in the second part of this book examine some of the aesthetic, cultural, and political dimensions of our responses to terror. Elaine Martin's essay "Films about Terrorism, Cinema Studies and the Academy" is based on her examination of a number of films about terrorism. Martin finds a number of shared concerns and methodologies in three contemporary films from Brazil, India, and Palestine (*Four Days in September*, *The Terrorist*, and *Paradise Now*, respectively). The films from various parts of the world find not only a commonality in a renewed interest in Third Cinema aesthetics but also in socio-political orientations which might suggest a universal frame for films about terror.

Robin Truth Goodman's essay "Shaherazad On-Line: Women's Work and Technologies of War" discusses the relations of technology to transformations in women's work. Goodman applies the comparison between the philosophy of Donna Haraway and that of Herbert Marcuse to the Iraqi blog *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq* and notes that Haraway's disruption of the private/public and male/female and machine/human binaries is a richer approach to understanding how women trapped in a narrative of terror might create spaces for themselves through the various technologies currently available.

"Neoliberalism as Terrorism; or State of Disaster Exceptionalism" by Sophia A. McClennen argues that the post 9/11 US state incorporates two fundamental shifts: the permanent state of exception caused by the war on terror and the corporate state of neoliberalism. Both radically alter civic identities on US soil and abroad. The civic identities McClennen then focuses on involve the representation of Afghanistan as a failed state that both precedes the war on terror and is also a large part of the current rhetoric about the country. Continuing to characterize Afghanistan as a failed state allows the US to pursue policies that it might not otherwise.

"Terror and American Exceptionalism" by William V. Spanos finds in Melville's work an early instance of American exceptionalism. Spanos traces the psychological and social effects of placing an entity (administration, nation, ship) outside the norms that govern daily interactions. Spanos strongly suggests that such exceptionalism leads to a diminution not only of ideals but of civilization.

The essay by Zahi Zalloua, "The Ethics of Trauma/The Trauma of Ethics: Terror After Levinas," examines the Levinasian understanding of self and other that might illuminate terror's othering of social relations. Although Levinas provides an ethical frame for seeing the other necessarily as a radical other, an other who forces the self to see more than simply the self's reflection, he has a blind spot when it comes to accepting the universalizing of the Jewish experience of the holocaust and of slavery in ancient Egypt into the Jew as the victim. This, in turn, makes it problematic then in the case of Israel where the Jew is not the victim. Zalloua suggests that critics be wary of the intersection of the philosophical and political in the Levinasian ethical framework.

Conclusion

The events of September 11, 2001 have had a strong impact on theory and the humanities. Whether or not the attacks were "theory's event" is not as important as a recognition of the way in which they have provided theorists with an historical event to ground their work. For most, the attacks were so "unforeseeable and irruptive," such that, in Derrida's words, they disrupted "even the horizon of the concept or essence on the basis of which we believe we recognize an event *as such.*" They do call for a new philosophy, as the old philosophy is inadequate to account for them. They also call for both reflection *on* theory, philosophy, and the humanities in general, which is what the essays in this collection provide.

But also, in an important way, the events of September 11, 2001 have changed the academy—or refigured it through the lens of terror. We now study "religious terrorism" rather than "religion"; we encourage the study of Arabic while closing Romance language departments; we are encouraged to engage in scholarship which helps us to understand and perhaps avoid events like the attacks—though always with the fear that our academic freedom cannot protect us from negative consequences for everything that we say; and so on. It is a positive sign for theory and the humanities that many academics have responded to the events of September 11, 2001 with conferences, symposia, books, articles, and special journal issues. And even ten years after the event, ours is still the age of terror—in much the same way that the late sixties were the age of love.

Perhaps the recent location and killing of the leader of the militant Islamic group al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, in Pakistan on May 2, 2011—almost ten years after he and his confederates carried out the 9/11 attacks—has ended the age of terror. However, it has not ended the journey to understand what it means to be a theorist in the age of *phobos*—nor the effort to create a new philosophy that measures up with life in the new millennium. It is in the spirit of hope—the hope that theory will help to bring us out of the age of terror—that we offer the essays in this collection to you.

Notes

1. See, for example, Coady and O'Keefe, Govier, Honderich (*After the Terror* and *Humanity, Terrorism, Terrorist War*), Primoratz, Shanahan, and Sterba.
2. Much has been written about this topic. However, for a comprehensive introduction, see the 2008/09 special issue of the journal *Works and Days*, "Academic Freedom and Intellectual Activism in the Post-9/11 University." As evidence that dissident readings of the events of September 11, 2001 (still) elicit powerful reactions, it should be noted that an evening of readings from the issue was threatened with cancellation.
3. See, for example, Ivie.
4. See, for example, Schulz and Reyes.
5. See Rosenblatt: "One good thing could come from this horror: it could spell the end of the age of irony" (par. 1).
6. Carter was quoted by Seth Mnookin as saying "It's the end of the age of irony." See "In Disaster's Aftermath, Once-Cocky Media Culture Disses the Age of Irony," *Inside.com*, Sept. 18, 2001.

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I

Terror, Philosophy, and the University

Chapter 1

"Cosmopolitisme ou barbarie"?

September 11, Higher Education, and Cosmopolitan Literacy: An Asymmetric Manifesto

Christian Moraru

I am the content of a relation.
– Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*

[T]he central human worries as "world" problems…
– Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Manifesto"

Terror, the ruin of language and consciousness…
– Marc Redfield, *The Rhetoric of Terror*

Driven by competing agendas and inevitably fraught with their high-pitched discord, the post-9/11 debate over terror in general and terrorism in particular rests, nonetheless, on an implied epistemological consensus of sorts: the traditional notions no longer hold water. By "traditional," I mean, of course, "modern." To be sure, the dictionary definition of terrorism, on which we often fall back mechanically, has been handed down to us by modernity, namely by the post-Westphalian modernity of sovereign Western nation-states. Along with so many others, this definition too has all but outlived its pertinence. Underscoring rather abstractly the use or threat of physical, sometimes deadly, anti-governmental and even anti-civilian force for political purposes, this understanding provides little orientation in the contemporary geography of violence. No question

about it: the conceptual map we inherited from the moderns is hardly the twenty-first-century territory where terrorism's contentions, plots, and meanings play out. To come to terms with these evolving meanings and their complex bearings on our lives as students, teachers, and citizens, I propose, accordingly, that we begin with this territory itself. For, it seems to me, what terror—no less than counter-terror—purports and stands for at the turbulent dawn of the new millennium is ultimately a function of this territory, of terror and terrorism's position, reach, and scope.

If terrorism is, among other things, politics, this politics is fundamentally and sometimes fundamentalistically a politics of location. Terrorism constitutes a territoriality epiphenomenon. Or, more precisely, it did so until recently. Whatever else they may have entailed or impacted, terrorist claims have involved, not unlike the claims laid by the nation, self-determination, sovereignty, and, in the final analysis, territoriality. Historically speaking, terror, political terror rather than its psychologist counterpart (terror as a "state of mind") has been *territorialized*, place-bound. Local, or territorial, terror has had a spatial pathos to it. It has bodied forth a "separatist," hence topological militancy, has been energized (has been "about") and therefore has been circumscribed by a certain terrain—a *terra*, *țară*, *tierra*, *terre*, and so on in Latin and a number of Romance languages—that is, by a (home)land, country, or domain of the nation-state and its subdivisions or extensions inside or around its ever-contested borders and policies. Thus, terror and its modern enactments have been ordinarily a violent variety of political *teratology* in the twofold sense that sets up the familiar-domestic, the territorial, as a stage for the teratological, the monstrous, the "terrifying" (from Lat. *terrēre*). Waged by individuals, groups, state-sanctioned military or paramilitary apparatuses of surveillance and repression such as the secret police from the Tsarist CEKA to East German Stasi and the Iranian Basij, or by whole governments during the recurrent "reigns of terror" for which latter-day apologists like Slavoj Žižek still offer cynical encomia, terror has been a non-deliberative, anti-parliamentary formation or malformation *within* the home of the nation, a homegrown aberration inside or alongside the *Heimat*'s body politic (Žižek, "No Solution").

Not so much in the post-1989 era. Fundamentally symptomatic of the Cold War's aftermath, the September 11, 2001 attacks, as well as the

worldwide developments they spurred, bear witness to the spectacularly global dissemination of terror. Like most anything else, terror has been deterritorialized. Decoupled from a well-marked territory, terror has gone global. Both in its actions and in the counter-actions it has unleashed—as "Jihadism" and "War on Terror" alike—it is now supralocal, transnational, arguably planetary. The nation-state neither contains it topologically nor accounts for it descriptively, as a unit of analysis. Not any more. As before, our time's terrorism is militarily and politically transgressive, or, as we say these days, "asymmetrical," in that it overall bends and even shuns the more or less agreed-upon rules of martial and political engagement. Its geographical asymmetry, its territorial unpredictability, is, however, quasi unprecedented. Practically, terror may originate anywhere nowadays, including "at home," and it can also strike anywhere. In fact, whether the target is (or is "in") Manhattan or Waziristan, and whether the targeting is carried out by isolated operatives or by networked, state-sponsored, or self-described statal agents such as regular armed forces, terrorist acts predominantly and characteristically stem from "elsewhere."

Does this mean that terrorism is not our problem, here and now, in a here and now almost overnight became, after 9/11, more problematic, more replete with problems and questions than ever? Absolutely not. It *is* our problem. Moreover, should it seem otherwise, we must show explicitly that we can make it our problem. It does not mean that this elsewhere is solely a spatial category either. To the contrary, it means, as I will expound in what follows, that terrorism *qua* our problem, as an American problem and possibly as *the* problem of America overall, of US culture and its current place in the world, cannot be tackled apart from the highly charged problematic of elsewhere, of other terrains, cultures, and peoples. If that is true, then let me say a few words about this geoculturally asymmetric elsewhere and its thought-provoking, irregular landscape of otherness, as a preamble to a "provocation" of my own—the post-9/11 higher-education manifesto of sorts that I will offer in the last part of this essay.

"Meaning can happen when you least expect it," Alan Alda writes in his 2007 memoir *Things I Overheard While Talking to Myself* (72–73). I certainly agree. The "aha!" moment or place usually catches us by surprise. It may even strike us as "out of place." Why? Because it is just so,

out of place and order, inordinate and ex-centric geographically, culturally, or both, displaced and perhaps *déplacé*, as the French would say; because effective cognition entails a critical displacement, puts to test our habitual takes on things insofar as "getting it" is often not of "this" place, ours, but obtains in places remote or off the beaten path. Like identity, to whose fostering it is key, understanding is not a given but a gift on an other, *"de l'Autre."*[1] If, as one of Kundera's novel titles assures us, "life is elsewhere," there is a good reason for it. This elsewhere and its troubling, perhaps "terrible" if not "terrifying" "otherwise" are vital to us here, in our America. Being and thinking feed off the less conspicuous nearness and seemingly less consequential immediacy of the distant, the strange, and the different. These set in train the requisite, Levinasian *sortie de soi*, the "release from self-sameness," from the inherited ways and clichés poised to shape our lives and thoughts into mindless rehearsals of previous lives and thoughts.[2] To be sure, we are and understand *with* others and their places; self-identity presupposes them (Taylor qtd. in Scharlemann 18). Admittedly, "being elsewhere," *être ailleurs*, can betoken "distraction" and "absence of thought," but they also mark the very place of being and thinking because we ultimately come to terms with ourselves and our world *ailleurs*, "elsewhere," as Montaigne once remarked.[3] In the heteronomous scene of understanding, the existential, the epistemological, and the ethical intertwine.[4] It is in this arena that comprehension, self-comprehension, and the self itself eventuate, relationally, in relation and thus as debt to an other. It is here that we learn about our own here and now (and their past), from others' "out there" and their "far-out," "exotic," and "implausible" territories, histories, and notions.

So did Alda himself. As he reminisces in his volume's sixth chapter, "A Passion for Reason," he had to travel all the way to China a few years ago to "make a personal connection to [Thomas] Jefferson" and, by the same token, to himself as an American for whom our third President was a personification of America (Alda 65). As the actor told a roomful of Jeffersonian experts back in Monticello, a rice paddy "on the other side of the world" proved to be the unlikely place where, at long last, he "got" Jefferson (71).

One wonders, though: are we now offshoring national identity too, how we feel about who we are? Is the postmodern making of Americans,

the manufacturing, that is, of our innermost associations and self-revelations going the way most other manufacturing jobs have? More to the point: must we connect with others and their cultures in order to connect with ourselves *as* Americans, Americanists, or otherwise? Must we take the deterritorializing route of otherness, of cultural transit and translation, to be and "find" ourselves?[5] Not entirely new, the questions are more timely now than ever. We must raise them if we really want to find out who we are as citizens of the US and the world, and we must raise them too, I submit, to get a handle on terror's twenty-first-century meanings. The gist of the answers—and the main tenet of my argument below—is encapsulated by Alda's realization that Yuan Long Ping, a Chinese biologist, made him "underst[and] Jefferson for the first time" (71). Yuan did so, Alda intimates, as a "Chinese Jeffersonian" who reenacted an experiment "Jie Fu Sun" had done with rice back in his day. Following Jefferson and running similarly serious risks—the American smuggled rice out of Italy; the Chinese defied the People's Republic's pseudoscientific yet "official" botany—Yuan created a high-yield rice hybrid by cross-pollinating two strains of rice. Cross-pollination is, of course, key here, at once a Jeffersonian technique and an American *modus operandi*, driving force of national creativity and code of Americanness on so many levels. More notably, the Chinese Jefferson, himself an incarnation of this methodology, broke the code for his American guest. In other words, it was the latter's enlightening encounter with his host that enabled Alda to relate to Jefferson, to forge the bond we normally assume we *already have* with those close to us, with kin, relatives, and like relations. What Yuan did and said as well as what he was—a hybrid in his own right—helped Alda and, through him, Alda's American listeners back in Virginia get a fresh grip on their individual and collective identities.

The other and the far-flung may speak to us from afar, with an accent if not in tongues, or so we may hear them and their Jie Fu Sunian whispers. But we had better pay attention to what they say because it may just unveil us to ourselves. We need not be—I for one am not—sold on a view of an identity and perception thereof wholly "disembedded," "offshored," much less on the economic metaphor itself. Nor should we underestimate the powerfully formative sway of the *hic et nunc*. What we might entertain instead and what I advance here is the hypothesis of a

cultural-epistemological "outsourcing" of sorts, with others and their "out-of-place" sites, images, texts, styles, ideas, and *Weltanschauungen* as sources of defining "parts" and junctures of a fairly distinctive protocol of identity production and self-representation. This protocol, I further suggest, is pivotal to a kind of picturing of the self and of its world—to a cultural imaginary—that in the Cold War's aftermath becomes more typical of American culture than at any time in its history. The logic underlying this imaginary is fundamentally, systematically, and pointedly relational, turning as it does on self and other's foundational co-relationality with respect to one another. Whatever they are and regardless of how much they care for this situation, both are (stand for, exist) correlatively, in relation with each other. Alda's little scene is relational because it decisively plays on relatedness, to wit; it premises the self and the self's own thematization of itself and its culture on the self-other nexus.

With this in mind, let us circle back to our "terror.edu,"[6] to this title masquerading as an Internet domain name. Is it a pun? A play many times over? Yes, but not gratuitously so, for it is also a memento, a reminder beginning with a full stop, so to speak, with the dot that links up in the spurious domain name two legitimate domains otherwise apart if not at odds in the public imaginary: terror, terrorism more specifically, irrespective of its manifestation, on the one hand, and education, higher-education more exactly, on the other. Giving the lie to the old Ivory Tower cliché, "terror.edu" forefronts the mutual articulation of terror—with its events, policies, and disputes—on one side, and the academy on the other, so much so that there is no other side, no sides, discrete, or outside domains any more, but a single albeit conflicted continuum of occurrences, implications, and discourses. "No more outside": this is Hardt and Negri's reiterated Deleuzian conclusion in *Empire* (194); within months, 9/11 corroborated this supremely apposite post-Cold War geopolitical observation, and before long, our universities followed suit, finding it increasingly difficult to position themselves outside those events, policies, and debates.

Many of us have deplored the encroachments of counterterrorist measures and regulations on our libraries and computers, and rightly so. But, whether or not the "War on Terror" as such makes precisely for the kind of knee-jerk, unreflective reaction we think it is our job to help students

control intellectually and ethically; whether or not this all-out campaign threatens the very freedoms in whose defense it was presumably waged in the first place—either way, what "terror.edu" does, in my account at least, is this: it highlights the intricate, ever-ambiguous imbrications of terror, its territorial, or cross-territorial, terrain, rather, and the moral-aesthetic values cultivated (cf. Lat. *cultura*) throughout this globally shifting, counter-cartographic territoriality; it thus reminds us that, while it may no longer be place- or nation-bound, terror remains germane to culture; it suggests, on this very ground, that terror falls under the enlightening jurisdiction of education, viz., it can be approached as a cultural formation of meanings and of those learning about them.

For, no question about it, the dot in question is deceptively terminal. That is to say, since culture does not end where terror begins (and vice versa), the dot is not a terminus, an *ad quem* point, but the marker of the terms' inherent interplay, for better or worse: for worse, insofar as this imbrication may allow for potentially or effectively censorious intrusions of various government agencies on our work—and, to the extent counterterrorist suspicions and policies, domestic and foreign, hurt our abilities to recruit international students and otherwise do our job, these infringements should be challenged vigorously, as they have been (see for instance, Hauerwas and Lentricchia's 2003 collection *Dissent from the Homeland*); for better, in that if terror and culture are indeed bound up with one another and, further, if the University continues to be a premier place for the critical production and filtering of cultural definitions, identities, and citizenship, as I think it does, then several points are in order—I would like to think of them, if I may, as a pedagogical decalogue for the twenty-first century.

First, we, educators generally and humanists especially, are uniquely positioned to intervene in the ongoing, confusing dispute over terror and terrorism. We must understand, and make others understand too, that the confusion will persist unless the controversy and pertaining decisions, policies, and so forth take into account cultural issues.

Second, what this intervention might come down to is, in short, a reorientation of the discussion and related public perception away from the crude us/them, "clashist" dichotomy à la Benjamin Barber and Samuel Huntington. This polarity is simplistic, politically counterproductive,

and geoculturally fictitious as long as we view it in exclusively adversarial and topologically discontinuous terms. This is not how Alda thinks about his dealings with his Chinese friend. I am not implying either that self and other do not exist in the modality of a distinction that can be deemed, and often simply is, as Levinas stresses, absolute. It is just that, distinct as they are and often insist on remaining, self and other stand after 1989 willy-nilly inscribed into a material world syntax of co-presence and co-participation in the very basic sense that I and you, Christian and Muslim, white and black (or brown), and so on—whether we/they like it or not—"are in this together." Being-with-, understanding-with-, understanding-oneself-with-an other are forms of translocal and transcultural togetherness that define the transition away from modernity's disjunctive, either-or, nation-state-based logic to our conjunctive stage. In this post-, perhaps post-postmodern world, to be and mean is to be and mean in relation, to be and signify with others, so much so that you *owe them* who you are and how you see yourself, your own people, history, and the like. More than ever, the problem of culture—"my culture" included—and the problem *with* its analysis no less, is the problem of alterity. Relatedness, more specifically the self-other nexus, is, much like our connecting dot, the logic of Manuel Castells's network society and in that cuts to the heart of how and who we (no less than "they") and our world are—once more, whether we/they are crazy about it or not.

Third, if this is so, then, once again, the problem of terror is no different from the problem of culture, "mine" and "yours," "American" and "Pakistani," of how we think of it and how we might help our students and the public at large think of it. I would propose, then, that this thinking and the teaching and learning based on it are or should be relational, grounded in the kind of I-You relation to which thinkers like Martin Buber have attended so insistently and inspiringly (*I and Thou*). Similar to the dot knotting together fields and people, this thinking connects the dots too, distinct and asymmetrically positioned as these dots may be or appear. This "mutualist" worldview sets up relations, places things in a participatory context of interaction, exchange, and negotiation in order to make sense of those things.

Fourth, this kind of context also defines the pedagogical environment *and* epistemological paradigm of the twenty-first-century classroom.

Reciprocally, it is in this context that the defining essence of culture and identity emerges. Both transhistorical and more conspicuous today than at any previous stage, this essence, what culture and cultural identity are and, consequently, how we think or how we should think about them, ultimately disables a disjunctive-adversarial understanding of the self-other dyad. "Out there" as much as "in here," across the world and across the street, the other no less than the self as the other's other are—or, if they are not yet, they ought to become—no longer the monolithically ethno-religious fetish lying behind most acts of terror and anti-terrorist retaliations.

Fifth, while imagining ourselves—teaching the images and histories of America—in terms of our indebtedness to others may not be an instant game-changer, in my judgment it nevertheless is a first step we can and should take as students and teachers of culture. This is a step in the direction of a cultural solution to a problem that, I hasten to add, loud and clear, is not solely cultural but also economic, religious, demographic, political and geopolitical, and so on. However, what we hear time and again from Žižek, Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio, and other self-appointed, global-era terrorism experts is, as Baudrillard contends in his 2002 essay *Hypothèses sur le terrorisme*, that "It all comes from the fact that the Other, like Evil, is unimaginable. It all comes from the impossibility of conceiving of the Other—friend or enemy—in its radical otherness, in its irreconcilable foreignness.... A refusal rooted," the philosopher goes on, "in the total identification with oneself around moral values and technical power. That is the America that takes itself for America and which, bereft of otherness, eyes itself with the wildest compassion" (Baudrillard 72). Needless to say—or, who knows, perhaps this needs to be said, given where the terror debate stands *dix ans après*—there is hardly any compassion for terrorism's victims in Baudrillard, and you would find it neither in Virilio's technophobe jeremiad *Ground Zero*, where the 9/11 attacks are defined, following Karlheinz Stockhausen's despicable 2001 statement, as "the greatest work of art there has ever been" (45). Nor is there any in Žižek's anti-consummerist-anti-Hollywood-anti-postmodern-anti-cultural-studies-anti-multicultural-anti-US-anti-Israeli-anti-Pakistani-anti-everything tirade *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. Oddly enough, Žižek fancies himself a sort of iron-fisted Morpheus, not the Greek god of

sleep and dreams, of course, but the Laurence Fishburne character in *The Matrix*, moonlighting, appalling as it may sound, as "[a] Minister of the Interior or head of the secret service," which, still in Žižek's own words, was "the only government [post] which interested me" back "in the early 1990s," when "I was more involved in Slovene politics" (*Welcome to the Desert* 6) (hey, did somebody say totalitarianism?). Žižek-as-Himmler-(or Stalin's Beria—just take your pick)-as Morpheus, then, welcomes the terrorist occurrence, the "act," insofar as the act—never mind its mass-murderous consequences—serves as a national wakeup call, in turn welcoming us to the "thing itself," the Real underneath the media-generated simulacrum also known as the American everyday. In this sense, 9/11's thousands of deaths and, by implication, the many more thousands of casualties inflicted on others elsewhere after that make for a reasonable "price to be paid for peeling off the deceptive layers of reality," that is, for finally "getting" ideology and the spell it casts on us (Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert* 6). But the careful reader must be disappointed, I presume, when the Slovene Morpheus lulls us back to sleep by defining, a bit later, the cultural anatomy of the event behind the Real's disclosure as the very workings of said ideology. Whether you want to know more about yourself or about others, learning about the other's culture "remains," he claims, "a gesture of ideological mystification *par excellence*: probing into different cultural traditions is precisely *not* the way to grasp the political dynamics which led to the September 11 attacks" (34).

Sixth, the new pedagogical imperative and the cosmopolitan literacy that I believe must be this imperative's ultimate objective go of necessity against this a-cultural cocksureness. Cultural "probing" is hardly the compounding problem. Quite the opposite, it provides the solution, in classrooms, agoras, and political bodies alike. Why? Because, if terrorism is, no matter its origin, venue, and rationale, the violent epitome of parochialism, a paroxism of the idiomatic and the ruthlessly exclusive, this is due to no negligible degree to a poverty of the anthropological imagination. Xenophobic, anti-Semitic, racist, jingoistic, and, according to Roland Barthes, "petit-bourgeois" culture is simply "unable to imagine the Other. If [it] comes face to face with him, [it] blinds [it]self, ignores and denies him, or else transforms [it]self into him."[21] Barthes talks about "class anthropomorphism," but I would broaden the notion to cover the

cultural anthropomorphism of any culturally ingrown self, group, or society, "ours" surely no exception, in which "otherness is reduced to sameness" (*Mythologies* 151). On the one hand, such self or group expunges the other from the domain of selfhood; on the other hand, it reduces the other to (the self) itself in the (pseudo)act of self-knowledge. Both are stratagems of negation, denial, and thus self-denial. Historically, they have played out, as Barthes alerts us, in a number of superficially conflicting ways: as outright ignorance; as pseudo-recognition that forces the unknown into the clichés and essences customarily featured by the rhetoric of intolerance and more largely into cut-and-dried categories of intelligibility; as "agnostic" rationalization of the supposedly "exotic," "irrational," and "incomprehensible," which casts the other outside "humanity" on principle—the other is in- or sub-human, demonic, barbarian, unclean, etc. In the West, this exclusive mentality can be traced back to the Greek city-state and its setting itself off against the backdrop of "barbarian" otherness fancied as outlandish, *distinct* in space and culture, that is, incompatible with the local axiology of the polis and thereby im-polite and im-politic, uncouth and uncivilized, in sum, "barbarous." A barbarian, Greek historians and philosophers enlighten us, is fundamentally a non-Greek, a foreigner. Vice versa, a foreigner must be barbaric, totally different from and adverse to the native in customs and demeanor. *Alius* ("other" for Romans) is thus understood as *alienus*, "alien." The self and the barbarian other are not only distinct but also politically discordant and so liable to clash. As a non-self, the latter threatens the self by its very existence. This is how, in the dynamic of self and other as represented by the *socii* of a self-described native community, difference sets itself up as incompatibility, disjunction, contest, intolerance, and finally exclusion. It becomes so, of course, without necessarily being recognized as such. The rationale of this exclusion is reason itself, more precisely, the contrasting irrationality of the other, who is "by nature" prone to brutality, to rude, irrational if not utterly insane behavior (cf. the French *aliéné*). This proclivity is putatively born out by the word's onomatopoeic root. Accordingly, the gibberish spoken by the *bárbaroi* is nonsensical "bar, bar, bar" ("blah, blah, blah"), an etymology corroborated by the Sanskrit *barbara* ("stammering" *and* "non-Aryan").[7] Since presumably *phoné barbariké* serves no rational purpose, it supplies no vehicle to logos, sense-making,

communication, and cooperation either, disqualifying its speaker as *polítes*, as a member of a linguistic-rational community. In brief, irrationality is both cultural diagnosis and political subterfuge, language used by the "sane," a priori civilized, and "politic" body to mark and quarantine infectious difference, to control the "pathology" of otherness.

Seventh, we have reached a point in world affairs when it is becoming abundantly clear that this symptomatology is endemic to insiders and outsiders alike, to self-described rational communities, languages, and institutions, as well to their supposedly irrational and putatively external exteriorities. Regardless of side, then, among all those unable to imagine others and their "alternate" ways of doing and looking at things, the terrorist individual, organization, or mindset is the worst in that he, she, they, or it cannot picture other people as people, that is, cannot visualize others' humanity as humanity, as concrete, if "atypical" human life worth respecting unless it mirrors their own type. And if it does not, it does not exist. It falls short not only typologically but also ontologically, or so the argument goes. Those others may be "out there," but they are less than human. Further, since they do not fit the bill of humanness, they are not worth our humaneness either, a modicum of compassion that would make the terrorist think twice before blowing them to smithereens.

Eight, this compassion is cosmopolitan. Very basically, as a modality of care, of ethical outward projection of the self, compassion "shap[es] the civic imagination" and thus lies at the core of civility, of being "civilized," a *cives* (*polítes*) (Nussbaum, "Compassion and Terror" 12). The cosmopolitan *cives*, the *cosmopolites* as the Greeks called him or her, extends or is expected to extend "intramural" compassion to those other "out there" (or, if in here, not like "us"). He or she possesses the rare ability to care about others, and to the extent that this ability is inherent to cosmopolitanism, a phrase such as "compassionate cosmopolite" is arguably a tautology. Conversely, to suggest that the cosmopolitan's antinomy, the barbarian, is uncompassionate would be equally redundant. Along these lines, the terrorist individual, entity, or mechanism, no matter how rhetorically sophisticated his or its platform, is quintessentially, and no less redundantly, barbarous.

Ninth, cosmopolitan compassion, the capacity to feel-for across differences in space and culture, is—and I here too I follow Nussbaum (*Poetic*

Justice 94)—the one that puts indifference, injustice, aggression, and ultimately murderous violence onto an other out of gear. Yet I cannot feel-for if I cannot feel-with, if I cannot associate myself authentically to the ways in which others see and take in the world, without necessarily buying into their world pictures, in brief, if there is no empathy. But there can be no empathy for others, no emotional connection with those who are *not* already my relatives, without the basic ability to relate to them cognitively—cognitively and, I insist, ethically at once—that is, if I make no attempt to know them in their often radical, hard-to-know and sometimes unknowable otherness. In this sense, the "impossibility of conceiving the Other" in his or her "radical otherness," in the specific, time- and place-bound configuration of his or her humanity, is indeed the problem we are all facing today, whether we talk about terror or about culture, about 9/11 or Orientalism (or Occidentalism, for that matter). At the dawn of the twenty-first century more than ever in our history, this history and the culture produced across it appear to us, with supreme clarity, as a domain of relationality.

Tenth, as has been noted, but, apparently, also forgotten repeatedly, it was cultural studies that moved "others" to the center of our view of ourselves. "Bereft of otherness," to invoke Baudrillard again (*The Spirit of Terrorism* 62), America makes, indeed, no sense analytically—I suppose this is what most of us tell our students more and more these days. Made possible by a number of philosophers, sociologists, and political scientists who have taken the first steps in opposing cosmopolitanism, its cultural epistemology, and ethics to the new, state-sponsored or freelancing barbarianism of terror—and more largely cosmopolitan "conversationalism" to parochial "confrontationalism" (Appiah 246)—the whole point of what I would call cosmopolitan literacy is to drive home this notion of being and making sense in *sine qua non* relation with an other's singular humanity.[8] Our charge as humanists eager to honor the plurality embedded in the humanities to which we are so dedicated, and also the main task of education in general at a time self and other have drawn so close in space to one another, is indeed this literacy understood as a systematic, cross-curricular, and methodologically apposite effort to help our students see others—and with them, ourselves—in the their material, particular humanness. For this materiality, I contend, is the very site and

vehicle of cultural-existential difference. Difference, then, is no longer a hurdle, an obstacle to communication, as classical humanists and critics from Žižek and Badiou to Nussbaum herself tend to think, but a bridge, a window into the other's humanity and implicitly an apt instrument with which to handle and possibly mitigate the frictions, tensions, frustrations, and confusions of twenty-first-century worldly togetherness. To think twice, to spare a life, to think a life worth sparing, is not just thinking but also feeling. Yet, it bears reiterating in closing, you cannot feel for, or feel like, others, nor can you empathize—let alone be compassionate—if you cannot relate, and you cannot relate outside the immediate circle of kin and kind if you do not get to know those others in their most humanly individualizing routines that, at the end of knowing, must remain as human as individual, "different." On this account, Baudrillard is wrong: while terrorism may often be logistically "asymmetric," what it actually accomplishes does nothing to "restore" the world of singularities threatened by Nike billboards (Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* 46). To the extent that any asymmetric claim is the purview of cultural behavior, asymmetry is hardly the terrorist individual or state's posture. This is, in fact, precisely what makes terrorism "immoral" and its posture a de facto imposture (12). It is the cosmopolitan cultural analyst and teacher, whose methodological self-positioning, object, as well as objective are all asymmetrical: unpredictable, slippery, undisciplined, and otherwise insubordinate to available cognitive grids. Still, we need to remind ourselves and our students this: if, much like self-knowledge, our knowledge about others passes the test of this asymmetry, then we have known them in their unyielding otherness and thus have also not known them, as it were, in the Levinasian sense in which relational rather than rational knowledge honors the mystery of others and the common world their elusive presence makes possible.

Notes

1. On Lacan and the "ex-centricity" of the self, see, among other places, "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious" in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (83). On Lacan, identity, and "L'Autre," see the whole issue "L'identité

en question dans la psychanalyse" of *La Revue de psychanalyse du Champ lacanien*, especially Jean-Jacques Gorog, "L'identité est 'de l'Autre," 59–65.

2. Drawing from Levinas, Adam Zachary Newton discusses the remote, the strange, the "not-here," and their "liberating" role in *The Elsewhere.* See *On Belonging at a Near Distance: Reading Literary Memoir from Europe and the Levant* (116). On Levinas's *sortie de soi* and how this "exit," *ex-cedence* (in Newton), or ex-cessive repositioning of the self outside of itself in the "proximity of the other" empowers the self's life and mind, see "La proximité de l'autre" in *Altérité et transcendence* (108).

3. Nicole Lapierre glosses on Montaigne's dictum "Nous pensons tousjours ailleurs" ("Our thinking always takes place elsewhere") (*Pensons ailleurs* 11–20).

4. Following Freud, Lacan also elaborates on the heteronomy of the self in "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious" (83) and elsewhere.

5. Giles Gunn is one of the critics who have formulated such questions in terms of cultural translation (*Beyond Solidarity* 23).

6. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Terror.edu Winter Theory Institute hosted by the Society for Critical Exchange at the University of Houston-Victoria, February 11–14, 2010.

7. See Arthur Anthony MacDonnell's *Practical Sanskrit Dictionary* for Sanskrit *barbara* (192). The *Unabridged Webster's* too mentions the Sanskrit and "inhumane" as a meaning of the Greek "barbarian." "Babbling" is also listed as a meaning for "barbarous." The Liddell-Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* lists *barbarízo*, "speak broken Greek, speak gibberish," "violate the laws of speech," whence the modern term, "barbarism." The *bárbaroi* were, we learn, originally "all non-Greek-speaking people" (306). As for my essay's title, its first part obviously references the French post-World War II group and journal *Socialisme ou barbarie* led by Cornelius Castoriadis.

8. Critics who have made a cosmopolitan case against the brutality of terrorism include Daniele Archibugi ("Terrorism and Cosmopolitanism"), Ulrich Beck ("The Fight for a Cosmopolitan Future"), and Martha C. Nussbaum ("Compassion and Terror" 10–26).

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Chapter 2

Universities, Terrorists, Narrative, Porcupines

Terry Caesar

At one point early in John Updike's novel, *Terrorist*, the Secretary of Homeland Security upgrades the terror-threat level in Washington, New York, and northern New Jersey from yellow to orange. "Financial centers, sports arenas, bridges, tunnels, subways," he explains, "nothing is safe" (43). In particular, "robust screening"—of vehicles, packages, deliveries—will be in place in order to secure buildings and underground parking garages. The problem of terrorism is at least in part to try to anticipate its targets, its favored sites.

Although in theory any site can conceivably be targeted, in fact, some are more favored than others. The most infamous one of all—the World Trade Center—has acted to effectively marginalize or efface all other sites, even those concurrent with the attack; in the introduction to their recent collection of essays *Literature after 9/11*, Anne Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn note that "literary representations of 9/11 focus almost exclusively on the events in New York City. The destruction of the Pentagon and the crash in Shanksville, PA, while suggestive for film makers, has not proved as interesting to writers" (1).

Over and over again, the essays in the Keniston and Quinn collection explore what has not been represented in (or as a result of) 9/11: Iraqis or Afghans killed by Americans, or the real-time trauma of the actual historical event on this one particular day, to the loss of the father as represented in fictions such as Jonathan Saffran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, or comix such as Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, and the absence of actual dead bodies.[1] As Simon Cooper and

Paul Atkinson note, the very use of the numbers "9/11" expresses an absence, since it is based on "the use of a date in lieu of a name" (62).

Just so, some of the problem of terrorism is the problem of naming. "9/11" doesn't so much state a transcendent solution to the problem as much as simply relay the implicit question: what is terrorism?[2] If 9/11 isn't an example of terrorism, we can certainly conclude, nothing is. And yet, 9/11 was so spectacular, so televised and photographed in real time throughout the entire surface of the globe, that it still threatens to render any other examples—or even all subsequent examples—to be, if certainly not trivial, then less significant, smaller of scale, and more local in consequence.

We need to inquire into what other narratives 9/11 conceals as well as the ones it reveals. In particular, we need to inquire into the relation between terrorism and higher education. The one is not merely the opposite of the other; according to Marc Sageman in *Understanding Terrorist Networks,* two-thirds of contemporary al Qaeda-affiliated terrorists went to state or Western-style colleges (cited in Evans 13). What are we to make of this fact? Or of the larger fact that what counts as "education" to Us both is and is not identical to what counts for education for Them? At the least, a reading of our education in terms of their presence ought to help us understand our stories of education better, if not theirs. Not to mention them, in whatever guise.

One

There are few certainties regarding terrorism. Understanding can be quickly overcome by proliferating distinctions or lost in endless surmise. For example, how is terrorism distinct from jihadism or slaughter? How is international terrorism to be distinguished from domestic terrorism? Is each merely a manifestation of the same thing, or something quite different from the other? What about the phenomenon of state terrorism? And so on. No wonder Gus Martin, in his handbook, *Essentials of Terrorism*, has to be content to offer the following not as a definition but as a "definitional model": "Terrorism is a premeditated and unlawful act in which groups or agents of some principal engage in a threatened or actual use of force or violence against human or property targets. These groups

or agents engage in this behavior intending the purposeful intimidation of governments or people to affect policy or behavior with an underlying political objective" (9).

At least one thing seems certain: a college or university campus does not constitute a likely terrorist site. Large numbers of people may congregate there, in classrooms or auditoriums, as we saw most spectacularly in the case of Virginia Tech in 2007, when Seng Hui Cho killed thirty-two students and faculty. But Cho acted alone, as a failed member of the "college community." His motives sought no wider politics, and none were subsequently discovered.[3] Virtually alone among recent fictions about terrorism of any sort, Updike's novel begins in an educational institution. However, it is a high school, not a college. Why not a university?

We might suppose that a college would do just as well in order to register Ahmed Molloy's fervent Islamic faith and extravagant revulsions, especially since Central High School sits "on its little rise hung above the city like a castle, a palace of learning" (11). In other words, Central High appears to posses the elevation as well as the isolation of a university. However, this is misleading. In fact, Central High adjoins a disused downtown area consisting of abandoned trolley tracks and public lavatories or boarded-up display windows of old department stores. Its "interface" with private property has at once grown complicated and slum-ridden; inside the main school building, Ahmed's guidance counselor's room is a former supply closet.

In other words, one reason Central High has been chosen is because it is open to the world, and all too vulnerable to its ravages. A university campus would be more physically separate from its larger surroundings, though not to say self-enclosed. Central High is all too fatefully part of the world, which has already succeeded in eroding its educational pretensions and transforming students who come "encoded in the intricate programming of action figures twitching in their spasmodic way through the explosion-producing algorithms of a video game" (34). In college, students presumably study such programming; in high school, they act it out.

There is, however, another reason why Central High is not Central University: something called "college" can therefore become Ahmed's destination. He can do something more with his life than drive a truck.

Higher education represents this "something." Jack Levy, the guidance counselor, senses this immediately, as he explains to Ahmed that scholarship money—despite the war against terrorism—is still available to people of color: "We could have gotten you some, I'm sure of it. Not Princeton, maybe, and maybe not Rutgers, but a place like Bloomfield or Seton Hall, Farleigh Dickinson and Kean, can be excellent. Sorry I wasn't on to your case earlier" (40).

As the novel progresses, the narrative of college remains firmly in place as a counter to the narrative of terrorism. Jack later stops by with some college catalogues to see Ahmed, and explains to his mother, "Any college these days, the way the politics of it are, wants diversity, and your boy, what with his self-elected religious affiliation, and, pardon me for saying it, his ethnic mix, is a kind of minority's minority—they'll snap him up" (83–84). It falls to college, in other words, to make good the promise of Ahmed's Egyptian-Irish heritage, whose "diverse" resonances are at best muffled in high school.

College, in effect, provides the foundation for the central tenet of American ideology, whereby all groups are reborn as American. As Jack maintains to Ahmed at the end (after the boy has voiced disapproval of his mother sleeping with a Jew): "Hey, come on, we're all Americans here. That's the idea, didn't they tell you that at Central High? Irish-Americans. African-Americans, Jewish-Americans; there are even Arab-Americans" (301). Alas, it seems Ahmed wasn't properly instructed at Central High. This alone becomes sufficient reason for him to go on to college. Again, the narrative of college stands in stark opposition to the narrative of terrorism, which withholds the democratic hyphen to ethnic groups and instead enforces a separatist logic that leads to a righteous war of potentially all against all.

Two

In his history of terrorism in the United States, *The Terrorist Trap*, Jeffrey Simon gives the following "future trend": "The rank and file of terrorist organizations will continue to be filled with the poor, uneducated, and alienated youths of the Third World and elsewhere" (353). Thus he enforces our most common comprehension. Terrorists are ignorant and

stupid. Education would benefit, if not disabuse them. Like Updike's Ahmed, they ought in fact to attend college, which is conceived as the antithesis of terrorist "knowledge." Indeed, as Slajov Žižek remarks in his recent study, *Violence*, "terrorist attacks are carried out on behalf of that *absolute* meaning provided by religion. Their ultimate target is the entire Western godless way of life based on modern science" (81).

Of course it is more complicated than this. Writing in 2001, Simon goes on to note how we might expect "extremists" to become "more technologically proficient," thereby adding "a new dimension" to their attacks, notwithstanding the fact that sabotaging telecommunications links or international banking networks simply fails to deliver the 'big bang' or dramatic effect of traditional destructive tactics (352). But this complication does not threaten the image of the terrorist as a religious fanatic. Simon is careful to designate technological proficiency as a "skill." As such, it does not seriously challenge what he takes to be education, or what Žižek takes to comprise science (as an institution—according to John Gray—that paradoxically promises both security as well as freedom of thought) (81–82).

Once again, the narrative of college—insofar as it exists on the Western model as the favored site for education—not only now stands opposed to the narrative of terrorism. This opposition, in turn, stands in contrast to American fictional narratives of the previous generation, in which political violence of various kinds on the part of extremists, radicals, Weathermen and Black Panthers was typically set on college campuses. In effect, these earlier narratives—let Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* stand as a late instance—explored the relation between college itself and the radical actions that the knowledge offered there could bring about. If potentially radical or destructive—consisting not only of demonstrations but of robberies and bombings—these actions were not widely understood as examples of "terrorism." For one thing, as Simon argues, whether because of FBI failure to discover any evidence of a conspiracy among many of political groups or because these groups were so small in number, "[t]he foundation to support a political revolutionary terrorist campaign in the United States was simply not there" (371).[4] For another thing, as Pynchon's narrative makes clear, what was "there" instead at the

time was a need to examine possible commonalities between the identities of student protestors and police.[5]

Today, there appears to be in our political narratives about student protest no comparable need. Why did it exist at one time? Not only because the 60s—now over—was a period for all sorts of strange conjunctions: sit-ins and free love, Richard Nixon and Jimmy Hendrix, tie-dyes and Ho Chi Min, or the Whole Earth Catalogue, LSD, and Herbert Marcuse. Not only because today's campus is more than half in love with an easeful virtual dimension consisting of internet links, on-line courses, and Wikipedia-driven research. What is absent at the present time is some larger cultural script in which the college campus could function as a setting for a terrorist narrative.

No such script seems any longer to be available. What appears to be available instead is a need to preserve the college campus from the political energies that saturated it not so long ago, and that, in turn, often resulted in a destructive potential that can be read today in terms of what we now understand as "terrorism." This is precisely how Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* (1997) responds to the figure of Merry Levov (who sets a bomb in a small post office, causing the incidental death of one man), and it is significant, I would argue, that, unlike the real-life figure on which she may have in part been modeled, Merry never gets to college.[6]

She does not for the same reason Updike's Ahmed does not. By locating her back in high school, Roth exposes Merry's "revolutionary" energies as youthful, while at the same time his narrative implicitly retains an ideal of college or university as the site upon which these energies could have been developed, matured, or at least made more authentic. *American Pastoral* can serve, in turn, as a decisive moment in the history of contemporary American fictional constructions of the figure of the terrorist, insofar as it concerns higher education. He or she now becomes absent from, if not foreign to, campus, representing not some strange, provocative synthesis of fugitive kinds of knowledge or disparate actions but instead simply their antithesis.

In a fascinating discussion of the figure of the terrorist in contemporary American conspiracy fiction, Steffen Hantke argues that "violence, and particularly terrorist violence, is first and foremost a coding problem" (226–27). Despite the differences among the three postmodern novels

upon which he focuses (Joseph McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge*, Don DeLillo's *Players* and *Mao II*), what he finds is the depiction of the terrorist as "a consistently ambivalent, yet infinitely adaptable trope of conspiratorial violence" (224). Hantke's argument was published just ten years ago. How much has changed since then! At the present time, we have ceased to need such a construal of the terrorist. Now the figure is simply inauthentic, which is another way of saying that anything he or she represents is finally alien to campus. There is no longer any "code" by means of which the terrorist can be admitted there—or anywhere else. At the present time, we need college to redeem the threat of terrorism, not to host it.

Our willingness to see nothing charismatic about the fictional terrorist extends to our inclination to ignore the educational experience of the actual terrorist. An article in a recent *New York Times*, for example, inquires into precisely what kind of institution is Al-Eman University in Yemen, where the young Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, recently studied Arabic, before packing his underwear with an explosive charge that failed to detonate when his plane neared Detroit on Christmas Day, 2009. Is Al-Eman a "university" at all in the Western sense? It appears that its curriculum is heavily weighed to religion, and therefore suspiciously complicit with jihadism. What are we to make of such a campus, whose central physical feature is a huge mosque? What has such a campus made of the young Nigerian who once studied there?

There is more. Umar Farouk is a graduate of London's University College, where he studied engineering and business finance and earned a degree in mechanical engineering. If his subsequent study in Yemen can be questioned, his study in England cannot. Instead, his higher education constitutes a sort of hybrid of West and East, engineering and Allah, science and religion, so typical of al Qaeda recruits. Just so, the 9/11 terrorists were enrolled in a bewildering array of educational institutions, here and abroad, including language schools, technical universities, and especially flight schools. If anything, they were too ardent of education rather than scornful of it.

"My only son, without a Ph.D," laments the Egyptian father of Muhammed Atta in the recent HBO-financed movie *The Hamburg Cell*, about the formation into a group of many of the 9/11 terrorists. By the time he voices this complaint, his son is ready for martyrdom, for which

his own formal study—in architecture—has become a cover. Or at least, this is the easiest way to understand it. How *else* we might want to understand it is another matter—one our current narratives disdain. A terrorist with a PhD?[7] Easier to imagine a terrorist without much education at all or to admit as mere curiosities the fact that, say, the targets on 9/11 were in fact designated by the terrorists in code as "the College of Art" or "the College of Applied Science."

Three

Donald Barthelme's short fiction "Porcupines at the University" begins with a "scout" breaking into the room occupied by the Dean and his wife and shouting "porcupines!" It appears there are thousands, only a few miles away. "Porcupines what?" asks the Dean. Then he hazards the hope, "Maybe they won't enroll. Maybe they're just passing through." "You can't be sure," cautions his wife. When she asks if he isn't going to "bust" the porcupines, the Dean allows: "I'm tired of busting people.... I suppose I'll have to do something," he admits nevertheless (131–32). The narrative immediately becomes a parable about what to do, or rather what can be done, when figures appear at the university who are fundamentally inconceivable to it.

Why porcupines? That is, why an example of an animal, rather than some human figure? Perhaps because according to a recently-published seminar by Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, although the two are indissoluable, "having in common their being both outside-the-law," this being-outside-the-law in the case of the beast "can also situate the place where the law does not appear, or is not respected, or gets violated" (17). The animal, that is, gives a more shocking, deeper, or at least immediate purchase to the provocation posed by a figure who is not so much above the law as below it. Yet, if so (and of course there remains much more to say simply about the ontological authority of these two figures), why these particular animals?[8] Possibly because they have quills—the scout pulls them out of his ankles while the Dean questions him—and these quills suggest the venerable connections between terrorism and writing.

In any case, it quickly develops that there is a "porcupine wrangler," named Griswold, who dreams of the riches that will be his, once he

arrives with his herd at "the great porcupine canneries of the East." As he writes new songs and anticipates New York, Griswold forms a polar figure to that of the Dean, who prepares for the porcupines by loading an old Gatling gun that had formerly sat on a concrete slab in front of the ROTC building. "Porcupines at the university, well why not?" his wife has said, to which he has objected: "We don't have *facilities* for four or five thousand porcupines" (133). The wife suggests they could take a course entitled, Alternate Life Styles. The Dean replies that there are already too many in the course.

At the end, the wrangler and the Dean parlay. The Dean insists that enrollment is out of the question. Besides, there has been enough trouble on campus. The wrangler seems eager to comply—provided a "deal" can be made. Apparently it is, but we never learn what exact demands he makes. Instead, a final section of the narrative finds the porcupine herd starting onto the Cross Bronx Expressway as the wrangler contemplates a bright show-biz future, while "citizens" in cars look out and think: "What is wonderful? Are these porcupines wonderful? Are they significant? Are they what I need?" (137).

In the last chapter of his recent biography of Barthelme, Tracy Daugherty traces a somewhat surprising context for Barthelme's fiction, beginning with a criticism of certain American writers that appeared in the *New York Times* two days after 9/11. Typical of their abandonment to write about public life, Barthelme, it seemed, had contented himself by "performing postmodern experiments with fable, farce, and recycled fairy tales" (491). On the contrary, Daugherty argues, postmodernism in general is more devious, which is what Barthelme meant in once remarking, "The disorientation in my stories is not mine. It is what is to be perceived around us."

One example: the south side of St. Vincent's Hospital near the World Trade Center, on the same block as Barthelme's old apartment, which became a post 9/11 wailing wall full of pictures and descriptions of lost loved ones. To his biographer, these fragments constituted a particularly vivid, grim recall of Barthelme's well-known aesthetic credo: "Fragments are the only forms I trust." Daugherty is not suggesting, I think, that Barthelme's stories have anything explicitly to do with terrorism. But they do have to do with the disorientation and fragmentation terrorism brings

about. Thus, in another sense, how could they not have to do with terrorism? This is the way fiction works.

The porcupines are not terrorists. But they are a sort of zero-degree species of beings who, like terrorists, threaten the university simply because they are so completely alien there. Something must be done about them when they appear. They can't be ignored. Since there is no way to absorb them into the structure of the university, it might be possible instead to oppose them by violence. But this possibility is not satisfactory. Some accommodation—some "deal"—must be reached. And so in Barthelme's narrative, it is. However, it's not clear precisely what this is.

Perhaps the nature of the accommodation can't ever be clear. The need for it is one thing. The substance is quite another. Many of Barthelme's stories work this way. There is a formal structure of some kind. Something foreign appears either within it or alongside it. What to do? Usually an incorporation is made by the end, through which the thing is either uneasily relocated or else revealed to be not so alien after all. (See, for example, "The New Member," in the same volume.) "Porcupines at the University" is not only an example of the formal dynamics of a particular author. The story, published in 1977, can be read as an example of the continuation of a larger narrative in American fictional narratives about nothing less than the meaning of higher education, beginning with wayward others who appear not even to belong because they seem to promise only violence.

But what if they did belong? What if they were already among us? It may be too late at the present time to reimagine anew the figure of the terrorist as what Hantke terms "a cherished figure of postmodernist transgression" (228). (He compares its "conceptual makeup" and "strategic value" to another cherished icon, Donna Haraway's cyborg.) And yet, if we take place the actual education of known terrorists—in all its undifferentiated variety—alongside the education we know as our own, at least we have an idea of college less "pure" than that of our present narratives, maybe even more mysterious, and certainly more useful insofar as understanding what terrorism is.

With "Porcupines at the University," we already have one such idea, given along the lines of Jean-Francois Lyotard's famous injunction in *The Postmodern Condition* that "our business [is] not to supply reality but to

invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented" (81). Porcupines at the university? Porcupines? Perhaps in them we have what Lyotard characterizes as "the unpresentable in presentation itself" (81). Their very notion is absurd, although no more so than the imagining of the World Trade Center in DeLillo's novel *Players* (published in the same year as Barthelme's story) as the location of a firm called the Grief Management Council and as one whose towers "didn't seem permanent…no less transient for all their bulk than some routine distortion of light" (16).

A final thing about Barthelme's story: at the end, it is the citizens rather than the Dean and his wife (much less their faculty colleagues) who worry about the significance of the porcupines. Is this because the "deal" already accomplished back on campus has foreclosed further academic attention? Hard to say. But to anybody who proposes the academic study of something so alien to the university, there does seem to be a lesson: attention will ultimately be established by the terms of the larger society, whose sheer wonderment at the utter spectacle of these alien beings may never succeed in clarifying anything at all about them.

This is why, in turn, we need academic study, although in this one fictional instance the porcupines actually pass through, or rather by, the university too quickly. The fact that they are never admissible does not change the fact that they succeed in exerting a certain influence or pressure upon campus, which it is the business of the story to (in Lyotard's idiom) "conceive" if not precisely present. What is this influence? How to gauge this pressure? Unpresentable matters both—at least in narrative terms. It is left for us to muse about whether or not the Dean returns at the end to reciting the lines of a popular song, as he is doing, idly, at the story's outset.

It is also left to us to decide how many political energies we want to address directly in our programs. Perhaps those having to do with terrorism can't really be recuperated, much less even ultimately understood. However, at the present time, it seems particularly unfortunate that the plots of actual terrorists insofar as they involve college intersect with our own fictional narratives about terrorism at these same institutions. The result? Campus appears as a site that can be either discarded after being used or else as a repository of values that can be protected once idealized. At times, it already appears hard to tell the difference, as in the recent case

of "The Manchester College of Professional Studies," a bogus college created on the location of a former pub by two Pakistanis, which enrolled a number of suspected terrorist suspects among hundreds of other students in order for them to obtain work in the UK.

How contemptuous are terrorists of education in so many forms, and yet how devoted to its promise, how fascinated by its opportunities! If, like Barthelme's Dean, we must in our turn "do something," then we could well begin by making a full appraisal of educational experience in all sorts of unlikely institutions which include students who turn out only to study through violence. This appraisal alone might enable stronger, more searching narratives for us to fashion simply about our own educational institutions, poised uneasily as the most respectable of them are at the present moment between making some sort of "deal" with terrorism (new programs, special conferences) and excluding it entirely.

Notes

1. After quoting Foer on his protagonist's outrage at finding "all sorts of stuff" available on the internet but not available in his own country, David Simpson comments: "Is this the therapeutic state at work, protecting us from what it knows we cannot bear, or something more sinister, a purposive repression of the physicality of death in order that a culture of undying energy can maintain itself and continue to avoid facing up to the deaths of those in other parts of the world, and in its own enclaves (the inner cities, the prisons, and elsewhere), the deaths which its own mighty resources might work to avoid rather than continue to perpetuate?" (214).

2. Compare Derrida: "But this very thing, the place and meaning of this 'event,' remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept, like a unicity with no generality on the horizon or with no horizon at all, out of range for a language that admits its powerlessness and so it reduced to pronouncing mechanically a date, repeating it endlessly, as a kind of ritual incantation, a conjuring poem, a journalistic litany or rhetorical refrain that admits to not knowing what it's talking about" (86).

3. Of course I endorse Žižek's call: "the task is precisely to *change the topic*, to move from the desperate humanitarian SOS call to stop violence to the analysis of that other SOS, the complex interaction of the three modes of violence: subjective, objective, and symbolic" (11). Cho's terrible act of violence, that is, was purely "subjective," and leads to no fuller understanding of violence itself, much less terrorist violence.

4. Steffen Hantke notes that German writers, for example, "have generated fictional accounts of terrorism that show none of the signs of paranoia that is so essential to American fiction from the same period." Instead, "the conspiracy is seen from the inside and appears therefore transparent and unthreatening" (241).

5. The following declaration of the narrator of *Vineland* (about the narrative's official villain) is often cited: "Brock Vrond's genius was to have seen in the activities of the sixties left not threats to order but unacknowledged desires for it." Brock goes on to imagine "the deep…need to stay children forever, safe inside some extended national family" (269).

6. See the brief summary of Judith Clark's life given in Simon (3–4). Unlike Merry, she attended college—the University of Chicago—where her commitment to radical politics deepened. Of course, the respective lives of the fictional character and the real person diverge at several additional points, perhaps the other most salient one being that Clark was eventually arrested and tried for murder (of a bank guard and two policemen during a robbery).

7. I pass over the special case of the Unabomber (who of course is, or was—for better or worse—one of "us"). For an interesting discussion, see Simmons. In treating the connection between terrorism and authorship, the article of course conforms to the terms set by DeLillo's novel, *Mao II* and therefore acts to restrict the discussion of terrorism to its "literary" character. See Scanlan, however, for a wider history of the long fictional relationship between terrorism and writing.

8. A later remark by Derrida seems particular close to the logic of Barthelme's conception (as well as the present argument): "And what if 'the beast and the sovereign' were primarily an incitement, a provocation not only to know, but to know knowledge otherwise or for the first time or, more precisely, to *think* knowledge, to determine it, and thus also to reconnoiter it and so know its limits? What could that mean, to know the limits of knowledge" (278)?

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Chapter 3

World Bank University

The War on Terror and the Battles for the Global Commons

David B. Downing

The scene is a hotel meeting room in 1950, Bogota, Colombia, and the main characters in the drama are Robert Garner, then Vice President of the World Bank, and Lauchlin Currie, director of the Bank's mission to Colombia. Garner has traveled from New York to get Currie's report on what the Bank should be doing in Colombia. He is not happy with what he hears. "Damn it, Lauch," Garner cries out, "We can't go messing around with education and health. We're a *bank!*" (Benjamin 67). Garner is protesting Currie's proposal to expand the bank's capital investments in that country into human services such as schools and public health, rather than strictly productive resources such as agriculture, industry, and energy suitable for profitability. His proposal strikes at the heart of the conflict between opposing narratives in the postcolonial reconstruction of global geographies. On the one hand, we have the banker's concern to invest in capital-yielding productive resources of industry, transportation, and wealth finance, and on the other, the political (and social) responsibility to invest in capital-draining human services such as education, healthcare, childcare, sanitation, water, and sustainable living and working conditions. Of course, these two domains sometimes seem to join hands, and sometimes split far apart, but ideologically separated they indeed were, and still are, for that matter, in many people's eyes.

Garner's remarks make great sense within the first third of what I will describe as a three-part history of the World Bank. I will return to this opening scene since I present it as a paradigmatic moment in the battles

between private capital and public commons. What I hope to add to this general story is a refinement of the more direct links between the mutations of the World Bank and the alteration of working conditions in higher education. But before I get to that historical sketch, let me set the stage with some general reflections that organize my presentation of the history.

My basic project is to try to articulate the links between the war on terror and the battles for the global commons, especially as they impact higher education in the US. In order to do that, we need to translate from the vast historical archive of the global economy some simplified frames with which to comprehend the relations between the mutations of the World Bank-IMF-WTO complex and the alteration of working conditions in higher education. I have coined the term "World Bank University" (WBU) as a play on Evan Watkins' term, "World Bank literacy," and Amitava Kumar's term, "World Bank Literature" (WBL), a term Kumar refers to as a "provocation" rather than as having any distinct referent. In short, rather than a definitive definition, "the phrase is intended to prompt questions about each of the words in that constellation" so as "to invite inquiry into globalization, the economy, and the role of literary and cultural studies" (xvii), or in my use, the role of higher education. Kumar's point is that literary production in the post-war period of neocolonialism often directly confronts circumstances determined by literal policies of the World Bank. But in a figurative way, the World Bank also serves as a kind of synechdoche for all the various International Financial Organizations (IFI) that have shaped the geopolitical world since the 1940s. As a provocation, World Bank University configures the relations between education, knowledge, and the geopolitical economy.

As a general story, we all recognize that capitalism and militarism work to enclose the public commons serving many in order to expand private profit for the few.[1] The current "War on Terror" has its roots in the post-WWII "climate of fear" and the "permanent war economy" (Mills) established by the international financial policies for the organizing of capital. This paper offers three historical frames as a simplified narrative within which to describe the global orchestration of the links between state militarism and private capitalism, on the one hand, and, on the other, the dispossession, enclosure, and shrinking of the global commons represented

by human services such as housing, water supply, sanitation, electricity, health care, and education. Regardless of our disciplinary position within the many sectors of higher education, we are all caught within these frames, and we can no longer avoid translating between the global geopolitical arena and the local effects of our academic work. What can, or should, we do in these circumstances?

I organize my story by focusing on the tension between the often opposing *domains* of productive economic resources and necessary human services. I will try to make these conflicts clear by borrowing David Harvey's description of the organically linked but "dual character" (*New Imperialism* 137), or Janus-faced *processes* of late capitalism. On the one hand, in the mode of capital accumulation by expanded reproduction, assets are directly invested in industrial and agricultural productivity, or in debt financing itself as a mode of wealth production. On the other hand, the mode of accumulation by dispossession takes over when over-accumulated capital can only find new markets by breaking into the public commons of otherwise relatively protected, state-operated (or socialized) domains of basic human services. Even democratically installed protections of such services can be forced open under the rubric of deregulation and structural adjustment which are really just names for regulations that favor capital rather than human beings. These modes of neoliberal production combine violent economic and military operations that sustain and create terror; but they also sustain antagonism and resistance.

The virtue of Harvey's formulation is that it takes account of both *processes*, production and dispossession, as they determine who gets access to both *domains*, resources and services. Of course, the mix of domains and processes can get pretty interdependent and complex, and that complexity is part of the message. Nevertheless, my sense is that conceptually distinguishing their operation in each of the three historical frames can help us to better describe the links between the World Bank economy and the restructuring of higher education.

Phase I: 1944–60

In July, 1944, the World Bank (officially, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) was founded as a mediating agency in

the historical transition between directly managed colonial rule by nation states and globalized market management through transnational agencies. As Michael Denning has explained in *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, the newly emerging terms of the First, Second, and Third Worlds became descriptors of the geo-political landscape of the rapidly expanding global economy partly because of the actions and mission of the World Bank to control development and its partner, the IMF, to control global monetary funds. The main thing to be managed was global productive resources, which referred primarily to tangible kinds of industrial, agricultural, and infrastructure projects suitable for capital accumulation. Productive resources were therefore intended to be distinctly separate from "human resources," the "soft sector," the "social welfare" domain championed by the New Deal. Accordingly, these educational, cultural, and service interests were strategically channeled off to the United Nations, a body that in 1946 founded UNESCO as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Economic development would thus be handled by the World Bank, IMF, and GATT; cultural development could be left to the United Nations, and all of these organizations were under the effective control of the United States.

The Bank certainly felt that its mission as a bank meant that it could not be seen as a social benefactor, or an extender of the principles of the New Deal to the rest of the world, but as an orchestrator of capitalist development of the Third World. The Bank's strictly economistic mission was ideologically to distance itself from any social, cultural, political, or military mission. Ironically, higher education supplied exactly the ideological backbone for this plan. The university produced the discourse adapted by the World Bank founders: the division between economics and politics reflects the modern discourse separating knowledge from power, the scientific laboratory from the political state, the literary from the social, and this discourse was conveniently incorporated right into the founding documents. By focusing on objectifiable economic commodities rather than subjectively (and collectively) experienced conditions of human labor, the Bank could effectively obscure class struggle and power relations. All of this university-originating discourse produced the grounds for American exceptionalism: US interventions were on the side of knowledge, science, and development, not politics. John Harriss

calls this a process of "depoliticizing development" as worked out by "the anti-politics machine," the cruel irony being that the anti-politics rhetoric produced some devastating political realities. Political history is whitewashed with the myth of a well-worn scientific rationalism now operating in the social arena of global development. As Wendy Brown explains, "Depoliticization involves removing a political phenomenon from comprehension of its *historical* emergence and from a recognition of the *powers* that produce and contour it" (15).

Indeed, the World Bank archives are replete with recurrent arguments and tropes guiding policy decisions according to the idealized discourse of science as objective neutrality: knowledge, research, scholarship, all of these activities are to be fundamentally carried out as nonhistorical, nonpolitical, nonideological procedures (while, of course, exactly the opposite is really happening). The disciplinary double-vision produced by higher education is carried over, one might say, by the college-educated economists who took the lesson to heart in drafting the World Bank's charter in 1944. It was called "nonpolitical lending," and this rhetoric and practice begins at the beginning.

Consider, for example, Article 3, Section 5 of the World Bank Charter, which reads that all loans are to be made "without regard to political or other non-economic influences or considerations" (qtd. in Benjamin 35). Or even more expressly, we find in Article 4, Section 10 a heading called "Political Activity Prohibited," and under that heading, the following policy delimitation: "'The Bank and its officers shall not interfere in the political affairs of any member.... Only economic considerations shall be relevant to their decisions, and these considerations shall be weighed impartially" (35). Sound familiar? From our perspective, no doubt, these ideological mystifications are spurious, to say the least, but there they are, right in the language of the founding charter.

Now, these formulations of the charter help, in part, to explain why in 1950, Robert Garner was so upset at Lauchlin Currie. Among other things, it meant that the Bank was deeply concerned about its public representation as a manager of capital with the free market as the panacea for the economic ills of the world, not an extender of a kind of global New Deal concerned with social, historical, and political projects. It was as if

private capital had nothing to do with public commons, however they might be conceived.

On an equally significant and parallel footing, the de-political myth was carried over explicitly in military training. In *The Power Elite*, C. Wright Mills quotes from a 1952 article, "The U.S. Military Mind," published in *Fortune* magazine: "It is drummed into every military manager in the course of his not-inconsiderable education, from the day he enters West Point to the day death makes him eligible for an Arlington burial with honors, that he is to back away from anything resembling a political decision" (Mills 200).

Likewise, since education was the main producer of disinterested knowledge, there was good reason within the nation (even if not in the Third World) to provide considerable public funding for higher education, as represented by the 1944 GI Bill. Vannevar Bush's influential 1945 book, *Science: The Endless Frontier*, had set the stage for translating the dwindling frontiers of US geographical colonialism into the socio-political landscape of "Big Science" with a nationalist fervor and World Bank assistance. And in order to have science, you had to have more education. So the 1947 Truman Commission on Higher Education for American Democracy (which later spurred the 1958 NDEA) provided the political discourse to translate these events into US funding for science education. These federal resources would propel me (and my generation) right through grade school and on into college. Indeed, all of higher education in the US began to ride the wave of the postwar boom—the GI Bill, NDEA, and deep investments in public education—even if it was driven by aggressive government favoring of science education so we could get to the moon first. Of course, the Cold War expansion of education had its backlash during the 1950s in the witch-hunting era of McCarthy. This period witnessed a large-scale purging of dissent in both public and academic life in the midst of a new synergy between American business interests, government policies, and university research (Schrecker; Harvey, *A Brief History* 8). Despite this ugly period of political purging, the nationalist project of investing in competitive science and thus the growth of higher education carried along with it a surplus: the "soft" fields expanded right along with the "hard" disciplines. The growth of public higher education became a huge experiment as a growing majority of an

emerging generation was allowed to be college and university students for a prolonged period before they became workers. One unintended consequence of this investment was that in the end it produced a lot of dissent. But that's a story that will have to wait for the next phase.

During the 1950s, none of the geopolitical events ever got publically translated into simple terms other than as Manichean views of us versus them. None of the imperialist features of US history got translated into any meaningful venue in my (or most anybody else's) primary and secondary education in the 1950s and 60s. Most of us white, middle-class baby boomers growing up in the shadows of the Second World War never learned an intelligent word about socialism or Marxism in our formal schooling, and what we did learn about communism was a congeries of evil, fear, and inhumanity. Understandably, of course, because all this rhetoric about the "apolitical" educational, economic, and military operations was being orchestrated by the emerging Cold War agenda. Thus in his 1947 speech that launched the "Truman Doctrine," Truman himself "said the world 'must choose between alternative ways of life.' One was based on 'the will of the majority… distinguished by free institutions'; the other was based on 'the will of a minority… terror and oppression'" (qtd. in Zinn 426). Thus begins the post-war version of the War on Terror that established a "climate of fear," a hysteria about Communism that fueled an escalating military budget for the "Good" (the "free world") to battle the "Bad" (the terrorists). Thus, terror was external and from the "other."

There was, of course, resistance to this agenda, even though it was often hidden from public view. For example, in 1956, C. Wright Mills exposed the depolitical myth because, as he explains, "the economic and the military have become structurally and deeply interrelated, as the economy has become a seemingly permanent war economy; and military men and policies have increasingly penetrated the corporate economy" (215). Moreover, even if the Establishment could bolster the myth of ideological disinterestedness for educational institutions, the rhetorical education of the general public demanded by the permanent war economy needed no such myths, and so it was well funded: in the early 1950s, the US engaged in a massive public relations effort whereby millions of dollars and thousands of publicists were employed to "define the reality of international relations in a military way" (220). And the reality was the opposite of the

apolitical myth because higher education contributed deeply to that mission. As Mills argues: "some universities, in fact, are financial branches of the military establishment, receiving three or four times as much money from military as from all other sources combined" (217).

Let me provide one specific example exposing the myth about the separation of the economic and the political. The IMF would not lend money to Cuba because it would not "stabilize" conditions for private capital even though Castro had expanded the public commons through a nationalized system of education, housing, and land redistribution for peasants (Zinn 439–40). And listen to one official's representation of that ideological agenda from Lester D. Mallory, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Inter-American Affairs in an April 6, 1960 memorandum to Roy R. Rubottom Jr., then Under-secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs: "Most Cubans support Castro. There's no effective political opposition…the only foreseeable means to alienate internal support is by creating disillusionment and discouragement based on lack of satisfaction and economical difficulties…. We should immediately use any possible measure to…cause hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the Government" (Lamrani par. 8). When an official threatens hunger and desperation as an economic means to execute the political goal of destabilizing a so-called "terrorist" threat of Castro's Cuba, it's pretty clear who is producing the terror. Nevertheless, those rationales were, and still are, extended throughout US interventions in Latin America.

Mallory's comments reflected the troubling circumstances emanating from the World Bank/IMF global reconstruction and development story. The main problem was that the pressure for human resources kept building during the 1950s, in part, because the development project showed too many signs of not doing so well. Indeed, despite the overall growth in world productivity, the gap between developed, First World nations of the North Atlantic, and the undeveloped, Third World nations of the southern hemisphere kept widening rather than narrowing. What could one expect when, despite the apparent consumerist glut in the developed countries, 85% of the world population consumption is limited to food and essential goods for survival (Chossudovsky 77)? The pressure was building towards a major shift in bank policy, a literal need to invest in poverty alleviation and human services. The sixties were about to happen.

Phase 2: 1960–79

I use 1960 as a turning point to the second phase because it marks the election of John F. Kennedy, the beginning of the Vietnam War, the formation of the IDA (International Development Agency), and the modification of World Bank rhetoric and practices as now shaped by the liberal interventionist strategies for the reduction of poverty. In 1961, Robert McNamara is appointed Secretary of Defense for 7 years, until he then takes over as President of the World Bank in 1968, a post he holds until 1981. In this second phase, capital can be extended, but in rigorously determined and circumscribed ways, to the human services area. Given the rapid expansion in world productivity, the World Bank works to both rhetorically and politically control the kind of investment in human services so that they can be scripted into the domain of productivity and wealth. In Harvey's terms, the mode of accumulation by reproduction extends its rationale to cover investment directly into the domain of human services, (but now conceived as indirect resources) including education, health care, and other necessary services.

The second phase of my narrative begins with a quote from Eugene Black, the then President of the World Bank, only now it is 1962, during his last year as President, and more than a decade has passed since his Vice President Garner protested so loudly against soft sector lending. As you will see, the Bank, and its directors, have dramatically changed their tune so that now, as Black puts it: "We are forced by our circumstances into trying to fashion a whole new orchestra of financial instruments designed specifically…to implant and cultivate in the underdeveloped world the many factors that make a society productive" (Benjamin 67). The key phrases here are "forced by our circumstance" and making "a society productive:" the sense of being forced is coming from below, which is to say the increasing pressure of many who are now objecting to the widening gaps between the wretched of the Earth and the wealthy North Atlantic nations. Making a society productive meant that the human services had to be included in the economic procedures of wealth production rather than in a social concern for working conditions and citizen's rights.

As Brett Benjamin argues, the social and cultural had irrupted into the discourse of the World Bank just as it irrupted in the turmoil of 1960s

protest movements, the changing demographics of higher education, and the emergence of cultural studies as an academic field. Under these circumstances, the World Bank had to adapt both policy and rhetoric to meet the times. It had to find a way of incorporating a changing mission that would include human services without abandoning its primary capital mission in expanding productivity. Robert McNamara was just the man for the job: a Harvard MBA business background, a Vietnam era hawk, a corporate leader, and, finally, a civilian form of military leader. Yet ironically, he became the Bank's most liberal president. He brought human services under the rubric of systems analysis, the term he used at Ford and later developed as Secretary of Defense to make the administration of the military more cost-effective.

Systems analysis was the perfect rhetoric to liberalize investment policy, all the while avoiding anything smacking of social welfare or soft sector idealism. Social benefits such as education and health care had to be justified exclusively in the language of productivity and development: education could be productive if investment in vocational training could lead to more highly trained workers; health care could be productive if it kept more people on the job longer; sanitation facilities could be productive if they enabled more people to work for longer hours. For these kinds of development to succeed, only certain kinds of education, health care, and sanitation were necessary, and the development they contributed to was the development of more capital, more productivity. Of course, First World corporations and franchises could more "cost-effectively" produce the necessary services in the Third World, so most of the capital did not go into indigenous forms of public commons and socialized human services. Indeed, McNamara did just such scripting of human services into the language of capital productivity. For example, McNamara actually tripled education lending in the first five years as World Bank President (Benjamin 67). But, of course, there was a cost to this investment and to the associated rhetoric, because we begin to see the rise of managed education and the transformation of higher education into technical assistance and vocational training. As McNamara put it, "we must make teachers more productive" (qtd. in Benjamin 67). If we manage them successfully, we will produce more freedom for the market. In short, the rhetoric of the protestors about freedom, equality, democracy had to be

appropriated by the Bank itself as a rhetorical way of silencing the protests themselves by so insidiously adapting the protest language.

Education had to serve the economic and military agenda and the fear of resistance was realized in the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s. Indeed, while the irruption of the cultural into the economic was real enough, higher education continued to serve the World Bank agenda. In fact, an interesting pair of surveys (1966 and 1970) by the University of Michigan revealed a remarkable inversion of expectations. According to Howard Zinn, "This showed that, throughout the Vietnam war, Americans with only a grade school education were much stronger for withdrawal from the war than Americans with a college education" (491).[2] In short, it appears that despite all the irruption on campuses, Chossudovsky remains correct in his claim that "the universities' main function is to produce a generation of loyal and dependable economists who are incapable of unveiling the social foundations of the global market economy" (27).

This was particularly the case for the "Chicago Boys." For that story, we have to backtrack a bit before we get to the first "little" 9/11, the coup in Chile in 1973. During the 1950s, it was at the University of Chicago under the free-market theories of Milton Friedman and his "Chicago School" that the move from Keynesian to early neoliberal economic planning began to coalesce (Harvey, *A Brief History* 20–24). But it was also at the University of Chicago where the "group of economists known as the 'Chicago Boys'" were trained and funded by the US government "in a Cold War programme to counteract left-wing tendencies in Latin America" (8). This dynamic link from the Chicago School to the Chicago Boys was an academic experiment of a kind to test economic theory in political practice, one that prepared the way for the "little September 11" of 1973 when Chile became one of the first US neoliberal state projects (Puerto Rico might be the first). The consequences of this economic restructuring under Pinochet were devastating: food prices skyrocketed, wages were frozen, and "an entire country was precipitated into abysmal poverty: in less than a year the price of bread in Chile increased thirty-six times and eighty-five percent of the Chilean population had been driven below the poverty line" (Chossudovsky xxi).

The effects of the Chicago Boys' plan for free market fundamentalism has now been carried out over the past four decades as the global plan for privatized, deregulated, neoliberal capital. The results have been fairly devastating in most parts of the world, including the restructuring of higher education, and that's the story for the next phase.

Phase 3: 1979–2010

The third phase of this three-part history of the post-war period begins with the Right wing takeover represented by Thatcher and Reagan, a period David Harvey marks with the intensified neoliberal re-writing of the conditions and possibilities of global lending. Almost overnight, they had piloted the re-writing of World Bank and IMF policy along the lines of what was called a "structural adjustment program" (SAP), a euphemism for orchestrating the violent processes of accumulation by dispossession (Henry Giroux calls it the "politics of disposability"). Under the new rules for "structural adjustment," first world, supply-side lenders are protected, and third world debtors are forced to adapt neoliberal economic policies in order to secure the loans, which means that formerly protected public domains must be open to private takeover. Education now becomes a central focus of the combined World Bank-IMF-WTO mission, rhetoric, and policy; it is almost as if the market fundamentalists took Antonio Gramsci's famous claim that "every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship" (350) and put it to work for their agenda so as to produce neoliberal ideology as the accepted norm of consumer culture for all citizens by restructuring education at all levels. This third period is also characterized by the sequences of massive debt crises, corporate bailouts, and increased world-wide resistance to the World Bank agenda as exemplified by demonstrations in Seattle (1999), Washington, DC (2000), Porte Allegre, the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico, the organization of the World Social Forum, the anti- and alter-globalization movements, and, more recently, the Occupy Wall Street movement. In short, the third phase clearly begins the shift to the primacy of the mode of accumulation by dispossession in which private capital dispossesses many citizens of various global, but locally differing, domains of public commons and human services. Needless to say, like many citizens around

the world, many of us in the humanities have been pretty vulnerable to the logic of dispossession. What now gains international and lawful legitimacy is the invasion of private investment capital into domains otherwise protected by democratically elected provisions for a public commons, a domain of human welfare, public education, public health care, sanitation, land, air, water, worker's rights, minimum wages, etc.

According to this agenda, the patterns of dispossession moved right into the university, the shift to a part-time, flex labor, cheap teaching core, that Marc Bousquet, Cary Nelson, Jeff Williams, and many others have described. The World Bank played its part: in its many publications, the Bank attacked teacher's unions around the world and offered a version of education at every level modeled according to standardized business practices and vocational training divorced from any form of teacher autonomy, critical thinking, or public education models.

Within US higher education, the global policies of the World Bank found both legislative and judicial sanction in a new law (Bayh-Dole) and a Supreme Court decision (Yeshiva) put into effect in the transition year of 1980. Bayh-Dole fueled expanded reproduction through legalizing of patent rights for profit within higher education even as institutions maintained their non-profit status. The Yeshiva Decision restrained the right of faculty in private institutions to strike, thus dispossessing them of basic workers' rights to contest their conditions of employment. It was, therefore, precisely in tune with the mode of dispossession. As Marc Bousquet argues, "the institutions of faculty and staff unionism are the survivors of a series of great judicial, executive, and legislative traumas after 1980" (109). Here's where the two modes are organically linked: the dispossession of the public knowledge commons associated with the traditional functions of the university fueled a dramatic increase in the mode of expanded reproduction. In short, it favored certain segments of the university: where patents are possible, profits are likely.[3] So the class structure of higher education is not just full professors versus adjuncts; it is also the patent-creating sectors such as fields like bio-engineering, chemistry, computer science, botany, business schools, management schools, and nursing, as well as the vendors, sports-teams, and luxury suite dorms. New rules were put in place to facilitate rapid technology transfer in and out of the university, such as the WTO's TRIPS (Trade

Related Intellectual Property rightS). Some segments of the university have been deeply funded by private interests working according to the mode of expanded reproductivity, while other segments have been dispossessed of academic freedom through insecure working conditions.

What has tended to go under the radar in this analysis is the hidden reality uncovered by Christopher Newfield, who has demonstrated convincingly that despite all the public and private research money running into university science departments, the indirect research costs (IRC) of grant funding has meant that the humanities and social sciences actually serve to fund the debts incurred by the hard sciences. The myth is that scientific research is deeply funded, ergo contributing to public education wealth, but the reality is otherwise; IRC mean that the sciences cost more in terms of tuition and state appropriations money, mainly because the grants never cover all the research costs, so the humanities and social sciences produce the revenue to support the more costly scientific disciplines

In any case, Bayh-Dole and Yeshiva are internal to the US, but there's a much larger stage of World Bank intervention in the global stage of higher education. Indeed, whereas in its first phase, education was never even mentioned in Bank documents and policies, in this third phase, education is everywhere formulated, discussed, and administered in online and print documents, hypertexts, books, essays, and flyers. Let me just give you an example from the book it published in 1994, called *Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience*. From the title alone you might be led to think they have a kind of progressive concern for "Education and Experience"—that is, until you start reading. What you learn is that one of the conditions for borrowing money is that any eligible country must also "agree to develop business-university linkages: including business investments in higher education programs, business funding of educational research, the appointment of business professionals as university faculty and as university governors" (The World Bank qtd. in Hurlbert and Mason, n.p.). The Bank persuades universities to have business leaders "actively define and design new curricula, monitor institutional management, organize student placement, and arrange for industry personnel to be seconded to tertiary institutions." In addition, The Bank calls for "academic staff to have industrial experience," all with the goal of

"aligning education to the country's needs and to the changing structure of the labor market" (75; qtd. in Hurlbert and Mason par. 19). Which is to say, manage labor in higher education to the tunes of capital management everywhere.

This alignment of business and education comes at a price. The borrowing nation must promote competition—euphemistically called "diversification"—in education (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 11). According to Bank logic, by breaking state control of education through the fostering of for-profit universities, such as the University of Phoenix, whose aggressive marketing The Bank praises (31), developing nations will improve the quality of the educational experiences of its citizens. But the reality is much different, and it radiates throughout all levels of the educational system in the developing countries. As Michel Chossudovsky explains:

> Freezing the number of graduates of the teacher training colleges and increasing the number of pupils per teacher are explicit conditions of World Bank social-sector adjustment loans. The educational budget is curtailed, the number of contact-hours spent by children in school is cut down and a double shift system is installed: one teacher now does the work of two, the remaining teachers are laid off and the resulting savings to the Treasury are funneled towards the external creditors. (61)

For a good specific example of the links between dispossession and education, consider Jean-Bertrand Aristide's account of the horrendous destruction of the small, black, Creole pigs indigenous to Haiti. These pigs were the mainstay of the rural Haitian peasant economy. Eighty-five percent of the peasant population owned these pigs, and they served many functions in the local economy: they ate garbage and thereby aided in rural sanitation; they were eaten as food; exchanged as gifts; sold to pay for special occasions such as weddings, "baptisms, illnesses and, critically, to pay school fees and buy books for the children when school opened each year in October" (14). But in 1982, the IFI informed the Haitians that their pigs were sick (they were worried that the diseases they might sometimes carry could be spread to countries in the North).

The peasants were promised that better pigs would be sent to replace theirs if they would simply kill all of their own pigs. So the peasants did just that within thirteen months "with an efficiency not since seen among development projects" (14). Well, it took two years for the new, improved pigs to arrive from Iowa, and when they did, they destroyed the local economy: they required clean drinking water (mostly unavailable to the Haitian population) and imported feed "costing $90 a year when the per capital income was about $130" (14). Besides that, they didn't taste as good as the Creole pigs. It has been estimated that Haitian peasants lost about $600 million dollars through this devastating dispossession of their pigs. And there were dire educational as well as economic consequences: "There was a 30% drop in enrollment in rural schools" (14), and that's in a country where illiteracy is close to 85%, and only about 10% of school age children attend school. The Haitians have never fully recovered from this debacle with the Iowa pigs, and their poverty and the accompanying terror of deprivation is more than ever evident in all the images of devastation from the 2010 earthquake.

Despite these setbacks over the Creole pigs, in 1988, Aristide was deeply involved in educational projects to create a knowledge commons, and he sought "to create a popular university.... An experimental farm and environmental study center, a center dedicated to the study and practice of informal sector economics, a faculty of adult literacy.... A cornerstone principle of this university is that knowledge is not a commodity—it is meant to be shared" (59). He created an on-air educational radio program (Radyo Timoun) and a televised children's educational station (Tele Timoun) that went on the air in 1999. Since Aristide was deposed in 2004, Haiti has been the victim of human rights abuses, increased drug trafficking, money laundering, and corruption of the small group (about 1% of the population) of wealthy elite rulers (Hallward). No wonder most people of Haiti were unprepared for the earthquake.

But to return to the World Bank's instructions in the 1994 book, *The Lessons of Experience*, here's what happens when we jump twelve years later to 2006. George W. Bush's Education Secretary, Margaret Spellings, issues the Commission on Higher Education's (CHE) report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, and the future is charted, all right. In short hand, it is pretty easy to see now that Spellings

and the CHE have quite literally taken the 1994 World Bank book on higher education and turned it into a model of cost-benefit, "value-added" basis for US education. Without tracing all the details, which is actually pretty easy to do, just listen to this line: "Student achievement, which is inextricably connected to institutional success, must be measured by institutions on a 'value-added' basis that takes into account students' academic baseline when assessing their results" (4). In short, you test them first year, test them final year, subtract the first from the last, and that's the measure of the value you've added. Now you can grade every school, every university on one scale. As Patricia Williams puts it, "Ostensibly a school's grade would be used like the nutrient labels on tubs of potato salad" (10). We're all so much part of the World Bank-WTO discourse of "profit-maximizing" that those areas that don't yield profits directly, like humanities, arts, music, gender studies, race studies, etc., well, they can just be dispossessed of both public and private funding.

The twenty-first-century century War on Terror precisely fuels that kind of dispossession. The move to enclose the educational commons proceeds through the more general attacks on freedom of speech, the PATRIOT Acts, and the hyper-security state. The World Bank University represents that phase of higher education where the global financialization of world debt is carried deep within the nation's (and the world's) institutions of higher education (Martin). In addition to the overtly political suppression carried out by the many infringements on academic freedom that we have witnessed in recent years, the WBU carries out internally to higher education the external IFI policies of market fundamentalism by way of massively increasing student debt, casualization, and the flex labor teaching force of temporary, non-tenure track faculty, retrenchment, and down-sizing. At the same time, during the past decade, we have witnessed the massive accumulation of buildings, grounds, endowments, and administrative hires while exploiting students and non-tenure track faculty. These systematic financialization processes reduce and enclose the knowledge commons, which still remains one form of hope for human well-being.[4]

Possibilities of Resistance

As my three-part historical sketch reveals, neoliberal capitalism seeks to totalize its enclosure of all public commons, but it has never worked: the litany of horrors and abuses produces and sustains antagonism and resistance. Karl Polanyi called this the "double movement of society"; Marx called it class struggle. If the resistance movements do not produce some form of commons, they will be ripped apart by capitalist enclosure (i.e., single issue movements are vulnerable). Higher education has long been deeply part of the capitalist project, but it has also engaged battles for a knowledge commons. The university still offers some social spaces (and time) for resistance and dissent that to a limited degree are still in place: academic freedom, classroom freedoms, free exchange of ideas—these concepts remain part of the discourses about the commons, even as they are being enclosed. The struggles and resistances are real and widespread, as witnessed by Occupy Wall Street and by student strikes around the world speaking out for the educational commons necessary for any imaginable version of human flourishing (see Emancipating Education for All). The different value practices of such commons emerge within context-specific classrooms, departments, research groups, labor unions, and student organizations of various kinds.

Secondly, I share Hardt and Negri's assessment that "The most significant event of the first decade of the new millennium for geopolitics may be the definitive failure of unilateralism" (203). The World Bank and the other IFI represent the failed efforts of US global unilateralism. The system is broken. The recent disastrous economic shocks register the end of the project of US unilateral hegemony, and it is unlikely that there will be any single successor, whether nation or global body, to take the place of US imperialism in the form of military dominance and capital systems of unification and control. We are living through a period of transition where the old forms of imperial governance are yielding unprecedented levels of instability in many parts of the world. What may emerge from these struggles remains uncertain. But as educators, these troubled times are dense with teachable moments. From my limited experience, the troubles are so great that more students than ever are willing to listen when we teach about capitalism, socialism, anarchism, and communism. All these movements have histories, and they provide us opportunities

for re-inserting history into the ahistorical rush of hyper-capitalism. Because the litany of capitalist aggressions emanates affective resistance, these moments are thus also dense with organizing moments, political alliances of the left [the peace movement, the anti- and alter-globalization movement, the human rights movement, the environmental justice movement, the feminist movement, etc.]. Conversely, of course, we should recognize that these times are also teachable moments for skinheads, neo-Nazis, and fundamentalists of all kinds.

Third, many domains and elements of the commons remain invisible to the dominant discourse. For instance, in their highly provocative *Disorientations Guide*, the Counter Cartographies Collective (3Cs) offers this formulation regarding the unseen labor, often located in what we might call the commons: "UNC is a space of multiple and unseen kinds of labor made precarious under the pressures of the economic crisis; UNC is a site where borders and migration policy are put into effect; UNC is a site of historical struggles" (EduFactory par. 2). 3Cs focuses on UNC, but their point is that it is only a synecdoche to the broader context of public higher education in the US university where these unseen labor practices are often the struggles of the contingent teaching force, the free-way flyers, mostly women. But in the context of the World Bank University, the point is that these US laborers suffer under the same basic neoliberal, global economic policies suffered by the unseen laborers in distant parts of the world. We have developed many different but related terms to designate these others: the unrepresented, the subaltern, the marginalized, bare life (as Agamben uses the term), the dispossessed, the disempowered, the wretched of the earth, etc. These terms are not, of course, just synonyms, as they do reflect real semantic differences grounded in real material differences. They are indeed "multiple and unseen," but the biopower of the unseen is not the same as the administration of biopolitics by the IFI. There is, of course, real powerlessness: an inability of the dispossessed to magically end the exploitations of global capitalism. Hardt and Negri offer the idea of the "multitude" as a name to replace Marx's notion of the proletariat, the workers whom Marx thought would end capitalism. The multitude may idealize the commons unless we are extremely careful to recognize that the material circumstances of various groups within the multitude is so different. But a large part of our job

as educators is making visible the lost histories, the invisible commons, the precarious forms of labor—Gramsci's "war of position" suggests the material struggles registered in the affective task of making them visible as part of the alternatives to global capitalism.

Fourth, all our terms, rationales, and struggles for and about the commons share at least three primary ethical concerns: 1) social justice; 2) human dignity; and 3) social and collective solidarity with and including the dispossessed of the world. The focus on the commons engages the multiple histories and possibilities of anarchism/communism/socialism as public sharing of resources and services. Let's work as educators to translate our local work into context-specific articulations of these common goals for a better world. As the alternative higher-education movement represented, among many other organizations, through the work of the edu-factory collective puts it, "The commonality of struggles is always against the empty universality of power" (EduFactory n.p.). Struggles for the commons are struggles to work against the reduction of the life world to capital. In short, the battles for the global commons must confront and push back against the war on terror and the financialization and privatization of everyday life as represented by the World Bank University. As Massimo De Angelis puts it, "A different understanding of commons is re-emerging from the webs and networks of the alter-globalization movement" (244).

Fifth, these struggles for and about the commons must integrate three phases: 1) direct action (such as strikes, demonstrations, etc.); 2) coalition building (single-issue movements must form alliances with common causes); and 3) rigorous critique. With respect to the latter, much of the work that needs to be done in this area is, in my mind, less strictly theory-oriented (although of course we need theory), but history-oriented in the sense of retrieving, locating, telling the stories that have been denied by dominant education, the hegemony of mystified history that leaves out most of the real-world geopolitical history of the contemporary moment. Thus, the task of all humanities workers is inevitably an historical task to this extent: that each discipline, each worker, now needs more than ever a kind of self-reflective assessment of the history of its discipline, the history of the university, and the history of global capitalism. How we get access in different disciplinary spheres to these interwoven historical

frames is of course a strategic problem of translating between those differences. (This paper is clearly oriented to that phase of the project.)

Sixth, a lot of our work as educators is as translators. Given the huge range of cultural, social, educational, ethnic, racial, class, and gender differences we confront in and out of our classes, nothing can be more important than translating between and among teachers, scholars, students, parents, public, and private domains. There are lots of people working at these tasks, and I list just a few examples: Adolf Reed's Free Higher Education project (www.freehighered.org); Marc Bousquet's blog (www.howtheuniversityworks.com/wordpress); UNC graduate students' Counter Cartographies Collective (www.countercartographies.org); and EduFactory (www.edu-factory.org).

In fact, I will end with an EduFactory statement: "A network of struggles and resistance has to be a common space of translation…of the different languages and practices, that is to say a common place from which to dismantle the conditions that support the regime of unilateral translation. Only in this way, can a network of struggles and resistance answer in a collective way the central question: how to build up a transnational politics of the common against the global university?" Or what I have been calling, the World Bank University. We should not give up these struggles.

Notes

1. I use a capacious sense of the "commons." Marx used the notion of the commons as a reference to only those domains of strictly not-capital: those spaces free of any contamination from capitalism, and thus a domain that private capital seeks to enclose. Drawing on Marx's key notion, I nevertheless use the "commons" in a somewhat broader sense (see Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*). Also, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri explain, "It is important to keep conceptually separate the common—such as common knowledge and culture—and the public, institutional arrangements that attempt to regulate access to it. It is thus tempting to think of the relationships among the private, the public, and the common as triangular, but that too easily gives the impression that the three could constitute a closed system with the common between the other two. Instead the common exists on a different plane from the private and the public, and is fundamentally autonomous from both" (282). So by global commons, I refer to all those

local spaces of *relative* autonomy from direct capital appropriation of surplus value and from private property as regulated by public law. Such spaces occur in very different contexts and in differing relations to and struggles with capitalism around the globe. Historically speaking, capitalism seeks to enclose and dispossess such global commons, and militarism and terrorism have been deeply linked to those processes of dispossession. See Kamola and Meyerhoff; De Angelis.

2. To summarize the statistics Zinn reports: in the University of Michigan study, in 1966, 27% of college educated people in the study voted for withdrawal, but 41% of those with grade school education were for immediate withdrawal. By 1970, the mood of the country meant that antiwar sentiment was greater in both groups, but there was more increase in the belief in withdrawal among the non-college educated: 47% of college educated were for withdrawal; 61% of those who had only a grade school education.

3. See Jennifer Washburn's *University, Inc.*

4. For a disturbing example of the deleterious links between neoliberal capitalism and US public health, see John Abramson's account in *Overdosed America* of how pharmaceutical companies' exclusive focus on profit have quite literally increased levels of illness and disease among the population.

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Chapter 4

The Company They Keep

How Apologists for Faith Rationalize Terrorism

Horace L. Fairlamb

Defending Faith in the Age of Terrorism: The Evasion of Epistemic Responsibility

In the aftermath of 9/11, theistic faith suffered high-profile criticism from the Reason Project, including best-selling books by Sam Harris (*The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*), Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*), and Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*). In defense of faith, book-length responses appeared from such respected theologians as Alister McGrath (*The Dawkins Delusion?: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*) and Keith Ward (*Why There Almost Certainly Is a God: Doubting Dawkins*). Many others have joined in the fray on both sides. Unfortunately, the focus of both sides is often so broad (i.e., theistic faith in general, for or against), that neither side sheds much light on the crucial links between faith and terrorism.[1]

The need to explore many of the links between religion and violence should be obvious. As even faith's apologists admit, much damage has been done in the name of religion. The ancient Israelites exterminated Canaanite tribes in the belief that God ordered them to do so; the Catholic Church burned and tortured thousands of Christians who did not subscribe to the official version of the Gospel; today's religious militants declare war against liberal permissiveness, global materialism, and

modernity itself. But theism has also produced millions of pacifists and altruists. As faith's defenders rightly note, religious violence is pathological rather than typical. Still, pathologies may be natural even if abnormal, which is to say that militancy may be a natural effect of religion under certain conditions that are not always as rare as they have been in the modern West. Moreover, it is possible that religious violence is the result of a wider infirmity of faith of which violence is but one symptom. In that case, what philosophy and sociology of religion need is not a vote of confidence on faith, but an etiology of religious violence that reveals its underlying conditions.

The recent debate on faith has often polarized between too weak and too strong views of the rationality of religious belief. On the critical side, where earlier positivists accused theology of meaninglessness, some of today's atheists accuse it of stupidity or worse. But the fact that theism is unprovable does not make it irrational. Nor is it obvious that God ought to be easily (or scientifically) understandable. For humanists to assume that creatures with finite intelligence should be able to understand a Creator with infinite intelligence seems to be—to say the least—a non-starter. The least presumptuous view is the Kantian one that admits that life is ambiguous when it comes to ultimate causes.

On the other hand, apologists for faith are too often reluctant to admit that even mainstream religion suffers its measure of irrationalities. The history of orthodoxy is replete with superstitions, ad hoc rationalizations, and politically expedient myths, not to mention destructive crusades. The more candid theologians acknowledge these blots on the history of religion, but they often marginalize such cases, as if the distinction between reasonable orthodoxy and the lunatic fringe is something that everyone can agree upon. To the contrary, blind faith and fanaticism have never been confined to the margins, nor is there now a widespread consensus among believers on the criteria of reasonable belief. Without an uncontroversial criterion of rational faith, apologists face the uneasy trilemma of defending faith in general—which includes too much—or arguing that only their own faith is rational—which looks like special pleading—or avoiding the demarcation issue altogether. Thus, if the atheists have not done justice to the rationality of faith, neither have the apologists faced up to the potential irrationality of faith.

Logic aside, the political urgency of the clash of cultures has prompted faith's critics to accuse moderate believers of complicity with the extremists. Moderates, they argue, too often fail to speak out against extremists, i.e., holding their fire in the interest of religious tolerance and the "privacy" of faith. Good intentions or bad, so the accusations go, "the faithful" constitute an ideological block when it comes to defending faith. Naturally, moderates respond that benign faith should not be painted with the same brush as toxic faith, whose violence they condemn. But the atheists have a point that some non-violent defenders are complicit with the militants whether or not they intend to be. For instance, some mainstream apologists defend faith so categorically that they rationalize ignorant and toxic faith at once, even as they condemn unhappy consequences.

Moderate believers may not condone fringe cults and violent extremism, but mainstream theology and academic philosophers of religion are often soft on the rational accountability of faith. In particular, those who would rationalize the faith of naïve believers seem either oblivious or indifferent to the fact that their attempts to rationalize naïve faith rationalize religious terrorism as well. By lowering the bar of rationality down to the level of naïve believers, such apologetics lend legitimacy to religious terrorists. So while most mainstream believers reject religious militancy, they overlook the wider implications of mainstream apologetics for faith, which include rationalizing religious violence. It is these links between mainstream apologetics and religious terrorism that I will examine below.

I propose four steps toward the rational accountability of faith, three points based loosely on C. S. Peirce's "The Fixation of Belief." In light of Peirce's argument, an adequate critique of the rationalization of religious terrorism requires:

- an assessment of rationality through epistemic practices
- a modest standard of rationality as *inquiry*
- a practical distinction between inquiry and the belief-securing practices of tenacity, authority, and apriority
- a consideration of how resistance to inquiry invites religious fanaticism

Irrational Beliefs vs. Irrational Practices

Traditional epistemology has often associated rationality with valid inferences from standard forms of evidence. Recently, however, epistemologists have shifted attention from inference and argument to other epistemic *practices*. This shift has lent some credence to the view known as "reliabilism," which holds that beliefs are warranted (and therefore rationally held) if the process that produces the belief is a reliably truth-conducive process (e.g., sense perception, memory, double blind studies, etc.). In the reliabilist view, rationality is tied to the belief-producing process first and only then to the belief itself. This practical approach to rationality recalls Peirce's classic essay on the fixation of belief. Though the precise terms of Peirce's discussion are a bit dated, the general approach is useful for diagnosing irrational faith.

Where epistemology seeks the ideal conditions of knowledge, Peirce's essay considers the variety of practices that are in fact used to fix belief. (I choose the term "practices" as some of these ways are not methods in any rigorous or structured sense.) The practical approach proves especially appropriate for religious beliefs, for theology is often motivated by non-epistemic motives (e.g., moral consequences), thus inviting a pragmatic or functional analysis. As Peirce noted, the urge to settle a belief is typically prompted by cognitive dissonance or doubt, a tension caused by conflicting epistemic elements. For the purpose of removing doubt, a variety of practices might serve regardless of their conduciveness to truth. Thus, Peirce concluded, the common feature of doxastic practices is not the search for truth, but rather the fixation of belief, the relieving of doubt. Likewise, a practical view of belief must be as interested in the *causation* of belief as in the truth of belief. As it will become clear, Peirce's pragmatic approach highlights the political and psychological aspects of belief as well as epistemological implications.

Tenacity: To arrive at a fixed belief, one need only commit to a particular belief—chosen for whatever reason—and to stick to it in the face of all challenges, "constantly reiterating it to ourselves, dwelling on all which may conduce to that belief, and learning to turn with contempt and hatred from anything that might disturb it[.]" One could say that this solution to intellectual problems is accomplished simply by force of personal will. Not surprisingly, this practice is widespread, especially among less

open-minded personalities, among those with limited reflective capacity, and among those who crave a feeling of doxastic superiority.

Authority: As with tenacity, the way of authority also appeals to commitments of the will. But the way of authority appeals to a *social* will, some institution on which persons depend for direction. Being a social arrangement, the content of belief is secondary to its official sanction, whose primary aim is solidarity, unanimity, etc. The price for such solidarity is high insofar as it involves the surrender of one's own judgment, but as Peirce remarks: "For the mass of mankind … there is perhaps no better method than this. If it is their highest impulse to be intellectual slaves, then slaves they ought to remain."

Apriority: Apriority is the status of *necessity* conferred by epistemology to logically required, immediately known, or foundational beliefs. Peirce includes under this rubric, of course, logical necessity, but he also includes any candidate for "self-evidence" that traditional epistemology might warrant. As Peirce showed at length in his critique of Cartesianism, traditional epistemology often mistook certainty for a necessary (and sometimes sufficient) condition for knowledge. To the contrary, Peirce explained, certainty is not a feature of the belief itself, but rather a subjective *feeling* that a belief cannot be doubted. Such feelings of indubitability cannot be trusted, however; inability to doubt a belief may be due to indoctrination or lack of imagination. Ironically, unimaginative people often feel the most certain just because they cannot conceive otherwise. In any case, apriority is an unreliable index of truth because it includes anything that believers might feel certain about for whatever reason.

Apriority is an incipient epistemic ideal because it looks for justifying features of belief, and thus involves some epistemic reflection. So Peirce allows that apriority "is far more intellectual and respectable from the point of view of reason than either of the others which we have noticed." But it lacks a *progressive* critical thrust: if one merely conforms to what already seems most certain, one is simply encouraged "to think as one is inclined to think." Likewise, "its failure has been the most manifest" insofar as it renders belief dependent on feelings or intellectual taste, which is "unfortunately … always more or less a matter of fashion." Thus, various metaphysical systems have appealed to opposite principles in the name of certainty and "have never come to any fixed agreement."

Inquiry: Peirce's notion of inquiry was heavily influenced by modern science, but his critique of positivism shows that his empiricism—like William James'—was a broad evidentialism. The crux of his appeal to modern science, and what distinguishes it from the first three doxastic practices, is its self-correcting character. The very point of tenacity is *not* to change one's view, so tenacity is inherently opposed to self-correction. Authority is open to change should authorities change their minds, but that does not constitute an epistemic sense of self-correction since authorities may change their views for non-epistemic reasons (e.g., political expediency, changes of taste). Apriority or certainty would only be self-correcting if it were linked to inquiry or at least open to better epistemic grounds. Otherwise, certainty's openness to change would be arbitrary rather than progressive.

Thus, only inquiry is an inherently self-correcting process.[2] In a memorable turn of phrase, Peirce concludes that inquiry "is the only one of the four [ways] which presents any distinction of a right and a wrong way." One cannot pursue the first three methods wrongly as they are constitutive of the truth in any case; the truth is whatever they seize upon. There is no such thing as invalid tenacity or fallacious authority except by some other standard. With inquiry, however, "bad reasoning as well as good reasoning is possible; and this fact is the foundation of the practical side of logic."

As noted, Peirce is as sensitive to the psychological dynamics of the first three ways as he is to their epistemological import. But to discern the links between religion and terrorism, one would want to look beyond psychology to the political implications of the first three ways. Historically considered, tenacity, authority, and apriority have proven institutionally useful regardless of their rationality. Perhaps most influentially, the Western tendency to elevate revelation above reason has allowed defenders of faith to deny doctrinal accountability to reason, thereby insulating their premises from criticism by infidels. Moreover, it is a small step from saying that certain sacred truths are beyond reason to saying that inquiry and doubt are inappropriate regarding those truths. Below, I consider how mainstream Western theists continue to rationalize these practices and deny their accountability to reason, thereby rationalizing

militant fanaticism along with more benign forms of naïve faith.[3] I consider Peirce's first three ways in reverse order.

Apriorism: Speaking for God

For classical epistemology, apriori truth was attributed to propositions that were self-evident, such as logical truths. But when Christian theology began to borrow philosophical concepts from the Greeks, apriori necessity was attributed to theological dogmas or any beliefs taken to be beyond suspicion for theological and institutional reasons. The most typical rhetorical devices for placing belief beyond the challenge of natural reason are such dichotomies as God and reason, natural and supernatural power, absolute and relative truth, inerrancy and fallibility. Arguments may be used to establish such categories, but the point is typically to place privileged beliefs beyond scrutiny, thus granting them apriori status.

One such strategy of rationalization involves appealing to God as a starting point. Faith need not depend on reason, Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck notes, if we proceed "from God as the starting point." By assuming the truth of the scriptures, God's Word, we may "behold heaven and earth, birds and ants, flowers and lilies, in order that we may see and recognize God in them" (qtd. in Plantinga 64). One may know God directly, Bavinck implies, not merely as a conclusion to the inferences of reason, but directly. When God is experienced, arguments for God's existence are beside the point.

But what about the credibility of the Bible and religious experiences that are supposed to be sources of knowledge of God? For many apologists for faith, questioning the ultimate sources of faith is an affront to piety. To subject God's word to the standards of reason shows inadequate faith, and constitutes "unbelief." As Alvin Plantinga glosses Karl Barth:

> To be in the standpoint of unbelief is to hold that belief in God is rationally acceptable *only if it is more likely than not with respect to the deliverances of reason.* One who holds this belief, says Barth, is in the standpoint of unbelief; [the unbeliever's] ultimate commitment is to the deliverances of reason rather than to God. Such a person "makes reason a judge over Christ," or at any rate over the Christian faith. And to do so,

> says Barth, is utterly improper for a Christian… [Making rationality a criterion of belief expresses one's] ultimate commitment to the deliverances of reason, a posture that is for a Christian totally inappropriate, a manifestation of sinful human pride. (70–71)

Following Bavinck and Barth, Plantinga has rejected the demand for rational evidence, preferring instead a more direct commitment to God's Word, which is to "start with God" instead of starting with reason. In this view, one can "start with God" because the truth of God can be known prior to argument. This view constitutes a kind of empirical apriorism: Bavinck, Barth, and Plantinga are not suggesting that God's existence is a self-evident concept, but rather that some experiential sources of religious truth are prior to the authority of reason. According to Plantinga, one can "perceive" God directly due to what Calvin called the "sense of divinity" (*sensus divinitatis*). Though the existence of God is not conceptually self-evident, these experiential sources are beyond doubt, and thus prior to argument.

Presuppositionalism in apologetics and theology is another form of apriorism. But this approach begins with orthodox beliefs rather than religious experience (e.g., Cornelius Van Til, Gordon H. Clark). As a doxastic strategy, presuppositionalism recognizes that all reasoning depends on presuppositions. If all reasoning is presupposition-relative, proponents argue, and if one can only argue truly from true premises, then Christians must begin by presupposing the truth of the Bible and use the biblical starting point to critique all contrary thought.

Critics of presuppositionalism accuse it of begging the question of truth, i.e., of merely assuming the truth of its sources rather than justifying belief. As Bertrand Russell once said: "The method of 'postulating' what we want has many advantages; they are the same as the advantages of theft over honest toil" (71). Yet presuppositionalists have the legacy of Kantian epistemology on their side, which is also presuppositional. Kant's epistemology of pure reason is a theory of what philosophers must presuppose in order to have understanding at all. In fact, one could argue, every epistemology begins with *some* presuppositions, whether Kant's, Augustine's, or positivism's. If Kant can presuppose pure reason, why shouldn't Christian presuppositionalists presuppose God's Word? After

all, as presuppositionalists typically ask: "Who are we (or anyone else) to doubt God's Word? Who are we to 'put God in the dock'?"

As it turns out, however, dogmatic apologetics is liable to the charge of question-begging in a way that Kant's philosophy is not. Kant recognized that his epistemology was a hypothesis, and therefore subject to revision or abandonment depending on where it led. By contrast, theological presuppositionalists assume that their core beliefs are not only true, but beyond criticism, revision, or refutation because they are assumed to be the Word of God. That is, presuppositionalists assume the truth of the Bible or theological orthodoxy precisely to avoid examining its coherence and adequacy in conjunction with other knowledge. In short, philosophical presuppositionalism may be a form of inquiry, whereas theological presuppositionalism aims to insulate its foundations *from* inquiry. Or in Peirce's terms, Kant was practicing inquiry whereas Van Til and Gordon Clark practice authoritarian apologetics.

Another authoritarian tactic appeals to the inerrancy of God's word. This tactic is sometimes guilty of begging the question of truth (is the Bible God's word or not?) and sometimes of changing the subject. When believers claim to start from God rather than reason, they are changing the question from "how do you know what God has said?" to "Does God speak truly?" But these are two distinct questions, and only the first is interesting. Even an agnostic would allow that, if God exists as traditionally conceived, God would speak truly. What the agnostic doubts is whether anyone can *assume* that God has spoken to them, or that any evidence of divine communication is beyond doubt, and therefore beyond inquiry. By contrast, presuppositionalists assume not only that God's word is true, but also that *they know* God's word when they see it. Not only God's truth, but *their* knowledge of God's will and God's word is assumed.

Regarding reliable epistemic practices, perhaps the greatest challenge for presuppositionalism is the problem of religious diversity. From the inside, presuppositionalism may seem like a reliable method insofar as believers often feel that they know God well enough to presuppose their knowledge. But what if everyone adopted that approach? How could one recommend that method for one's own religion but deny it to others? The relatively isolated nature of traditional societies allowed people to believe that their cultures were correct and that alien cultures were

mistaken. But in a world of diverse religions, presuppositionalism could only be a self-centered privilege, not a universal practice. If it were universalized, it would lead to a culturally relative theology, and thus to self-contradiction.

In fact, presuppositionalism is impractical even within a single tradition with sectarian differences. Presuppositionalists avoid the issue of intramural pluralism by assuming more institutional consensus than actually exists. For instance, though Christians rightly assume that being a Christian commits one to believing that God's word—the Bible—is true or that Jesus' words are God's words, these commitments prove to be no more than a verbal consensus. Even if it were true that the Bible is God's word and that Jesus' words were God's words, that fact would only have philosophical substance if Christians agreed on their interpretation of the Bible and Jesus' sayings, which is historically not the case. Interpretations of what "the Gospel" is are as numerous as the Christian denominations: they differ over whether scripture is literally true or symbolically true; they differ over whether the church should be militant or pacifist; they differ over whether Christians should be poor or rich; they differ over whether they are saved by faith or works. Given such fundamental differences, presuppositionalism assumes a unity of belief that goes no deeper than verbal membership in a group.

Every dogmatic theology (that does not allow dogmas to be revised) constitutes a kind of presuppositionalism in the end, for each treats its dogmas as apriori true. But where most theologians do not identify themselves as question-beggers, many are explicit about their appeals to authority. Indeed, conservative critics of modernity have redoubled their appeals to authority as a way of insuring unanimity of belief, even as the ideal of inquiry increasingly calls authority into question. But even when orthodoxy achieves a robust political hegemony of verbal and behavioral compliance, it seldom constitutes a very coherent philosophical unity. The modern proliferation of Protestant sects manifests what was always the case: that religious orthodoxy ignores the fact that people understand religious concepts very differently. The Hindus embraced that fact; the "religions of the book" have typically tried to repress it. As history shows, authority is a political solution to an epistemological problem.

Authority: The Politics of Belief

However spiritual their origins, religions only become major religions by institutionalizing, and institutionalizing involves establishing authorities. Each of the major Western religions was founded on a cultural revolution, and each had to become an organized movement in order to survive. The sociological character of traditions and their sects is enormously varied, as are their political implications.

For lay readers of the history of Christian doctrine, the centuries of debate may seem rarified and theoretical. But the political implications of the debates were often very close to the surface. When Christians threatened to part ways over the meaning of the Incarnation, the emperor Constantine refused to choose between the humanity and divinity of Jesus and decreed both in full measure, thereby accommodating both sides with a mystery. When Augustine debated with the Donatists over whether the authority of priest's services lay in the person or in the office, Augustine was not indifferent to the fact that if it lay in the man, then all marriages conducted by corrupt priests would be invalid, hardly an acceptable consequence for the offspring of such marriages. For good pragmatic reasons, priestly power must reside in the office, not the man, thereby bureaucratizing the benefits of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the meaning of communion was also decided in favor of the power of the Church. To say that the meaning of communion is merely symbolic—which is what Jesus implied when he said "Do this in remembrance of me"—would allow communion to be served "whenever two or three are gathered in my name," rendering church attendance dispensable. The Church chose the more mysterious and less probable alternative, transubstantiation, which conferred upon the priesthood a monopoly on the power to change a wafer and wine into the body and blood of Jesus (a form of white magic). Over the first millennium of Christian history, one finds that whenever the establishment of doctrine requires a choice between common sense and Church authority, Church authority wins.

It would be fair to conclude that the extent to which Western faith has appealed to authority is the extent to which faith became a political ideology reflecting the authority of the Temple, the Church, or the Caliphate. Not surprisingly, however, apologists avoid the connotations of intellectual slavery attached to religious authoritarianism by its critics.

For instance, defending those who condemn other religions without any first hand knowledge, Jerome Gellman denies that blindly following the teachings of mainstream religions fits the brainwashing paradigm:

> Now, rational people can differ over whether a present case is sufficiently similar to brainwashing to be condemned or otherwise rejected. The religious case is surely not a case of brainwashing, if we think of the paradigms of brainwashing from the Korean War, say. Hence, a religious person can be perfectly rational to think she has not undergone anything remotely akin to brainwashing when she was "educated into" or granted the gift of "glimpsing from close-up" the religious life of her group. (416)

But Gellman's defense is beside the point in several respects. To begin with, whether a person *thinks* she has been brainwashed or not is hardly the appropriate criterion for whether brainwashing has occurred for the simple reason that a successfully brainwashed person would not think she had been brainwashed. So that is a pointless objection. Secondly, Gellman's comparison with Korean War brainwashing is pitched at the wrong level, i.e., at the level of a particular method rather than a general practice with the aim of thought control. Brainwashing is a practical effect, not a particular method.

If we compare some common religious practices in terms of practical effects, the charge of brainwashing holds up. Consider St. Ignatius Loyola's first and thirteenth rules for thinking with the Church:

> All judgment laid aside, we ought to have our mind ready and prompt to obey, in all, the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our holy Mother the Church Hierarchical.
>
> To be right in everything, we ought always to hold that the white which I see, is black, if the Hierarchical Church so decides it, believing that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Bride, there is the same Spirit which governs and directs us for the salvation of our souls.... (n.p.)

The crucial factor here is not the method, nor even the willingness of the seeker, for a practice does not cease to have the effect of brainwashing just because someone consents to the process any more than hypnosis ceases to be hypnosis just because someone willingly submits. In fact, it would be hard to find a clearer instance of brainwashing or intellectual slavery than Loyola's rules. Yet Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* is one of the most respected manuals of Western spiritual practice. It would seem then that the practice of authoritarian brainwashing is not so far out on the margins after all.

Significantly, while Gellman denies that religion is brainwashing, he does admit that his rationalization of religious authoritarianism would rationalize the extremities of cult behavior as well: "in principle a person could be perfectly rational to hold a Jonestown theology. If this sounds outrageous that may be because we tend to put too much importance on rationality.... It will be crazy because of its content" (416). In other words, authoritarianism may be the height of rationality in the right hands. It is only irrational when practiced by madmen such as Jim Jones.

Gellman's emphasis on crazy content obscures the point of reliabilism: that some practices are more rational than other regardless of content, a point which Gellman ignores or fails to see. To the contrary, he implies, religious authoritarianism is fully rational even if it is more likely than inquiry to indoctrinate us with crazy content. That is just what reliabilism denies: a doxastic practice is only as rational as it is truth-conducive, in which case a practice is irrational to the extent that it invites crazy content. By that standard, authority—because it is a political or sociological expedient rather than a self-correcting epistemic practice—is a less rational practice than inquiry.

Rather than judge by the higher standard of inquiry, Gellman would rationalize the more extremist cults in the interest of rationalizing authoritarian belief. As he admits, he is more concerned to defend faith than to respect rationality. The result, however, is that he trivializes rationality. Like other religious epistemologists striving to rationalize faith, he lowers the bar of rationality to where it no longer means anything more than a modicum of inferential validity (regardless of content). This trivializes rationality because it is possible to find a glimmer of reason in almost all thought, even beliefs motivated only by obedience to authority without

any real understanding of content (i.e., even brainwashed beliefs). But then "full rationality" reduces to *any* rationality rather than being an ideal toward which thought strives in a more or less adequate way. True, there are useful senses of "rationality" that are quite narrow (e.g., logical validity, appropriate choice of means to an end, etc.), but the philosophical ideal of rationality is broader than that, and that broader sense of epistemic responsibility is lost when rationality is dumbed down to accommodate any sort of faith, no matter how blind, ignorant, or pernicious.

One rhetorical strategy for lowering the bar of rationality involves forcing a false dichotomy by asking whether someone is fully rational or irrational rather than asking what level of rationality the person has achieved. Thus, when some liberals have impugned the rationality naïve believers with prejudices against other religions, Alvin Plantinga asks,

> What about the 14-year-old theist brought up to believe in God in a community where everyone believes? This 14-year-old theist, we may suppose, does not believe in God on the basis of evidence. He has never heard of the cosmological, teleological, or ontological arguments, in fact, no one has ever presented him with any evidence at all. And although he has often been told about God, he does not take that testimony as evidence; he does not reason thus: everyone around here says God loves us and cares for us; most of what everyone around here says is true; so probably *that is* true. Instead, he simply believes what he is taught. Is he violating an all-things-considered intellectual duty? Surely not. (33)

Plantinga implies that if a naïve believer commits no fallacies in blindly following the authority of his family and community, his blind faith is epistemically and rationally impeccable. The all-or-nothing dichotomy implies that someone with any shred of rationality qualifies for full rationality because they are not irrational.

Plantinga's language focuses on epistemic duties where Gellman's focused on form, although they have the same effect of weakening rationality by lowering the bar for both epistemic warrant and epistemic responsibility. In regard to duty, defenders of naïve faith sometimes play off the *ought-implies-can* principle to diminish epistemic responsibility. In those

cases, a naïve believer is rationally impeccable if he is doing whatever he can do to make a correct decision, and cannot be faulted for not doing what he cannot do (e.g., for not knowing what he does not know). Plantinga can say that that the 14-year-old believer is making the best of his modest resources, so no duties are neglected.

This view trivializes epistemic duty by reducing it to no more than what a naïve believer can attain. For most people, however, rationality in its fullest sense involves more than naive faith. Full rationality would be an ideal by which a naïve believer may be judged to be deficient even if his ignorance of that higher level of rationality is not due to willful neglect of epistemic duties.

Efforts to defend the moral integrity of simple faith are well intentioned, but they are more appropriately directed at the moral requirements for salvation than the epistemic requirements of rationality. The ultimate effect of rationalizing naïve faith and faith with crazy content is not to demonstrate that they are rationally impeccable, but merely to deprive the common sense notion of rationality of its critical substance. The cost of this diminished view of rationality is too high: it suggests that full rationality requires nothing more than blind faith in an authority whose limitations are as yet unknown and unquestioned. By contrast, Peirce's reliabilist distinctions between the four ways helps clarify how rationality is a matter of degree, the fullness of which is only achieved by inquiry.

The choice between inquiry and authority is not merely a matter of comparative rationality; there is an institutional conflict of interest between authority and inquiry. To acknowledge that authority is an inferior practice to inquiry would imply that faith is accountable to reason, which would undermine the sufficiency of authority for "full rationality." Authority means dogma, and the defense of dogma—as Gellman's and Plantinga's examples show—needs apologetics rather than inquiry. The fact that authority is an inferior epistemic practice to inquiry must be dismissed if apologetics is to be effective. Because the point of authoritarian dogmatism is obedience rather than knowledge, authoritarianism elevates ecclesiastical politics above knowledge.

Tenacity: The Blessed Rage of Ignorance

Authority is a social form of tenacity. But it leads to individual tenacity when successful, as in the case of Loyola's faithful believer who says that what he sees as black is white because the Church says so. In his defense of "contented exclusivism," Gellman joins Plantinga in denying that naïve believers have a duty to inquire into the credibility of their beliefs, no matter how pernicious. In that view, loyalty to authority is the highest duty there is. Thus, Gellman rationalizes ignorant judgments of others' faiths, claiming that the condemnation of other religions based on second hand authority does not "fall short of full rationality" (401). Moreover, there is no epistemic obligation on the ignorant bigot even to look into the matter:

> An exclusivist need not necessarily reflect on the rival claims of religions other than her own. She need not try to adjudicate between the home and the 'visiting' religious traditions.... A believer may rationally invoke her unreflective religious beliefs to defeat opposing religious claims, without having to consider the question any further. (403)

According to Gellman and Plantinga, the impression that rationality imposes a duty to inquire is an illusion; rationality is adequately secured by authority and tenacity, even in cases of virulent ignorance.

Ironically, Gellman grants the superiority of inquiry when he admits that "critical scrutiny enhances a person's chances of achieving truth rather than chancing error," which suggests that perhaps ignorant prejudice is not fully rational after all. Here Gellman undermines his attribution of full rationality to obedient illiterates. If critical scrutiny is a more reliable practice than blind faith, then practitioners of blind faith are not as rational as inquirers, in which case full rationality carries with it the epistemic duty to know what one is talking about, even if that requires a bit of inquiry.

Committed to rationalizing authoritarian obedience, Gellman and Plantinga have embraced a logic of cultural and personal relativism that Gellman spells out quite explicitly:

1. If one has no problems with one's current beliefs, one need not question them. "My grandmother used to say: 'If the wheel does not squeak, don't oil it'" (403).
2. If one has been pleased with one's current beliefs, there is no reason not to accept them as a foundation for judgment of other systems of belief (403–04).
3. Even if there were a common framework for the adjudication of different religions, a contented believer need not "enter that common intellectual space to try to adjudicate matters, in order to preserve her rationality" (404).
4. A theist who believes in a "jealous" God might believe that it would be "a serious violation of her relationship to God for her to consider for a moment that some other religion might be true rather than the one God encourages her in daily" (405).
5. Believers who believe in a Chosen People or Chosen Faith may expect that some religion must be true, that all others are false, and that theirs is the true one (407, 413).
6. Rationality underdetermines the final reconciliation of all epistemic principles. It can only tell us to find the best equilibrium among competing beliefs, not what that equilibrium looks like (409).
7. All reasoning begins from prejudicial background assumptions (in Gadamer's sense of prejudice). The contented exclusivist has the right to begin from hers (409).

In other words, no matter how ignorant, misinformed, prejudiced, and pernicious one's existing beliefs, if one is comfortable with them—as far as one knows—one is not only fully rational to hold fast to them, but one is exempted from the duty to look farther into their credibility. Ignorance is an exemption from critical epistemic duty. Authoritarian ignorance is epistemic bliss.

Notice, however, that the sixth premise in the argument is exactly what Peirce's essay denies. The sixth premise suggests that rationality is nothing but balancing one's beliefs by one's best lights. But Gellman

already conceded that that view is too weak. If "critical scrutiny enhances a person's chances of achieving truth," then the most rational equilibrium is likely to have more inquiry and less authoritarian belief. Rationality, in short, prefers inquiry to authority, which is what Plantinga and Gellman deny when they attribute full rationality to beliefs based only on authority.

Having abandoned hope for any transpersonal measures of rationality, Gellman and Plantinga retreat into the language of piety and morality. The 14-year-old believer acquits his duty to reason if he sincerely considers only what he already believes. Rationality is no more than thinking earnestly, so that anyone who can think can be pronounced rational if, by thinking at all, they are doing the best they can. Thus rationality becomes more reflective of good intentions than of truth-conducive practices.

Unfortunately, substituting sincerity for knowledge not only rationalizes the most militant terrorist but also exonerates him from the epistemic duty to understand the nature of his acts and the identities of his victims. Indeed, this subordination of rationality to earnest effort has the perverse implication that the more ignorant, anti-intellectual, and closed-minded a person's faith is, the less he is obliged by reason to inquire just because he has been taught that inquiry into his sacred beliefs is blasphemous.

> If he has worked out a satisfactory equilibrium in a criteria-belief complex, is true to the weights he perceives to be appropriately assigned to beliefs in this complex, finds that his religious beliefs simply do not squeak in the face of religious diversity, and [is logical], then he is fully rational to be a contented exclusivist if that is what his epistemic situation yields. So, a contented exclusivist can be fully rational. (414)

If a believer has arrived at a stable equilibrium of epistemic principles *by her own standards,* then she is pronounced fully rational. Radical relativism in a nutshell.

Plantinga's and Gellman's views of rationality rehearse all the weaknesses Peirce discovers in the first three practices for fixing belief: being wholly self-constituting, the practices of tenacity, authority, and apriority have no right or wrong application. If the simple believer sincerely believes whatever she was taught, she warrants full rationality by Gellman's

standard. But by the standards of reliable epistemic practices, such beliefs must be judged less rational than more informed beliefs.

Terrorism and Collateral Rationalization

It may not be surprising that contemporary religious terrorism has prompted more polemics than sober assessments.[4] On the one side, anti-metaphysical atheists have been fixated on the epistemic blindness and irrational excesses to which religion sometimes leads. On the other side, religious apologists, though better informed on metaphysics and theology, minimize faith's liability to fanaticism and violence, putting blame on the minority of extremists. But while it may be only the extremists who commit terrorist acts, mainstream academic philosophers have defended their moral legitimacy by attributing full rationality to ideological obedience, whether benign or fanatical, informed or ignorant.

One might expect that academic philosophers would consider inquiry a prerequisite for full rationality. But the gold standard of inquiry is often sacrificed to the pragmatic aim of apologetics, and *de facto* cultural relativism is the result. That is, the contextualizing tactics of cultural relativism—which theologians usually condemn as morally bankrupt—are selectively invoked to show that naïve believers with good intentions (because they cannot do better) are fully rational in their blind obedience to indoctrination, even when dangerously misinformed. On the one hand, this willingness on the part of professional philosophers to attribute full rationality to tenacity, authority, and apriority is a testament to the power of those same practices among people who should recognize their unreliability. On the other hand, many of those same apologists are guilty of a double epistemic standard when they use cultural relativism against the duties of rationality while failing to draw the logical conclusion that if mere obedience to authority is fully rational, then God has cursed most of humanity with fully rational faiths that—by exclusivist standards—inhibit salvation.

When apologists defend tenacity and authority against inquiry, inquirers are not condemned because inquiry is epistemically inferior to faith, but because inquiry is not sufficiently presumptuous. Inquirers insult God by not assuming that their religious beliefs are beyond question. But

this moral critique of inquiry leads to an epistemological double standard insofar as the same ideal of piety cannot consistently be demanded of other faiths. Yes, believers of other faiths are equally convinced of their own truth, but dogmatists must reserve authoritarianism and presuppositionalism for themselves, while demanding inquiry of other faiths. Assuming a monopoly on truth, the critics of other faiths must assume without question that *their* beliefs are true and the others' are false, *their* savior is genuine and the others' are pretenders, *their* sacred texts contain the sum of wisdom while the others' see throught a glass darkly, and *their* leaders channel inspired truths while the leaders of other faiths mislead. Dogmatists must be closed-minded to other faiths, whereas other faiths must inquire into theirs. Reason is relativized asymmetrically in their favor: truth does not depend on method, but strictly on having the right revelation. Rational critique of *their* revelation is impossible because truth is revelation-relative, although that allows them to condemn other faiths as deficient, if not corrupt. Tenacity for their members is the sign of piety; tenacity for other faiths is the sign of a perverse will.

These apologetic strategies shift the question of truth from epistemological to moral grounds, from truth to piety, from ignorance to sincerity. For Gellman, for instance, the risk of naïve obedience is not that someone will believe falsely, but that someone may exploit his own ignorance. The risk, in other words, is that contented naïve exclusivism might become "an insincere protective strategy" (416). But for epistemologists, sincerity is beside the point: ignorance is not compensated by sincerity.

The rationalization of ignorant sincerity has obvious consequences for the clash of cultures. When willful narrow-mindedness is rendered fully rational, all faiths are insulated from self-correction at once, removing all moral leverage against the worst excesses of fanaticism. Indeed, on the question of sincerity, the fanatics are sure to win because that is where they excel. Thus Gellman's liberal caveat is to no avail:

> …True enough, my contented exclusivist may rationally believe that all religions other than the home religion are works of the devil, and that the devil tricks others into believing them…. I realize that the contented exclusivist position might be unjustifiably used to slide into positions I would want to reject. Hence, I close with an appeal that philosophical defences

> of contented religious exclusivism always be accompanied by declarations of religious tolerance. (416–17)

Unhappily, if one is fully rational to believe whatever one has been taught, that would include those indoctrinated with militant intolerance. Indeed, fanatics would turn Plantinga's and Gellman's defenses of exclusivism against liberal sincerity: non-militants disdain not only the errors of liberal infidels, but also their unwillingness to fight for their faith. The non-militant commitment (i.e., faith) is weak. When faith is understood as unwavering commitment to absolute truth, then there may be little to be said for the virtue of tolerance.

In the interest of defending simple believers, apologists have made naïve obedience to authority a content-indifferent exemption from the duty to inquire into the grounds of one's beliefs. But once inquiry is rendered dispensable for full rationality, then tenacity, authority, and apriority may flourish unaccountable to more informed perspectives. Not all theists understand faith that way; many open their faith to inquiry at all points. But there is nothing intrinsic to faith to distinguish good faith from bad. If faith is to be disciplined, it must come from the outside, i.e., from inquiry. By equating tenacity, authority, and apriority with full rationality, apologists insulate faith from the only practice that would impose epistemic discipline. By removing that check, apologists underwrite the rationality of terrorists as well as the rationality of their grandmothers.

Members of the Reason Project have been rebuked for accusing even moderate and liberal theists of complicity with militant extremists whose militancy they may reject. Their concerns are not groundless. The defenses of naïve faith discussed here justify those who do not feel the need to dialogue. They rationalize the monologues of the self-righteous. Peirce's essay shows the epistemic limitations of such exercises in tenacity, authority, and apriority, but recent culture clashes show the danger of their ecclesiastical politics.

Notes

1. There are exceptions, such as Charles Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*, which examines the pernicious effects of religious beliefs in chosen peoples, inerrant scriptures, apocalyptic times, and holy wars.

2. At first, it may seem as if all these practices *intend* to be progressive. But that impression fades when one realizes that the first three practices merely *fix* belief rather than correct it. Of course, it is possible that a better belief could be fixed by tenacity, authority, or apriority; but it is not those practices that constitute its progressive character. Inquiry aims at epistemic progress, not mere fixation.

3. Not surprisingly, the ways of tenacity, authority, and apriority have been practiced in the East as well as in the West. Hinduism's cult of the guru, for instance, involves a loyalty no less tenacious and authoritarian than anything in the West. But nowhere in the East have tenacity, authority, and apriority been so expansively politicized as in the mainstream lineages of Western religion. What has been the exception in the East became the rule in the West. This historical contrast has made Western theism notably more suspicious of inquiry than either Hinduism or Buddhism in the East, and therefore more open to the political benefits of apriorism, authority, and tenacity.

4. The recent polemics all postdate the arguments examined here by Plantinga and Gellman. That Gellman's piece appeared shortly before 9/11 is painfully ironic.

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Chapter 5

Terror, Aesthetics, and the Humanities in the Public Sphere

Emory Elliott

In a 1991 interview for the *New York Times Magazine*, Don DeLillo expressed his views on the place of literature in our times in a statement that he has echoed many times since and developed most fully in his novel *Mao II*:

> In a repressive society, a writer can be deeply influential, but in a society that's filled with glut and endless consumption, the act of terror may be the only meaningful act. People who are in power make their arrangements in secret, largely as a way of maintaining and furthering that power. People who are powerless make an open theater of violence. True terror is a language and a vision. There is a deep narrative structure to terrorist acts, and they infiltrate and alter consciousness in ways that writers used to aspire to. (qtd. in DePietro 84)

The implications of DeLillo's statement are that we are all engaged in national, international, transnational, and global conflicts in which acts of representation, including those of terrorism and spectacular physical violence as well as those of language, performance, and art compete for the attention of audiences and for influence in the public sphere.

In the early days of the Iraq War, the United States used the power of images, such as those of the "mother of all bombs" and a wide array of weapons, as well as aesthetic techniques to influence and shape the consciousness of millions and to generate strong support for the war.

The shock, fear, and nationalism aroused in those days after 9/11 have enabled the Bush administration to pursue a military agenda that it had planned before 9/11. Since then, the extraordinary death and destruction, scandals and illegalities, and domestic and international demonstrations and criticisms have been unable to alter the direction of this agenda. Those of us in the humanities who are trained as critical readers of political and social texts, as well as of complex artistically constructed texts, are needed now more urgently than ever to analyze the relationships between political power and the wide range of rhetorical methods being employed by politicians and others to further their destructive effects in the world.

If humanities scholars can create conscious awareness of how such aesthetic devices such as we see in those photos achieve their affective appeal, citizens may begin to understand how they are being manipulated and motivated by emotion rather than by reason and logic. In spite of our ability to expose some of these verbal and visual constructions as devices of propaganda that function to enflame passions and stifle reasonable discussion, we humanities scholars find ourselves marginalized and on the defensive in our institutions of higher learning where our numbers have been diminished and where we are frequently being asked to justify the significance of our research and teaching. While we know the basic truth that the most serious threats to our societies today are more likely to result from cultural differences and failures of communication than from inadequate scientific information or technological inadequacies, we have been given no voice in this debate. With the strong tendency toward polarized thinking and opinion and the evangelical and fundamentalist religious positions in the US today and in other parts of the world, leaders continue to abandon diplomacy and resort to military actions. Most government leaders find the cultural and social explanations of the problems we face to be vague, and they are frustrated by complex human issues. That is not reason enough, however, for us to abandon our efforts to influence and perhaps even alter the current course of events. In spite of the discouragements that we as scholars of the humanities are experiencing in these times, it seems to me that we have no option but to continue to pursue our research and our teaching and hope to influence others to question the meaning and motives of what they see and hear.

In these dark times, I take my inspiration from those writers past and present whose works have served as a counter-force to the misdirection of our politics and foreign policies and who have employed the aesthetic to address the political. In a paper that I delivered in Berlin in April 2004, entitled "Aesthetics and Politics in the American Novel," I presented an argument regarding several nineteenth-century American writers who employed what I call an aesthetics of astonishment—the use of language and imagery to jolt readers into recognizing some of the ways that governments use rhetorical strategies to justify decisions to which many citizens are fundamentally opposed.

Using Melville's "Benito Cereno" and Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* as my main texts, I argued that these texts raise questions about the effectiveness of US leaders in negotiating in other cultures or in understanding people different from themselves. Hank Morgan and Amasa Delano fail in their missions abroad for reasons having to do with pride, arrogance, a sense of racial and cultural superiority, and indifference and blindness toward other cultures and cultural others. As a result, they leave death and devastation in their wakes. Because of the fundamental resistance of American publishers and average readers to accept such criticisms of the United States, however, both writers presented their critiques in coded language and through insinuation. Both works gradually reveal the negative features of their protagonists so subtly that many readers will fail to perceive the racism of Delano and the despotism of Morgan. But as a way of prompting perceptive readers to recognize that more is being suggested than what first meets the eye, both writers also employed an aesthetics of astonishment to startle some readers into questioning their own assumptions. In "Benito Cereno," it is the shock of awareness that occurs when Delano, and most likely the reader as well, discovers that the San Dominick is under the command of the African, Babo. In *Connecticut Yankee*, it is Hank's brutal execution of twenty-five thousand knights in a confrontation in which Hank and his small army have no chance of escape, but in which Hank nevertheless chooses to massacre as many as possible anyway in a display of his superior technology.[1]

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Today, I want to look at some of the ways that more recent writers of fiction have employed a similar aesthetics of astonishment to prompt readers to examine the realities of their society and the failures of their leaders. Of those contemporary writers who are attempting to engage what many consider to be the most disturbing tendencies in American domestic politics and international policies today, two are Don DeLillo and Philip Roth. With his breakthrough book *White Noise*, DeLillo effectively exposed so many of the aspects of the rhetoric of advertising, bureaucracies, and government with his parodies of formulations such as the "airborne toxic event." For those who may not know *White Noise* by DeLillo, one of the funniest and most memorable passages of *White Noise* describes what goes on inside a jetliner that falls from thirty-four thousand to twelve thousand feet. Instead of the expected formulaic calming voice of the Captain assuring the passengers that they all will be safe and that the plane will recover, passengers hear from the flight deck: "We're falling out of the sky! We're going down! We're a silver gleaming death machine!" (90). But then, the narrator reports that soon "certain members of the crew had decided to pretend that it was not a crash but a crash landing that was seconds away. After all, the difference between the two is only one word." He goes on: "The basic difference between a crash and a crash landing seemed to be that you could sensibly prepare for a crash landing.... The news spread through the plane, the term was repeated in row after row. 'Crash landing, crash landing.' They saw how easy it was, by adding one word, to maintain a grip on the future, to extend it in consciousness if not about actual fact" (91). Throughout this work, DeLillo exposed and critiqued the ways that official rhetoric and manipulations of language can create versions of reality in ways in which people are most often unconscious.

In *Libra*, his novel on the Kennedy assassination that focuses on Lee Harvey Oswald, DeLillo went even further in his effort to enlighten his readers about the function of official accounts of history and his own fictional account. While clearly suggesting in the novel that there are many people in the US and Cuban governments who had wanted to kill the President and that there are good reasons for suspecting a conspiracy was involved, he also self-reflectively raises questions about his own motives

and purposes as a writer to write a novel that explores this subject. He integrates literary criticism into the text and repeatedly draws the readers' attention to the conventions of fiction he employs, while he questions the tendency of some readers to believe that a novel about an historical event is more likely to present the truth than official accounts or histories. Thus, the reader of *Libra* is more likely to conclude the work as an even more skeptical reader of all historical and fictional accounts than he or she was at the beginning.

Although his epic on cultural American memory, *Underworld*, appeared in 1997, DeLillo chose for the dust jacket a photo of the World Trade Center buildings as seen through a ghostly haze. The text suggests the ways that grand illusions, manipulations of the truth, and distractions such as sports and popular culture, enable people to endure the waste, violence, aimlessness, and emptiness of contemporary life that lead to misplaced values and tragic failures.[2] It is a black comedy in which the Cold War, with its nuclear threat looming over the lives of millions for fifty years, is recounted, and while there is a sense of anticipation of some tragic event yet to come, there are no clear suggestions about what the source of such a global catastrophe might be.

DeLillo's 2003 *Cosmopolis* is his first novel since 9/11. Highly controversial and severely criticized by some, this work is something of a departure from what readers have come to expect from him. While many reviewers praised the work for its aesthetic qualities such as "the vibrancy of his verbal and scenic imagination" (Wolfe), many found the issues it raises unresolved and the ending inconclusive. As in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the action occurs on a single day in April 2000, just as the stock market is about to collapse. Two other modernist texts are clearly at play in important ways in DeLillo's text—Eliot's *Wasteland* and "Prufrock." *Cosmopolis* forecasts the social and economic plunge that would soon follow the bursting of the dot-com bubble and the consequences of the collapse of Worldcom, Enron, and the World Trade Center.

The protagonist is Eric Packer, a twenty-eight year old billionaire venture capitalist whose deals are of such impact that they have put many companies out of business and caused the loss of millions of jobs; thus, aware that many hate him, he is paranoid and lives in fear for his life.

On this particular day, he is gambling everything on the collapse of the Japanese yen which, in spite of all expectations, inexplicably continues to rise. Eric leaves his multimillion dollar apartment on Manhattan's east side and takes his custom-designed thirty-five-foot armored limo across town to get a haircut. But the President of the United States is visiting New York, and with the traffic jams that result, it takes him all day to get across town.

Inside his limo, Eric works in front of several computer screens and TV monitors while surrounded by armed bodyguards. Throughout the day, he has visits from several employees and business associates, some of whom are also his lovers, has a medical exam, and he has three chance encounters with his wealthy socialite wife of three weeks with whom he has not consummated his marriage. During the last meeting, they do so on the street. While Eric's limo crawls across 47th Street on his journey through the twenty-first-century wasteland of New York from the wealthy east side to the poor west side, a series of astonishing, often violent, events occur: a burst water-main floods the theater district with mud and debris; angry, anti-globalization protestors set fire to cars, attack his limo, and wave and carry images of rats to symbolize their disgust for capitalists; a huge, celebrity-packed funeral procession for a young rap star stops traffic; a bomb explodes near an investment bank; a man sets himself on fire; moviemakers film three hundred extras lying naked in a street, whom Eric joins on a lark (and where one of his coincidental meetings with his wife takes place); and a serial cream pie assassin who travels the world attacking famous leaders makes Eric his mark.

Meanwhile, on the televisions inside Packer's limo, the director of the International Monetary Fund is shot and killed while appearing live on the Money Channel, and the owner of Russia's largest media corporation dies of gunfire. Eric's chief of security alerts him that there is also a credible threat against his own life. In the midst of all of this chaos, the regular appearances of rats on the streets is a constant reminder of the decay of the natural and social support systems resulting in disease, high unemployment, diminishing medical services, shrinking school budgets, and the dangerously inflated stock market, not to mention a recurring rat metaphor for a tycoon like Eric himself.

Scenes of shocking violence are typical in much of DeLillo's works and usually appear aimed at calling attention to the bizarre chaos of contemporary life where it is difficult to distinguish criminals, insane murderers, and terrorists from leaders who direct state and corporate-generated violence. In *Libra* and *Underworld,* for example, the CIA, FBI, KGB, organized crime, and the White House appear to be in regular dialogue. In *Cosmopolis,* however, the enemy is not so evident, and the direction in which to point the finger of blame for the collapse of the economy is never clearly determined. At first, Eric appears to be the likely villain, but while his life and actions may contribute to the impending disaster, he is just one of many culprits and is himself a victim at several levels, not the least being his financial collapse.

Furthermore, DeLillo has given his assassin a chapter early in the novel in which he speaks to Eric's corpse, thus defusing any suspense about Eric's murder and invoking a degree of sympathy for him as well as evoking a desire in the reader to understand Eric's tragedy.

The question then is what is the point of all this shock and awe and what does the novel have to contribute to our perceptions and understanding of American society and the world in which everything since 9/11 (as is commonly repeated) has supposedly changed? Is the text asking the reader to question any prior assumptions or values?

To answer these questions, we must recall that even within all of this gloom, DeLillo remains a very humorous writer whose wit, satire, and dark comedy are keys to the connections between the aesthetic and the political, psychological, and the philosophical spheres of knowing found in his works.

Central to the novel is the collapse of the system, the market, and the society, but it is upon the fragmentation and dissolution of Eric's fragile ego that DeLillo focuses the reader's attention because, in spite of the media, the courts, and the corporations that may make it appear that forces and uncontrollable economic shifts are to blame, DeLillo forces the reader to acknowledge that disastrous consequences finally result from the decisions and acts of the individuals who have the power to act. Eric fancies himself a scholar of science, history, and philosophy; he has knowledge of many random facts. But much of his success has hinged upon luck. He has taken chances that wiser investors would not take and

has won, until today when his luck is running out. Because of arrogance and self-destructive tendencies, he ignores the advice of his top advisors to stop investing in the fall of the yen. On this day, he is losing his grip and regressing into childhood. His desire to return to the barbershop in his old neighborhood to have his hair cut by the barber who gave him his first cut when he was four reveals a nostalgic yearning to return to the womb and to abandon control—the control that he has carefully cultivated during his rise to power.

It seems that the turn that DeLillo has taken in this work is away from the satiric critic of the culture of glut and waste mindlessly digging its own mass grave and toward the issue of leadership. In Eric Packer, DeLillo gives us a contemporary Captain Ahab, Hank Morgan, Tom Sawyer, or Jay Gatsby—a man of aesthetic and sexual appeal who represents the United States on a global stage and who appears to possess confidence and talent, who is charming, and who acts decisively, but who is finally just another Wizard of Oz: a confidence man, a shrunken man hiding behind a computer screen and a grandiose reputation. Eric relies more upon appearances and rote information than upon human qualities traditionally associated with leadership—such as wisdom, maturity, compassion, integrity, and an ability to identify with and understand the nature of other people. His new wife, Elise, is an established poet (whose writing he refers to as "shit"). Elise says to him early in the day: "You know things. I think this is what you do. I think you're dedicated to knowing. I think you acquire information and turn it into something stupendous and awful. You're a dangerous person. Do you agree? A visionary" (8). Indeed, an arrogant, egotistical visionary for our times. During the day, she learns that he is having affairs with several other women, three of whom he has had sex with on that day. She tells him that the only way she can remain married to him would be if she were able to be indifferent to his callous disregard of her feelings, which she cannot be: "I think we're done, aren't we? You speak of being free. This is your lucky day" (122). Perhaps, because of his rhetorical force and bravado, commentators have, in my view, taken Eric far too seriously. Rather than a symbol or stereotype of the worst of cyber-age robber barons, Eric is a comic figure, a spoiled bully who is out of control, self-destructive, and is begging to be punished—a child who needs limits. Some critics have scolded DeLillo for the often

pompous, pretentious, and sometimes nonsensical pronouncements that Eric makes throughout. But I believe that his hollow expression signals that he is not the brilliant analyst but is more like Prufrock—a lonesome man, pushing beyond all the limits, wandering the city streets, dwelling on the past, and anticipating death. An early alert to readers that there is less to Eric than meets the eye occurs in the second paragraph, where DeLillo has him expound upon how important poetry is to him: "He read science and Poetry. He liked spare poems sited minutely in white space, ranks of alphabetic strokes burnt into paper. Poems make him conscious of his breathing. A poem bared a moment to things he was not normally prepared to notice. This was the nuance of every poem, at least for him, at night, these long weeks, one breath after another in the rotating room at the top of the triplex" (5). The rest of this opening section is packed with such banalities: "Nothing existed around him. There was only the noise in his head, the mind in time. When he died he would not end. The world would end" (6).

Another example of Eric's vacuous responses to literature occurs when he visits Gotham Book Mart, and the narrator observers: "He browsed lean books always, half a fingerbreadth or less, choosing poems of four, five, or six lines. He scrutinized such poems, thinking into every intimation, and his feelings seemed to float in the white space around the lines. There were marks on the page and there was the page. The white was vital to the sound of the poem" (67). Not knowing how to translate the words of the poems into meaningful ideas, Eric remains fascinated by the blank white spaces that make no demands upon his interpretive abilities. Earlier, he says that he likes all "white paintings because they are unknowable—knife-applied slabs of mucoid color" (8).

The noise in Eric's head is discordant and incoherent, and he appears to have attention deficit syndrome as his mind leaps from one image and idea to another just as he rushes from one appointment and one lover to the next, never finding satisfaction or rest. In place of reflection, ideas, and conceptualization, he has his delusions of grandeur and desire for the next acquisition; on this day, he will next triumph in the market or die a broken ignominious failure, which he does. Eric's monomania is like that of Melville's Ahab and thus raises the question of whether his all white, thirty-five foot limo is really a version of Moby Dick in which Eric

is an unwitting victim, already entombed.[3] As with Ahab, in his failure and death, he is overreaching in the worlds of finance, sex, and human relationships. In his failure and death, he will take his crew and the investments of millions down with him.

During his visit to one of his lovers, Didi Francher, she tells him that once he had "all this talent and drive. Utilized. Consistently put to good use." "But," she says, "that's not true any more.... Not since an element of doubt began to enter your life.... You're beginning to think it's more interesting to doubt than to act" (32). Like Ahab who never doubted that he would kill Moby Dick, Eric has had complete faith in his own calculations. Confident in his security systems, his limo, and his bodyguards, he has thought himself invulnerable, but what he ignores is the complexity and unpredictability of human nature. Throughout the day, he has been fixated on his doctor's observation that his prostate is asymmetrical, and although he has no idea if that is a health risk, he takes it to be an ominous sign.

When he introduces Benno Levin, DeLillo alludes to the humor of Ellison's *Invisible Man* when the outcast Benno says that he steals electricity from a lamppost and lives in an abandoned warehouse. In a lengthy dialogue with his assassin, Eric learns that Benno also has an asymmetrical prostate and that it is "a harmless variation" (199; and earlier on 8 and 54). But Benno, who has studied Eric intensely from his many TV and magazine interviews and the articles about him, tells him that he has failed because he "forgot something along the way. The importance of the lopsided, the thing that's skewed a little. You were looking for balance, beautiful balance, equal parts, equal sides. I know this. I know you. But you should have been tracking the yen in its tics and quirks. The little quirk. The misshape. That's where the answer was, in your body, in your prostate" (200). This is ironic given his preoccupation with his genitals throughout.

What has led many critics and readers to find this novel disappointing is that it seems to provide no resolution. We may come to recognize Eric to be a shallow, selfish, insensitive egomaniac who is deeply insecure, lonely, homicidal, self-destructive, and suicidal, but the death that he appears to welcome at the hands of a disgruntled former employee seems to tell us nothing. However, DeLillo's references to earlier lonely American

searchers like Ahab, the narrator of *Invisible Man*, and Gatsby suggest that Eric is a grotesque twenty-first-century incarnation in a series of failed American visionaries. *Cosmopolis* is a dark comedy that reminds us that all too often the so-called "best and the brightest," like those who confidently advised escalating the war in Vietnam forty years ago and those who assured Congress that an invasion of Iraq would achieve peace in a matter of months, are most often people like Eric, amoral egotists who base their advice on their computer models and gross statistics, blithely dismissing cultural complexity and badly misjudging the power of the intelligence and the will of the other and their own limits.

Two

"Inflammatory," "shocking," "in your face to the max"—these are a few of the phrases used by reviewers to describe Philip Roth's novel *The Plot Against America*, published late in 2004. Quite different in style and structure from DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, Roth's text employs a first-person linear narrative in the form of social realism to recount historical events that occurred between June, 1940 and October, 1942, when he was between seven and nine years old. The setting is the Jewish neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey where he grew up, and the characters include his own family members and many public figures of the time, including Walter Winchell, Fiorello La Guardia, Franklin Roosevelt, Charles Lindberg, and Henry Ford. Because he wants his readers to understand that most of the events he reports are historically accurate, Roth adds a "Postscript" that contains "A True Chronology of the Major Figures" and other historical documentation. To make the point that history can take very unexpected turns, however, Roth hypothesizes what might have happened had Lindbergh become President in 1940. One of the fascinating things about the book is that Roth shows us how easily it could have happened once you consider the political turmoil of the 1930s, the motives of those who hated Roosevelt and the New Deal, and the magnetic power of Lindbergh's celebrity. Even reviewers who find some problems with the book admit that "it could happen anywhere, at any time if the right people and circumstances come together" (Ryan).

Roth's nightmare goes like this: from May, 1927, when he made the first solo transatlantic flight, Lindbergh was a beloved American hero—seen as a brave, modest, handsome patriot. When his young son was kidnapped and murdered in 1932, there was an enormous outpouring of sympathy for him and his wife Anne. While some scholars and journalists who followed Lindbergh's activities knew him to be an anti-Semitic isolationist, ordinary Americans had little or no knowledge of his politics.

On September 11, 1941, he delivered a speech at a rally of the America First organization that opposed entering the war. Lindbergh said that the United States should not succumb to the will of foreign powers and should pursue "an independent destiny." He charged that "the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt administration" were supporting intervention and that "behind these groups … are a number of capitalists, Anglophiles, and intellectuals who believe that the future of mankind depends upon the domination of the British empire" (15). In Roth's novel, when the Republican convention becomes deadlocked between the nominations of Dewey and Willkie, those supporting Lindbergh arrange for him to arrive unexpectedly at 3:18. "The lean, tall, handsome hero, a lithe, athletic-looking man not yet forty years old, arrived in his flying attire, having landed his own plane at the Philadelphia airport only minutes earlier, and at the sight of him, a surge of redemptive excitement brought the wilted conventioneers up onto their feet to cry 'Lindy! Lindy! Lindy!' for thirty glorious minutes, and without interruption from the chair" (15).

Imagining Lindbergh as an unconventional campaigner, Roth depicts him as having powerful charismatic appeal: "His [acceptance] speech was unadorned and to the point, delivered in a high-pitched, flat, Midwestern, decidedly un-Rooseveltian American voice. His flight outfit of high boots and jodhpurs and a light-weight jumper worn over a shirt and tie was a replica of the one in which he'd crossed the Atlantic, and he spoke without removing his leather headgear or flight goggles which were pushed up on his forehead" (29–30). Landing his own plane at airports around the country, he would climb out and speak a short and simple message: "My intention in running for the Presidency is to preserve American democracy by preventing America from taking part in another world war. Your choice is simple … Lindbergh or war" (30). In contrast to Lindbergh, Roosevelt appears to say too much, to be too complicated,

and to sound effete: "It was straight-talking Lindy who never had to look or to sound superior, who simply was superior—fearless Lindy, at once youthful and gravely mature, the rugged individualist, the legendary American man's man who gets the impossible done by relying solely on himself" (30).

In spite of all that Roosevelt has done for the poor and working people, the power of Lindbergh's charm and simple message leads to a solid victory. Roth's attribution of the reasons for Lindbergh's victory are so typical and familiar that it is hard to believe that they are, in this case, fictional. "The experts concluded that twentieth-century Americans, weary of confronting a new crisis in every decade, were starving for normalcy raised to heroic proportions, a decent man with an honest face and an undistinguished voice who had resoundingly demonstrated to the entire planet the courage to take charge and the fortitude to shape history, and of course, the power to transcend personal tragedy. If Lindbergh promised no war, then there would be no war—for the great majority it was as simple as that" (53).

Those in Jewish communities, like members of the Roth family, are terrified by Lindbergh's openly anti-Semitic statements and by the possible consequences that could result from the rumored connections between Lindbergh and Hitler, and it is hard for them to understand the adulation that the majority of the people feel toward their President. Roth's father, a patriot who strongly believes in the American system, is shocked at the overwhelming support Lindbergh receives and makes a statement that sounds very similar to ones we've heard since the last election: "We knew things were bad but not like this.... They live in a dream, and we live in a nightmare" (76).

Within months, the government creates new programs under the Office of American Absorption, the goal of which is to unify the country by making Jews and other members of minority groups part of the mainstream. For teenagers, there is the "Just Folks" project that sends teens from eastern cities to spend the summer on farms in the west (84). Roth's brother goes to Kentucky and returns a strong advocate of the program, thereby dividing the family. Soon, Roth's father's insurance firm notifies Jewish employees that they must accept transfers to branches in other parts of the country if they wish to remain employed. It becomes clear

that the government intends to break up Jewish communities and isolate Jewish families in predominantly Christian towns. Roth's father realizes that he had been mistaken not to join others who had already moved to Canada because he believed that no such thing could happen in the United States. Roth says that he "watched my father fall apart…crying like a baby and a man being tortured—because he was powerless to stop the unforeseen" (113). It is in this context that Roth presents a powerful statement about the precariousness of the present and the possibility that the future may take a direction that perhaps no one would have predicted: "As Lindbergh's election couldn't have made clearer to me, the unfolding of the unforeseen was everything. Turned wrong way round, the relentless unforeseen was what we schoolchildren studied as "History," harmless history, where everything unexpected in its own time is chronicled on the pages as inevitable. The terror of the unforeseen is what the science of history hides, turning a disaster into an epic" (113–14).

Having moved from actual history to fictional history, Roth needs to shift back to the historical record, and he does so by creating a *deus ex machina*. Suddenly, Lindbergh and his plane disappear, never to be seen again. Amid rumors that there is a plot against America, a reactionary Vice President takes over and orders the FBI to take many prominent people into protective custody, including the first lady. Fearing a surprise attack by Canada, they seal the borders. After a week of terror for many, Mrs. Lindbergh manages to get access to radio and gives a national speech condemning the Vice President and his allies: She says: "I declare that injurious history of usurpation to be ended. Our enemies' plot has failed, liberty and justice are restored" (319). One of the democrats christens her "Our Lady of the White House," and things go back to normal. A new election is called, Roosevelt wins, and the United States enters the war.

I believe that Roth's work succeeds in linking the aesthetic and the political and in affecting the political climate of the country. The many very public, positive reviews of this novel and its status as a best seller have already gone a long way toward getting people to think of the parallels to the current threats upon free speech and democracy. Of course, those who voted for Gore, which was nearly half of those who voted, embrace the book as a *tour de force* that excoriates the current administration. Bush supporters are not reading the book but labeling it as unpatriotic

and even treasonous. The "what if" satire enables Roth to connect powerful historical associations to the current techniques of bureaucratic rhetoric and legal maneuvering that unfortunately are thriving in our new political context.

Three

Let me now turn to the current plight of the humanities in American education. On my campus, I direct a humanities center called The Center for Ideas and Society. The faculty in our College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences consider it crucial to sustaining the intellectual life of the college, supporting faculty and graduate student research, and for articulating to the campus and the community the importance of the humanities to the society at large. We have been quite successful over the last five years in obtaining institutional grants from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, we have international exchange programs with the University of Utrecht and a research group in Paris, and have had twenty-six international scholars in residence since 1995. In 2001, the Center's core budget was severely cut, and for the last four years, the activities of the Center, apart from those funded by outside grants, was drastically reduced. This reduction was not limited to our campus but to research programs in general in the University of California system, but what has been most disturbing is a general attitude among administrators nationwide that the humanities are a luxury that we can no longer afford. We all know for a fact that over the last fifteen years, the number of faculty positions for literature professors has dropped drastically as administrators have chosen to hire part-time lectures and instructors instead of replacing retiring tenure-track professors. Repeatedly, we are asked to justify the "use-value" of our work and give evidence of our impact on the public at large outside the academy. A recent letter from the Rockefeller Foundation indicated that they are in the process of deciding whether to fund humanities projects at all in the future.

I have read over the last several months many reports and statements from around the country, in which colleagues struggle mightily to make the case for the humanities by pointing to the relationship to new technologies, to the formation of cultural policies, to bringing ethical and

moral questions to the work of science, and to making the community, state, and nation more humane places. But when it comes down to questions such as why should institutions and foundations be willing to fund humanities departments to have relatively small classes for majors and graduate students, we find ourselves saying something like "because what we do matters." We need to find more effective ways to answer these questions, and to do so we need bolder approaches.

I want to close by giving a recent example of the kind of bold approach that we might emulate. On May 15, Mark Danner, a longtime staff writer for *The New Yorker* and Professor of Journalism at Berkeley and Bard College delivered a powerful commencement address to the graduating English majors at Berkeley, the class that began college in the fall of 2001. It will appear in the June 23rd issue of the *New York Review of Books*. He gave his talk the title "What Are you Going to Do with That?"—the question that every English major and graduate student is repeatedly asked by parents, relatives, and friends about why they study literature. As a College Master at Princeton, I often had to debate parents who threatened to stop paying tuition for their children who wanted to switch majors from science to humanities. Danner says that in the United States, with "all its vulgar, grotesque power," it should not be surprising that those who choose to study literature would be scorned because they seek to develop the moral imagination instead of seeking economic self-justification. Such an idea, he says, has never been popular in the U.S. and "became downright suspect after September 11, 2001." He says that by declaring themselves to be questioners—humanists—they are already outsiders. They have doomed themselves by "learning how to read, learning how to question, learning how to doubt," and thereby being forced to see the "gulf between what you are told about the world" and "what you yourself cannot help but understand about that world."

When Danner became a journalist, he began to write about wars, massacres, and violence, and he gives several examples of horrors he has covered in such places as Salvador, Haiti, Bosnia, and Iraq, and of the perpetrators of crimes of enormous evil he has interviewed. In a statement that goes very much to the core of DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, Danner explains that these evil doers all believe that what they are doing is right and good. He describes an interview with a Serb leader in Bosnia who had killed

sixty-eight people the day before: "I was writing a profile of him and he of course did not want to talk about bodies or death. He preferred to speak of his vision for the nation. For me, the problem in depicting this man was simple: the level of his crimes dwarfed the interest of his character. His motivations were paltry, in no way commensurate with the pain he had caused. It is often a problem with evil and that is why, in my experience, talking with mass murderers is invariably a disappointment. Great acts of evil so rarely call forth powerful character that the relation between the two seems nearly random. Put another way, that relation is not defined by melodrama, as popular fiction would have it. To understand this mass murderer, you need Dostoevsky, or Conrad."

On the current situation in the United States, Danner makes the following observations: among government officials, he finds "unprecedented frankness in explaining the relation between power and truth." Indeed, our officials believe that power can determine truth. He quotes an unnamed advisor to the President: "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality." Danner's recent book is called *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror*.[4]

Danner recounts a press conference of a few weeks ago with Donald Rumsfeld and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace, in which a reporter presented a very well-informed statement summarizing several reports stating that the events at Abu Ghraib were systematic and ordered by higher commanders. He mentioned a memo by the commanding general in Iraq that approved twelve interrogation techniques that "far exceed the limits established by the Army's own field manual." He also described a process called "rendition," which authorizes that people who are suspected of having information can be kidnapped off the streets by US intelligence agents and taken to third-world counties to be tortured, and quotes a military report estimating that 85–90% of those held in Abu Ghraib had no intelligence value.

The reporter asks of Rumsfeld: "I wonder if you would just respond to the suggestion that there is a systematic problem rather than the kind of individual abuses we've heard of before?" Rumsfeld and Pace both respond by saying that there have been many reports on the scandal, but that they cannot think of any that "characterized it [the torture] as systemic or systematic." When the reporter tried to ask a follow-up question,

Rumsfeld ignored him and turned to another questioner as other reporters laughed. Danner quotes from several reports that the reporter might have wanted to mention, which speak of the "systemic," "sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses" and point to the "vast gulf of lies" that can be traced to the Departments of Justice and Defense and to the White House. Danner says: "What is interesting about this fact is that it is not hidden but that it is revealed. We know this—at least those who are willing to read know it. Those who can see the gulf between what officials say and what the facts are. And we, as I have said, are fairly few.... In the U.S., there is a divide between those who simply agree to believe and those who are determined to read and think." As English majors, he concludes, "you have taken a step along the road to being Empiricists of the Word."

It is clear to me that in the years ahead the work of scholars and teachers of languages, linguistics, literature, film, philosophy, history, and religious and culture studies will be more important than ever before in addressing mankind's most critical problems and guiding students everywhere, and especially in the United States, to respect and, humbly, to try to understand the peoples of every culture.

Notes

1. Twain's visionary satire *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* seems to suggest that the central hubris of US power lies in its terrific ability to achieve maximum damage for the sheer sake of spectacle, even if this means that no certain endgame is possible. Hank's warmongering depravity at the siege is no more prescient as an allegory of US imperialism in the nineteenth century than it is for our own global stance in the twenty-first century. We need to look no farther back than in the military fi reworks during the opening hours of the Iraq war in 2003. As with the first Persian Gulf war, CNN was there to broadcast the artillery light show, which didn't disclose the whereabouts of Saddam Hussein or serve any other practical purpose than to offer a sideshow attraction to tax payers wondering where their military budget goes.

2. Images of the WTC before 9/11 seem all the more foreboding if we look at the cover art of DJ Spooky's 1998 album *Riddim Warfare* (Atari-like image of buildings in collapse), the cover art of Modest Mouse's *Lonesome Crowded West* (also of two identical towers in '97), and the photograph of William Burroughs pointing his shotgun at the Twin Towers back in 1977.

3. In Terry Southern's *Magic Christian*, Guy Grand—a jaded multimillionaire with a foppish sense of humor—decides to produce a fleet of fifty-foot luxury sedans as a comic send-up to America's gross desire for power and consumption. Once bought, many of the sedans create traffic jams due to their inability to make left turns on the streets of New York City. Eric Packer's car is a Moby Dick spectacle of garish proportions that seems to suggest a continuing trend in U.S. value systems (i.e., the SUV).

4. Mark Danner's UC-Berkeley address, as well as his other writings, can be found at his website: http://www.markdanner.com/nyreview/061004_Torture_Truth.htm.

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II

Terror, Film, and Exceptionalism

Chapter 6

Films about Terrorism, Cinema Studies and the Academy

Elaine Martin

There is no doubt that 9/11 has had a significant impact on film studies. Thousands of people linked catastrophic trauma with the cinema in saying of 9/11 that "it looked just like a movie"—although in this reversed linkage the genre of disaster films precedes the historical event. Ruby Rich, in an essay somewhat ambiguously entitled "After the Fall: Cinema Studies Post-9/11," summarized this impact succinctly:

> the events of 9/11 (and the chain of retaliations, bombings, invasions, demonstrations, court decisions, political campaigns, and so on that have transpired since then…) have rendered inadequate the theoretical approaches and analytic habits on which film studies as a discipline has relied for the past several decades. Readings in successive schools of scholarly engagement (postcolonial, multicultural, feminist, postfeminist, multiculturalist, queer, anticolonial, antiracist, Marxist, subaltern poststructuralist, genre-based, Lacanian, semiotic, and structuralist) and close textual readings in general can yield points of synthesis and arenas of relevance for fresh approaches in this time of critical destabilization of categories. The deep shift in global power structures, our own unprecedented anxieties as a nation, and the altered nature of cinematic/digital representation, however, demand new methodological tools and significant critical reinvention from

> any who claim to be cultural theorists of the post-9/11 image universe. (110)

Some teachers have responded by creating courses that directly confront traumatic events and the hegemony of mainstream cinema—courses with titles such as "Critically Reading the War on Terrorism" (Long Island University), "Post-9/11 Cinema: A Cultural History of the Present" (University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign), and "Alienation, Revolt and Terrorism" (University of Alabama). New methodologies are apparent already in the titles: critical questioning of the "political, economic, historical, cultural, and personal aspects of the terrorist attacks" (Brady 96), a cultural embedding of the texts and films, and a challenge to "convenient binaries: cowards and heroes, terrorists and freedom fighters, evil and godliness, us and them," which has been called by Benjamin Barber "Jihad vs. McWorld" (qtd. in Brady 96). A special issue of *Cinema Journal*, published in the winter of 2004, focuses on pedagogy and terrorism. Several of the essays indicate students' reluctance to discuss 9/11 or to transcend emotional responses and consider it analytically. Sarah Projansky, who taught "Post-9/11 Cinema: A Cultural History of the Present" in spring 2003 at the University of Illinois suggests that her students' unwillingness or inability to consider 9/11 critically arose from their deep investment in the socio-cultural context of the events (106). In her essay in the same issue, Ruby Rich refers to "the terrible flattening of complexity in U.S. attitudes toward the rest of the world and its own history" and argues for courses on terrorism that would provide analytical models for addressing these potentially dangerous simplifications (113).[1] In an essay that appeared four years later, Karen Espiritu and Donald Moore, still dealing with 9/11 and pedagogy, inquire whether 9/11 might, in fact, be "unteachable" (202). Noting a post-9/11 resurgence of anti-intellectualism in the U.S., the authors consider unteachable as a synonym for prohibition and cite the example of the conservative watchdog ACTA (American Council of Trustees and Alumni), which blacklisted academics who called for "analysis and education" following the events of 9/11 (203). Given the strong visual orientation of many (American) students as well as the continued popularity of film courses, one might look to cinema studies as a site where the socio-political agenda of Third Cinema and the need to approach terrorism analytically converge.

One of the major shifts in cinema studies since 9/11 has been the foregrounding of Third Cinema films within the discipline in terms of Third Cinema films in general and terrorism films in specific. Not all Third Cinema films deal with terrorism, but a large number of films about terrorism falls under the rubric Third Cinema. As British film critic and teacher Mike Wayne has noted, Third Cinema first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and became an official part of the film studies curriculum in the 1980s (1). In their now-famous essay "Towards a Third Cinema" written in 1969, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, two Argentinian filmmakers/scholars, wrote:

> Just a short time ago it would have seemed like a Quixotic adventure in the colonialized, neocolonialized, or even the imperialist nations themselves to make any attempt to create *films of decolonization* that turned their back on or actively opposed the System. Until recently, film had been synonymous with show or amusement: in a word, it was one more *consumer good*. At best, films succeeded in bearing witness to the decay of bourgeois values and testifying to social injustice. As a rule, films only dealt with effect, never with cause; it was cinema of mystification or anti-historicism. It was *surplus value* cinema. Caught up in these conditions, films, the most valuable tool of communication of our times, were destined to satisfy only the ideological and economic interests of the *owners of the film industry*, the lords of the world film market, the great majority of whom were from the United States. (44)

In further comments, they reveal an acute understanding of the obstacles faced by the new cinema:

> Was it possible to overcome this situation? How could the problem of turning out liberation films be approached when costs came to several thousand dollars and the distribution and exhibition channels were in the hands of the enemy? How could the continuity of work be guaranteed? How could the public be reached? How could System-imposed repression and censorship be vanquished? (45)

The subsequent worldwide production of a body of Third Cinema films at least partially answers these questions posed by Solanas and Getino. It is true that the most salient examples developed in the Third World, but Third Cinema, which is a socio-political designation, should not be conflated with Third World (or Third World Cinema), which is a geographical designation. Third Cinema, irrespective of the country in which it is produced or which country it takes as its subject, is considered a cinema of socio-political and cultural critique. Its modes of production and the avenues of its distribution and reception are also singular. As Mike Wayne points out in *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* "Third Cinema has pioneered collective and democratic working practices. In particular, it has sought to foster the participation of the people who constitute the subject matter of the films" (3). Wayne also refers to the "constraints within which Third Cinema works, squeezed as it is between monopoly capital which dominates production, distribution and exhibition, and/or state interference. In extreme instances of danger or crisis, Third Cinema … has pioneered 'guerrilla filmmaking'" (3). Third Cinema, which has also been called imperfect cinema (Espinosa),[2] has also taken a proactive role vis-à-vis First Cinema (dominant, mainstream) and Second Cinema (art, authorial/auteur); rather than rejecting these precursors, it seeks to transform them and develop their sublimated potentialities (Wayne 10). The result is that one rarely finds a film that belongs solely to one of the three types of cinema; most are hybrids. Some even change their genres as the contexts change. Ruby Rich asks for example: "What does it mean that in today's context *The Battle of Algiers* has begun to look like a recruiting film for Al-Qaeda?" (111). Finally, Third Cinema seeks to create, in Brechtian fashion, engaged spectators. Comparing Third Cinema films, which display an activist function with news reportage, film theorist Bill Nichols notes that the latter "urges us to look but not care, see but not act, know but not change. The news exists less to orient us toward action than to perpetuate itself as commodity, something to be fetishized and consumed" (Bill Nichols, qtd. in Bennett 113). Third Cinema films on the other hand, reflect Lukács's idea that "the social world is in process and that realist art must 'uncover the deeper, hidden, mediated, not immediately perceptible network of relationships that go to make up society'" (qtd. in Wayne 35). This anticipates Julio Espinosa's call for

Third Cinema to "show the process which generates the problems" (81). Žižek's distinction among three types of violence: subjective, symbolic (as in language), and systemic helps clarify the Third Cinema project (1–3). Third Cinema films' *raison d'être* is the exposure and indictment of the underlying economic framework and socio-political system, the "network of relationships" that enable violence. It thus becomes obvious that independent or non-mainstream directors who seek to make films about terrorism might well turn to the ethical practices, methodologies, and tools of Third Cinema.[3]

These Third Cinema directors have, in their films, effectively challenged the production values, *Weltanschauung*, and cinematic narratives of Hollywood. The result has been an iconoclastic cinema that developed independently in different parts of the world, for example in South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. This apparent challenge has, however, been tempered by a simultaneous incorporation and reformulation of Hollywood cinematic conventions themselves. The resultant films thus exhibit an interesting tension that centers on factors such as narrative perspective, casting, genre fusing, linguistic authenticity, anti-anti-terrorist rhetoric, and realistic endings. In his 1988 essay "The Essential Terrorist," Edward Said provided a critique of the ideological and cultural battle against terrorism, citing two problems with this battle: "first, its selectivity ('we' are never terrorists no matter what we may have done; 'they' always are and always will be), and second, its wholesale attempt to obliterate history, and indeed temporality itself. For the main thing is to isolate your enemy from time, from causality, from prior action, and thereby to portray him or her as ontologically and gratuitously interested in wreaking havoc for its own sake" (154). Third Cinema films about terrorism have broken all of Said's taboos, subtly shifting concepts of "we" and "they" while stressing causality, history and temporality.

To illustrate these points I look more closely at three films from different regions of the world: *Four Days in September* (Brazil, 1997), *The Terrorist* (India, 1999), and *Paradise Now* (Palestine, 2005), demonstrating how, thematically and cinematically, these works challenge the status quo. For example: they tend to merge distinctive genres (such as documentary, drama, thriller, and romance), even incorporating humor and irony; they are filmed on location and in native languages (Portuguese,

Tamil, and Arabic respectively); the terrorist roles are cast with very appealing actors—a fact emphasized by the pronounced use of extreme close-up shots; the films' narrative perspective is that of the terrorists (which problematizes "we" and 'they"); and the process of becoming a terrorist is delineated logically and rationally, and in one case is linked to earlier abuse and betrayal through flashbacks. In all three examples, history and causality are emphasized, and the roles of victim and perpetrator are interestingly confounded. In two of the films, both belonging to the subgenre of suicide bomber films, the role of the handlers also becomes paramount in the associative process. Unlike Hollywood films about terrorism such as *Syriana* (2006),[4] which adopt an anti-terrorist heroism approach, the Third Cinema films stress the perspective of the terrorist(s) and are replete with doubts, debates, and questionings. Their open-endedness also challenges the Hollywood films' typical closure. Edward Said wrote in "The Essential Terrorist": since terrorism "has displaced Communism as public enemy number one the concept has been used to institutionalize the denial and avoidance of history. If we are terrified enough, the argument goes, we do not ask questions about the public causes of terrorism or about the measures our government adopts for stamping it out." Films from the world of Third Cinema, by humanizing terrorists and by revealing causal relationships, have undercut these feelings of being "terrified" and have thus helped foster a questioning both of the causes of terrorism and of the government's anti-terrorist response.

My choice of these three films as examples was to some extent arbitrary since the number of films that center on terrorism seems to grow from day to day. I want, through my selection, to suggest the breadth of the genre as well as the depth of particular films. I hope by choosing films from countries as diverse as Brazil, India and Palestine to suggest the ubiquity of the phenomenon I am describing. I also want to indicate the diversity within the category of Third Cinema terrorist films: one centers on a hostage taking, one follows a guerrilla fighter turned suicide bomber, and the other pursues two volunteer suicide bombers, one of whom carries out his mission while the other does not.[5] In an aside on suicide attack narratives, I would note that my students have found this subgenre of terrorist works more compelling than say lyrical responses to terrorism, hostage-taking narratives or more general terrorism narratives

that might include bank robberies, torture, shoot outs, even chase scenes (I think here in particular of works about the Baader Meinhof group in Germany).[6] Several factors may be operative. Suicide is taboo in some religions and may therefore carry the allure of the forbidden. Suicide-for-a-cause may also be exotic in its politicized foreignness to many American teenagers. Suicide bomber films (this is a shorthand term since not all political suicides are bombings, and suicide bombers would use different language to name themselves—perhaps martyrs, warriors, or jihadists) may also represent for many students the fascination-with-evil-phenomenon characteristically associated with high enrollments in Holocaust courses.[7] My "Terrorism in Literature and Film" course (taught four times between 2003 and 2010) has had substantial enrollments.

All three films I have selected are perhaps unusual in that they feature strong, revolutionary female figures, which reopens the debate about Third Cinema and the representation of gender issues. It is characteristic of Third Cinema works that they engage issues of sexism, racism and classism within revolutionary movements as well as their manifestations in colonialism. Two of the three films are based on actual historical events which are fictionalized in the screen retellings. In summary then, I hope to illustrate, through my three examples, how these films about terrorism embrace and explore Third Cinema production values and themes.

Bruno Barreto's 1997 film *Four Days in September* is based on Rio de Janeiro journalist Fernando Gabeira's political memoir *O Que E Isso, Companheiro?* Which is also the title of the original Brazilian version of the film (English translation: Oh what is this, comrade?). The original title has been purged of its ambiguity and provocativeness in the innocuous sounding "four days in September." The film follows Fernando as he joins a group of revolutionaries, the MR-8 group, which is fighting governmental oppression and censorship. They rob a bank and then successfully kidnap the American ambassador to Brazil, Charles Burke Elbrick. Their demands for the release of fifteen political prisoners are finally met by the military government, but they are ultimately captured themselves. The concluding scene shows them being released from prison in exchange for the German ambassador to Brazil, who has been kidnapped. This film which has been called a "political thriller" (Davis), does indeed exhibit elements of that genre, but it is considerably more

complex due to its borrowings from other genres. It is a thriller plus romance plus *Bildungsroman* plus docudrama, at the very least, with some *noir* elements thrown in as well. As a literary adaptation of a memoir with extensive documentary footage and Brechtian-style informational banners throughout, *Four Days in September* leans heavily toward an informational kind of authenticity. The *NY Times* reviewer, Stephen Holden, has called the film "an uneasy hybrid of political thriller and high-minded meditation on terrorism, its psychology and its consequences." Holden's use of the word "hybrid" underlines the film's formal challenge to First Cinema types of films. And "uneasy" suggests one of the effects the film has on viewers. Other elements contribute to the creation of this uneasiness as well.

Undercutting Hollywood's tendency to separate types of characters into immutable good and bad categories, *Four Days in September* seems to call almost everyone and everything into question: the revolutionaries fight among themselves both ideologically and otherwise; the hostage, the American ambassador, superbly played by Alan Arkin, is portrayed both negatively and sympathetically; some of the kidnappers develop a relationship with the hostage and oppose executing him; and one of the secret service agents, Henrique, who specializes in torturing the dissidents, feels remorse for his actions, which he expresses both to his wife and to his colleague. Rather than as hardened criminals, the kidnappers are repeatedly described as a bunch of kids or as amateurs. Henrique tells his wife "Most are kids with big dreams." And one of the more experienced revolutionaries tells his colleague that "They are middle-class kids seeking adventure." This ethical ambiguity and ideological wrangling directly contradict the official anti-terrorist discourse current in Western countries in the 21st century. The scenes of torture cast a negative light on the government agents as does the concluding scene. Barreto filmed a soccer match at the Maracana stadium in Rio which demonstrated growing Brazilian patriotism through the wild enthusiasm of the fans; this scene stands in stark contrast to the governmental repression in the streets.

The first five minutes of the film set the tone both formally and thematically. *Four Days in September* opens with an informational banner or intertitle: Rio de Janeiro. Early 1960s. The viewer then sees a sequence of black

and white stills as The Girl from Ipanema plays in the background (but a jazz band version, not a Latin band version). The informational banners revealingly use present tense verbs. The black and white images fade into footage of a student demonstration with the actors superimposed. As the demonstration turns violent, police arrive with horses, shields and clubs. The next banner says: July 20, 1969; we see an astronaut landing on the moon. This neutral event is politicized by the anti-American commentaries of the three young men who are slowly revealed watching the television broadcast. Applause is used as an auditory segue from the apartment to a reception at the residence of the American ambassador where guests are watching the same television broadcast, but express quite different reactions. This difference reminds me of the question posed by Teshome Gabriel in an essay on Third Cinema: "Have you ever watched a Third World film with native viewers of that culture?" ("Colonialism" 42). The socio-political oppositions and the government's ruthlessness are thus established early on. The ending in which nothing seems to have been accomplished but at a very high cost—for example Maria has been injured in police custody and is in a wheelchair—lends even more ambiguity to a film that seems to want us to root for the underdog. Stephen Holden writes:

> Made nearly three decades after the events it describes, this gripping but often clumsy film presents a disturbingly ambiguous and unromantic portrait of retaliation against oppression. While the film admires the bravery and idealism of its naive student terrorists, whose kidnapping of the ambassador forced the dictatorship to free a group of political prisoners, it also suggests that their short-term victory may have been counterproductive.... After the kidnapping, the military government intensified its suppression of dissent. The military didn't begin to relax its grip on Brazil until the late 1970's, and democracy would not return until 1989. (para. 2)

To give a slightly different perspective on the film's message, Clare Norton-Smith, in a BBC review of the film, had the following to say:

> The son of Brazilian film producers, Barreto claims, "I did not make a film about politics but about human beings. I did not

> make a film about ideas but about the fears, desires and tensions involved in a specific episode." Barreto has achieved just this although in doing so he reportedly alienated many left-wingers, angered by his balanced portrayal which highlighted the moral dilemma of fighting a dictatorship with targeted violence.... *Four Days in September* is a measured, dramatic account of events. Barreto takes pains to explore the background to his characters, providing a sense of their motivation and developing psychology. By avoiding shock tactics, Barreto has shown the human face of political conflict. (para. 3)

In probing deeply into the motivations and psychological profile of his characters, Barreto exhibits a characteristic that, I would argue, is common to all contemporary terrorist narratives.

Indian director Santosh Sivan, in his 1999 film *The Terrorist*, documents throughout the 95 minute film the slow evolution of the protagonist Malli from guerrilla fighter to suicide bomber to mission aborter. She encounters a succession of people who make her question her mission and ultimately decide to renege. Sivan has said that he wanted to understand how someone could commit such an incomprehensible act. Like *Four Days in September*, *The Terrorist* was based on an actual event, in this case the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian prime minister, in 1991. Just as Norton-Smith observed about Bruno Barreto's film—and in almost the same words—the *NY Times* reviewer of Sivan's film concludes that the director has focused on humanizing the story: "In spite of the political volatility of its subject matter, the film is less interested in politics than in psychology. It seems to have been inspired by a basic, exquisitely difficult question: what kind of a person would do something like that? And by choosing to answer the question as literally and painstakingly as possible, Mr. Sivan has accomplished something extraordinary: he has given political extremism a human face." (Scott para. 3). The precise political conflict, the identity of the leader of the guerrillas, the target of the suicide bombing—all are left unspecified in the film—although we know events occur in a jungle somewhere. These factors combine with the director's fondness for extreme close-up shots of the protagonist's "unforgettable face, with her wide, full mouth and enormous dark eyes... often filling most of the screen, as if we might be able to find our way

into Malli's mind through her pores" as one critic has noted (Scott para. 4). The result is an emphasis on the protagonist's psychological development. In this regard, *The Terrorist* might appear to be a less political film than *Four Days in September*. However through repeated use of flashbacks, viewers are introduced to government troops' atrocities against the revolutionaries, including torture. Through flashbacks we also relive the death of Malli's older brother, also a guerrilla fighter, and the murder of her guide Lotus's entire family. Sivan's interest in the psychological elements along with the political serves to make the film more complex in terms of genre but also as an example of a "terrorist" film.

Typical of Third Cinema films, according to definitions put forward by Solanas and Getino as well as Teshome Gabriel, would be *The Terrorist*'s production conditions. It was the first feature film directed by Santosh Sivan, and it was shot in just 17 days (on locations in Kerala and Madras—not in a studio) with a budget of only $50,000. In addition, the cast was entirely made up of nonprofessional actors. While *Four Days in September* enjoyed more substantial funding, and the actors were professional, the make-up was done in a way to make them look like ordinary people. Fernando is represented, with unkempt hair and thick black-plastic glasses, as a stereotypical intellectual-bordering-on-nerd. In a non-Hollywood move, Sivan works openly with symbols, particularly with water. This is a very wet film, filled with streams, lakes, rivers, tears, showers and rainstorms. In another such move, Sivan lets the screen go black in instances of psychic distress. Sivan comments on the cultural influence of the West when Malli preens in front of a mirror, striking poses like the Western movie stars in posters on the wall. This scene occurs just before she decides not to go through with the bombing. Distribution is also an important issue for Third Cinema films, and *The Terrorist*, has an interesting history. John Malkovich discovered it at the Cairo International Film Festival in 1998 and undertook to find the film a distributor. It took producer Mark Burton and Malkovich several months to locate Phaedra Cinema to distribute the film in North America. Malkovich introduced the film in a lengthy *New York Times* article in January 2000, thus ensuring the film some exposure.[8] In summary, *The Terrorist*, like *Four Days in September*, challenges the status quo of First Cinema both thematically and cinematographically.

In our final example we move to Palestine, which already marks a challenge geographically. Palestine is an occupied land and its film directors have little access to resources under the unstable conditions. Despite this, director Hany Abu-Assad managed not only to film on location—despite the kidnapping of his location manager and the near hit of an Israeli missile that caused five German technicians to return home—but also to create a work with fairly high production values. The hybridity of which we have spoken is exemplified already in the director's identity: he was born in Nazareth and carries an Israeli passport, but identifies himself as a Palestinian. Like *The Terrorist*, filming was relatively fast: a total of about 40 days. In the spirit of revolutionary filmmaking "collectives" as discussed by numerous Third Cinema critics (Solanas/Getino; Anthony Guneratne; Teshone Gabriel), this film, *Paradise Now*, was co-produced by a number of European firms, and the film crew of seventy people came from seven different countries. Like the other two films, *Paradise Now* is interested in both personal psychology and politics. It traces two boyhood friends in Palestine who are asked to make good on their promise to carry out a suicide mission in Israel. After a failed initial attempt, one of the friends returns to complete the mission. Hany Abu-Assad said in a 2005 *Cinéaste* interview: "the majority of people have one of two views on the suicide bombers: either the bombers are criminals or super-heroes. My film is about destroying those prevailing perceptions, those images, to build a new perception .... We are disturbing their established perceptions" (17). Abu-Assad reflects in this observation Bakhtin's important "argument for disruption as a method of intellectual advancement" (qtd. in Rich 112). Like the preceding two films, the director claims to be telling the story "from a human point of view" (17). Abu-Assad rightly notes that he allows viewers "to experience things they will never experience in their own lives" (17). Rather than showing difficulties of everyday life in the West Bank, the director decided to shed light on a dark place, as he explained: "What we don't know is the experience of the last twenty-four hours before people blow themselves up. So I wanted to light up that place" (18). *Paradise Now* is ideologically as fraught as *Four Days in September*. Different political opinions and attitudes toward violence, including suicide bombing, emerge from discussions between the two friends, between them and a moderate woman named Suha who has returned

from abroad with a different perspective, and between the two friends and their handlers. Abu-Assad said that he did not necessarily want to change people's opinions but he wanted them to be affected. When asked what he hoped Israelis would see in the film, he responded: "Israeli or not, I hope they come out with a shock. This is what I wanted.... I want people to leave speechless.... Every human should be shocked watching a movie that lights dark places" (18). In Brechtian fashion, the director appears to hope that viewers will go straight from the movie theater to the barricades.

One area in which all three films challenge not only First Cinema but also Third Cinema itself, is the role of women. In writing about the combination in world cinema of two transnational genres, the melodrama and the action picture, Annette Kuhn mentions that sometimes the twist is that the action 'hero' is female. This same twist has been appearing in films about terrorism recently. We had the early example of three women bombers in Pontecorvo's *Battle in Algiers*, but that was merely one episode in the film. Recent films have centered on women revolutionaries and terrorists. In *Four Days in September*, the leader of the MR-8 terrorist cell is a strong woman named comrade Maria. Late in the film, she is humanized and breaks down crying and tells Fernando that she is afraid of dying. *The Terrorist* opens with a violent scene in which Malli executes a traitor followed immediately by a second violent scene in which she kills a government soldier. The humanization and feminization occur slowly throughout the film. And finally, in *Paradise Now*, a key role is played by Suha, who appears to be very worldly because of her time spent outside the country. She lives independently instead of with her family and defends her political beliefs in an articulate manner. Hany Abu-Assad said in the *Cinéaste* interview that he intentionally cast Suha's character as someone from outside and as a woman: "I believe women, in general, have more reasonable thoughts about killing. In matters of life and death, they are more compassionate. They care about life more than men do" (18). One cannot overlook the reductionist, even essentialist nature of Abu-Assad's comment, and yet these female figures expand the very definition of Third Cinema by taking on gender issues once considered extraneous to social conflicts.

In his forward to Part II of *Rethinking Third Cinema*, Anthony Gueneratne refers to the "symbolic use of women's bodies as signifiers of nation and of national intergrity and fecundity," a topic pursued at greater length in one of the essays in that section. This topic invites us to look afresh at Third Cinema films but also at terrorist films. For example, the suicide bomber, Malli, in *The Terrorist*, becomes pregnant in the course of the film, a fact that assumes growing importance (pun intended) in her decision whether to carry out the mission. Instead of killing the Indian VIP, she gives life to the next generation of Tamil guerrillas—a choice that heralds a new political agenda in Third Cinema films.

In summary, terrorism, because it is an inherently fraught subject matter, offers a space in which third Cinema films can challenge the official "we/they" discourse of Western governments. The films' iconoclastic function rests on the following four strategies: 1) presenting terrorism from the terrorists' point of view, 2) portraying terrorists themselves sympathetically, 3) demonstrating causality in terrorist acts, and 4) representing the worldview of the oppressed. Importantly, this group of terrorist films is iconoclastic not only in its alternative way of understanding terrorism. The films also challenge current definitions of Third Cinema by moving beyond the ideas of Solanas and Getino and others in ways that both question and expand on the core characteristics (and inherent limitations). First, let me enumerate the factors that identify this group of terrorist films as works of Third Cinema, and then conclude with the ways in which I think they transcend Third Cinema. The films all exhibit at least some of the following characteristics—both thematic and cinematographic: low budgets, rapid filming, filming on location (non-studio productions), non-professional actors, use of documentary footage, genre hybridity, renunciation of a non-diegetic sound track, use of intertitles, and a basis in actual historical events. The films transcend Third Cinema in the following ways: 1) instead of choosing a political focus over a psychological one, they merge the two, using psychological interest for political ends; 2) they present a non-monolithic political position, opting rather to expose internal dissension and reflect arguments, debates, and doubts; 3) as mentioned above, they often present women as equal or even primary figures, and they expose gender issues; and, to end on a note of greater levity given the grim nature of terrorism in

general, 4) a number of the films use humor, including two of my examples: *Paradise Now* and *Four Days in September*. During the kidnapping in the latter work, one of the hostage-takers has trouble driving the getaway car, and the protagonist Fernando is not allowed to participate in the abduction because he can neither shoot nor drive—hardly the marks of a hardened revolutionary. In the Palestinian film, the handlers incongruously eat sandwiches in the background as one of the two suicide bombers, Khaled, tapes his martyr video. When he is finished, they discover there was no film in the video camera. And finally, at the end of his martyr video, he gives his mother advice on where to buy the least expensive water filters, which adds a poignant twist—a revealing zeugma—to the taping. The use of humor appears to humanize the terrorists at the same time as it problematizes the purely political agenda of both Third Cinema and terrorist films. In sum then, and in light of all the aforementioned factors, I would like—at the very least—to suggest that the two genres of Third Cinema films and terrorist films intersect in a way that is mutually elucidating. Both are contributing to the revitalization and politicization of film studies.

As terrorism studies or terrorology—as I have heard our research called—become more institutionalized, and as terrorism increasingly pervades popular culture, we can expect more Third Cinema style films about terrorism to be created. "On the political significance of film" Walter Benjamin wrote,

> [a]t no point in time, no matter how utopian, will anyone win the masses over to a higher art; they can be won over only to one that is nearer to them. And the difficulty consists precisely in finding a form for art such that, with the best conscience in the world, one could hold that it *is* a higher art. This will never happen with most of what is propagated by the avant-garde of the bourgeoisie. (qtd. in Wayne vi)

Thus we have the means to reach not only our students but also the masses of which Benjamin speaks; it remains to find the right methodology. I close with a kind of "call to arms" by Ruby Rich, which I partly cited earlier and which suggests some aspects of just such a methodology:

> The terrible flattening of complexity in U.S. attitudes toward the rest of the world and its own history makes it imperative that teachers offer models of how to conduct analysis while the ground shifts underfoot, how to craft political arguments, how to apply past histories to current circumstances, and how to think through film without sacrificing the subtlety of cinematic inflections, vernacular or formal. Granted, academic scholarship does not move with the speed of journalism. Nonetheless, political paradigms are being set in place with astonishing speed, so much so that scholars would do well to accelerate the normally cautious pace of theoretical revision and invention. We need to weigh in with new approaches to representations (past, present, future) in a world that is irrevocably altered. (113)

While the nexus that connects terrorism and film studies is Third Cinema, that which links terrorism to our students might be called, to paraphrase Kant, the pedagogical imperative. Third Cinema films are postmodern in Lyotard's sense of questioning the existence of a single, monolithic meta-narrative. We owe it to ourselves, our students, and to Benjamin's "masses" to pursue this skepticism rigorously.

Notes

1. See Steinbrink and Cook for their detailed and provocative "Why Do They Hate Us? Lesson Plan" (286).

2. In a follow-up essay published in 1985, Espinosa revisits his original comments of 1969 on the "imperfect cinema" and clarifies: "if art is substantially a disinterested activity and we're obliged to do it in an interested way, it becomes an imperfect art. In essence, this is how I use the word imperfect. And this I think isn't just an ethical matter, but also aesthetic" (94).

3. In a review of the film *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, provocatively entitled "Terrorism as an Aesthetic Choice," Brian M. Carney writes: "The picture that the movie paints is of a group that has chosen terrorism as a kind of aesthetic, a lifestyle in which sex and shooting are an expression of antibourgeois authenticity" (D9). If members of the Baader Meinhof group had made films, they clearly would have fallen under the rubric of Third Cinema, although the political movement was European. On the topic of European cinema as Third

Cinema, see especially the 2005 essay by Thomas Elsaesser: "Hyper-, Retro, or Counter-. European Cinema as the Third Cinema between Hollywood and Art Cinema."

4. See also *Flight 93*, *World Trade Center*, and *9/11* for further examples of this type of film, although the film *9/11* is partly documentary.

5. Feature-length films focused on the perspective of the terrorist(s) would include: *The Battle of Algiers*, *Good Morning, Night*, *The Terrorist*, *The War Within*, *Paradise Now*, *Four Days in September*, *My Son the Fanatic*, *Hey Ram*, and *The Legend of Rita*.

6. Films about the Baader Meinhof group and the Rote Armee Fraktion, as well as the West German state's response to left-wing violence in the 1970s include: *The Legend of Rita* (*Die Stille nach dem Schuss*), *Marianne und Juliane* (*Die bleierne Zeit*), *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, *Germany in Autumn* (*Deutschland im Herbst*), *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (*Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*), and *The Second Awakening of Christa Klages* (*Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages*).

7. See Tania Modleski's essay "The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory" for interpretations of the titillation factor that potentially inheres in violence. In her essay "Reel Violence," Nouri Gana refers to "the aestheticization and consumption of atrocity, horror, violence" and suggests a way of transcending spectacle: "If film is unthinkable outside the conscripts of an economy of the spectacle—or without the mediatory interposition of the screen…—it becomes critically incumbent to discern the threshold beyond which film ceases indeed to be reducible to a spectacle, pandering, as it were, to audiences' unwitting lust for melodramas, intrigues, kinesthetic thrills, and technically sophisticated stunts, dazzles, or visual gags. Not that film can evacuate its spectacular entertainment principle or be redeemed *from* it, but that it can surely, or so I contend, be redeemed *through* it…" (20).

8. For details of this involved and largely serendipitous distribution process, see Kamath, A.P. "How John Malkovich God-Fathered Sivan's *The Terrorist*."

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Chapter 7

Shaherazad On-Line

Women's Work and Technologies of War

Robin Truth Goodman

In this paper, I compare Donna Haraway's views on the technological public sphere with Herbert Marcuse's. According to Donna Haraway, new political visions and identity formations for the neoliberal, post-national age assume a surpassing of the private/public split of industrial capitalism, while Marcuse believes that the private sphere's temporal, spatial, and conceptual "outsidedness" gives it the symbolic force of a radical alternative. The comparison between Haraway and Marcuse indicates that the private sphere, as a relic of nation-state-centered productive practices and development, must be read as an autonomous space of opposition or transcendence to the totally administered society, an autonomous space of opposition that Haraway believes has disappeared: for Haraway, politics in neoliberalism has to do with arranging and rearranging codes rather than with conflict, contradiction, or struggle. Marcuse's vision of the relation between technology and labor is limited by the context of the nation-state, while Haraway's internationalism disrupts the private/public binary in such a way as to make invisible the emergence of an oppositional public sphere that Marcuse identified in the forms and temporalities of women's work.

Rather than understanding neoliberalism as an age which no longer sees its identity in the public/private split, as does Haraway, I argue here that the relationship between the public and the private has been reversed: while the private gains decisive power in its avoidance of state control and regulation, the public is pushed off to the outskirts of

economic and political activity. I call this "re-privatization" and see it as relating to an emergent formation of gendered labor where women's work is still subordinated, but this time in its contingency to the public while the private is the intensified site of capitalization. These new forms are not utopic, science-fictiony suggestions of new networks of alliance that are no longer identified solely through affectivities produced in private and familial life, as Haraway predicts. Rather, the public/private divide of industrialism that seems to be destroyed in the violence of the new economic age is, actually, functionally turned over: the public is now the "outside" and, in this, symbolically is represented through new identities of women working. Within the symbolic structure of the endangered industrial private sphere can be discerned the marginality of a future public sphere unfolding.

This comparison also suggests that, often, the remnants of communicative public functions can be attributed now only to the margins of the post-national technological takeover of the national public sphere, in such margins as the private sphere formerly resided in under industrialization. This public communicative/educative function is what is being leveled in the leveling of the public/private difference. The shrinking of the public sphere, in a very broad sense, is currently leading to a shrinking of the autonomy of consciousness and critique. Though current media communications, as well as institutions of education, are increasingly falling under private hands in various ways—through, for example, voucher schemes, corporate professorial hiring, coffee companies taking over study-space in college libraries, charter school expansion, standardized testing, teacher merit pay proposals, and the like—this paper suggests that new spaces of learning, social criticism, and informational exchange are opening up, linked to private production on the internet, specifically related to women and their work. In the context analyzed in this paper, the private work of women to distribute new knowledge through international internet communities is opposed to the work of corporate privatization of women's work in that it serves as a block against the universalization of imperialist exploitation, the terror it inflicts, and its forms of work.

For Marcuse, the "past-ness" of the private sphere, its reflectiveness and alienation, forms into the limit of the totally administered society, to its state-focused production and to its technologies, and gives rise to

a new society founded through new technologies and reoriented uses. Haraway, on the other hand, sees technology as the post-national, non-transcendent unity of private interest and public life, with no limit or outside. She understands Marcuse's continued embrace of "outsidedness" as an outgrowth of dualistic thinking, where technology is defined through domination and redemption is imagined as a return to an originary organicism.[1] Though I see how such a conclusion can be reached, I am reading Marcuse a bit differently here: rather than a "return to nature" thesis, I read Marcuse as positing the private sphere as an empty signifier of difference that is always on the move, always an opening, and always oppositional. Its referential allusions to a sphere of women's labor do not stagnate its meanings and ground them down but rather suggest a broadening of this sphere's communicational and educational potentials that its technological use foreshadows. This paper shows how the idea of the outside, critical detachment or the negative difference that Marcuse works through the national private sphere needs to be identified within a post-national, public analytic. Writing from a country whose public sphere has been transformed into a technological display of the present's total and endless destructiveness with its demolition of the public/private divide, Riverbend takes on this project in her now famous two-volume witness to war, *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq*. Unlike Haraway, Riverbend does not believe that future identity-formations will make invisible the public/private divide but understands the incipient construction of a public sphere outside of the privatizations and appropriations of imperialism depends on a defense of the public realm revealed through domestic practices. In opposition to a technological public culture extending imperialist investments, work privatization, and endless administration, Riverbend envisions an internationalized private sphere constructed through technology as an embryonic pedagogical public culture—that is, as a form of production for knowledge and critique.

Baghdad Burning

Baghdad Burning can be read as two books in one. On the immediate level, it is vitally present. Starting in August 2003 and moving through May 2006, Riverbend presents her impressions of the historical events of the

war as they unfold around her, as she watches and lives them, sometimes in short snippets and observations, at other times in sarcastic rejoinders to the news and grandstanding on TV. Riverbend puts a "real" "human face" on a tragedy that most of us are learning about through impersonal statistics and distanced reports. On another level, *Baghdad Burning* exists as a two-volume collection that tells a story of war, with stable characters, sustained narratives, identifiable settings, linked chronologies, and moments that seem to resist and challenge realist convention, pushing at the edges of believability or recognizable logic. The war unwinds, on the one hand, as a series of stills, each one framed and distinct, each one disappearing as another comes into view, without connection, and, on the other, as a moving sequence in which each shot is opened out as it disappears into the surrounding whole.

These two forms are in constant tension. Each dated entry tells of an event or a set of events which is happening at the same moment as or in close temporal proximity to the writing, is being covered on TV, or has entered fervently as an item of discussion among the neighbors or on the web, perhaps obsessively so. As well, each dated entry tells of a moment in a trajectory of the war that might reveal itself within some historical significance or contribute a note to an unfolding understanding of a geopolitical formation, giving a fresh perspective on a very familiar thematic setting where we all identify our moving historical moment. Responses may oscillate from total recall—e.g., "I remember that as how we got from here to there"—to a wonder at forgetting—e.g., "that seemed so significant at the time, why did it fall out of the war's story, will people in the future still recognize this as part of the history?" The entries appear as both an eternal present without memory and as a memory without present.

Certainly, the narrative voice in *Baghdad Burning* appears as a modern-day recurrence of Shaherazad of *The Arabian Nights,* who has to keep telling her tale to survive (even the back cover admits this), or as in an epistolary romance like Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* where a single letter writer is posed pouring his heart out in response to unprinted incoming correspondence from absent personages. But the best analogy for *Baghdad Burning* would be a possible merging of *Don Quixote* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* as the same book. Though it is just a raw, day-to-day,

personal and emotional response that brings to life a "civilian tragedy" as the yet-untold, empirical part of a story about the large, powerful forces, energies, and interests through which we generally confront history and war, at the same time, it can look back at itself, reflect on its past, revise, and comment in response to the hindsight of its future, the separation of its imagination, and the distance of other places. The difference with *The Diary of Anne Frank* is that in *Baghdad Burning*, the war is as much inside the hidden refuge as outside, brought inside through connecting to vast communications' networks that call from the future or from a non-nationalized territory of participating voices: radio, television, telephone, neighborhood gossip, internet correspondence, other blogs, international websites, and, of course, the new technologies of warfare constantly exploding, endangering and interrupting day-to-day life processes. The private-inside is saturated and defined by its electronic, public outside.

Marcuse on Technology

Like Riverbend, Marcuse gives a sense that technology's absorption in its present gives rise to a positive possibility that is different or autonomous from the meanings bestowed on it by its present use in production: the actuality of technological production reveals its potential to give itself over to alternative social relations. Marcuse's reading of technology borrows from Heidegger's. Heidegger made a distinction between the *techne* of classical Greece and modern technology. *Techne* would reveal the inner essence of the object—or the relation of the artist, the object, and the world—through its use, while modern technology denied the object's essence by instrumentalizing the object.[2]

On the one hand, Marcuse understands technology as locking in the present by buying out the possibility of the present's negation, particularly in the form of oppositional consciousness. Modern technology grants workers a comfortable standard of living that invites them to identify their interests in the growth of the technological systems. Technology satisfies immediate human needs and so erases the impulse to revolt, but only by creating new needs, mostly based on fear, that demand an ever-larger technological base, an expansion of labor, and a permanent mobilization. What results is a reduction of thought, a collapse of ideals

into facts and of possibilities into actualities: "Today's fight against this historical alternative," he laments,

> finds a firm mass basis in the underlying population, and finds its ideology in the rigid orientation of thought and behavior to the given universe of facts. Validated by the accomplishments of science and technology, justified by its growing productivity, the status quo defies all transcendence. Faced with the possibility of pacification on the grounds of its technical and intellectual achievements, the mature industrial society closes itself against this alternative. (*One-Dimensional Man* 17)

As in *Baghdad Burning,* where the very daily-ness of the war extends the war as infinitely part of the present of production and the dailiness of its private lives, the present for Marcuse's technological society becomes an automated repetition, standardized and routine, an integrated totality where human life is but an extension of the workings of the machine.

On the other hand, by expanding labor, by increasing needs—through its cultures of consumption—which it ultimately cannot satisfy, by freeing up free time, technology gives rise to "the historical transcendence towards a new civilization" (*One-Dimensional Man* 37). That is, technology reveals "the consciousness of the discrepancy between the real and the possible" (229)—technology expresses the universal, the not-yet-realized potential revealed in the actual present moment and for which the present moment eventually is negated and replaced. In technology, the universal bursts out of the walled-in frame of the present, demolishing the present's facticity.

Riverbend and the Technologization of the Private Sphere

In the 1960's, Marcuse worries that technology has already translated universals and essences into concrete realities and facts so that ideals and contemplation can no longer reveal the present's limits: the one-dimensional, technological society "tends to reduce, and even absorb opposition (the qualitative difference!) in the realm of politics and higher culture.... The result is the atrophy of the mental organs for grasping the contradictions and the alternatives" (*One-Dimensional Man* 79). This

"inauthenticity"[3] or absence of alternatives, this technological absorption, characterizes all walks of modern life and infiltrates private spaces as well. Such a technologization informs the narration of Riverbend's return to her home as a computer expert, blending the inside into the outside, the housewife into the worker, showing the fusion of opposites. Computers, however, also serve as the pedagogical break in the private sphere's circularities—as politics, global news, and commentary flicker in and wire up the home. The war might be endless and everywhere without break, but technology reveals itself as embedded in social relations that exceed the war.

This section presents *Baghdad Burning* as privatizing the public by "re-privatizing" women's work: by "re-privatization," I mean the return of women's work to the private sphere in a neoliberal age. "Re-privatization" is an appropriation, by the ideologies of neoliberalism, of the symbolic structure of women's labor under industrialization. That is, under industrialization, the private sphere figured the "outside" to the public of production, civil society, and the state. The ideologies of neoliberalism capitalize on these symbolic and moral meanings of domestic labor for the purposes of bypassing the authority of the nation-state in regulative and governing processes. In this case, the return of women to the private sphere comes to replace the state as the main social organization in the wake of the national public sector's total destruction by imperialist forces. Like technology, the private sphere in *Baghdad Burning* affirms the present by restoring its ordering and thereby shows the present in its temporal and spatial entirety as absorbed in the war. In a future section, I explore *Baghdad Burning* as revealing the private as excessive, its potential as already public. Technologized, the private sphere becomes the science fiction of the present, what affirms the present by repeating it, but what at the same time proves the impossibility of its repetition: the imperialist present's fragility.

At the same time as *Baghdad Burning* is an experiential panorama of a war without end, it is also a story of a professional woman who loses her job, and whose life then gets consumed in endless household chores: Riverbend gets "re-privatized." At the age of twenty-four, Riverbend becomes a host of the private sphere, not permitted to leave without at least two male chaperones, and this restriction she shares, not only because

of the lack of public security, kidnappings, assassinations, street explosions, and militias,[4] but also because of a cultural transformation induced by the occupation: modern identities were remade into the primitive, the savage, the backward, the private, and the irrational. "Before the war," she notes in her entry of August 23, 2003, "around 50% of the college students were females, and over 50% of the working force was composed of women. Not so anymore. We are seeing an increase of fundamentalism in Iraq which is terrifying" (17).[5] Writing in English, addressing herself often to a US audience, part of Riverbend's mission is to disassociate Iraq from Western fantasies of its technological archaism[6] and to debunk parallel mythologies of Middle Eastern exoticism, particularly in the form of a backward-looking indigenous cultural abuse of women. Riverbend makes clear that the war is not the defeat of sexism and the exclusion of women but rather the catalyst to new forms of sexism connected to the privatization of women's work.

Before the war, Riverbend worked as a programmer/network administrator for an Iraqi database/software company. After the invasion, when she gets word that the company has continued operations, she insists on returning. Accompanied by two male bodyguards, she braves the streets, cracked under the weight of US tanks, and enters her old office—whose electricity had been cut—with great anticipation, only to discover that "I was one of the only females" (23). Approaching her department director, she reads on his face an expression that tells her "females weren't welcome right now" (24), and he sends her home. "I'm one of the lucky ones" (24), she concludes, as she tells of Henna Aziz, an electrical engineer who was assassinated in front of her family because she refused to stop working when her country needed her expertise. "How are females supposed to be out there helping to build society or even make a decent contribution," she remarks, "when they suddenly seem to be the #1 target?" (68). The privatization of women's work serves to extend the war into the home, erasing the distinction between them.

In "re-privatizing" women's work, Riverbend's private use of technology also privatizes the public sphere. The conflating of public and private life in the "re-privatization" of women's work affects, as well, any national public engagement. As Riverbend's neighbor tells her, "I don't have time or patience to read [the draft constitution]. We're not getting water—the

electricity has been terrible and Abu F. [her husband] hasn't been able to get gasoline for three days.... And you want me to read the constitution?" (*Baghdad Burning II* 129). She emphasizes this by grabbing the paper out of Riverbend's hands and washing the wall with her copy of the Constitution: the most basic political acts have been re-privatized as women's work.

Baghdad Burning depicts the private sphere as a site of technological breakdown. The constant failures of technology make Riverbend's house seem like a workshop, as the day-to-day repetitions of family ritual are impeded and then work begins in order to put them back in order. The private sphere has the function of restoring routine and modernity against the crises to the everyday that the war continually inflicts: the water stops coming through the tap, so they fill the water tank on the roof, carrying pails of cold hose water up the stairs; or the electricity gets cut, and they wake up at 2 a.m. to wash the clothes, during the brief return of the current—"reality is a washer, clanging away at 2:30 a.m. because you don't know when there'll be electricity again" (*Baghdad Burning* 197). To restore the (modern) present, Riverbend portrays daily life during war and occupation as a constant attempt to make household technologies functional despite their constant crashing, or to substitute human acts for technological automation, so that human acts take on the automation of the failed technologies: the human is but an extension of the technological.

The repetitions of daily routine life in the private sphere, as well, reflect the temporal repetitions of rituals: the continuance of the yearly cultural rituals, from Ramadan to Eid and back, with their family visitations, phonecalls, and traditional dishes (at one point, Riverbend starts to exchange recipes over her blog [*Baghdad Burning* 130–31]): these practices get disrupted by curfews, road detours, gasoline rationing (in a country, Riverbend points out, that is rich with oil), car bombings, and threats of violence. "Houses are no longer sacred... We can't sleep... We can't live... If you can't be safe in your own house, where can you be safe?" (*Baghdad Burning II* 175). The private sphere, as the common space of ritual re-enactment, is endangered by the deprivations of war but, more fundamentally, also by the incursions of public life: the kidnappings, killings, street explosions, and security raids, both US and Iraqi, where

family members are removed or disappeared, the rituals are suspended, and all semblance of order breaks down as everyone searches for them: a traumatized young woman's mother and three brothers are captured by authorities, interrogated, beaten, and held in custody, and a customary visit to a sick friend's house then turns into a conversation about what interventions need to be made to bring back the family (*Baghdad Burning* 234–35). A cousin's husband disappears while driving his parents back home after the feast of Eid, and, with "[g]oing home no longer an option" (204), the family stops its daily routine to search for him, pay ransom for him, and await for his return. The purpose now is to re-establish the ritualistic order of time by re-establishing the private sphere as foundation, as protected against the outside. The present of nation and culture can only be repaired through a return to habitual, repetitive, and mechanical practices of everyday and private family life, the rituals of women's work in the private sphere.

The technologization of the private sphere extends the private sphere indeterminately, blending it into the outside from which it is meant, in liberalism, to be separated. As the inside is constantly barraged in electrical failings, dry faucets, and the consequent risks to the continuation of everyday family, religious, and national life, the outside is similarly seeped in wreckage, blasting bombs, falling buildings, car explosions, and infrastructural collapse. Like the private sphere as well, the technological devastation is met with a staunch effort to repair things by privatizing them. In fact, repairing things means their privatization. Riverbend recounts how her cousin, a bridge specialist working for an Iraqi firm, was asked to calculate the cost of rebuilding the New Diyala Bridge in Baghdad; while his estimate came to $300,000, the contract was granted to an American company who made the estimate of $50,000,000 (*Baghdad Burning* 35). (Riverbend compares this negatively to the successful reconstruction efforts of Iraqi engineers after the 1991 Gulf War). "A few rich contractors are going to get richer," she laments, "Iraqi workers are going to be given a pittance and the unemployed Iraqi public can stand on the sidelines and look at the glamorous buildings being built by foreign companies.... This war is...about huge corporations that are going to make billions off of reconstructing what was damaged during this war" (37). The "re-privatization" of women's work, the production of unemployment, runs parallel

to the effort by the multinationals to grab jobs, productive forces, territories, and profits.

Haraway and the End of Dialectics

Twenty-seven years after Marcuse wrote *One-Dimensional Man,* his classic study of technology, Donna Haraway in "The Cyborg Manifesto" describes a vastly altered technological universe. The world of technology is no longer organized along nation-state lines or bordered territories. Instead, it fuses along on electronic circuitries and informational nodes tied to corporate productivities, networks, and codes.[7] Technology has penetrated even into biology and consciousness and can no longer be discerned from them. There is no longer a firm separation between the worker and the machine, or the possibility of identifying the workers' interests against those of the machine. Time has flattened out, fiction has collapsed into fact, imagination into experience, public into private, idealism into materialism, man and woman into the post-gendered body of the cyborg.

Instead of the negative, in whatever form, ushering in a qualitative historical difference because it makes no sense in the present—as in Marcuse's private sphere, technological essence, idealist potential, or proleteriate consciousness—Haraway's present, like Riverbend's, solidifies around blasphemy, or irony: in contrast to the ultimate resolving of contradictions that she identifies with dialectics,[8] irony for Haraway maintains "the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true" (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* 148). Similarly, Riverbend's dominant tone, even when ranting, is ironic: one of her favorite targets, for example, is Ahmed Chalabi[9] , whom she frequently depicts as a clown or a circus animal: "A circus-themed gala, perhaps, where Bremer can play the ring-master and Chalabi can jump through red, white, and blue hoops to mark this historical day" (*Baghdad Burning* 45). Or when Donald Rumsfeld compares Baghdad to Chicago, she retorts, "Wow. This guy is funny.… What he actually should have said was, 'It's like Chicago, during the 1920s, when Al Capone was running it'" (52). Spoofing on the Oscars, she nominates George W. Bush for "Best Actor" "for his convincing portrayal as the world's first mentally

challenged president" (*Baghdad Burning II* 180) and Condoleezza Rice for her performance in "Viva Iran!", giving honorable mention to Bush's speech writers for "writing scripts to make George W. Bush sound/look not great, not even good—but passable" and writing "speeches using words with a maximum of two syllables" (*Baghdad Burning II* 182). In post after post, she continues to expose the leaders' decisions as tragically ridiculous. Such irony works not as critique—that is, as showing the limits of the applied logic, overturning it, using reason to make visible argumentative and factual mistakes or alternatives—but rather through pushing a statement to its extreme, affirming its content by extending its sense. Rather than posing an opposing possibility, irony melds opposites together through superimposition, over-the-top affirmation, and mocking agreement, or pastiche.

Haraway's cyborg theory extends the present infinitely, and it does this—just as *Baghdad Burning* does this—through the extension of women's work. "The actual situation of women is their integration/exploitation into a world system of production/reproduction and communication called the informatics of domination. The home, workplace, market, public arena, the body itself—all can be dispersed and interfaced in nearly infinite, polymorphous ways" (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* 163). Instead of the private sphere appearing as obsolete and abandoned as a historical form, a break from the present, as it is for Marcuse, it is absorbed and integrated in the total structure, where "the factory, home, and market are integrated on a new scale and…the places of women are crucial" (166). There is no longer an outside to work or working-time. The end of the public/private distinction underlies descriptions of the present in her later work where private and public have merged together into a new and productive corporate combination that is also the site of oppression. In *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience,* for example, biotechnological research has made markets that trade in human or animal cell tissue, patenting laboratory animals like OncoMouse that are used to target disease. Haraway compares this to slavery even while she extols it for creating fruitful new capacities for interconnectedness, geneaology, and category fusion, including mixing insides with outsides, natural origins with corporate productions, state and corporation: "From conception

to fruition…these millennial offspring required massive public spending, insulated from market forces, and major corporations' innovations in their previous practice" (*Modest_Witness* 83). For Haraway, there is no alternative to the technologized body, the public/private partnership: it is everywhere simultaneously, hopeful in its despairing. The cyborg is the possibility of everything as it already exists, as it can be discovered and then affirmed as what we already have and have had all along: the present has always existed, even if arranged or ordered variously.

Marcuse's Technologized Private Sphere

Unlike in Haraway, Riverbend's assimilation into a technological society does not mean that the possibilities of technology have been exhausted in its present facticity. The privatization of production is not the final word: Riverbend's private use of technology sets in motion a technological option that cannot be confined within the present, its controls, its violence, and its repetitions. Unlike Haraway, who figures that the disappearance of the private sphere has already been completed, Marcuse, like Riverbend, wants to tell a story about modern technology as a story about how the disappearance of the private sphere as an alternative within the present is still in process. Marcuse takes the controversial Marxian line that the present use of technology, once it is freed from its restrictions within the irrationality of the capitalist present, "sustains and consummates itself in the new society" (*One-Dimensional Man* 22). As the present's difference with itself, Marcuse believes, with Marx, that technology, even if developed in a profit-based society, is itself neutral, and once embedded in different relations of production, the technological apparatus would unleash new possibilities already inside of it. Once embedded in different relations of production, the technological apparatus would also alter, unleashing the new essences and possibilities that were already inside of it. Rousing the possibility of a technology that would out-survive its own performative profit-principle, Marcuse proclaims that "the completion of the technological reality would be not only the prerequisite, but also the rationale for *transcending* the technological reality" (231): the technological imagination, when internalized and alienated, fashions a world beyond technology's mechanizations in repressive power and resistant to it.

With their connection within the private sphere, free time, and the post-work society, such historical alternatives are, according to Marcuse, "feminized": "inasmuch as the 'male principle' has been the ruling mental and physical force, a free society would be the 'definite negation' of this principle—it would be a *female* society" (*Counterrevolution and Revolt* 74–75). Women's link to the private sphere and its productive technologies forms into the public of the future. This happens because society under capitalism is irrational, forcing its potential into alienated private enclaves outside of the direction of production and divorced from social reality, reserving its energies for later use.

For Marcuse, the absorption of the domestic sphere into the field of productivity is a symptom of the "convergence of opposites" that underlies the one-dimensional society, denying its essence. Along with the proleteriate and other manifestations of the negative, technology has been invading and absorbing the private sphere, cracking down on the development of historical alternatives that its private use, according to Marcuse, would discover. Marcuse worries that technology has "invaded the inner space of privacy and practically eliminated the possibility of that isolation in which the individual, thrown back on himself alone, can think and question and find" (*One-Dimensional Man* 244). The gradual disappearance of the proleteriate matches up—lamentably, for Marcuse—with the gradual disappearance of domesticity and the division of labor. Marcuse's private sphere is thus "ghosted": always disappearing but continually present.

Of all the Frankfurt School thinkers, Herbert Marcuse took the most definitive stand in favor of the feminist movement. "I believe," he announced in a 1974 lecture at Stanford University, "the Women's Liberation Movement today is, perhaps, the most important and potentially the most radical political movement that we have, even if the consciousness of this fact has not yet penetrated the Movement as a whole" ("Marxism and Feminism" 147). Earlier in 1972, he also asserted, "[T]he Women's Liberation Movement becomes a radical force to the degree to which it transcends the entire sphere of aggressive needs and performances, the entire social organization and division of functions" (*Counterrevolution and Revolt* 75). Marcuse saw that the values of the private sphere would reformulate sociologically as the destructive force of imminent

qualitative change still linked to workers' liberation: women symbolized for Marcuse the freedom from work and the reclaiming of time in the working-day that Marx predicted the socialist future would usher in. The "feminine characteristics" of the emergent socialism would reduce "alienated labor and labor time" for the "emancipation of the senses" ("Marxism and Feminism" 154). For Marcuse, the essence of man—his Being and his potential—is woman.

The Spectre Haunting Riverbend's Private Sphere

Whereas Haraway has constructed a vision of the world in which the distinction between public and private—between autonomous and social will—plays no part, Marcuse understands the private sphere as a site of contention and struggle with the social, with a similar role to autonomy and freedom as in idealist philosophies. Haraway abandons the inner, private freedom that idealism poses against social unfreedom for a social vision where the socialized individual is infused with the totality of social relations, without borders between them. On the other hand, adopting Marx's observation that struggle in a capitalist system is rooted in the struggle between technologization and the working day, the private sphere—for Marcuse—represents a reduction in the time of work—at least, of remunerated work—that Marcuse understands as man's historical essence, his autonomy.

Riverbend's private sphere resembles Marcuse's only in its bare outlines: in fact, in some senses, Riverbend's situation reverses the situation described through Marcuse's private sphere without necessarily countering Marcuse's idea that the private sphere's resistance to conceptualization and the social gives it historical force. Rather than a separation from work, Riverbend's private sphere is a place where pre-war work continues. In *Baghdad Burning*, non-work is more exploitative than work, because non-work indicates a world and a temporality owned and controlled by others elsewhere, in their own spheres of private appropriation. In Riverbend's view, her continued work in the private sphere refutes colonialist exploitation-through-privatization. The private sphere is a site for practices of public sovereignty.

The idea that work linked to technology can be creative and therefore lead to fulfillment has been elaborated within strands of German feminism influenced by Marcuse and the Frankfurt School thinkers: technology in advanced capitalist societies, feminist social critic Frigg Haug ethnographically details (for example), can finally allow for a type of work that resembles what Marcuse means by non-work. For Haug, post-Marxism projects that any form of work is a form of exploitation and only a form of exploitation, leading to the conclusion that liberation can only happen outside of social productivity and can only therefore ever be partial. Haug thinks, in contrast to post-Marxism, that frameworks for non-alienated and non-marketed labor currently restricted to the private sphere could be blended back into working life.[10] Additionally, Haug finds that Marx's sense of a proleteriate consciousness developing from work—especially independent, creative work as the kind technology can foreground—means creating the potential for action through work in the world rather than conceiving work as just a mechanism for extending exploitation, dehumanization, or dispossession.

With Haug, Riverbend believes that exploitation in work takes a particular form: undermining contributions of the national populace, undermining the possibilities of creating a purpose or destination outside of the determinations of rationalized, privatizing capital to which the national heritage is being sold off. Riverbend asserts claims over her own time as self-determination in the cultural and familial routines of the private sphere. The occupation has its own time: "You get to the point during extended air raids where you lose track of the days.... The week stops being Friday, Saturday, Sunday, etc.... You begin to measure time with the number of bombs that fell, the number of minutes the terror lasted and the number of times you wake up in the middle of the night to the sound of gunfire and explosions" (*Baghdad Burning II* 68). The war's claim to set its own time gives it also the authority to grant its own titles onto its narratives of certain events, like on April 9, 2004, Riverbend remembers that day a year before, when Bush announced the triumphant end of the war, unleashing a torrent of violence, massacres, looting, bomb blasts, and a refugee crisis.

Repeating the rituals of the family, its circularities, and its regularities blocks out the others' appropriation of time. Dinner or a TV show might

be interrupted, for example, by an electricity outage or a threat of a raid; everybody gets up to hide the inherited jewelry, or to check to see that others are accounted for as the family tries to conclude the narrative moment on its own terms rather than wait for the invading army or national police force to do it. Housework claims back the time that the occupation wants to control in its labeling of events by restoring the time of the everyday: "I have spent the last two days ruminating the political situation and … washing the roof," Riverbend announces. "While the two activities are very different, they do share one thing in common—the roof, and political situation, are both a mess" (*Baghdad Burning* 270). Housework can be compared to living under laws that you yourself author, Riverbend proposes. Maintaining the private sphere does more than just affirm the private sphere as a fact that needs securing, as an actuality; it also marks an outside, an alternative, contextualized, self-determining, and non-dispossessed temporality distinct from the occupation's framing and claiming of time, event, and object.

Riverbend's private sphere chores reference not just an immediate group of real-life intimates but also an invisible audience. Offering a course in the human cost of war from the humanistic "pen" of the enemy, Riverbend constructs herself as a node in a global public policy debate: she discusses with her invisible interlocutors what the new government should look like, who should be involved in deciding, how should populations get represented, what part religion plays, and what should or should not be the role of the US. She is engaged in a campaign of clearing up misinformation on the part of some of her US correspondents but also learning from others. The ghostly presence of this absent but intimate audience appears in the frame as Riverbend addresses them—in her exchange of impressions, interpretations, and information—as part of her educational circle. Though the discussion focuses on the political fate of Iraq, it alludes to bigger conceptual questions still, like how to set up a democratic system and how imperialism contradicts those efforts. As formative thought on what might constitute the independent citizen of the future democracy, Riverbend's on-line informational public offerings form a continuation with her independent household routines in claiming time: marking holidays from year-to-year; discussing news stories; chronicling the coordination of chores; trying to clean up, sort

through, and put in place the disorderly rationality of the political situation;[11] describing the internal adjustment of household technologies to the new external regimes of scarcity and control. Riverbend's Internet involvements implicate her private sphere as part of an educational mission, mediating her internal context with absent others to produce knowledge outside of official-speak. She comments on blogs from US soldiers (*Baghdad Burning* 59–61), gives a lesson on private contractors (78–79), and corrects mistakes in *The New York Times* about the Iraqi tribal structure (87) or about the veil (92). Answering some of the criticisms from her US interlocutors, she invites them inside, to see outside the standard tropes: "I wish every person who emails me supporting the war, safe behind their computer, secure in their narrow mind and fixed views, could actually come and experience the war live. I wish they could spend just 24 hours in Baghdad today and hear Mark Kimmett[12] [sic] talk about the death of 700 'insurgents' like it was a proud day for Americans everywhere…" (254). And sometimes, the computer speaks back to her as "anonymous" or the "absent other": "I avoid looking at the computer because it sometimes seems to look back at me rebukingly" (255).

Riverbend's educational conversations with the absent others ultimately refer to what I would identify as the critical center of the trajectory of her narrative: a "haunting" (*Baghdad Burning* 210).[13] During a trip to Amiriyah, Riverbend goes on a tour of a bomb shelter. To this shelter, Riverbend attributes similar structural meaning as a home, its family members gathered in ritual celebration. The shelter, however, was blasted to pieces by a "precision" bomb during the festival celebration of Eid in 1991, locking 400 women and children inside as fire and boiling water rose and killed them. Riverbend later learns that the woman who leads the tour of the shelter—who refuses to leave the shelter—had lost all of her eight children in the tragedy: she had exited the shelter for an instant during the festival to retrieve food and clothing at her house, and while she was running back, the missile hit.

> She had watched the corpses dragged out for days and days and refused to believe they were all gone for months after. She hadn't left the shelter since—it had become her home. She pointed to the vague ghosts of bodies stuck to the concrete on the walls and ground and the worst one to look at was that of

> a mother, holding a child to her breast, like she was trying to protect it or save it. (*Baghdad Burning* 211–12).

This private sphere reveals the ghostly, absent others traced onto a screen, witnessing from elsewhere. The girl-blogger's obsessions with house chores, claiming back time, restore this ritualized private sphere, but restore it differently. Public pedagogy inhabits the time of the private, breaking into the present with its different time. In this present incarnation, the ghosts on the wall are disembodied and detached contributors to a textual scenario, participating spectators beyond definition or location, who come into existence through technological use. Against the technologies of imperialism and their destructive privatizations, the private sphere has revealed its authentic potential as the public's "Being-with-others" that was already within it.[14] In the face of the privatization of the industry in which she worked and her job, Riverbend herself creates a public alternative in autonomous time.

This is not a happy story, nor can it be read as a tragic moment with a "silver lining" or an eventual positive outcome. The forces of privatization that Riverbend's war experience heralds are dominant to the point of absorbing even the imagination, as Marcuse predicts. Marcuse believes, however, that such forces can never be universalized, as they contain an imminent but radical difference symbolized through the difference of women's work. Haraway also believes that the current order contains an imminent difference, as do most post-Heideggerian philosophies, but the imminence is also a reaffirmation through a rearrangement rather than, as in Marcuse's case, an overturning or a replacement: this is, in turn, symbolized through the unavoidable avowal that women's work is no longer locked into its own separate sphere in a neoliberal age. In Marcuse, technology really has two separate ways of being, in two totally separate temporalities, while in Haraway, the same technology is in the world ironically, instrumentalized as the melding of opposites, the future absorbed within the present, without releasing an essence or meaning outside of its immediacy. Borrowing from Haraway, I read Riverbend as portraying a world in which the future portends the continuing intensification of the present: the "re-privatization" of women's labor allows for the intensification of imperialist capitalization even while it conditions her efforts at revealing a different technological connection within a narrative

of non-immediacy. The good news is that, unlike in Haraway, Riverbend can see the public as not completely blended into the private or disappeared under its dominance but, despite all odds, can still envisage it as different, resistant, or even radical.

The technologization of Riverbend's private sphere at first seems like an affirmation of the present: the disruptions to the repetition of everyday practices caused by the war lead to a constant effort to repair what was broken in order to restore a private order that seems, regressively, to be secluding women, offering up the nation for the profit of others, and automating human activity into circular, machine-like routines. This perspective shares with Haraway a confirmation that survival demands an affirmation and reconstruction of the facts "as is," and an imperative to rearrange the facts rather than to change them. Yet, Riverbend's work in the private sphere also reveals itself through an autonomous wired world populated with absent, ghostly others. In this instance, as a public exchange of perceptions, the technologized private sphere cannot be walled-in and turned into a thing-for-sale. In other words, the world-concept to which it gives rise cannot be reduced to its concrete factuality: it reveals a temporal break, a future that uses technologies differently, as mechanisms of rational argument, intersubjective recognition, reflection, and autonomous critique rather than as tools of appropriation, dispossession, and destruction. The private sphere that Riverbend envisions offers her the autonomy from the social necessary for social criticism, a public autonomy prepared by the social technologies of the present, and released by them, but not confined to, blending into, or confused with them. Like Marcuse's, Riverbend's private sphere—needing constantly to narrate itself at the edge of survival—reveals itself, though marginalized, as essentially a ghost-like sovereign public of the future.

Notes

1. "One of my premises is that most American socialists and feminists see deepened dualisms of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism in the social practices, symbolic formulations, and physical artifacts associated with 'high technology' and scientific culture. From *One Dimensional Man* to *The Death of Nature*, the analytic resources developed by progressives have insisted on the necessary domination of technics

and recalled us to an imagined organic body to integrate our resistance" (Haraway 154).

2. "The Greeks lived in a world of self-sustaining things confronting human beings with a rich variety of useful potentialities awaiting realization through skillful manipulation. Artistic practice resembles craft and belongs to this Greek *techne* as well. By contrast, modern technology dominates nature and extracts and stores its powers for later use. Technology organizes vast systems of mutually dependent components in which human beings serve alongside devices. Nothing any longer has intrinsic qualities that can provide the basis of technical or artistic creation" (Feenberg 68).

3. To solve the problem of historical determinism early on, Marcuse turned to Heidegger. This move on the part of Marcuse has been controversial among his critics. Douglas Kellner believes that Marcuse turned to Heidegger's formulation of "authenticity" as a way of understanding Marx's category of alienation without denying the possibility of the individual's interactions with the historical process. But, "[s]ince Heidegger's analysis does not allow for the possibility of revolutionary change that would overcome 'fallenness' with a new social structure, the most he can recommend is individual self-transformation" (48). Though Heidegger does develop an account of *Dasein* as able to move apart from the "idle chatter" of the "they" of inauthentic existence, his inability to theorize the concrete historical and social conditions of inauthenticity, or how such social conditions could be anything but inauthentic, leads Kellner to conclude that "Heidegger…scorned the public act" (48).

4. "Being out in the streets is like being caught in a tornado. You have to be alert and ready for anything every moment" (*Baghdad Burning* 40).

5. "Women's rights aren't a primary concern for anyone, anymore. People actually laugh when someone brings up the topic. 'Let's keep Iraq united first…' is often the response when I comment about the prospect of Iranian-style Shari'a" (*Baghdad Burning II* 131).

6. "The Myth: Iraqis, prior to occupation, lived in little beige tents set up on the sides of little dirt roads all over Baghdad. The men and boys would ride to school on their camels, donkeys, and goats…. Girls and women sat at home, in black burkas, making bread and taking care of 10–12 children. The Truth: Iraqis lived in houses with running water and electricity. Thousands of them own computers. Millions own VCRs and VCDs. Iraq has sophisticated bridges, recreational centers, clubs, restaurants, shops, universities, schools, etc. Iraqis love fast cars…and the Tirgis is full of little motor boats that are used for everything from fishing to water-skiing" (*Baghdad Burning* 34).

7. "I prefer a network ideological image, suggesting the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and in the body politic" (170).

8. This may be true of the version of dialectics developed by Marcuse, who—following Marx—does think that man can ultimately reveal and realize his essence in some future, though what would count as this realization is not quite so specific (he criticizes Hegel for locating it in the bourgeois state). It is not true, however, of all dialectical philosophies. As I have suggested before, Adorno, for example, thinks that such reconciliation is the petrification of thought, and he attributes this to a Hegelian dialectic which he also believes denies an ultimate resolution.

9. The famed president of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) who is most noted for assuring George W. Bush and his administration that Saddam Hussein was harboring weapons of mass destruction and that the Iraqi people would greet American troops as liberators. He was placed on the Iraqi governing council and for a brief time in 2005 was prime minister and acting oil minister of Iraq, and in 2007, prime minister Nouri al Maliki appointed him to head the Iraqi services committee coordinating reconstruction of the public infrastructure. Riverbend's account occurs before Ahmed Chalabi's fall out with US authorities when they discovered in 2004 that he was selling US state secrets to the Iranians. As late as 2007, General David Petraeus was singing Chalabi's praises as the person who would restore the connection between Iraq's government and its citizens, and so as vital to the "surge" efforts.

10. Haug believes that feminism steered itself in the wrong direction by trying to dislodge the public/private split, even in a technological age, because many of its concerns—from reproduction to health care, oppression in the home, or inequality—continue to depend on an analysis of the private sphere in its present form.

11. For example, she sets the record straight on Abu-Ghraib, disparaging American "shock" in responding to the lurid photographs as though they were a singular event rather than a continuation in time: "You've seen the troops break down doors and terrify women and children…curse, scream, push, pull and throw people to the ground with a boot over their head. You've seen troops shoot civilians in cold blood. You've seen them bomb cities and towns. You've seen them burn cars and humans using tanks and helicopters. Is this latest debacle so very shocking or appalling?" (*Baghdad Burning* 263).

12. Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs under George W. Bush.

13. This connection between the new technologies and communication with the dead has been a standard topos in the scholarly literature on new media. Many of these perspectives follow on a Heideggerian sense of decenteredness, a "Being-towards-Death" that individualizes and objectivizes in the same motion. Avital Ronnell, for example, addresses how Alexander Graham Bell's partner, Thomas A. Watson, as being a spirit medium before inventing the telephone: "As thing, the telephone will have to be despooked without,

however, scratching its essential ghostly aspect. Thus Watson always presents the telephone as something that speaks, as if by occult force…. He was already himself attuned to the ghost within" (246). Alexander Graham Bell himself modeled the telephone on a dead human ear that one of his scientist friends had donated to him. The dead specimen started to stand in for Bell's attempts to connect with his mother, Ma Bell: "Now, when mourning is broached by an idealization and interiorization of the mother's image, which implies her loss and the withdrawal of the maternal, the telephone maintains this line of disconnection while dissimilating loss" (341). For Ronell, ghostliness becomes the apparition of the disembodiment that trans-locational mediation demands.

14. Discussing how Marcuse appropriated Heideggerian philosophy, John Abromeit separates the first part of *Being and Time* from the second part: the first part constructs a "radically individuated" (133) sense of human agency that is based on this individual's ability to build an awareness of itself in relation to past and future and to "realize [his own-most possibilities] in the future" (135). The second part, meanwhile, indicates that this radical individuation can be dynamized "only through a collective effort to change the material world" (135). "Departing from his earlier analysis of authenticity as Being-toward-death, which had focused on the extreme individuation brought about by existing in the full awareness of one's own mortality, Heidegger…shows that [authenticity] can be realized only collectively, within a larger context of Being-with others" (136).

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Chapter 8

Neoliberalism as Terrorism; or State of Disaster Exceptionalism

Sophia A. McClennen

The connections between the hegemonic exercise of geopolitical power, the biopolitics of bare life and governmentality, and the free market doctrine of neoliberalism were nowhere more apparent than in the first round of presidential debates held on September 26, 2008. Barack Obama brought the biopolitics of neoliberalism into relief when he spoke about how the McCain health care plan was based on the "notion that the market can always solve everything and that the less regulation we have, the better off we're going to be" (CNN 9). Obama's point was well taken, but what was missing was recognition of the fact that the idea that the market can solve all problems is necessarily linked to the idea that the United States can solve the problems of all other states. Both positions depend on the same internal logic, the same forms of exception, and the same exercise of sovereign power.

This is why the discussion during the debate about healthcare in the US has to be read in relation to McCain's claims about US foreign policy. In another moment in the debate, McCain critiqued Obama's understanding of Central Asian politics: "I don't think that Senator Obama understands that there was a failed state in Pakistan when Musharraf came to power. Everybody who was around then and had been there and knew about it knew that it was a failed state" (n.p.). Though Pakistan was wrestling with problems—like tensions with India and serious poverty when Musharraf took power in an 1999 coup—it had a democratically elected government and was far from being what could be described as a "failed

state"—that is, a country in social and economic collapse where the government no longer exercises authority. How does it become possible for a US senator/presidential candidate to so glibly define Pakistan in that way? Who decides when a state has failed? Put differently, who is the "everyone" that knew that democratic Pakistan was a failed state? Surely not the Pakistanis, but also not Obama and not many US citizens either.

Thus, when McCain defended his free-market based economic policy or when he casually referred to democratic pre-Musharraf Pakistan as a "failed state" that "everyone knew about," he was demonstrating Carl Schmitt's notion of the sovereign who can decide the exception, who can make decisions precisely because he is sovereign, and whose rule is based on the inevitable absence of rules. For Schmitt, the only rule is that of the sovereign who alone determines a state's friends or enemies, even in those cases when the enemies are the state's own inhabitants themselves. In fact, one of the key arguments that I will make in this essay is that the contemporary neoliberal version of biopolitics requires an appreciation of how the disenfranchised within the US are integrally linked to extranational groups, whether these are stateless enemy combatants or whether they are entire nations, as in the case of Pakistan.

Prior to the events of 9/11/2001, much US Americanist research focused on identity issues in a context of nationalism and critiques of nationalism. Against these trends, scholars like Donald Pease and Amy Kaplan called for moving away from the ontological framework of nationalisms and alternatives to nationalism because of their over-investment in identity markers.[1] They suggest, in contrast, that it is time to reconsider more seriously the role of the state. Pease's analysis of Ground Zero and Kaplan's research on Guantanamo, for example, argue that any effort to reframe identity struggles requires attention to the violent repressive tactics of the US state. Taking my cue from this line of critical work, I argue here that the next challenge for those of us interested in the relationship between national identities, political possibilities, and global power networks concerns understanding the practices, pedagogies, and public image of the state post 9/11.

Suggesting this line of work, though, for US academics requires further attending to the troubled context for engaging in lines of inquiry that challenge the pervasive turn away from more politically incisive critique

that has followed in the wake of 9/11. Arguably, the turn to identity-based critique where scholars examine identity markers as the source for problems of disenfranchisement as opposed to examining political and economic structures—like capital, class, and the state—has its origins well before 9/11. One could suggest that such shifts were a function of the sorts of lines of inquiry that emerged in the 70s and 80s that derived from deconstruction's emphasis on negative critique and distrust of organizing concepts in combination with poststructuralism's focus on language and signs as sources of power. Even though these critical trends developed in response to an urge to challenge oppressive power structures, when they merged with a suspicion of any efforts to find a common ground or collective good, they often resulted in positions that were wary of proffering alternatives. As Masao Miyoshi notes in his critique of the development of US humanities-based research, US scholars share "an undeniable common proclivity…to fundamentally reject such totalizing concepts as humanity, civilization, history, and justice, and such subtotalities as a region, a nation, a locality, or even any smallest group" (41). This emphasis on difference without reference ultimately strips criticism of its context and makes any analysis of state structures difficult to sustain.

These trends then combined with the self-censorship and weak, if not totally bland, forms of critical engagement that followed from the academic witch hunts launched by the post 9/11 assaults on higher education.[2] As Henry Giroux notes in *The University in Chains*, the post 9/11 assaults on higher education by various right-wing constituencies were met all too often by apathy on the part of progressive academics who were either too afraid or too overwhelmed to offer any sort of sustained resistance. According to Giroux, "given the seriousness of the current attack on higher education by an alliance of diverse right-wing forces, it is difficult to understand why the majority of liberals, progressives, and left-oriented educators has become relatively silent or tacit apologists in the face of the assault" (5). In this context, then, it comes as little surprise that there has been relatively little attention to the way that 9/11 facilitated a shift in state power, where democratic institutions entered into a permanent state of exception and citizens were indefinitely denied their rights. But, as I will argue here, attention to the connections between neoliberalism's need to push the state to defend the rights of the market

over the rights of the citizen and the war on terror's restructuring of rights both within the US and across nations is a much-needed if not essential line of work for any scholar committed to restoring the democratic possibilities of higher education. One of the greatest threats to progressive education in the US today comes from the blind acceptance of corporate mentalities, the incorporation of militaristic solutions to conflict, and the demonization of other cultures, all of which combine to further a state of terror.edu.

The state of exception caused by the war on terror and the corporate state of neoliberalism have combined to radically alter civic identities on US soil and abroad. In one example, the shared criminalization of the immigrant, the refugee, and the disaster victim points to new ways that identities have been reconfigured as hostile to "freedom," where "freedom" refers to the sovereign free market rather than to individual rights. After mapping the theoretical implications of linking neoliberalism with the biopolitics of bare life, the first part of this essay traces this new US state, what I am describing as "The Neoliberal State of Disaster Exceptionalism." I then examine this transformation in the particular context of US-Afghan relations, where I analyze the dialectics between sovereign states and what I call "bare" states, i.e., states that are included in the geopolitical world system by virtue of their exclusion. Unlike the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan has from the outset been described as an effort to rescue a failed state from terrorist influences. Any disasters caused by the US invasion are always justified by the previously existing Afghan state of disaster. Reading both mainstream media accounts of the US attacks on Afghanistan post 9/11 and fictional efforts to narrate Afghanistan (particularly the novel *The Kite Runner* and the film *Charlie Wilson's War*), I argue that the representation of Afghanistan and of US-Afghan relations both reveals and conceals the intersections between neoliberalism, terrorism, and the state of exception.

Much of my argument rests on the idea that the post 9/11 state requires attention to a new biopolitical era—one that links the state of exception with the free market state of neoliberalism. While a number of scholars have taken up post 9/11 biopolitics and a number of others have focused on the effects of neoliberalism, few have claimed that these two structuring systems are necessarily linked. Naomi Klein brings

some of these threads together in her study of disaster capitalism, arguing that neoliberalism thrives on disaster and shock to radically alter civic structures and state roles.[3] Henry Giroux and Zygmunt Bauman have also claimed that neoliberalism brings with it a specific set of biopolitical practices that radically alter the notion of the citizen and the public sphere.[4] What these scholars have shown is that there is a symbiotic convergence between neoliberal free market capitalism, which understands citizens as consumers or as disposable waste, and an emergency state, which increasingly abrogates the rights of entire populations in the name of homeland security. Regardless of whether the punishing force is the market or the permanent state of war, the result is an onslaught on rights, both civic and corporal.

These new identity formations created by the post 9/11 US state, though, also rely on earlier paradigms, most significantly that of US exceptionalism and that of bare life. "American" exceptionalism depends on the longstanding belief that the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations—a difference that makes it possible, for instance, for the US to be critical of British or Russian/Soviet imperialism but not its own. That the US is superior to developing or undeveloped nations is taken for granted. Thus the bombing of civilians in Iraq or Afghanistan is justified, whereas the terrorist bombings of US civilians are not. What is of particular interest in the current context is the link between US exceptionalism and bare life. Giorgio Agamben's theory of bare life claims that state power has always assumed power over life, deciding who will receive the rights of the citizen and who will not. Bare life is that life which is included in the state by virtue of its exclusion from political life. It is life that can be killed with impunity because it is a life without rights. Agamben points out that "if anything characterizes modern democracy over classical democracy…it is that modern democracy presents itself from the beginning as a vindication and liberation of [bare life]" (*Homo Sacer* 9). But the rights of the citizen in the modern state still face two problems: first, sovereign power always creates bare life, even in modernity, and, second, the increasing commonality of the state of exception, or the suspension of law in order to establish rule, makes it possible for all citizens to be immediately rendered bare life, to be stripped of their rights. According to Agamben, the US entered a state of

exception shortly after the 9/11/01 terrorist attacks when it enacted a series of laws that governed living beings by means of the suspension of law. But this retraction of rights was read in keeping with US exceptionalism as fundamentally different from the suspension of rights as practiced by other states. So, a key feature that affects how we think of this problem is the way that the US's dominant narrative as a free, democratic nation that is globally exceptional frustrates any counter claims that suggest that, in contrast, the US is like all other states that have limited citizen's rights as a means of preserving power. By making the case of the US's suspension of rights incomparable, and therefore exceptional, the dominant narrative of US power then is able to suggest that the US remains in a unique position, as a consequence of its exceptional democracy, to determine the fate of other states.

If US exceptionalism is a geopolitical policy and bare life refers to the rights of the being within the borders of a particular state, what happens when these spheres can no longer be kept separate? When what a state does within its borders necessarily leaks to the global sphere and vice versa? As a way of interrogating the geopolitical implications of these mutual contaminations, it is first necessary to consider the global implications and ideologies that derive from Agamben's theories of the state of exception and bare life. Considered thusly, it becomes clear that the US state of exception requires American exceptionalism and depends not just on bare life but also on *bare states*, that is, on the designation of states that are included in the world order solely by the form of their exclusion. In addition to rethinking the false binary of internal and external state policies, a further part of my argument is that it is essential to recognize the symbiosis between free market capitalism and the perpetual state of exception.

Agamben's focus on the force of law misses an opportunity to elaborate on the force of capitalism—a word that never appears, for instance, in his *State of Exception*. Unchecked free market capitalism requires the state of exception since the deregulation of the market necessitates the destruction of the public sphere and the permanent suspension of the rights of the citizen. As mentioned earlier, these ideas are latently developed in Naomi Klein's theory of disaster capitalism. Klein argues that the blank slate caused by disaster allows for massive transformations in state policy. She links megadisasters—wars, massive recessions, and natural

disasters—with superprofits. The disaster is the event that sanctions an abrupt shift in the function of the state, one which always brings with it a loss of rights because the state protects capital rather than people, at the same time that it signals an opportunity for neoliberal practices. A further key component of Klein's theories of neoliberalism is her attention to the biopolitics of shock, where shock affects not just markets but bodies, a move that allows her to link torture and a pervasive culture of fear with the functioning of the free market. She draws a direct line between the US's research into psychological military operations, torture tactics, and the fostering of mass hysteria after major disasters and argues that these biopolitical practices pave the way for societies to willingly cede rights and dignity in favor of so called security and stability. What Klein's theory lacks, though, is more attention to the ideological forces that make these shifts possible, especially the history of US exceptionalism, in addition to orientalism and its sister stereotypes. Moreover, just as Agamben misses capitalism as a biopolitical force, Klein misses the biopolitics of governmentality. My claim is that the current forms of state power require that we put these theories into dialogue.

The theorist who has most worked on establishing these links more overtly is Henry Giroux, who considers neoliberalism as a form of public pedagogy—a hegemonic force that teaches the public to accept unacceptable social practices. Giroux, along with Pierre Bourdieu, has been one of the foremost theorists of the ideology and public pedagogy of neoliberal practices. As Giroux explains it: "What is often ignored by theorists who analyze the rise of neoliberalism in the United States is that it is not only a system of economic power relations but also a political project, intent on producing new forms of subjectivity and sanctioning particular modes of conduct" (*Youth in a Suspect Society* 7–8). In recent years, a number of theorists (i.e., Agamben, Hardt and Negri, Mbembe) have also begun to expand on Michel Foucault's theory of biopolitics—the theory of how states govern via the regulation of human life. But Giroux is one of the few scholars to develop a theory of neoliberal biopolitics, and he is the only one to study how these practices have been directly influenced by the post 9/11 militarization of the US security state. The book that most explores these links is *Beyond the Terror of Neoliberalism*. There, Giroux writes: "[Neoliberalism's] supporting political culture and pedagogical

practices also put into play a social universe and cultural landscape that sustain a particularly barbaric notion of authoritarianism, set in motion under the combined power of a religious and market fundamentalism and anti-terrorism laws that suspend civil liberties, incarcerate disposable populations, and provide the security forces necessary for capital to destroy those spaces where democracy can be nourished" (xxiii). For Giroux, "Democratic politics is increasingly depoliticized by the intersection of a free-market fundamentalism and an escalating militarism" that not only attacks civil liberties within the United States but also designates entire populations outside of the United States as either disposable or controllable (xx).

US-Afghan relations post-9/11 offer a tragic, yet paradigmatic, example of this new biopolitical era. Unlike the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan has from the outset been described as an effort to rescue a failed state. While much time has been spent, especially on the part of Noam Chomsky and Jacques Derrida, deconstructing the definitions and tracing the auto-referentiality of terms like "failed states" and "rogue states," it seems to me that the more relevant way of thinking about these issues is through the dialectic of what I call the *bare state* and the sovereign state. If the sovereign has the ability to decide which lives can be killed due to the suspension of the force of law, then it follows that the sovereign *state*, that is, the state that rules all other states, decides which states will be bare states. The sovereign state imposes the rules that determine the exception. Bare states are those that can be destroyed or manipulated with impunity since they are only included in the world system by their exclusion, by the assumption that they have no rights to self-govern. The destruction of the bare state by the sovereign state has no legal ramifications since the bare state has no rights. The focus on the developed world in the theories of Schmitt and then also in Agamben ignores the problem of states where the sovereignty of the sovereign is always in question. In a sense, imperialism is the state of exception *writ large*, and when states do emerge as a consequence of postcolonial independence, that independence is akin to *bare* independence: it is an independence that exists only at the discretion of the sovereign state.

Afghanistan is a particularly complex case because it is best described as a quasi-postcolonial state. While it has resisted foreign rule, it has had

plenty of foreign interference. Located at a geographical crossroads, it is a state that came into existence in order to resist the imperial designs of the British and Russian Great Game in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And, as is commonly the case with postcolonial states, the Afghan state was carved across ethnic lines and according to imperially imposed geographic boundaries. The key issue, however, is that states like Afghanistan are encouraged by sovereign states to operate in ways that undermine the rights of their citizens so as to justify their continued exclusion from geopolitical state rights. As Rudyard Kipling puts it in his story of Afghanistan, "The Man Who Would Be King," "nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of Native States so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to another. They are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty" (247). Here orientalism combines with the idea of the bare state. Not only is it assumed that this is a state which needs oversight and that this is a state where citizens will have few rights, if any, but it is also assumed that the so-called sovereign of the bare state is genetically incapable of just rule.

The problem for bare states in the era of neoliberalism is not only their lack of rights within the world system but also the fact that the deregulative ideologies that buttress the sovereign state/bare state dialectic are linked to the needs of market fundamentalism. Arguably, neoliberalism is simply the most recent phase of capitalism, the one that most visibly exposes the rule of the market as the only rule that capitalism will recognize. The deregulation required by neoliberals is closely linked to the lack of rights of bare life. Under neoliberalism, people are products and states protect the rights of corporations rather than of citizens. Thus, when neoliberalism joins the imperialist bare state/sovereign state structure, the result is that the only rules are that there are no rules except those articulated by the sovereign system of capital. Of course, in the case of Afghanistan, the idea that the area and its inhabitants represented nothing more than products to be exchanged or bodies to be regulated had a long history that pre-dated the US' involvement there.

These ideas of a barbaric land occupied by barbaric people would reemerge with particular force in representations of Afghanistan after 9/11.[5] Much was heard of the brutality of Taliban rule, of the plight of

Afghan women, and of the tenacious spirit of the Afghan warrior who had managed to defend his country from foreign rule for more than 2,000 years. The most frequently cited resource was that of Rudyard Kipling, and Corinne Fowler writes that "during the 2001 conflict, references to Kipling were legion" (49). For instance, while in Peshawar at the American club, British journalist Ben Macintyre wrote that the spies, arms dealers, aid workers, mercenaries, and journalists that congregated there all had one thing in common: they all read Kipling as they lived out their "romantic fantasies." "The works of Rudyard Kipling were required reading, for Britain's bard of imperialism captured the wilderness and the wonder of the North-West Frontier like no other writer, before or since" (Macintyre, *The Man Who Would Be King* 4). Kipling's works were cited throughout media reports in the days following 9/11 as though they provided some deep insight into the mystery of Afghanistan and its neighboring countries. News reports carried multiple references from his short story "The Man Who Would Be King" and from his poem "The Young British Soldier" that portrays Afghans (including women) as particularly brutal:

> *When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,*
> *And the women come out to cut up what remains,*
> *Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains*
> *An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.* (n.p.)

The turn to Kipling may very well have made sense as the United States and Britain contemplated overt military action in a country with a reputation for rebelling superior military force. Not only had the Brits suffered military losses there three times (1842, 1841, 1919), but the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan from 1979–89 arguably led to the end of the Soviet Union. Perhaps some of Kipling's insights into these conflicts could serve as useful cautions. Nevertheless, the repeated use of Kipling as a source of knowledge about Afghanistan points to the persistence of *orientalism* in the post 9/11 context.

Edward Said suggests that one of the key features of orientalist thinking is the assumed fact that there is a fundamental distinction between "Orient" and "Occident." But this distinction is not one of simple difference;

it is one of hierarchy. This strategy means that, regardless of the relationship between West and East, the West always retains "*positional* superiority" (7). This positional superiority though holds material force when we link this idea to the concept of the sovereign state that determines the fate of the bare state, bringing with it a global biopolitics that not only separates categories of humanity within nations but across them as well. Thus, when US Navy Seal Marc Luttrell describes his mission to Afghanistan as "payback time for the World Trade Center," he is a "special breed of warrior," whereas his enemy is described as "lawless," "wild mountain men" (9, 6, 10, 13). Or when Afghans rebel against foreign invasion, they are described as dangerous and unpredictable, but when Western countries defend themselves from foreign invasion, they are described as righteous and valiant. Not only does such thinking depend on an absolute division between East and West, where the West is always understood as superior to the East, but it also requires that East and West be understood as static entities that do not significantly change over time and that do not have substantial variations within themselves. Such practices meant that it remained possible after 9/11 to assume that Kipling's imperialist view of the barbarous nature of Afghanistan was still largely true, that little had changed; and they depended on ignoring Kipling's own context of writing as one that referred to a specific historical moment that carried particular worldviews. The third key feature of *orientalism* relevant for a discussion of the bare state is that it depends on ideas and not simply on the use of military and political power to remain in force. When orientalist statements are made in the Western media about Afghanistan, such statements themselves serve to strengthen structures of authority that are not only material but also hegemonic. Thus, Kipling's legacy was continued in Western media representations of Operation Enduring Freedom not simply through references to his works, but also through the mere practice of producing truth claims about Afghanistan, the nature of the Afghan people, and their relationship to the West—truth claims that inevitably reinforced the historical legacy of occident versus orient.

For obvious reasons, post-9/11 US coverage did not replicate the British media's imperialist anxieties, but that did not deter US journalists from falling into a pattern of repeatedly rehearsing a series of traits that indelibly marked Afghanistan as a threat to Western ways of life. Mahmood

Mamdani refers to these practices as "culture talk." Building on Edward Said's concept of *orientalism*, contemporary "culture talk" takes its cues from works like Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* and understands contemporary conflicts in cultural rather than political terms. Mamdani explains that "It is no longer the market (capitalism), nor the state (democracy), but culture (modernity) that is said to be the dividing line between those in favor of a peaceful, civic existence and those inclined to terror" (18). The key to "culture talk" is the assumption that different cultures have different essences, and it requires that cultures be understood outside of their historical and political context. In the West, post-9/11 "culture talk" meant understanding the crisis in Afghanistan as one that was culturally endemic, that of a failure to become civilized rather than as a consequence of specific historical and political developments. As a result, post 9/11 Afghan-related reporting often included references to the rise of fundamentalist Islam in the country but rarely acknowledged the role played in Afghanistan by Saudi Arabia's and Pakistan's intelligence agencies (the GID and ISI) who worked during the Soviet era along with the CIA in helping train and fund the Afghan rebels who would later become the Taliban.

Instead of contextually and historically specific reporting, much news relied on a series of orientalist, culturalist stereotypes of Afghanistan that reinforced a biopolitics of Afghan disposability. One ongoing and persistent feature of media coverage referred to the warlike nature of Afghans and to the fact that Afghans "have traditionally greeted outside armies with hostility" ("War without Illusions" 22). Fowler also notes that "a striking feature of news media coverage of the 2001 bombing campaign" depicted Afghanistan as "contemporaneous with medieval Europe"—a condition that suggested the almost total lack of anything the West would call "civilization" in the nation (64). Another trope of the media was the reference to the lack of national unity in a country prone to tribalism and ethnic conflict. Ross Benson writes, for instance, that "each ethnic group is distrustful of the other and in Afghanistan distrust is cause enough for murder" (11). Linked to descriptions of the people as barbarous, uncivilized, pre-modern, and dangerous, the physical geography was described as equally treacherous, sometimes due to the ominous mountains and desserts and sometimes due to the wreckage left behind by the remnants

of the Soviet era.[6] All of these practices combine, then, to offer a cultural logic to treating Afghanistan as a bare state and to characterizing Afghans as undeserving of self-determination.

As a counterforce to much mass media reporting of the conflict, a series of cultural texts attempted to offer an alternative view. Bringing public attention to another side of the story was one of the motives behind Mike Nichols' film *Charlie Wilson's War*—a quasi-farce about the US' involvement in exacerbating the conflict during the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan from 1979–89, that was produced by Participant Productions, a company dedicated to "entertainment that inspires and compels social change." While Nichols does not do enough to link the so-called "freedom fighters" of the Soviet conflict with the "barbaric" mujahedeen of the post 9/11 moment, the strength of his film is its narrative of US exceptionalism's use of Afghanistan as a bare state. The film traces the unlikely story of Charlie Wilson, a playboy Texas Congressman, who singlehandedly raised the budget for the covert operations in Afghanistan from 35 million dollars in 1982 to 600 million in 1987. Wilson's interest in Afghanistan stems from the twin desires to "kill Russians" and to help the Afghans, whom he meets for the first time in a devastating scene in a Pakistani refugee camp. The film does an excellent job of pointing out the contradictions of US exceptionalism that link humanitarian aid with a devastating proxy war. Nichols also underscores the idea of Afghanistan as a bare state when he has a CIA member refer to it as "barely a country"—a move that links a state with no rights in the global system to a state that lacks the infrastructure of modernity. One example of this combined bareness is a scene where characters complain about how Afghanistan's lack of roads makes it less convenient for them to provide anti-Soviet forces with weapons.

Telling this story in the context of the US' ongoing overt war with Afghanistan, where thousands of Afghan civilians have died, where Afghans constitute the largest refugee population worldwide, and where only 6 percent of the country even had intermittent electricity in 2004, goes a long way to correcting the myths and misinformation about the state of Afghanistan (Jones 214). But the film has a few blind spots, not the least of which is the lack of voice given to Afghans themselves who are almost always screened from a distance, often in scenes that show them being

gunned down by Soviets, a practice that tends to justify the US' role in the covert war by reinforcing orientalist stereotypes of Afghans as incomprehensible others who needed to be rescued by the US.

In contrast to *Charlie Wilson's War,* putting a human face on Afghans was one of the primary goals of Khaled Hosseini's enormously successful *The Kite Runner*. The narrative covers the life of a boy who grows up in Afghanistan prior to the Soviet invasion, takes refuge in Pakistan and then later the United States, only to later return to Taliban-led Afghanistan on a quest for personal redemption. Most post 9/11 writing by Afghans falls into the category of "burqa lit," and, even though a number of these books, such as *My Forbidden Face* and *Zoya's Story* were written by women who lived in moderate Islamic homes with men who did not abuse them, these books tended to focus wholly on the brutality of Taliban rule, which often reinforced a view of Afghan barbarity. Hosseini's text, in contrast, portrays Kabul before the Soviet invasion in significant detail, giving Western readers a view of a moment in Afghan history when the city was "modern" and "civilized" by Western standards. Even though the novel takes a highly romantic and nostalgic tone, a stylistic feature that may be explained by Hosseini's status as an exile from his homeland, these lyrical portraits of the city challenged assumptions that Afghanistan had been always a barbaric and medieval nation with no connection to modernity.

This is the novel's greatest strength, but it is largely eclipsed by its weaknesses which include reducing the existence of the Taliban regime to the moral failure of its protagonist and the psychological flaws of his nemesis, Assef, the Taliban thug who is simply described as a sociopath. Unfortunately, though, the balance between Afghan specificity and "universal" (read Western) themes has been largely lost on Western readers. Meghan O'Rourke notes that most readers overlooked or downplayed those features of the novel that indicated "otherness": "Study the 631 Amazon reviews and scores of newspaper features about *The Kite Runner*, and you'll find that most fail to mention that the narrator converts from a secular Muslim to a devoutly practicing one. Hosseini's story indulges this readerly impulse to downplay what is hard to grasp and play up what seems familiar" (par. 6). The fact that the novel did not seem "foreign" was precisely one of Hosseini's goals. In an interview, he explained that "It goes

back to telling a story that connects with people on a human level. When you do that, I think you get people thinking" (qtd. in Sandor). The dilemma, though, is that in order for *The Kite Runner* to depict Afghans as humans, as part of a universal, global community, they almost lost their Afghannness.

Conveniently, the novel's presentation of Afghanistan's problems ignores global geopolitics and the history of US manipulation. At a moment when US citizens had to grapple with terrorist attacks on US soil, such a tale suggested a division between good and evil that inevitably palliated the violent consequences of bombing Afghanistan and that made it easier to imagine that the invasion was a just response. Even though *Charlie Wilson's War* and *The Kite Runner* were both interested in correcting Western misinformation about Afghanistan, by dealing with pre-9/11 Afghanistan, they risk leaving audiences ambivalent about whether or not the post-9/11 US invasion was a justified humanitarian action.

The story most ignored is the one of how the US invasion has brought a neoliberal spin to the Afghan bare state. As a corrective, Ann Jones's journalistic memoir *Kabul in Winter* explains the new neoliberal economics of aid and military action at work in Afghanistan post-9/11. Aid, like war, is outsourced, allowing contractors to gain lucrative deals that refunnel US funds back to the private sector. She explains that since "the underlying purpose of American aid is to make the world safe and open to American business, business is cut in from the start" (242). And to prove the point that US policies have rendered Afghans as bare life without rights and without the ability to participate in the market, Afghan contractors are excluded from competing for these deals since, as one USAID official puts it: "they don't know [US] methods of accounting" (243).

As I close this necessarily sketchy outline of the links between neoliberalism, the state of exception, and a new era of biopolitical practices, what remains clear is that the productive tensions over the public sphere and over Enlightenment commitments to rights and just wars that had existed prior to the rise of neoliberalism have been almost entirely dismantled. Market fundamentalism and corporate rights have become the rule that determines law with none, or virtually none, of the push back of humanistic, egalitarian, democratic ideals. As complex and contradictory as those ideals may have been, their absence under the neoliberal state of

exception makes possible entirely new forms of human devastation and states of terror. Understanding the new era of the neoliberal state of disaster exceptionalism requires attention not just to changes in state policies, rights, and biopolitical practices, but also to the ideologies and counter-narratives that support and resist them. Attending to the links between neoliberalism, post 9/11 US imperialism, and the new biopolitical configurations these developments have caused is our next challenge.

Notes

1. See Pease's "The Global Homeland State: Bush's Biopolitical Settlement" and Kaplan's "Where is Guantanamo?"
2. For more on these trends, see Giroux and Giroux's *Take Back Higher Education*, as well as McClennen's "The Geopolitical War on U.S. Higher Education" and "The Assault on Higher Education."
3. See Klein's *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*.
4. See Giroux's *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* and Bauman's *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*.
5. I developed some of these ideas about Afghanistan in a previously published essay, "Reading Afghanistan post 9/11."
6. In an example of the first practice, Philip Caputo, who had lived in Afghanistan for a month, wrote for the *New York Times* in early October 2001 that "The mountains soar to 20,000 feet in the east, and endless deserts lie in the west" (27). In an example of the second, Ben Macintyre wrote for the London *Times* that "Bloody war is sewn into the very land of Afghanistan, in the form of innumerable landmines" (n.p.).

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Chapter 9

Terror and American Exceptionalism

William V. Spanos

Let us now observe the life of homo sacer.... He has been excluded from the religious community and from all political life: he cannot participate in the rites of his gens, nor... can he perform any juridically valid act. What is more, his entire existence is reduced to a bare life [nuda vita] stripped of every right by virtue of the fact that anyone can kill him without committing homicide: he can save himself only in perpetual flight or a foreign land. And yet he is in a continuous relationship with the power that banished him precisely insofar as he is at every instant exposed to an unconditional threat of death. He is pure zoe, but his zoe is as such caught in the sovereign ban [excluded yet included] and must reckon with it at every moment.... In this sense no life, as exiles and bandits know well, is more "political" than his.

– Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*

Introduction

In these inaugural marks, I want to make two crucial contextual points about the history of *Billy Budd* criticism that will help to clarify my focus in the following essay on Herman Melville's elusive—indeed, spectral—novella on the drumhead court proceedings that bring it to its culmination in Captain Vere's sovereign decision to execute the innocent Billy Budd. The first has to do with this criticism's marginalization of the historical matrix in which the events on board the *H.M.S. Bellipotent*

are embedded. The second has to do with the question of the identity of Melville's narrator and his audience.

As for the first, Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, written in the last years of his life after his withdrawal from the public sphere with the "failure" of *The Confidence-Man* in 1857, has been read by the great majority of the huge number of critics who have attempted to unravel its ambiguities since its posthumous publication in 1924 as his "testament of acceptance" in old age.[1] A smaller group has interpreted it as his "testament of resistance."[2] And a third, more recent group, following the anti-binarist directives of deconstructive theory, has concluded that it is undecidable,[3] thus, in refusing to judge a worldly situation in which power and its deadly effects are patent and fundamental, inadvertently siding with the first, politically conservative group. Despite the determinative prominence of the global historical occasion in Melville's text—the political struggle between England and Napoleonic France for dominance over the seaways in the name of empire—all three groups have tended to confine the meaning of the novella to one form of allegory or another. This allegorical initiative, which was inaugurated at the time of the Melville Revival in England in the 1920s with the emergence of the opposition between the adherents of the acceptance school and the resistance school, was exacerbated with the publication in 1962 of Harrison Hayford and Merton Sealts' "definitive edition," which categorically deleted the "Preface" of Raymond Weaver's original edition on the basis of their conclusion that Melville had discarded it some time along the line (Hayford and Sealtrs qtd. in Melville, *Billy Budd* 1–12). In that "discarded" preface, Melville, uncannily like Alain Badiou, represents the French Revolution as an "event," the radically inaugural "eventality" of which the following Napoleonic Wars betrayed in the name of the old dispensation.[4] More specifically, he represents this epochal event (and the Great Mutiny of British seamen at Spithead and the Nore it precipitated) as the *mise-en-scène* of the events on board the *H.M.S. Bellipotent*, that, in producing a state of emergency, a climate of insecurity, and a political situation in which the criminal become the policeman, culminate in the summary execution of the innocent "handsome sailor," Billy Budd. Despite the fact that this historical context pervades the body of the story right down to its capillaries, the "official" deletion seems, since then, to have been taken for granted. As

a consequence, most readers of Melville's text have been blinded to the epochal war that has rendered the state of exception the rule on board the *Bellipotent*. My purpose in this essay is to put this global historical context back into play. For such a reconstellation brings the patently unequal power relations and the sociopolitical conditions incumbent on the establishment of the state of exception as the norm back from the margins where they have been relegated by the effacement of the "evental" global matter of the "Preface" to center stage.

As for the second aspect of this history of *Billy Budd* criticism that needs attention—the question of the identity of the narrator—I find myself in some degree of solidarity with those—mostly of the resistance school—who distinguish his attitude toward the events he narrates from Melville's. But there are two crucial differences between their and my interpretation of the narrator. 1) For them, he is entirely the object of Melville's irony, whereas I read him as one who, like Ishmael in *Moby-Dick*, tells the "story," not, as in the case of the official narrative of the events published in their aftermath, to verify a preconceived conclusion, but to pursue its "jagged edges" to wherever they take him. Equally, if not more important, 2) for them, the narrator is ethnically identityless, whereas I read him as an end-of-the-century "American" writing about an epochal European event that occurred a century earlier uncannily reminiscent of his own contemporary American occasion. More specifically, he is a contemporary, Gilded Age American, attuned to the myth of American exceptionalism and the strategic importance of the American jeremiad, who is acutely conscious of the waning of the frontier, the consequent need of the dominant American consciousness for a rejuvenating enemy, and the imperial momentum to expand the frontier into the Pacific Ocean, epitomized by the historian Frederick Jackson Turner[5] and, above all, by the naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan, the late Melville's contemporary, who was proselytizing on behalf of the expansion of the America navy into an imperial fleet[6]

In short, this inaugural clarification of these two crucial aspects of the history of *Billy Budd* criticism enables us not only to perceive that the state of exception, despite its effacement by the history of *Billy Budd* criticism and commentary in the name of a worldless allegory—an effacement, not incidentally, that mirrors the obliteration of the actual events

on board the *Bellipotent* enacted by the official narrative that the narrator appends to his story—is really at the heart of Melville's novella. It thus also allows us to see that this ostensibly Old World story is in fact a cautionary tale addressed to a late nineteenth century American audience that is being maneuvered by the dominant culture into embarking on a global policy that would tacitly normalize the state of exception—and the lying discourse of its "truth"-producing institutions. In so doing—and this, finally, is more important—the reconstellation I am undertaking will also enable us to perceive that *Billy Budd* constitutes Melville's uncannily proleptic witness to our own contemporary occasion. I mean, of course, the occasion that, in the name of America's exceptionalist "war on terror," has gone perilously far to render "the state of exception" and the "truth" discourse of its ideological apparatuses—not only political parties and religious organizations, but also information media and educational institutions, i.e., cultural production in general—the norm and thus a matter of urgent critical concern.

Under the State of Exception, the Criminal Becomes the Policeman

Following Claggart's insidious accusation to Captain Vere that Billy Budd was fomenting mutiny, the narrator, commenting on Captain Vere's earlier fatherly awareness of the young sailor, concludes, "In sum, Captain Vere had from the beginning deemed Billy Budd to be what in the naval parlance of the time was called a 'King's bargain,' that is to say, for His Britannic Majesty's navy a capital investment at small outlay or none at all" (Melville, *Billy Budd* 95). Bracketing for the time being the troubling reductive rhetoric Vere' uses to assess Billy's worth, it will suffice to say that, despite Captain Vere's sympathy for Billy and his visceral dislike for Claggart and deep suspicion of his witness, he was visibly incapable, try as he might, of breaking the uncanny hold his wily subordinate's gaze has on him:

> Vere again heard him out; then for the moment stood ruminating. The mood he evinced, Claggart—himself for the time liberated from the other's scrutiny—steadily regarded with a look difficult to render: a look curious of the operation of his tactics, a look such as might have been that of the

> spokesman of the envious children of Jacob deceptively imposing upon the troubled patriarch the blood-dyed coat of young Joseph. (96)

Vere brings the confrontation to an "end" by deciding to put the accuser to the test of being confronted by the accused, but, disablingly, in a closed setting. In so doing, he succumbs to, in the very act of resisting, Claggart's policing strategy—the insidious strategy based on his knowledge of Vere's deeply inscribed commitment to the "truth" of the (lawless) law of the security state and its extreme disciplinary imperatives. One of the essential realities of the state of exception is that it enables the criminal, by way of its imperatives of secrecy, to all too easily become the policeman, the unruly the ruler.

Since this paradox is at the heart of my reading of *Billy Budd*, it is worth pursuing at greater length. The only critic to have read *Billy Budd* as a story about the state of exception is the French critic Alain Brossat in an essay, tellingly entitled "*L'inarticulable*" [The Inarticulate], written in the aftermath of 9/11. In fact, this essay reads Melville's novella as proleptic of the state of exception established by the George W. Bush administration's declaration of its "war on terror." Whereas my emphasis in treating the state of exception falls on the masters' reduction of human (political) life to bare life, Brossat focuses on the necessarily spontaneous violent response of the inarticulate—those who have been dispossessed of a political voice by the masters of the earth (Billy Budd's fist/Al Quaeda's attack on the World Trade Center). Though I find Brossat's easy identification of Billy and the inarticulate of the world with al-Qaeda somewhat problematic, I am in absolute agreement with his identification of the master-at-arms, Claggart, as the real power on board the *Bellipotent*—the "master of masters"—and analogously, if only by implication, the "criminal" element as the real power in the post-9/11 US.

This identification has been severely contested by the American political theorist John Brenkman in a recent substantial essay on *Billy Budd* entitled "The Melvillean Moment." Sympathetic with Brossat's association of Billy with the plebs, who "are caught in two wars at once, the war between nations and the 'immemorial' one between 'patricians and plebeians,'" Brenkman goes on to say that Brossat

> squanders this insight by oversimplifying the shape of power on the *Bellipotent*. He makes Claggart the epitome of rule on the ship, the "'master of masters' in a 'pitiless dictatorial regime exercised by the masters.'" Claggart's tyranny, dishonesty, and persecution of Billy becomes the very image of the ship's governance. (n.p.; forthcoming)

Brenkman goes on to refute this claim by underscoring the difference between Claggart's monomaniacal tyranny and Captain Vere's humane sympathy with Billy just before the moment that, according to Brossat, the alleged difference between the masters and the servants—the powerful and articulate and the weak and inarticulate—irrupts in what, following Walter Benjamin, he calls "mythic violence." Vere's fatherly council to Billy—"'There is no hurry, my boy. Take your time'"—Brenkman affirms, "implies no such simple alignment of repressive power and speech on the one side and silence, powerlessness, and hyperviolence on the other." "The captain," he goes on,

> has had Billy brought to his cabin in the first place because he doubts Claggart, and "therefore, before trying the accused, he would first practically test the accuser" (Chapter 18). Brossat apparently wants nothing to do with this difference between Claggart and Vere because it does not gel with the equations underlying his argument: if the depraved master-at-arms is the equivalent of the warship's captain, and if the warship is the equivalent of the modern state, then the wartime state of emergency is the equivalent of democratic rule. (n.p.)

What Brenkman's vestigial American exceptionalist problematic, like that of most critics of *Billy Budd*, blinds him to, I suggest on the basis of a retrieval of the minute particulars of the policing environment necessarily produced by the state of exception, is precisely the stranglehold that Claggart, the master-at-arms, has on Vere's, the captain's, mind: his insidious insight into the higher or "sacred" cause that unerringly determines the latter's vision and action. In so doing, he also, and more importantly, misses Melville's profound—*and proleptic*—recognition that, as I have shown, under the conditions of the state of exception, the criminal or, more accurately, as the narrator puts it earlier, the

"promiscuous lameduck … of morality" (Melville, *Billy Budd* 65) easily becomes the policemen.[7]

Seen in the dislocating light of the larger global historical context I have retrieved from the margins, the narrator's chapters of *Billy Budd* that have traditionally been invoked to justify the allegorical or universalist reading of Melville's story undergo, in Louis Althusser's phrase, a remarkable "change of terrain" very much like that undergone by the early chapters of "Benito Cereno" at the moment when Captain Amasa Delano's American exceptionalist frame of reference (his "problematic") is shattered by the revelation that the slaves have been in command of Don Benito's ship from the time he had boarded it.[8] These chapters come to be seen, that is, not as a prefiguration of the narrator's final encomium to Captain Vere's affirmation of law and order against revolutionary chaos (nor to Melville's testament of acceptance), but as his representation of events that, saturated with the ominous aura of the state of exception, lead inexorably to the preordained—"fated"—reduction of Billy's body to "inarticulate" naked life and its execution in the sacred name of the security of the ship of state.

The Drumhead Court and the Unerring Logic of the State of Exception

This fated, unjustifiable, and violent "end" is inexorably enacted in the final chapters that recount Vere's reaction to Billy's unintended killing of Claggart, his precipitous decision to hold a drumhead court immediately and behind closed doors (in secret), his imposition of his judgment on the recalcitrant court, and his execution of the innocent sailor. From the beginning to the end of this process, Vere is convinced of Billy's innocence and manifests deep, indeed fatherly, sympathy for the young man. But from the beginning to the end, too, Billy's innocence is ruthlessly secondary in the captain's mind to the security of the ship he commands in the name of the King and imperial Britain's war against Napoleonic France. What is ontologically prior to Billy's living being, that is, is Captain Vere's deeply inscribed and unerring loyalty to the (lawless) law of the state of exception. This inexorably predetermined momentum should be rather obvious to an "informed gaze" (Althusser 24),[9] but because it

has been rendered invisible by the supervisory gaze of those critics who have subscribed to one version or other of the testament of acceptance thesis, it will be necessary to spell it out systematically in what follows.

When, for example, the narrator recounts Billy's deadly reaction to Claggart's accusation during their encounter in the captain's quarters, the first words Vere is given to utter in the aftermath of the death blow—they are spoken in a whisper, which is to say, to himself—are, "'Fated boy… what have you done?'", thus going far to verify his criminal policeman's mesmerizing/paralyzing power over his superior: Claggart's commanding knowledge of Vere's essential identity and, therefore, his foreknowledge of the latter's response to his allegation of the threat of mutiny. And then, after Vere ascertains that Claggart is dead, the narrator, in a transformative moment of understanding that manifests itself as a dislocating question, goes on:

> Captain Vere with one hand covering his face stood to all appearance as impassive as the object at his feet. Was he absorbed in taking in all the bearings of the event and what was best not only now at once to be done, but also in the sequel? *Slowly he uncovered his face; and the effect was as if the moon emerging from eclipse should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into hiding. The father in him, manifested toward Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian*. (Melville, *Billy Budd* 99–100; my emphasis)

This decisive transformation of Captain Vere from caring father to undeviating military disciplinarian is underscored when, after having called the surgeon in to verify Claggart's death, he suddenly and "vehemently exclaim[s]…. Struck dead by an angel of God! *Yet the angel must hang*!" (101; my emphasis). And it culminates after Vere, having removed the dead body to a compartment opposite to that in which Billy had been immured and categorically dismissing the surgeon, now deeply troubled by his superior's "desire for secrecy" but compliant as a subordinate in the context of martial law, Vere announces his abnormal decision to "call a drumhead court" in secret instead of referring the case to the Admiralty, a higher and *more public* authority (101).

Immediately following this marked double "eclipse"—the transformation of Captain Vere *and*, in some significant degree, of the narrator—the narrator focuses his narrative on that aspect of the captain's authoritarian decision, above all, his arbitrary insistence on a trial of an obviously innocent sailor to be held in secrecy, that seems not only irrational (as most commentary represents this moment), but morally and, above all, politically troubling to those who have become privy to the events ending in the death of Claggart:

> Full of disquietude and misgiving, the surgeon left the cabin. Was Captain Vere suddenly affected in his mind, or was it but a transient excitement, brought about by so strange and extraordinary a tragedy? [This question, not incidentally, applies not only to the surgeon, but to the narrator as well.] As to the drumhead court, it struck the surgeon as *impolitic*, if nothing more. The thing to do, he thought, was to place Billy Budd in confinement, and in a way dictated by usage, and postpone further action in so extraordinary a case to such time as they should rejoin the squadron, and then refer it to the admiral. He recalled the unwonted agitation of Captain Vere and his excited exclamations, so at variance with his normal manner. Was he unhinged? (102–03; my emphasis)

Tellingly, the narrator goes on to characterize the surgeon's (and the other officers') hesitant response to the Captain's dislocating fiat by invoking the reductive and corrupting imperatives of the state of exception—and, by ironic implication, the democratic (public) openness that is annulled by the security promised by the abrogation of common law ("usage"), including that which guarantees human rights: "No more trying situation is conceivable than that of an officer subordinate under a captain whom he suspects to be not mad, indeed, but yet not quite unaffected in his intellect. To argue his order to him would be insolence. To resist him would be mutiny" (102).

In commenting on the surgeon's tentative attribution of mental unhinging as the cause of the Captain's arbitrary decision, the narrator, it is true, rightly interrogates a binarist interpretation of sanity and madness (and, for that matter, any form of the dyad, identity/difference, that is

reduced to the hierarchic binary that privileges order over chaos): "Who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the difference of the colors, but where exactly does the one first blendingly enter into the other? So with sanity and insanity" (102). But this crucial qualification should not be read, as it has been by Barbara Johnson, Eve Sedgwick, Nancy Ruttenburg, and Sharon Cameron, as evidence of Melville's final refusal to judge Vere in the name of undecidable ambiguity, a refusal that, as Brook Thomas in his critique of Johnson's reading of Billy Budd, has decisively shown, could easily be interpreted as a license for political paralysis (Thomas 51–78).[10] In the next paragraph, the narrator writes, "Whether Captain Vere, as the surgeon professionally and privately surmised, was really the sudden victim of any degree of aberration, every one must determine for himself *by such light as this narrative may afford*" (102; my emphasis). Taking our directive from this suggestion that we read this complex social text symptomatically, we see the metaphor of the colors of the rainbow used by the narrator undergo a metamorphosis. As I have been suggesting by way of bringing the hitherto marginalized martial law of the state of exception to center stage, we are enabled to tentatively conclude that the narrator is, in fact, referring to the dedifferentiating arbitrariness—the allegorization—of Vere's judgment after his eclyptic transformation. I mean, specifically, his arbitrary substitution (similar, not incidentally, to that of the imperialist British historians of the Great Mutiny and, as we shall see, of the official naval chroniclers of the "inside narrative" of the *Bellipotent*) of an unworldly worldly absolute, not for ambiguity as such, but for the (unjust) *imbalance* of power relations that always pertains *in the world*. And he does this, I suggest, in the name of pointing both to the injustice incumbent on reducing the complex socio-political occasion to decidable allegorical abstractions and to the political paralysis incumbent on reducing the actually existing imbalance of power to utterly undecidable ambiguity, that is, to the state of equivalence.

Be that as it may, it is no accident that, after underscoring Captain Vere's transformation, the narrator returns to the larger historical occasion that, in the eyes of the dominant British culture (the "naval authority," for whom the aftermath of the "suppressed insurrections" was "very critical"), justified the establishment of the state of exception:

> That the unhappy event [the death of Claggart] which has been narrated could not have happened at a worse juncture was but too true. For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections [the "Great Mutiny"], an aftertime very critical to naval authority, demanding from every English sea commander two qualities not readily interfusable—prudence and rigor. Moreover, there was something crucial in the case.
>
> In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the *Bellipotent*, and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places. In a *legal view* the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimize a man blameless; and the indisputable deed of the latter, *navally regarded*, constituted the most heinous of military crimes. Yet more. The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer that might be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea commander, inasmuch as he was not authorized to determine the matter on that primitive basis. (103; my emphasis)

In depicting the difficult conditions in which Captain Vere finds himself—the tremendous determining force of the "outside" world on the "inside" world of the *Bellipotent*—the narrator, it is true, expresses a certain sympathy for his terrible dilemma, even as he emphasizes the exacerbation of the imbalance of power—the chilling chiasma—that the martial law (the "legal view," the situation "navally regarded") has produced. But as he proceeds to reflect on Vere's transformation, he increasingly underscores the dehumanizing consequences of the state of exception—consequences that seep into every aspect of life in the public realm (the body politic of the *Bellipotent*). I quote the narrator at length to underscore the transformation that he has undergone in the process of relating the events that begin with Captain Vere's response to Claggart's accusation:

> Small wonder then that the *Bellipotent*'s captain, though in general a man of rapid decision, felt that circumspectness not less than promptitude was necessary. Until he could decide

> upon his course, and in each detail; and not only so, but until the concluding measure was upon the point of being enacted, he deemed it advisable, in view of all the circumstances, *to guard as much as possible against publicity. Here he may or may not have erred.* Certain it is, however, that subsequently in the confidential talk of more than one or two gun rooms and cabins he was not a little criticized by some officers, a fact imputed by his friends and vehemently by his cousin Jack Denton to professional jealousy of Starry Vere. *Some imaginative ground for invidious comment there was. The maintenance of secrecy in the matter, the confining all knowledge of it for a time to the place where the homicide occurred, the quarterdeck cabin; in these particulars lurked some resemblance to policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian.* (103; my emphasis)

In highlighting the narrator's repeated returns to the negative aspects in his meditation on Vere's decision, against "usage," to convene the drumhead court immediately and to carry out the proceedings in secret—which is to say, in a space which is closed off from public scrutiny and provides immunity to judges that preside over it—I do not want to suggest that he is anticipating an indictment of Captain Vere's person as such, as many critics have concluded in restricting the "case of Captain Vere" to the issue of universal morality versus expedience ("chronometricals" versus "horologicals"). Rather, I am suggesting that the target of his concern is wider than Vere or the individual, and more "political" in scope. Given the inexorable conditions produced by the insistent impingement of the macrocosmic world on the microcosmic world of the *Bellipotent* (which are further emphasized by the narrator's return to them—"the slumbering embers of the Nore among the crew" that "overruled in Captain Vere every other consideration" [104]—immediately after this paragraph), Vere remains a sympathetic figure. Melville's target, rather, as the resonant reference to Peter the Great as "Peter the Barbarian" suggests, is a "civilization" of the "austere" sort—the rule of (public) law of the "Power then [at the time of the Napoleonic Wars] all but the sole free conservative one of the Old World" (54)—that has been transformed into barbarism by the imposition of secrecy, the *sine qua non*

of the state of exception: ultimately, a reign of terror that has legally reduced the multitude—its lowly and powerless human victims—to bare life. It is a barbarism all the more barbarous in that the inhumane logic of its permanent lawless law is capable of harnessing a basically good and thoughtful man like Captain Vere as an unwitting agent of its totalizing dehumanizing cause: the reduction of *bios* to *zoe*, man as political animal to bare life.

That such a "civilizational" reading of this climactic passage of *Billy Budd* is a viable one is strongly enforced, I suggest, by recalling a strikingly similar passage in Melville's *White Jacket*, here, however, focusing on an American naval vessel, unequivocally indicting the dehumanizing secrecy that is intrinsic to martial law. It is a passage that, not incidentally, culminates in an overt reference to the *Somers* Affair, which, it will be recalled some critics have said, instigated Melville's *Billy Budd*, and which, not least, the narrator will invoke later in the chapter when he recounts the drumhead court proceedings that terminate in the decision to execute Billy:

> What can be expected from a court whose deeds are done in the darkness of the recluse courts of the Spanish Inquisition? When that darkness is solemnized by an oath on the Bible? When an oligarchy of epaulets sits upon the bench, and a plebian top-man, without a jury, stands *judicially naked at the bar*?
>
> Some may urge that the severest operations of the code are tacitly made null in time of peace. But with respect to several of the Articles [of War] this holds true, yet at any time any and all of them may be legally enforced. Nor have there been wanting recent instances, illustrating the spirit of this code, even in cases where the letter of the code was not altogether observed. The well-known case of a United States brig furnished a memorable example, which at any moment may be repeated. Three men, in a time of peace, were then hung at the yard-arm, merely because, in the captain's judgment, it became necessary to hang them. To this day the question of their complete guilt is socially discussed. (Melville, *White Jacket* 177; my emphasis)[11]

But we need not appeal to a text published many years before to argue that what is fundamentally at stake in the narrator's identification of Vere's insistence on secrecy in the conduct of the "trial" with the terrorism of the Spanish inquisition and Peter the Barbarian is the corruption of civilization from top to bottom under the aegis of the state of exception. For this thesis is decisively *enacted* immediately after this reference by the drumhead court, a court—the first lieutenant, the captain of the marines, and the sailing master—strategically chosen, secretly convened, and single-mindedly determined by Captain Vere. From the beginning (as the only eye witness) and throughout the proceedings (as the presiding judge), Captain Vere affirms the essential innocence of Billy Budd and expresses his deep, indeed fatherly, sympathy for him. That is to say, he acknowledges that, from the moral point of view, Billy is innocent and should be exonerated. But at no point in the process does Captain Vere deviate from the "law" of the state of exception—and the living dictates of the dead policeman. As the narrator says (in a reference to the religious fanatics of the Inquisition serving God?) in inaugurating his account of the drama: "But a true military officer is in one particular like a true monk. Not with more of self-abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former his vows of allegiance to martial law" (*Billy Budd* 243).

This monkish comportment begins to assert itself openly when Billy, having been asked by the troubled captain of the marines why Claggart should have "so maliciously lied, since you declare there was no malice between you?" is unable to answer him and turns to Captain Vere for help. At this point, Vere, despite his natural sympathy for Billy and the compelling power of Billy's helpless appeal, intervenes in his capacity as judge of the court by deflecting the captain of the marine's focus on the (natural) moral register to the political. Driven by the inexorable logic of martial law, he says:

> "The question you put to him comes naturally enough. But how can he rightly answer it," designating the compartment where lay the corpse. "But the prone one here will not rise to our summons. In effect, though, as it seems to me, the point

> you make is hardly material. Quite aside from any conceivable motive actuating the master-at-arms, and irrespective of the provocation to the blow, a martial court must need in the present case confine its attention to the blow's consequence, which consequence justly is to be deemed not otherwise than as the striker's deed." (107)

Billy's response to this (to him) unexpected and enigmatic utterance, the narrator tells us in a metaphor that resonates with his reduction to bare life by Vere's disciplinary logic, is "an interrogative look toward the speaker… not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master, seeking in his face, some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence." The court's response is equally telling: they read in it "a meaning unanticipated, *involving a prejudgment* of the speaker's part," which "served to augment a mental disturbance previously evident enough" (108; my emphasis). This last is, of course, a reference to the disturbed surgeon's earlier question following Vere's precipitous decision to convene a drumhead court: "Was he [Captain Vere] unhinged?" But here, in the context of Vere's relentlessly single-minded logic, it assumes a more definite meaning, one that recalls the narrator's identification of Claggart's as monomaniac (90)—and Melville's devastating criticism of Captain Ahab's and the Indian-hater's metaphysically ordained single-mindededness in *Moby-Dick* and *The Confidence-Man*, respectively.[12]

Seeing that the members of the court are deeply troubled by his undeviating logic—a disquiet, the narrator says, exacerbated by "his phraseology, now and then… suggestive of the grounds whereon rested that imputation of a certain pedantry socially alleged against him" (109)—Vere repeats his monolithic argument, now, however, from his privileged position as the captain of the "threatened" ship, and thus in terms that explicitly relate it to the historical/political events—the "crisis" of the *Bellipotent*'s "security"—that has justified the overt declaration of the state of exception as the permanent law. I quote this climactic passage at length not only to underscore the lawlessness of the "law" of the state of exception—the unmovable "center elsewhere" that is "out of reach of freeplay," as it were,[13] that inexorably determines Vere's political "argument," including, not incidentally, the authoritative words concerning the moral

issue he puts into the mouths of his subordinates (and later into Billy's). I quote it as well to demonstrate the subtle (casuist) way, epitomized by his reduction of those who would protect an innocent Billy's life from a degrading death on moral grounds to "casuists," his apparent argument becomes in the end an arbitrary final judgment: one that suppresses the *aporias* (doubts) which, opened to public scrutiny (the "political"), might undermine its higher—"paramount"—authority, or, as one of the officers puts it in response, the "lateral light" on "what remains a mystery in the matter" that might be shed by the depositions of the members of "the ship's company":

> "Hitherto I have been but the witness, little more; and I should hardly think now to take another tone, that of your coadjutor for the time, did I not perceive in you—at the crisis too—a troubled hesitancy, proceeding, I doubt not, from the clash of military duty with moral scruple—a scruple vitalized by compassion. For the compassion, how can I otherwise than share it? But, mindful of paramount obligations, I strive against scruples that may end to enervate decision. Not, gentlemen, that I hide from myself that the case is an exceptional one. Speculatively regarded, it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here, acting not as casuists or moralists, it is a case practical, and under martial law practicality to be dealt with.
>
> "But your scruples: do they move as in a dusk? Challenge them. Make them advance and declare themselves. Come now; do they import something like this: If, mindless of palliating circumstance, we are bound to regard the death of the master-at-arms as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one. But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom he we feel to be so?—Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. *But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to*

> *Nature? No, to the King*. Though the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? *So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free agents. When war is declared are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command. If our judgments approve the war, that is but coincidence*. So in other particulars. So now. For suppose condemnation to follow these present proceedings. *Would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigor of it, we are not responsible*. Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitilessly that law may operate in any instance, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it. (*Billy Budd* 110–11; my emphasis)

When Captain Vere realizes that his appeal to duty to the King over natural inclination, responsibility to the dictates of the monarch over free will, does not appease the uneasiness of the court's members, he modifies his argument against the (female) heart to include "private conscience." In the process, he also modifies his particular appeal to duty to the King to include overtly the larger and finally more substantial obedience to the "imperial" imperatives of the martial law (the state of exception) and the security state precipitated by Britain's global war against Napoleon:

> "But something in your aspects seems to urge that it is not solely the heart that moves in you, but also the conscience, the private conscience. But tell me whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed?...
>
> "To steady us a bit let us recur to the facts—In wartime at sea a man-of-war's man strikes his superior in grade, and the blow kills. Apart from its effect, the blow itself is, according to the Articles of War, a capital crime. (101)

At this point the officer of the marines emotionally interrupts the captain's unerring line of thought to remind him that "Billy proposed neither mutiny nor homicide." In response, Vere underscores his invocation of martial law against conscience, including its justification of impressment, an allusion that cannot help but evoke the memory of Billy's arbitrary enlistment into the ranks of the *Bellipotent* from "*The Rights-of-Man*," not to say, the anti-Burkean author of the pamphlet from which it drew its name:

> Surely not, my good man. And before a court less arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one that plea would largely extenuate. At the Last Assizes it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In feature no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives—War. In His majesty's service—in this ship indeed—*there are Englishmen forced to fight for the King against their will. Against their conscience, for aught we know*. Though as their fellow creatures some of us may appreciate their positions, yet as navy officers, what reck we or it?... *War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father*. Budd's intent or nonintent is nothing to the purpose. (111–12)

Following this reduction of depth to surface, life to bare life, the faltering junior lieutenant, in a last desperate effort to save Billy from hanging, asks Captain Vere whether or not the court could "convict and yet mitigate the penalty." Vere, now decisively and with absolute finality, returns to the *political context*: to what I have been asserting from the beginning as the *indissoluble relationship* between the "outside" story (the insurrections at Spithead and the Nore instigated by the "Revolutionary Spirit") and the "inside" story (the events on board the *Bellipotent*), that is, to the hierarchical relation between "Them" and "Us," the erratic "multitude" under aristocratic/imperial disciplinary rule:

> "Gentleman, were that clearly lawful for us under the circumstances, consider the consequences of such clemency. *The people* [meaning the ship's company] have native sense; most of them are familiar with our naval usage and tradition, and how would they take it? Even could you explain to them—which

> our official position forbids—they, *long molded by arbitrary discipline, have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate*. No, to *the people* the foretopman's deed, however it be worded in the announcement, will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow, they know. But it does not follow. *Why* [narrator's emphasis]? They will ruminate. *You know what sailors are*. Will they not revert to the recent outbreak at the Nore? Ay. *They know the well-founded alarm—the panic it struck throughout England. Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them—afraid of practicing a lawful rigor singularly demanded at this juncture lest it should provide new troubles*. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part, and how deadly to discipline. You see then, whither, prompted by duty and law, *I steadfastly drive*. But I beseech you, my friends, do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts, *I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid*." (112–13; my emphasis)

In the eyes of Captain Vere, in sum, as these speeches insistently and chillingly testify in both what they say and leave unsaid, Billy (and the common sailors), despite his innocence in the face of a life and death charge, is as *nothing* or a *nobody* in comparison to the safety of his ship and the security of his nation, irregardless of the morality or immorality of the latter's motives and practice. Nowhere in his eloquent and masterfully strategic address to the officers of the drumhead court does he invoke the *question of the reality of the threat*, to say nothing about the exceptionalist motives of the King (the dominant imperial culture) he (and his officers) so dutifully would obey. Despite Vere's sympathy, Billy is finally only an afterthought to Vere's monolithic commitment to the unerring disciplinary (biopolitical) imperatives of the state of exception, and his shipmates, the anonymous erratic vehicle of threat. They literally do not count in an accounting (value) system that privileges the security of the abstract national whole. This is what I meant when, earlier, I said

that Billy did not stand a chance. He and his fellow sailors (the multitude) are, in Alain Brossat's apt term, "*L'inarticulable*" (the "inarticulate"), in a world in which language—and the institutions of it dissemination—is utterly controlled by the masters.

Despite their abiding doubts, the members of the drumhead court capitulate in the end to the Vere's inclusive judgment, partly because of his earnestness, partly in deference to his superior intelligence, but also, as the narrator tellingly puts it, partly because of his "closing appeal to their [collective] instinct as sea officers: in the forethought he threw out as to the practical consequences to discipline, considering the unconfirmed tone of the fleet at the time, should a man-of-war's man's violent killing at sea of a superior in grade be allowed to pass for aught else than a capital crime demanding prompt infliction of the penalty" (113). This egregious reduction of historical reality in the name of vocation—a higher calling—that is, is further testimony to the insidious moral and sociopolitical effects of the normalization of the state of exception.

If, then, we are attuned by what precedes Captain Vere's justificatory discourse—his commitment to the security state in the name of the state of exception—to the narrator's overdetermination of those corrosive aspects of knowledge production and sociopolitical life on board the *Bellipotent* that render it a police state, it is difficult not to read that discourse as a *reactionary political* argument. However benign his motives may be, Vere not only legitimizes those corrosive sociopolitical conditions but also contributes to the establishment of a corrupt moral environment that enables less-righteous leaders to take advantage of them with impunity. Read in terms of the preceding context established by the narrator, in other words, Vere's "steadfast" commitment to his calling provides license to the executive agency (as opposed to the "people" and/or the representatives of the people) to abuse its monolithic power in behalf of disciplining—of biopoliticizing—the volatile" multitude. In a way that is remarkably proleptic of the entire Cold War and post-9/11 American occasion, the ruthless biopolitical imperatives of martial law Vere privileges over the life of the innocent and utterly helpless Billy Budd or, more to his point (if we take his remarkably low opinion of the ordinary seamen that man the man-of-war he commands, seriously), over the "the people," authorizes the sovereign executive to deliberately annul communication

in the social space, institute a climate of fear in the body politic, establish the practice of secret policing, produce the informant mentality, deny human rights to the accused, inflict torture to elicit "confession," and abrogate free speech and public trial by a jury of peers. Read attentively, in short, the narrator's juxtaposition of Vere's "argument" with the "inside story" enables us to see that the latter's decisionist justificatory vocational discourse authorizes the sovereign executive *to produce the truth it wants*. This is epitomized by the "authorized" account of the events on board the *Bellipotent*, "doubtless for the most part written in good faith," which represents the criminal as the victim and the victim as the criminal and ends decisively with an encomium to the peace the execution produced: "'The criminal paid the penalty of his crime. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard H.M.S. *Bellipotent*'" (130–31). In thus pointing to the indissoluble relationship between the state of the exception and the fabrication of the truth, the narrator's juxtaposition of the Captain's argument with the actual events on the man-of-war, it also enables us to see that Melville's *Billy Budd* speaks truth to the power of own contemporary occasion. The investigative reporter Ron Suskind bears telling, if unwitting, witness to this at the height of the George W. Bush administration's power:

> The aide [a "senior advisor" in the White House] said that guys like me were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors… and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do." (n.p.)

All of which is to say that Vere's domesticated Ahabian affirmation of the illicit law of the state of exception, despite his unquestionable probity and his fatherly sympathy for Billy, opens the door to the formation of a

polity in which politics is reduced to biopower and the "people" of the body politic to "bare life": to what, a hundred years later, Giorgio Agamben, following Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt, has called, in its limit situation, the polity of "the [concentration] camp" in his meditations on the state of exception in the wake of its increasing presence in modern democratic societies:

> [T]he birth of the camp in our time appears as an event that decisively signals the political space of modernity itself. It is produced at the point at which the political system of the modern nation-state, which was founded on the functional nexus between a determinate localization (land) and a determinate order (the state) and mediated by autonomous rules for the inscription of life (birth or nation), enters into lasting crisis, and the State decides to assume directly the care of the nation's biological life as one of its proper tasks.... The state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the juridico-political order, now becomes a new and stable spatial arrangement inhabited by the bare life that more and more can no longer be inscribed in that order. The growing dissociation of birth (bare life) and the nation-state is the new fact of politics in our day, and what we call *camp* is this disjunction. To an order without localization (the state of exception, in which law is suspended) there now corresponds a localization without order (the camp as permanent space of exception). The political system no longer orders forms of life and juridical rules in a determinate space, but instead contains at its very center a *dislocating localization* that exceeds it and into which every form of life and every rule can be virtually taken. The camp as dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living, and it is this structure of the camp that we must learn to recognize in all its metamorphoses into the *zones d'attentes* of our airports and certain outskirts of our cities. The camp is the fourth, inseparable element that has now added itself to- and so broken—the old trinity composed of the state, the nation (birth), and land. (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 175–76)

Notes

1. This school of *Billy Budd* criticism was inaugurated after the publication of the novella in England in 1924 by such British critics as John Middleton Murray (433) and John Freeman (131–36). It received its name with the publication of E. L. Grant Watson's "Melville's Testament of Acceptance" (227–319).

2. This school was inaugurated in the 1950s by "ironist" readings such as those of Joseph Schiffman (128–36) and Phil Withim (115–27).

3. See for instance Barbara Johnson "Melville's Fist" 567–99 and *The Critical Difference* (79–109); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (91–130); Nancy Ruttenburg (344–78); and Sharon Cameron (180–204).

4. "[W]hatever convokes someone to the composition of a subject is something extra, something that happens in situations as *something that they and the usual way of behaving in them cannot account for*. Let us say that a *subject*, which goes beyond the animal (although the animal remains the sole foundation [*support*]) needs something to have happened, something that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in 'what there is'. Let us call this *supplement* an event, and let us distinguish multiple-being, where it is not a matter of truth (but only opinions), from the event, *which compels us to decide a new way of being*. Such events are well and truly attested: the French Revolution of 1792, the meeting of Heloise and Abelard, Galileo's creation and physics, Hayden's invention of the classical musical style…but also: the Cultural Revolution in China (1965–67) [i.e., in politics, love, science, and art]…" (Baidou 42; my emphasis, except for "*subject*").

5. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in *The Frontier in America History* (1–38). This culminating nation-defining essay was first delivered on July 12, 1893 at the World Fair in Chicago, which featured "The White City," the Gilded Age's version of the Puritans' "city on the hill." For a revisionary account of the American jeremiad as represented by Sacvan Bercovitch in *The American Jeremiad* (1978) that points to the indissoluble relationship between American exceptionalism, the expanding frontier (i.e., the need for a perpetual enemy), and the state of exception and takes its point of departure from Melville's reading of the origins of the American national identity, see Spanos ("American Exceptionalism" 187–241).

6. In *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*.

7. Hannah Arendt makes precisely this still to be fully thought point about the politics endemic to the state of exception in her powerful critique of the French Third Republic's handling of the Dreyfuss Affair by way of her synecdochical account of the radical anti-Semite, Jules Guerin: "The most modern figure on the side of the Anti-Dreyfusards was probably Jules Guerin. Ruined in business, he had begun his political career as a police stool pigeon, and acquired that flair for discipline and organization which invariably marks

the underworld. This he was later to divert into political channels, becoming the founder and head of the Ligue Antisemite [sic]. In him high society found its first criminal hero. In its adulation of Guerin bourgeois society showed clearly that in its code of morals and ethics it had broken for good with it own standard" (111). More immediately, chronologically and geographically, I think, for example, of the relationship between Senator Joseph McCarthy and the US government under President Dwight Eisenhower, and, even most recently and tellingly, between Dick Cheney and the US government under President George W. Bush. See Barton Gellman's *Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency*.

8. See my "Althusserian" reading of "Benito Cereno" in *Herman Melville and the American Calling* (105–22).

9. Althusser is here distinguishing between the "oversight" of capitalist vision (its "problematic") and Marx's "informed gaze," which, precisely because it is aware of the blindness of super-vision, can see what the latter unwittingly is blind to.

10. See Spanos' *The Exceptional State and the State of Exception: Herman Melville's* Billy Budd, 68–70 for further commentary on this issue.

11. In their "Notes and Commentaries," the editors of the definitive edition of *Billy Budd* note this striking parallel, even say that the sentence referring to Peter the Barbarian "is nearer than any other in *Billy Budd* to indicating disapproval of Vere's course of action" (177). Indeed, they go on to point to other similar passages in Melville's writing, most notably in *Redburn*, *Moby-Dick*, and "I am a Chimney." But they do not pursue its implications.

12. "The white whale swam before him as the monomaniacal incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men felt eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning: to which dominion even the modern Christians ascribe one-half of the world; which the ancient Ophites of the east reverenced in their statue devil:—Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them; but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain, all subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in *Moby Dick*. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it" (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 184).See also *The Confidence-Man; His Masquerades*: "The Indian-hater *par excellence* the judge defined to be one 'who, having with his mother's milk drank in small love for red men, in his youth or early manhood, ere the sensibilities becomes osseous, received at their hands some signal outrage, or,

which in effect is the same some of his kin have, or some friend. Now, nature all around him by her solitudes wooing or bidding him muse on the matter, he accordingly does so, till the thought develops such attraction, that much as straggling vapors troop from all sides to a storm-cloud, so straggling thoughts of other outrages troop to the nucleus thought, assimilate with it, and swell it. At last, taking council with the elements, he comes to his resolution. An intenser Hannibal, he makes a vow, the hate of which is a vortex from whose suction scarce the remotest chip of the guilty race may reasonably feel secure. With the solemnity of a Spaniard turned monk, he takes leave of his kin; or rather, these leave-takings have something of the still more impressive finality of death-bed adieus. Last, he commits himself to the forest primeval; there, so long as life shall be his, to act upon a calm cloistered scheme of strategical, implacable, and lonesome vengeance. Ever on the noiseless trail; cool, collected, patient; less seen than felt; snuffing, smelling—a Leatherstocking Nemesis'" (149–50).

13. "[T]he center…closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible. At the center, the permutation or transformation of elements…is forbidden. At least this permutation has always remained interdicted…. Thus it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say the center is paradoxically *within* the structure and *outside* it. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not a part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure—although it represents coherence itself…is contradictorily coherent" (Derrida 279).

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Chapter 10

The Ethics of Trauma/The Trauma of Ethics

Terror After Levinas

Zahi Zalloua

Trauma theory and continental ethical theory share a deep affinity in US academia. The former is arguably an example of the latter. And as one would expect, for those who are generally hostile to continental philosophy—or its manifestation as literary theory in literature departments—trauma theory is seen as a doubly suspicious field of study. Emmanuel Levinas has contributed perhaps more than any other thinker to the fusion, if not conflation, of ethics and trauma. For Levinas, ethics is defined primarily as a hermeneutic disruption provoked by exposure to the Other's alterity. In the paradigmatic *face-to-face* encounter, the Self experiences a shock when faced with the Other, or when faced with the face of the Other, more precisely; we could even say that the *face-to-face* encounter is an event of terror. In this paper, I want to explore and scrutinize Levinas's *terrorizing* model of ethics, looking more closely at the logic of victimhood and the rhetoric of passivity that are often associated with both trauma studies and a certain brand of postmodern ethical theory. More generally, my article aims at the pedagogical difficulties in teaching a Levinasian-inspired ethics: how does one teach about the trauma of ethics, about ethics as persecution in a post-9/11 political environment characterized as a perpetual "War on Terror"?

Indeed, an ethics of the Other worthy of its name must pass through the test of politics; an ethical philosophy of absolute alterity must invariably confront the material realities of politics. Yet such a test always risks distortion if it ends up resulting in the mere translation of ethics into

politics. In tackling this thorny issue, I have chosen to focus on the image of the Jew as a recurrent figure of radical otherness: a figure whose deployment often entails a dangerous conflation of ethics and politics.

From Sartre to Levinas, continental philosophers have turned and returned time and again to the example of the Jew as the paradigmatic object of and model for ethical inquiry. In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Jean-Paul Sartre was arguably the first twentieth-century philosopher to romanticize the Jew, setting him in opposition to France's outmoded and diluted bourgeois self.[1] More than a figure of marginalization, the Jew gains in Levinas's work far greater rhetorical force. Levinas dedicates his book *Otherwise than Being* "To the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-Semitism." Levinasian ethics and trauma studies are both the result of, and a response to, the Holocaust, to the state of philosophy after Auschwitz. They radically challenge prior notions of autonomy and comprehension—two key notions for traditional ethical theory. The challenge to comprehension comes from a desire to respect the opacity of the Other, from a recognition of the dangers of hermeneutic violence; my relation to the Other is not a relation of knowledge. This interpretive sensibility is emblematic of what I call an "ethics of trauma." And what I call "the trauma of ethics" is a further qualification of the Self's rational agency and interpretive capacity. Ethics is not an interpretive attitude that one can adopt or refuse; rather, ethics is something that terrorizes me (ethics as persecution), that interpellates me, and compels me to act. In this respect, ethics is a profoundly heteronomous condition.

Anyone who has taught Levinas, however, knows that the pull toward abstraction is strong: how does such an ethics of the Other translate into real everyday life? Recourse to examples often function to counter this pull, to satisfy the hunger for specificity. Levinas does offer some examples. He refers to the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, but it is the figure of the Jew (as we saw in his dedication) which seems to exemplify best the perplexities of his ethics. A host of questions, however, immediately arise: what is at stake in thinking the Other as Jew?[2] Is a rhetoric of exceptionalism or exemplarity, with its unavoidable ontological residue, at odds with shifting political realities? Within this paradigm, what then

becomes of the Arab, the Other of the Jew, the Other of the Other, so to speak?[3] Does trauma studies, in its desire to bear witness to the *past* subject of suffering—in its attempt to come to terms with the subject after Auschwitz—bracket from analysis *present* operations of power? Would, then, a more sensitive historical approach expose the Palestinian as the Other of the Israeli? Finally, should we, as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek have more recently urged, critically revisit a paradigm of ethics that has been identified almost exclusively with radical alterity, an interpretive horizon under which the Jew as a paradoxical figure of exemplary otherness has flourished? In pursuit of these questions, I would like to turn here to a brief account of Levinasian ethics and its major detractors, and then trace the way the debate over the viability of an "ethics of alterity" spills over and implicitly frames the politically contentious discussion of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

In his polemical study *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Alain Badiou exposes the mystification of difference so prevalent in contemporary ethical and political discourses. Returning to the source, as it were, Badiou flatly rejects Levinas's contention that the Other is "without mediation" (Levinas, "Meaning and Sense" 53). To recall, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas describes the *face-to-face* encounter as a crucial instant of cognitive frustration; the Other's face exceeds my attempt at interpretive mastery, bringing into question my autonomy, spontaneity, and self-sufficiency (50). For Badiou, however, Levinas's ethics of alterity is both dubious and deceptive; it claims to treat all others as others but in fact distinguishes between others who resemble oneself and those who do not. As Badiou puts it, "[T]his celebrated 'other' is acceptable only if he is a good other.... That is to say: I respect differences, but only, of course, in so far as that which differs also respects, just as I do, the said differences" (*Ethics* 24). On Badiou's account, an ethics of alterity is profoundly ideological; it only masquerades as a respect for difference; in reality, it practices the crudest kind of ethical reductionism.

Levinas's own struggle with articulating a philosophy of the Other that is not simply formal and abstract is brought to light most clearly in a radio interview broadcasted shortly after the massacres of hundreds of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Israeli-occupied Lebanon in 1982. News of the massacres shocked the world and deeply

affected the Jewish community, leading the interviewer to ask Levinas, "Emmanuel Levinas, you are the philosopher of the 'other.' Isn't history, isn't politics the very site of the encounter with the 'other,' and for the Israeli isn't the 'other' above all Palestinian?" Levinas answers:

> My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbor, who is not necessarily my kin but who may be. But if your neighbor attacks another neighbor, or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong. ("Ethics and Politics" 294)

Levinas's response disappoints; it even calls into question his entire philosophy of the Other. Martin Jay voices what came to be a common response to Levinas's stance on the massacres, on what distinguishes a good neighbor (neighbor *as kin*) from bad neighbor (neighbor *as enemy*): "Here the infinity of alterity, the transcendence of mere being by ethical commands, the hostage-like substitution of self for other, are abruptly circumscribed by the cultural-cum-biological limits of permissible kinship alliance" (87).

On this reading, it is not Levinas's philosophy of the Other itself that is questioned, but only its inconsistency or "misguided" application. What could be more contrary to Levinasian ethics than an appeal to religious and national sameness (as the basis for ethical or political action)? Moreover, Levinas's comment that "there are people who are wrong" seems to confuse the victim and the aggressor. In the context of an answer addressing the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, it is clear that the persecuted, fragile, vulnerable Other here is the Palestinian refugee, not the Israeli occupier. Yet more recently, Robert Bernasconi cautioned that this line of inquiry is misleading in that it risks distorting Levinas's actual account of the Other. According to Bernasconi, Levinas refuses "to treat the notion of alterity as a sociological category that might be applied as a cultural or ethnic designation" (247). In other words, the Levinasian Other is not a postcolonial Other; it is never the by-product of a *process of othering*. On one level, Bernasconi is absolutely right; Levinas's philosophy

of the Other must be situated within the phenomenological tradition, a tradition that Levinas seriously questions by challenging the powers of consciousness to grasp the meaning of its enigmatic object (the face of the Other). As a result, any self/Other relation is always (at some level) asymmetrical, involving both a joining and disjoining, proximity and distance, a "relation without relation" (*rapport sans rapport*), as Levinas calls it elsewhere (*Totality and Infinity* 80). So the Palestinian cannot lay any special claim to being the Other of the Jew/Israeli. Yet, on another level, Bernasconi's careful (one could say faithful) reading of Levinas's Other minimizes the phantasmatic investment in the image of the Jew as a figure of radical alterity, an image that Levinas, as we have seen, does much to perpetuate. Evoking the Palestinian as the Other of the Israeli might be interpreted less as a descriptive account of the ethico-political situation than a rhetorical move aiming at disrupting an ideologically captivating image of the persecutor and the persecuted.

Less concerned with assessing Levinas on his own terms, Slavoj Žižek raises questions about the political viability of Levinasian ethics. What Žižek finds most problematic in Levinas's language is not the inconsistency of his thought, Zionist ideology, or cold indifference to the plight of the Palestinians, but the *necessary* failure to translate theory into practice, the failure of an ethics that cannot produce a progressive politics. "What Levinas is basically saying is that, as a principle, respect for alterity is unconditional (the highest sort of respect), but, when faced with a concrete other, one should nonetheless see if he is a friend or an enemy. In short, in practical politics, the respect for alterity strictly *means nothing*" (*Organs without Bodies* 106). In his essay "Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence," Žižek develops this line of critique, taking issue with what he sees as the Levinasian fascination with the Other, which blinds one to the suffering of concrete others: "[T]he true ethical step is the one *beyond* the face of the other, the one of *suspending* the hold of the face, the one of choosing *against* the face, for the *third*" (183). True ethics, then, necessitates a move away from the dyadic moment of the *face-to-face* encounter (the ethical proper) to an incorporation of the Other's others (the political proper).[4]

A typical gesture among readers sympathetic to Levinas who would prefer to de-emphasize the tension or friction between ethics and

politics while still alluding to their significant differences is to argue for the incommensurability of the two realms.[5] Rather than pursuing this approach, however, Badiou, like Žižek, calls for an ethics grounded in the recognition of the Same:

> The whole ethical predication based upon recognition of the other should be purely and simply abandoned. For the real question…is much more that of *recognizing the Same*…. The Same, in effect, is not what is (i.e. the infinite multiplicity of differences) but what *comes to be*. (*Ethics* 25, 27)

As one could expect, Badiou's way of thinking of the political and the ethical makes him especially hostile to the language of exceptionalism. In his 2005 piece "Uses of the Word 'Jew,'" published in his book *Polemics*—a text that has generated harsh criticism[6] —Badiou contests the mystical meaning of the notion of "Jew":

> Today it is not uncommon to read that "Jew" is indeed a name beyond ordinary names. And it seems to be presumed that, like an inverted original sin, the grace of having been an incomparable victim can be passed down not only to descendants and to the descendants of descendants but to all who come under the predicate in question, be they heads of state or armies engaging in the severe oppression of those whose lands they have confiscated. (160)

While critics have tended to minimize somewhat the relevance of Badiou's *Polemics*, I would stress its significance for an understanding of Badiou's ethical and political position. If the Badiou of the book *Ethics* pursued a critique of an ethics of alterity, the Badiou of *Polemics* historicizes his critique through a careful analysis of the Jew as an ideological interpretive category, as a fetishized predicate. Though there are no explicit references to Levinas in this essay, Levinas's thought, I would argue, is far from absent. In fact, it is precisely the following type of passages from Levinas's *Difficult Freedom* that Badiou finds most objectionable:

> The traumatic experience of my slavery in Egypt constitutes my very humanity, a fact that immediately allies me to the workers, the wretched, and the persecuted people of the

> world.... Among the millions of human beings who encountered misery and death, the Jews alone experienced a total dereliction. They experienced a condition inferior to that of things, an experience of total passivity, an experience of Passion. (11, 26)

The traumatic experiences of Jews endow them with a unique capacity to identify with the suffering of *all* others. Their trauma attests to the universal human core of ethical subjectivity, to their exemplarity as a people: their trauma is a sign of both their uniqueness (their election) and humanity's vulnerability (we are all potentially Jews).

Badiou's critique alerts us to the convoluted metaphysics, to the phantasmatic structure, underpinning this use and abuse of the signifier Jew: "[W]hat is at issue is to know whether or not, in the general field of public intellectual discussion, the word 'Jew' constitutes an exceptional signifier, such that it would be legitimate to make it play the role of a final, or even sacred, signifier" (*Polemics* 158). The problem here for Badiou is *not* that the current representation of Jews as victims somehow distorts the actual history of Jews. On the contrary, Badiou repeatedly acknowledges the historical tragedy of the Jews and insists on the need to remain vigilant and to denounce explicit and latent anti-Semitism whenever it manifests itself. His point rather is that a certain ideology of the Jew, "a certain philo-Semitism" (159), as he calls it, generally conditions mainstream Western discussion of Israeli politics.[7] The Jews' unprecedented historical suffering transforms them as a people from "victims" to "Victims" of Humanity, guaranteeing them the (timeless) status of (morally untouchable) Other—giving them, in turn, a paradigmatic status in trauma studies.[8] But such a metamorphosis has political implications, especially for anyone who finds him- or herself opposed to Israel and its policies. This transformation gives the right to the Israeli Jew, as to any Jew, to profess his or her universalism (the history of Jews *is* the history of Humanity[9]) and to maintain a right to difference (a righteous defense of the Jewish state, *a state to which the charge of state terrorism can never stick*, for example). The Jews are always the object of terror—never the subjects or agents of terror. Attempts to expose the uneasy relation of these two claims, to scrutinize their dubious conflation, often earn the critic the pernicious label of anti-Semite. With this ubiquitous threat, Palestinians

and advocates of the Palestinian cause are, as a result, constantly silenced, discredited, or excluded from the realm of rational public discourse, amounting to, as Badiou points out, nothing short of "political blackmail" (*Polemics* 162).

It is clear that the Self as victim, though not an unproblematic ethical model, does open up or provide you (for the one who can claim this you) some avenues for remedy. To claim victimhood, or better yet to have an ostensibly "neutral" third party (such as the Western media) claim it for you, can often succeed in arousing, in the international public arena, feelings of pathos (guilt, empathy, pity, compassion, etc.) that are becoming a precondition for understanding a people's plight. Unless I can see you as a victim—as someone who has endured an injustice and can only react in defense, never offensively, I will not be amenable to empathizing with you nor moved to intervene and rectify the political situation. In her article "Compassion and Terror," Martha Nussbaum makes some pertinent observations about the precondition for compassion between Self and Others. In her example, it is the poor. Nussbaum considers the reasons why some people fail to cultivate any sense of compassion toward them. She writes: "People who have the idea that the poor brought their poverty upon themselves by laziness fail, for that reason, to have compassion for them" (15). It is not difficult to expand Nussbaum's reading to the Palestinians. For those who fail to have compassion for the Palestinians, the Palestinians are seen as responsible for their condition. The story goes as follows: the Palestinians had several chances at peace and co-existence with Israel, from 1948 to Bill Clinton's last push in 2000; but each time, the Palestinians chose violence over peace. The Palestinians therefore cannot be seen as victims—objects of empathy and compassion—if they are construed as the primary *agents* of their misery.

This narrative helps to explain the failure of the mainstream American public to be outraged by the continued hardship of the Palestinians.[10] In the American imaginary, the Palestinian is not a traumatized subject; seeing him as a heteronomous subject, a fractured *cogito* (which would constitute an attempt at comprehension, an attempt at understanding the social, economic, and political conditions which could have helped to produce him as a so-called terrorist) is simply interpreted as an endorsement, rationalization, or justification of Palestinian violence. In the

American imaginary, the Palestinian is thus never the victim but almost always the Israeli's aggressor.[11] But what explains this persistent misrecognition of the Palestinians? Is it a public relations matter, a failure to convey their message to the rest of the world, especially to the US government and the dominant Western media? An affirmative answer would unduly simplify the problem. The problem of the Palestinians is first and foremost a structural problem, having more to do with a deeply ingrained image of the Palestinians, caught within the prism of Orientalism, and more recently the "War on Terror."

As an alternative to a Levinasian account of radical alterity, which is at once ahistorical and historically biased when it comes to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Žižek and others have productively turned to the notion "homo sacer" in their discussion of the abject condition of the Palestinians. *Homo sacer* is a legal notion, of course, brought back in ethical and political circles by Giorgio Agamben. In ancient Roman jurisprudence, "homo sacer" designated the excluded or exiled Other *par excellence*, someone who is cast out of the community, who could be killed with impunity by anyone but whose life lacked any sacrificial value (since it no longer possessed any worth). Living in the occupied territories, where psychological humiliation is part of everyday existence, Palestinians can be said to occupy the undesirable position of the *homines sacri*; Palestinians have become non-citizens dwelling in zones of exclusion, perpetually robbed of their dignity, reduced to "bare life," and made to appear to an international public as less than human—that is, barbaric, irrational, and evil. Žižek exposes the Palestinians' overdetermination:

> The logic of *homo sacer* is clearly discernible in the way the Western media report from the occupied West Bank: when the Israeli Army, in what Israel itself describes as a 'war' operation, attacks the Palestinian police and sets about systematically destroying the Palestinian infrastructure, Palestinian resistance is cited as proof that we are dealing with terrorists. This paradox is inscribed into the very notion of a 'war on terror'—a strange war in which the enemy is criminalised if he defends himself and returns fire with fire. ("Are We in a War?" par. 3)[12]

Their designation as terrorists functions to dehumanize Palestinians (they are *only* terrorists) and to forestall their inclusion (as mature rational agents) in any serious and balanced peace negotiations: Israel needs a true partner in peace, goes the argument, which requires that Palestinians renounce their "identity" as terrorists. According to this perverse reasoning, the Israeli military is helping the Palestinian people overcome themselves through its targeted assassinations of Hamas leaders, which of course comes with acceptable "collateral damage." We could even say that Israelis are engaged in their own "civilizing mission," using force only in order to achieve a noble end. Lacking the "concept of compromise," Arabs, according to former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, are doomed to barbarism, while Israel, in an obscenely self-serving assessment, represents a "vanguard of culture against barbarism … a villa in the middle of a jungle," a "protective wall" to the West (qtd. in Slater 180).

Israel's more recent 2009 Gaza invasion crystallized the Palestinians status as *homines sacri*. The failure to generate outrage among the general American public could be explained as a result of Israeli censorship, which successfully limited the visual transmission of the Palestinian devastation on cable news outlets, neutralizing, in turn, the potentially unsettling effects of pathos in the observer (the American public) of Palestinian suffering. Yet such an explanation is again at best only partial. What contributed greatly to this indifference, or failure to empathize with an all-too-distant Other, to see their lives as "grievable," as Judith Butler's puts it in her most recent book *Frames of War*, was again the relatively unchallenged ideological narrative—the Israelis as victims, and the Palestinians as aggressors—that pre-existed the Gaza war and continues to inform if not determine the American public's (mis)understanding of the Palestinian question.[13]

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg is a case in point. Justifying Israel's right to defend itself, Bloomberg said: "I can only think what would happen in this country if somebody was lobbing missiles onto our shores or across the border." On Israel's brutal disproportional response to Hamas' firing of rockets into Israel, Bloomberg was equally unyielding, providing us again with a hypothetical example: "If you're in your apartment and some emotionally disturbed person is banging on your door,

screaming, 'I'm going to come through this door and kill you!' do you want us to respond with one police officer, which is proportional, or with all the resources at our command?" Fortunately, yet also sadly, this all-too-common frame or narrative found a critical response not from the mainstream media but from late-night comedian Jon Stewart, who, on Comedy Central's cable program the *Daily Show*, humorously deconstructed the framing of the problem, the narrative of victim and perpetrator with this follow-up to Bloomberg's comment: "I guess it depends if I forced that guy to live in my hallway… and make him go through checkpoints every time he has to take a sh*t!" (qtd. in Hishmeh n.p.). We can of course radicalize further Stewart's response by saying "it depends if I kicked that guy out of his own home, and now live in it…and took out a restraining order on him."

Like the Sabra and Shatila massacres, the Gaza war made visible the ethico-political inadequacies of seeing the Jew as *simply* the Other. America's "War on Terror," along with its clear and distinct logic of good and evil, facilitated even further the US identification with Israel, as well as the Palestinians' identification with international terrorism. While the Israelis were depicted as a mirror image of the Americans (unjustly shocked and traumatized by the violence of the Islamic Other[14]), Palestinians—like the terrorists or "Islamo-fascists" who attacked America on 9/11—were depicted as profoundly evil, hating the freedom of Israelis and their democratic way of life.[15] This Manichean way of interpreting the Gaza offensive puts the blame of civilian casualties squarely on Hamas and thus helps to preserve the self-proclaimed moral superiority of the Israeli government—exemplified in the self-righteous claim of possessing the "world's most moral army." This mythic view of the Israeli military, however, faced serious objections from *within*, not only from Israel's human rights groups but more significantly from some of its own veterans. For instance, one soldier, *under* condition of *anonymity* , testified as follows to his moral predicament and personal struggle to make sense of the prescribed rules of engagement:

> We were supposed to... burst through the lower door, start shooting inside and then... I call this murder... in effect, we were supposed to go up floor by floor, and any person we identified, we were supposed to shoot. I initially asked myself:

> *Where is the logic in this*? From above they said it was permissible, because anyone who remained in the sector and inside Gaza City was in effect condemned, a terrorist, because they hadn't fled. (qtd. in Harel n.p.; emphasis added)

The logic is unfortunately all too clear; the logic that justifies the murder of innocent civilians is precisely the same logic that fixes the identity of terrorists and victims according to a phantasmatic field, and places the burden of proving one's innocence on those deemed guilty by reason of ethnic and religious affiliations. Seeing the possibility of war crimes in the actions of the "world's most moral army" in effect demystifies Israel's exclusive claim to victimhood,[16] "humanizes" the enemy, opening the possibility of not treating the Palestinian as "homo sacer" (the Palestinian is seen as someone who can be both killed and murdered). It also introduces a critical distance between the history of Jews and the current politics of Israel. Recognition of the former does not entail a blind endorsement of the latter. Judith Butler, speaking as a Jew herself, argues along these lines for a self-scrutinizing use of victimhood: "historically we are now in the position in which Jews cannot be understood always and only as presumptive victims.... No political ethics can start with the assumption that Jews monopolize the position of victim" (*The Precarious Life* 103).

Badiou, for his part, articulates his objection in slightly different terms, calling for dislodging the meaning of the Jew from the hegemony of "the tripod of the *Shoah*, the State of Israel and the Talmudic Tradition," which, he says, "stigmatizes and exposes to public contempt anyone who contends that it is, in all rigour, possible to subscribe to a universalist and egalitarian sense of this word" (*Polemics* 230). Consistent with the thrust of his philosophy, Badiou favors a rhetoric of the *concrete* universal (as opposed to Jewish universalism—a universalism, as we have seen, that posits and sustains the Jew as exemplary victim only by denying others, such as the Palestinians, the claim to victimhood). Badiou's universalism demands a radical reconfiguring of Jewish identity, as otherwise than irreproachable victim, racist Zionist, and intolerably religious. To his credit, Badiou applies the same logic to the Palestinian or Arab signifier:

> A more immediately relevant consequence is that the signifier 'Palestinian' or 'Arab' should not be glorified any more than

> is permitted for the signifier 'Jew'. As a result, the legitimate solution to the Middle East conflict is not the dreadful institution of two barbed-wire states. The solution is the creation of a secular and democratic Palestine, *one subtracted from all predicates*, and which, in the school of Paul—who declared that, *in view of the universal*, "there is no longer Jew nor Greek" and that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing"—would show that it is perfectly possible to create a place in these lands where, from a political point of view and regardless of the apolitical continuity of customs, *there is "neither Arab nor Jew"* (*Polemics* 164; emphasis added).

Uncompromising in his rejection of identity politics, Badiou advocates a *philosophy of subtraction*, a philosophy that suspends or strips away the inessential in order to get at a "generic humanity" (*Infinite Thought* 51).

Badiou can be seen here as extending Gilles Deleuze's own illuminating observation on the type of identitarian claims made both by Israelis and Palestinians. In a 1982 interview with Elias Sanbar titled "The Indians of Palestine," Deleuze offers the following commentary:

> The opening pages of the first issue of your journal [*La Revue d'Études Palestiniennes*] contain a manifesto: we are "a people like any other people." The sense of this declaration is multiple. In the first place, it is a reminder, or a cry. The Palestinians are constantly reproached with refusing to recognize Israel. Look, say the Israelis, they want to destroy us. But for more than 50 years now, the Palestinians have been struggling for recognition as a people. In the second place, the declaration marks an opposition with the manifesto of Israel, which says 'we are not a people like any other people' because of our transcendence and the enormity of our persecutions. (199)

Both of these passages capture the ambivalent exemplarity of the Palestinians, each passage highlighting a different aspect of their exemplarity. Deleuze's claim that Palestinians are "'a people like any other people'" stresses their representative status; they too hunger for recognition and suffer from the lack of it. Badiou's passage is perhaps more abstract, pointing to a social reality still to come, where in their secular,

universalist appeal, an appeal open to all political subjects, Palestinians will compel Jews and Arabs alike to bracket communal interests, to overcome their outdated logic of particularism, their pragmatic and phantasmatic attachments to religious and ethnic differences, and embrace a shared co-existence under new universal ideals. Here, the exemplarity of the Palestinians would reside not in their uniqueness, instantiated in their victimhood and suffering (past and present), but in the boldness and courage of their political vision, in their *practice of subtraction*. Likewise, Israelis could affirm an *alternative* universality by deciding to rethink the very notion of a "Jewish state," abandoning its myth of a sacred origin in favor of a more democratic and egalitarian political regime.[17]

Yet is there another way to address the shortcomings of identity politics without adopting a universalist stance? Is it really a matter of choosing between the unity of Humanity (a prescriptive universalism) or an ethics of alterity (a resilient particuliarism)? It depends, of course, on the meaning one finally ascribes to alterity or difference. In the context of the Nation-State, preserving difference, as we have seen, takes the form of social antagonism. The phenomenon of Israel dramatizes this point, since its antagonism is not only directed against Palestinians and its defenders but also against *other* Jews ("the Jews of the Jew," as it were). Žižek describes the latter attitude as a "Zionist anti-Semitism":

> [W]ith the establishment of the Jewish Nation-State, a new figure of the Jew emerged: a Jew resisting identification with the State of Israel, refusing to accept the State of Israel as his true home, a Jew who subtracts himself from this State. This Jew includes the State of Israel among the states towards which he insists on maintaining a distance… It is this uncanny Jew who is the object of what one cannot but designate as Zionist anti-Semitism: Zionists perceive him as the foreign excess disturbing their Nation-State community. ("The Strange Rise" n.p.)

Rescuing *and* updating this other (and more productive) genealogy of the Jew as profoundly other to him- or herself, always in *excess* of his or her existing phantasmatic and symbolic identity complicates a simple choice between universalism (the transcendence of one's facticity) and

particularism (the mystification of one's predicates).[18] For this Jew, the call for election not only takes the form of suspicion toward the state of Israel but of radical skepticism toward his or her election, sustaining, in the words of Jacques Derrida, "the terrible and indecisive experience of…election" (31).

Detaching the signifier Jew from any ahistorical ontological claims opens it up to inscription within different, less totalizing, less certain and more provisional systems of signification. Palestinian critic Edward Said made ample use of such a possibility in one of his last interviews. Responding to his Israeli interlocutor's observation that "[he] sound[s] very Jewish," Said boldly concurred: "Of course. I'm the last Jewish intellectual. You don't know anyone else. All your other Jewish intellectuals are now suburban squires. From Amos Oz to all these people here in America. So I'm the last one. The only true follower of Adorno. Let me put it this way: I'm a Jewish-Palestinian" (2000).[19] Playfully troping the signifier Jew, Said creatively gestures toward the possibility of thinking beyond the Jew and Arab as monolithic differences, producing his own unlikely example of *the Jewish-Palestinian*. Thinking the Palestinian as Jewish today is clearly not an attempt to silence Jews, to speak for them, to appropriate their trauma, but Said's "Levinasian" (I dare say) gesture toward rethinking the Jew (and his own Palestinian identity) as *otherwise than being*—not by abandoning the language of difference, but by traversing it and adapting it, short-circuiting, in turn, any fixed or timeless narrative of the victim.

Notes

1. For Sartre, the Jew's identity persists in its defiance of France's assimilative Republican ideal and demoded bourgeois values: "Jewish authenticity consists in choosing oneself *as Jew*—that is, in realizing one's Jewish condition. The authentic Jew abandons the myth of the universal man…he ceases to run away from himself and to be ashamed of his own kind" (136). For other examples of continental philosophers and critics using the Jew as a privileged sign for alterity, see, in particular, Jean-François Lyotard's *Heidegger and "the Jews"* and *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute;* Maurice Blanchot's "Being Jewish" in *The Infinite Conversation*; Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*; Jacques Derrida's *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida*; and Emmanuel Levinas's *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*.

2. Joseph Massad traces this intellectual bias in favor of the Jew from Sartre to Žižek. I wish to nuance Massad's view by looking more carefully at the ways some of these philosophers have scrutinized the ideological deployment of the Jew in the realm of public discourse. See Massad's "The Legacy of Jean-Paul Sartre."

3. The opposition Jew/Arab is itself questionable, since it juxtaposes a primarily religious difference (Jew) with an exclusively ethnic one (Arab). Imagining the Arab as the Other of the Jew reveals the deep connection of the Jew to the Nation-State of Israel. The Jew's enemy/Other is Israel's enemy, the Arab states (although in recent years, in the context of the "War on Terror," Israel's enemies include non-Arab states like Iran, under the broader category of the Islamic Other). For a lucid account of the discursive construction of the enemy in this context, see Gil Anidjar's *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*.

4. "If there were only two people in the world, there would be no need for law courts because I would always be responsible for and before, the other. As soon as there are three, the ethical relationship with the other becomes political and enters into the totalizing discourse of ontology. We can never completely escape from the language of ontology and politics" (Levinas, "Dialogue" 21–22).

5. Levinas puts the matter in terms of a *potential* contradiction between these two distinct realms: "[T]here's a direct contradiction between ethics and politics, if both these demands are taken to the extreme" ("Ethics and Politics" 292).

6. See, in particular, Eric Marty's *Une querelle avec Alain Badiou, philosophe*.

7. For Joseph Massad, such philo-Semitism not only informs Western media coverage but also conditions much of the Left's discourse on the Israel/Palestinian conflict. Many so-called progressive intellectuals remain "blind to the ultimate achievement of Israel: the transformation of the Jew into the anti-Semite, and the Palestinian into the Jew" (par. 17).

8. Cécile Winter makes a similar point: "[T]he ideological frame mounted at Nuremberg laid the foundations for a durable edifice. The 'Crime' against 'Humanity', the first, the incomparable and absolute, the inaccessible, definitive yardstick of all others, elevated its victims to exemplary status. The 'Victims', once jews, became 'Jews'. 'Jew', that is, turned into a metonymical signifier for Humanity… 'Jew' is the Victim par excellence" (223).

9. Levinas warns Jews not to take this universality lightly, that their election comes with an even greater sense of duty, an infinite responsibility to and for the Other: "We have the reputation of considering ourselves to be a chosen people, and this reputation greatly wrongs this universalism. The idea of a chosen people must not be taken as a sign of pride. It does not involve being

aware of exceptional rights, but of exceptional duties. It is the prerogative of a moral consciousness itself. It knows itself at the centre of the world and for it the world is not homogeneous: for I am always alone in being able to answer the call, I am irreplaceable in my assumption of responsibility. Being chosen involves a surplus of obligations for which the 'I' of moral consciousness utters" (*Difficult Freedom* 176–77).

10. For a critical account of the American media's preferential treatment given to Israel, see Marda Dunsky's *Pens and Swords: How the American Mainstream Media Report the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*.

11. Candidate Obama's comment that "no one has suffered more than the Palestinians" generated a fury of objections, which subsequently led him to qualify and diminish the full force of the statement, blaming the cause of the suffering on Palestinian leadership: "nobody has suffered more than the Palestinian people from the failure of the Palestinian leadership to recognize Israel, to renounce violence, and to get serious about negotiating peace and security for the region" (South Carolina Democratic Debate n.p.). This is a myopic judgment, lacking both nuance (all the causes mentioned are internal ones) and political courage (a missed opportunity to challenge the political status quo), which is also tantamount to blaming the victim.

12. Derek Gregory also notes, "Israel's offensive operations were designed to turn the Palestinian people not only into enemies but into aliens, and in placing them outside the modern, figuratively and physically, they were constructed as…*homines sacri*" (187).

13. This emphasis of the management or conditioning of grievability can be seen as a further qualification to the Levinasian *face-to-face* encounter (understood as a privileged pre-discursive or unmediated space outside of power). "It is not enough to say, in a Levinasian way," Butler argues, "that the claim is made upon me prior to my knowing and as an inaugurating instance of my coming into being. That may be formally true, but its truth is of no use to me if I lack the conditions for responsiveness that allow me to apprehend it in the midst of this social and political life" (*Frames of War* 179).

14. The notion of "Islamic terrorism" makes terrorism "constitutive of the very *identity* of Islam" (Žižek, *Iraq* 45).

15. For example, Democrat Representative Eliot Engel from New York stated, "The terrorist organization that runs Gaza called Hamas…thinking that it can use terrorism as a way of somehow getting its state, must understand that in order to gain acceptance of nations in the free world, that it needs to renounce terror, that it needs to recognize Israel's right to exist, and that it needs to abide by all previous resolutions that were signed by the Palestinian Authority. It doesn't do it because it's a terrorist state. It doesn't do it because its vow is to destroy the Jewish State of Israel. It doesn't do it because, like Hezbollah and like Osama bin Laden and like al Qaeda [sic],

it thinks it can use terrorism to establish its aims and goals, but it cannot." Republican Representative Dana Rohrabacher from California offered a similar one-dimensional assessment of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict: "The hate-filled radicals who launched missiles into Israel—Hamas triggermen, not Israeli pilots—are the ones who are really responsible for the horrible mayhem we are witnessing in Gaza. The radical Islamists ruthlessly and without any remorse did what they knew would bring retaliation and result in the slaughter of their own people. The hatred of Israel in the hearts of these Hamas radicals clearly outweighs their commitment to the safety and well being of their own people. That's a hard fact. And that after shooting rockets into Israel, they hide among and behind non-combatants—women, and children—makes their actions even more despicable." These comments, and those of many other government officials, can be found on AIPAC's web-document titled "American Leaders Speak Out in Support of Israel's Right to Self Defense." While it might be convenient for such US leaders to draw a "moral" distinction between the guilty Hamas and the innocent Palestinian population (and thus acknowledging that not all Palestinians are *a priori* evil), the distinction itself should be seen as profoundly ideological, distorting the all-pervasive logic that interprets and transforms any violent form of resistance (even in self-defense) to Israeli military into an act of terrorism. Before Hamas, it was of course the more secular Palestinian Liberation Organization that was subjected to the same logic.

16. The sheer imbalance in the death toll (totaling 13 Israelis and 1,417 Palestinians, as estimated by The Palestinian Center for Human Rights in Gaza) troubles the portrayal of the Israeli as sole victim.

17. Israel as a Jewish state and Israel as a truly democratic nation are mutually exclusive. As Etienne Balibar puts it, Israel as a Jewish state "is not only relentlessly expanding at the expense of Palestinians, but, within its own borders, it reduces them to second-class citizenship deprived of numerous rights and symbolically excluded from equality with 'real Israelis' in owning their common land" ("Universalité de la cause palestinienne," *Le Monde diplomatique* 27).

18. Similarly yearning to liberate the word "Jew" from its sense of destiny, Judith Butler writes: "The 'Jew' is to be found, substantively, as this diasporic excess, a historically and culturally changing identity that takes no single form and has no single telos" (*Precarious Life* 126).

19. Alain Finkielkraut sarcastically objects to Said's words, seeing in them a further assimilation and policing of Jews: "These are strange times for real Jews. Not long ago, they were on the lookout, ready to strike down anti-Semitism wherever it dared rear its head. They were determined never again to succumb to hatred, and to clip the wings of anyone who spoke of them as 'dirty Jews.' What they weren't expecting—and what makes it all the more disconcerting—was to be faced with a grievance that is in its form moral

and not brutish, virtuous and not vile, an altruistic grievance, sure of its legitimacy, full of kindness, and steeped in concern. While they are used to hearing themselves denounced as Jewish traitors, they did not expect to be denounced as traitors to their Jewishness" (26). What Finkielkraut fails to appreciate about Said's comment is its profound ethical thrust, its demystifying and denaturalizing call, a call not intended to diminish the agency of "real" Jews but to unsettle reified narratives about "authentic" Arab and Jewish identities.

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Chapter 6: Portions of this essay previously appeared in an essay, "Terrorism in Film Media: An International View of Theatrical Films," in the *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, volume 4, number 2, published by Intellect. Permission to reprint is gratefully acknowledged.

The events of September 11, 2001, have had a strong impact on theory and the humanities. They call for a new philosophy, as the old philosophy is inadequate to account for them. They also call for reflection on theory, philosophy, and the humanities in general. While the recent location and killing of Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, in Pakistan on May 2, 2011—almost ten years after he and his confederates carried out the 9/11 attacks—may have ended the "war on terror," it has not ended the journey to understand what it means to be a theorist in the age of *phobos* nor the effort to create a new philosophy that measures up with life in the new millennium. It is in the spirit of hope—the hope that theory will help us to understand the age of terror—that the essays in this collection are presented.

> "*Terror, Theory, and the Humanities* could hardly be more timely. Read it and weep—and then start planning for the future."
>
> Marjorie Perloff, *Stanford University*

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