

Circolo  
antirafia.club



Reader

Images

Notes

*Notes*

icular time was extremely  
the Italian society, because  
ive in fear and hopelessness.  
ing of his carrier, Andreotti  
as a Salvator, and probably  
son he led the government for  
Paolo Sorrentino is capable of  
a movie that moves between  
of documentary cinema and  
.. It was particularly interesting to  
ow the viewers at the screening of  
day November 1st 2018 were so  
ved in discovering the person of Giulio  
uretti. Consequently Sorrentino's  
n started a conversation between the  
students, on the realization of how the  
Mafia can be found in our current politics  
and education environments.

## 2

From a completely different prospective,  
*I a Mafia Uccide solo d'Estate* (the  
'Mafia kills only in the summer') by Pif is  
drawing a story from the people. The  
movie is the story of Arturo, a young boy  
whose obsession with the Mafia's casual  
presence in his city surpasses even  
his passion for Flora, the schoolmate  
who remains his main love interest until  
adulthood. Pif uses Arturo's story as the  
vehicle to narrate the most tragic events in  
Italy's recent history. Pif started his carrier  
as a tv journalist with a particular recording  
style: always using a hand-camera to

shoot everything, even himself. This ty  
of shot is preset during the movie, wh  
the main character, Arturo, becomes  
journalist. Pif is famous for using hu  
his tv report, and he uses it in this r  
Through a series of comic acts an  
look into growing up during the  
Andreotti mandate in Palermo, the mai  
particular, in Palermo, the mai  
most notorious Mafia crimes  
also how difficult it was for th  
stay legal and trust the insti  
those years. This is somet  
interested Stefano Harne  
'The New Rules of Algori  
(p.447—457 in Former!  
Contemporary after 19

It's fascinating to  
between the Italian p  
institutions and how  
the Yale School of  
trust and believe th  
conversation that  
are not feeling n  
that they are liv  
community.

The mov  
of the Italian  
Lead, previ  
Pif also us  
from thos  
emphas  
watchin

*Images*



GOVERN

**G O V E R**

In a previous lecture on "apparatuses of security," I  
plain the emergence of a set of problems specific to the  
population; on closer inspection, it turned out that we would  
need to take into account the series: security, government,  
and now like to try to begin making an inventory of this ques-  
tion. The Middle Ages as "advice to the prince," concern-  
ing the exercise of his subjects, to the mid-thirteenth century  
and up to the sixteenth century, that  
of the eighteenth century, that  
political treatises  
not yet works on  
a s

on closer account the service he into analyze to try to begin  
should now like to. Throughout the Middle Ages and during  
multitude of treatises presented as "advice to the exercise of power,  
ing his acceptance and respect of his subjects, from the d  
obedience to him, the more striking fact is that, from the d  
and so on. But a notable series, and not yet treated, that of politi  
fifteenth century, to the end of the eighteenth, that of political  
sixteenth century, as a general discussion of the government of  
sixteenth century, posed the question of personal conduct of  
exactly "advice to the prince," and not works seems to me to diverge ques  
tions. One that ritualization of souls and lives, the entire theme of  
oneself, or the government of pastoral doctrine. There is government of  
item too of the Protestant pastoral of pedagogy that emerges and  
Catholic and the great problematic of pedagogy that emerges and  
children and the great problematic of pedagogy that emerges and

Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality,'  
in J. Faubion, ed. Power: The Essential Works  
of Foucault, 1954—1984 Vol. 3 p. 201—222

p. 123—128

Hal Foster, Real Fictions  
Artforum International, 2017

p. 129—159

Hannah Arendt, *The origins of  
totalitarianism*, Hancourt, Orlando 195,

p. 161

Roberto Saviano, 'Gomorrah' in the New  
York Time Magazine, Nov, 14, 2007

p. 163—167

International Institutions and Global  
Governance Program, Emma Welch, *Illicit  
Networks: Mafia States, NonState Actors*,  
New York, 2012

p. 169—175

Vincenzo Scalia *The transformations of the  
sicilian mafia under postfordism*  
<http://www.centroimpastato.com>

p. 175—177

Rodrigo Almodóvar *Melancholia*

p. 57—71

CineMundi

Wittgenstein

Espresso Speciale

1990

Cinecirc  
antimafia



# Notes



In May 2018, the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Salvini released a video in which he stated he opposed the police escort protecting the writer and anti-mafia activist, Roberto Saviano. The police escort has protected Saviano since 2006, the publication year of his non-fiction book ‘Gomorra.’ Since that year, Saviano has not lived any kind of ‘normal’ life because he has been threatened by the mafia. The mafia is no longer only a stereotypical image provided by Hollywood movies. The modern mafia can take any form and shape and can be rightly related to almost every socio-political aspect of our lives.

Please, join the ‘cinecircolo’ that will take place in the Atrium, 1156 Chapel Street at 8.30pm every Thursday in November.

[www.antimafia.club](http://www.antimafia.club)

Thursday,

November 1<sup>st</sup>



November 8<sup>th</sup>



November 15<sup>th</sup>



November 29<sup>th</sup>



**Il Divo**  
by Paolo Sorrentino  
(Italian and English Subtitles)  
1h 58m

**La Mafia Uccide Solo d'Estate**  
by Pif  
(Italian and English Subtitles)  
1h 30m

**Goodfellas**  
by Martin Scorsese  
(English and English Subtitles)  
2h 28m

**Gomorra**  
by Matteo Garrone  
(Italian and English Subtitles)  
2h 27m



A cinecircolo is a place where people can meet, watch movies and afterwards have a free discussion. Historically this kind of place was created by the Church. During the '60s the Church was responsible for deciding what type of movie could go to festivals like Venice and Cannes, and which films needed to be censored. The creation of these places helped facilitate discussion between audience and director and allowed audiences to view the movie without censorship. Censorship is not a new phenomenon, especially for Italian people. Italians and others could find censorship in many different fields: in Politics, in Journalism, in the Church, and even in Education. Censorship became an important aspect in the development of the Italian culture and society. Going back in time, the first episode of censorship in Italy dates to Socrates; nowadays, censorship can be found almost everywhere.

Roberto Saviano, a writer and anti-mafia activist, in 2006 published a non-fiction book 'Gomorra.' The book is the story of the infiltration and investigation by Roberto of various areas of business and daily life controlled or affected by the criminal organization Camorra. From that year, Roberto has not lived any kind of normal life because he has been threatened by the Mafia. In May 2018, the new Prime Minister of Italy, Matteo Salvini,

publicly stated his opposition to the police escort protecting the writer. It's not the first time that an Italian Prime Minister has made hate speech against anti-mafia activists. In 2013, Silvio Berlusconi as well stated his opposition and concern to the Magistrates involved in Mafia trials.

It's difficult to track and estimate a date when the Mafia 'originated'; however, incidents involving the Mafia can still be found today. The Mafia is a complex type of organization that is still part of our society and community. For these reasons, during the month of November 2018, the Atrium, 1156 Chapel Street was converted to host a cinecircolo every Thursday with the subject of the Mafia. The movies selected were: *Il Divo* by Paolo Sorrentino, *La Mafia Uccide solo d'Estate* by Pif, *Goodfellas* by Martine Scorsese and *Gomorra* by Matteo Garrone. This type of festival aimed to be one of the first attempts to prompt conversation on this complex subject, especially from a US perspective. What is the Mafia nowadays? Did we never experience an episode of Mafia? Can we find episodes of the Mafia in our community?

In the New Haven cinecircolo, each movie was introduced by different professionals from different fields. I introduced the first movie, and subsequently Michael LoPiano, a PhD student from the History department at Yale, introduced , and Maxfield Fulton,

a PhD student from the Art History department, introduced Gomorra. Each speaker was asked to give an introduction of the movie and to share personal thoughts, opinions and questions. It was interesting to see how my interest in this subject matched in many different ways the type of research that these people are doing in their own departments. Michael is focusing on Renaissance relations of the Church with Politics in Poland and in Italy. The son of a third generation Italian in New Haven, he shared also a personal experiences about how Italian immigrants were seen during immigration. Maxfield is currently study and research between the Art History department and the Media Film Study. He gave an introduction of the cinematic world that Matteo Garrone tried to present in the movie Gomorra. Each Thursday we kept the same format: at 8.30pm an introduction of the movie was made, followed by the screening and a conversation around what we saw and personal thoughts.

Having brought such a complex subject and one not so common for an American audience, I have received different responses and feedback. People felt, at first, shocked that such a subject was 'still present in our daily society' and couldn't believe that the Mafia is still part of our political environment. It was interesting to see and analyze ways people reacted to the event. A lot of attention was paid to

the digital platform ([www.antimafia.club](http://www.antimafia.club)), where people through the web engaged better with the subject than people present at the screening.

With this event, my main goal was to bring attention to, but more important conversation on, this subject. The Mafia should no longer be an allegorical image of a clan in a bad part of the town. The modern Mafia can assume different shapes and be present in different fields. For example, when something doesn't look completely right and transparent, and especially goes against someone else's rights, that can be called a 'Mafia'.

## 1

*Il Divo* by Paolo Sorrentino is a cinematic portrait of the seven-time Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, whose controversial legacy peaked when he was tried for Mafia ties and subsequently acquitted. Giulio Andreotti was a leader with close ties to the Vatican and was also convicted for the murder of Italian journalist Carmine Pecorelli. The movie starts from the seventh re-election of Andreotti as a Prime Minister and ends with the start of the 'Big Trial' when the first allegation against Andreotti was made. The movie demonstrates the collaboration between Mafia and the Italian State.

"For a long time, one of the characteristic privileges of sovereign

power was the right to decide life and death." This how Micheal Foucault starts his chapter 'Right of death and power over life' (p. 258—273, from the History of Sexuality). Using Foucault to analyze the life of Andreotti and the relation with Mafia, I find it interesting to point out how politics and the Mafia never lost the 'privilege' that Foucault is talking about: to decide the life or the death of another person. In the beginning of the movie, we are drawn into a parallel between the Andreotti re-election and some notorious Mafia crime and murders. Sorrentino decided to shoot this beginning part of the movie almost in the dark, to underscore the relation of these criminal acts. At the same time, Sorrentino is focusing on the personal life of Andreotti and leaving outside how the Italian society was evolving. However, it's important to point out that the current body of students at Yale School of Art was born between 1980—1995. This generation of students is the daughters and the sons of the generations born after World War II. In Europe, especially, this generation was the one that fought for a better future, a better work environment and better rights. The current students are the sons and daughters of the generation that during the 1977 (year that Franco Bifo Berardi considers 'the start of the future') were in the streets of Bologna and Roma to protest. We must not forget that the same years of these protest, were Years of

Lead. That particular time was extremely sensitive for the Italian society, because they used to live in fear and hopelessness. At the beginning of his carrier, Andreotti was seeing as a Salvator, and probably for this reason he led the government for 45 years. Paolo Sorrentino is capable of creating a movie that moves between borders of documentary cinema and beyond. It was particularly interesting to see, how the viewers at the screening of Thursday November 1st 2018 were so involved in discovering the person of Giulio Andreotti. Consequently Sorrentino's film started a conversation between the students, on the realization of how the Mafia can be found in our current politics and education environments.

## 2

From a completely different prospective, *La Mafia Uccide solo d'Estate* (the Mafia kills only in the summer) by Pif is drawing a story from the people. The movie is the story of Arturo, a young boy whose obsession with the Mafia's casual presence in his city surpasses even his passion for Flora, the schoolmate who remains his main love interest until adulthood. Pif uses Arturo's story as the vehicle to narrate the most tragic events in Italy's recent history. Pif started his carrier as a tv journalist with a particular recording style: always using a hand-camera to

shoot everything, even himself. This type of shot is preset during the movie, where the main character, Arturo, becomes a tv journalist. Pif is famous for using humor his tv report, and he uses it in this movie. Through a series of comic acts and funny stories he gives the audience a good look into growing up during the Giulio Andreotti mandate in the south of Italy, in particular, in Palermo, the main city of the most notorious Mafia crimes. The movie also shows how difficult it was for the people to stay legal and trust the institutions during those years. This is something that also interested Stefano Harney in his essay 'The New Rules of Algorithmic Institutions' (p.447—457 in Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989).

It's fascinating to make a connection between the Italian public's mistrust of institutions and how the student body at the Yale School of Art cannot completely trust and believe the institution. The conversation that the movie invoked was compelling in how it revealed how students are not feeling represented in the institution that they are living in and working in as a community.

The movies also show the normal life of the Italian society during the Year of Lead, previously introduced from 'Il Divo.' Pif also used a mix between real footage from those years and cinematic footage, to emphasize the relation with the audience watching the movie. The result is having

a compelling and real story that current Italian people can relate to. This movie was a challenge for an American audience. However, it was interesting to examine how such an Italian story, could affect other cultures. Bringing to the screen the life of normal people, the film brought also the vulnerability and struggles that middle and working class experienced. This movie clearly states the relations that Mafia had not only in the political field, but also in economic territory. The Mafia dictates also how and where people could make their economic transactions (for example where you could get groceries). Bringing to the screen these topics allows cultures that are not Italian to project themselves into the story. The current body of students at the Yale School of Art is made of a mix of different cultures and different economic classes. The generous scholarships that help every student in the School makes for a more diverse body of students. The primary conversation that the movie brought was the sharing of personal stories regarding personal economic struggles. It was fascinating to come to the realization that we are able to talk about these topics in a such a privileged institution.

### 3

The work of Martin Scorsese didn't need any particular introduction, since he is probably the only well-known director in

this cinecircolo series. Goodfellas is one of those ‘classics’ that you think a lot of people have already watched. However, half of the audience present at the movie were watching it for the first time. The story of Goodfellas is based on the book ‘Wiseguy’ by Nicholas Pileggi. Scorsese is telling the story of a young man growing up in the mob who works very hard to advance himself through the ranks. During adulthood, he enjoys his life of money and luxury, but is oblivious to the horror that he causes. Drug addictions, sex, crimes, and few mistakes ultimately unravel his climb to the top. Scorsese has generated an important genre around Mafia and mob movies. The picture that he draws is of how Italian immigrants were seen in the United States after the big immigration. Illegal and under the table activities form the basis of this movie. Interesting for the discussion was the ‘an analysis of the grades of italo-american and yankee boys’ by Richard O.Ulin of Tufts University in the Fall 1965. “Since Americans of Italian background form a considerable segment of the American Population, the performance of Italo-American youngsters in the American public school deserve study. [...] Child’s Italian or American is penetrating analysis of second-generation New Haven Italians.” This is how the analysis report about Italian children in public schools started. It was interesting to compare the analysis of the work done at the time in the city of

New Haven with today. Michael LoPiano, PhD in the History department at Yale and also third-generation Italian in New Haven, introduced the movie. Michael was generous enough to share with the audience his personal experiences and also ask some interesting questions for further discussion: How do we look to immigrants nowadays? How do we relate to other cultures? The movie is making Hollywood pictures of what the Mafia is in the United States. Money, luxury, sex are fundamental elements during the movie. The pictures that Martine Scorsese is making definitely affected the view on how Italian people were seen in United States. Scorsese's version offers the closet picture of what people think about the Mafia—something outmoded and far from our community.

## 4

Gomorra was the last movie of the festival. It closes a circle. Moved by the words that the Prime Minister said about the escort that is protecting Saviano, I couldn't not include this movie as an ending. The movie, which is based on the book by Saviano, is the inside story of the clan Camorra. The Camorra is controlling Naples and the regions, creating a fortune out of cocaine corruption and chemical waste. The movie is projecting onto the screen different stories but all connected

to the Camorra clan. Some people are trying to fight the Camorra and steal the power, others are trying to hide from it. However, it is clear during the movie, that the Camorra is too large and too deeply embedded in Italy to be fought. The movie shows how the Mafia is deeply involved in many different fields. It stands alongside all the other anti-mafia movies revealing a complex subject. Additionally, it is clear why Roberto Saviano has been living in the dark since the publication of the book— bringing all these stories to the public eye definitely affected old and new generations. As a part of the new generation I wanted to show how the Mafia is still part in our community. The picture of the movie is cruel and real. The places, the story, the language are all elements that the audience can relate to. Everything seems to be too real. The audience was riveted to the film from the first minute until the end and in particular, I need to say thanks for the introduction of Maxfield. Max was able to articulate semiotically and visually all the different components of the movie. Through his words the audience was able to watch the movie with a different set of eyes. Max kept referring to the suggested readings— for the night in particular, the essay from Hal Foster. Max asked the audience if what we were seeing on the screen was real or not. How can we define what is real? What are our judge to prove it?

When I first conceived this event, I wasn't sure of what kind of result or goal I was looking for. I wanted to bring this subject of the Mafia and these questions into an American context and inside the institution that I'm part of. I wanted to start a critical conversation with the Yale community about the institution that was hosting us. Organizing, planning and executing this type of the event, is never easy, especially when it's made inside your studio/school space. The location (inside the Graphic Design department Atrium) definitely helped to have a sort of continuity of audience. This audience engaged with the festival on a deep level, and started to research on their own other stories and to think critically on the way they approach institutions. However, I was surprised and delighted

to also receive responses from different audience. People were emailing me or stopping me to know the reasons behind this project and also to engage with me through this subject.

What is next? What can we do? Definitely I hope that people that felt an attachment to the festival, will keep researching and asking more questions, even to themselves .I hope that this type of the event can be made in different contexts, also bringing different types of movies from different cultures. My final goal is to keep the conversation critical, in the way in which we are part of a community and how that could affect working among ourselves and with others.

Design, Write and Curate  
Simone Cutri

Edit  
Betsy Elisabeth

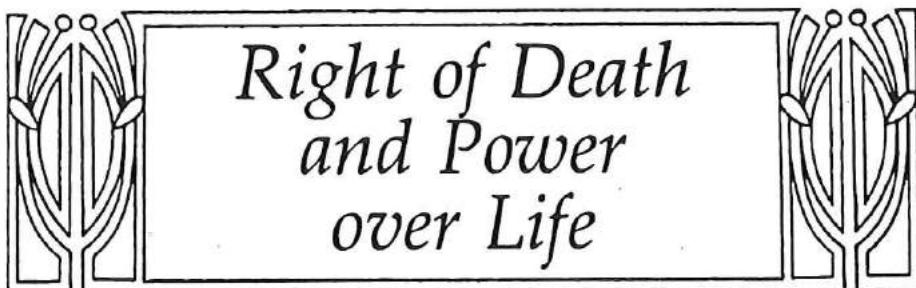
Support  
Yale School of Art  
1156 Chapel St  
New Haven, CT 06511

Thank you  
Michael LoPiano  
Maxfield Fulton  
everyone who participated

Cinecircolo is part of an  
antimafia collective started  
in Bologna in 1975 under  
Nando della Chiesa's son

# Reader

R.2



# *Right of Death and Power over Life*

(FROM *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I)

For a long time, one of the characteristic privileges of sovereign power was the right to decide life and death. In a formal sense, it derived no doubt from the ancient *patria potestas* that granted the father of the Roman family the right to "dispose" of the life of his children and his slaves; just as he had given them life, so he could take it away. By the time the right of life and death was framed by the classical theoreticians, it was in a considerably diminished form. It was no longer considered that this power of the sovereign over his subjects could be exercised in an absolute and unconditional way, but only in cases where the sovereign's very existence was in jeopardy: a sort of right of rejoinder. If he was threatened by external enemies who sought to overthrow him or contest his rights, he could then legitimately wage war, and require his subjects to take part in the defense of the state; without "directly proposing their death," he was empowered to "expose their life": in this sense, he wielded an "indirect" power over them of life and death.<sup>1</sup> But if someone dared to rise up against him and transgress his laws, then he could exercise a direct power over the offender's life: as punishment, the latter could be put to death. Viewed in this way, the power of life and death was not an absolute privilege: it was conditioned by the defense of the sovereign, and his own survival. Must we follow Hobbes in seeing it as the transfer to the prince of the natural right possessed by every individual to defend his life even if this meant the death of others? Or should it be regarded as a specific right that was manifested with the formation of that new juridical being, the sovereign?<sup>2</sup> In any case,

in its modern form—relative and limited—as in its ancient and absolute form, the right of life and death is a dissymmetrical one. The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the "power of life and death" was in reality the right to *take* life or *let* live. Its symbol, after all, was the sword. Perhaps this juridical form must be referred to a historical type of society in which power was exercised mainly as a means of deduction (*prélevement*), a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labor and blood, levied on the subjects. Power in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it.

Since the classical age, the West has undergone a very profound transformation of these mechanisms of power. "Deduction" has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them. There has been a parallel shift in the right of death, or at least a tendency to align itself with the exigencies of a life-administering power and to define itself accordingly. This death that was based on the right of the sovereign is now manifested as simply the reverse of the right of the social body to ensure, maintain, or develop its life. Yet wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century, and all things being equal, never before did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations. But this formidable power of death—and this is perhaps what accounts for part of its force and the cynicism with which it has so greatly expanded its limits—now presents itself as the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations. Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be de-

fended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed. And through a turn that closes the circle, as the technology of wars has caused them to tend increasingly toward all-out destruction, the decision that initiates them and the one that terminates them are in fact increasingly informed by the naked question of survival. The atomic situation is now at the end point of this process: the power to expose a whole population to death is the underside of the power to guarantee an individual's continued existence. The principle underlying the tactics of battle—that one has to be capable of killing in order to go on living—has become the principle that defines the strategy of states. But the existence in question is no longer the juridical existence of sovereignty; at stake is the biological existence of a population. If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population.

On another level, I might have taken up the example of the death penalty. Together with war, it was for a long time the other form of the right of the sword; it constituted the reply of the sovereign to those who attacked his will, his law, or his person. Those who died on the scaffold became fewer and fewer, in contrast to those who died in wars. But it was for the same reasons that the latter became more numerous and the former more and more rare. As soon as power gave itself the function of administering life, its reason for being and the logic of its exercise—and not the awakening of humanitarian feelings—made it more and more difficult to apply the death penalty. How could power exercise its highest prerogatives by putting people to death, when its main role was to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order? For such a power, execution was at the same time a limit, a scandal, and a contradiction. Hence capital punishment could not be maintained except by invoking less the enormity of the crime itself than the monstrosity of the

criminal, his incorrigibility, and the safeguard of society. One had the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others.

One might say that the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death. This is perhaps what explains that disqualification of death which marks the recent wanè of the rituals that accompanied it. That death is so carefully evaded is linked less to a new anxiety which makes death unbearable for our societies than to the fact that the procedures of power have not ceased to turn away from death. In the passage from this world to the other, death was the manner in which a terrestrial sovereignty was relieved by another, singularly more powerful sovereignty; the pageantry that surrounded it was in the category of political ceremony. Now it is over life, throughout its unfolding, that power establishes its domination; death is power's limit, the moment that escapes it; death becomes the most secret aspect of existence, the most "private." It is not surprising that suicide—once a crime, since it was a way to usurp the power of death which the sovereign alone, whether the one here below or the Lord above, had the right to exercise—became, in the course of the nineteenth century, one of the first conducts to enter into the sphere of sociological analysis; it testified to the individual and private right to die, at the borders and in the interstices of power that was exercised over life. This determination to die, strange and yet so persistent and constant in its manifestations, and consequently so difficult to explain as being due to particular circumstances or individual accidents, was one of the first astonishments of a society in which political power had assigned itself the task of administering life.

In concrete terms, starting in the seventeenth century, this power over life evolved in two basic forms; these forms were not antithetical, however; they constituted, rather, two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations. One of these poles—the first to be formed, it seems—centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured

by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines*: an *anatomo-politics of the human body*. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population*. The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed. The setting up, in the course of the classical age, of this great bipolar technology—anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life—characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through.

The old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life. During the classical period, there was a rapid development of various disciplines—universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birth rate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of "bio-power." The two directions taken by its development still appeared to be clearly separate in the eighteenth century. With regard to discipline, this development was embodied in institutions such as the army and the schools, and in reflections on tactics, apprenticeship, education, and the nature of societies, ranging from the strictly military analyses of Marshal de Saxe to the political reveries of Guibert or Servan. As for population controls, one notes the emergence of demography, the evaluation of the relationship between resources and inhabitants, the constructing of tables analyzing wealth and its circulation: the work of Quesnay, Moreau, and Süssmilch. The philosophy of the "ideologists," as a theory of ideas, signs, and the individual genesis of sensations, but also a theory of the

social composition of interests—ideology being a doctrine of apprenticeship, but also a doctrine of contracts and the regulated formation of the social body—no doubt constituted the abstract discourse in which one sought to coordinate these two techniques of power in order to construct a general theory of it. In point of fact, however, they were not to be joined at the level of a speculative discourse, but in the form of concrete arrangements (*agencement concrets*) that would go to make up the great technology of power in the nineteenth century: the deployment of sexuality would be one of them, and one of the most important.

This bio-power was, without question, an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. But this was not all it required; it also needed the growth of both these factors, their reinforcement as well as their availability and docility; it had to have methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern. If the development of the great instruments of the state, as *institutions* of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations, the rudiments of anatomo- and biopolitics, created in the eighteenth century as *techniques* of power present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them. They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony. The adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of the productive forces and the differential allocation of profit, was made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application. The investment of the body, its valorization, and the distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable.

One knows how many times the question has been raised concerning the role of an ascetic morality in the first formation of capitalism; but what occurred in the eighteenth century in some Western countries, an event bound up with the development of capitalism, was a different phenomenon, having perhaps a wider impact than the new morality; this was nothing less than the entry of life into history, that is, the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power, into the sphere of political techniques. It is not a question of claiming that this was the moment when the first contact between life and history was brought about. On the contrary, the pressure exerted by the biological on the historical had remained very strong for thousands of years; epidemics and famine were the two great dramatic forms of this relationship that was always dominated by the menace of death. But through a circular process, the economic—and primarily agricultural—development of the eighteenth century, and an increase in productivity and resources even more rapid than the demographic growth it encouraged, allowed a measure of relief from these profound threats: despite some renewed outbreaks, the period of great ravages from starvation and plague had come to a close before the French Revolution; death was ceasing to torment life so directly. But at the same time, the development of the different fields of knowledge concerned with life in general, the improvement of agricultural techniques, and the observations and measures relative to man's life and survival contributed to this relaxation: a relative control over life averted some of the imminent risks of death. In the space for movement thus conquered, and broadening and organizing that space, methods of power and knowledge assumed responsibility for the life processes and undertook to control and modify them. Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death.

and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body. If one can apply the term *bio-history* to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life. It is not that life has been totally integrated into techniques that govern and administer it; it constantly escapes them. Outside the Western world, famine exists, on a greater scale than ever; and the biological risks confronting the species are perhaps greater, and certainly more serious, than before the birth of microbiology. But what might be called a society's "threshold of modernity" has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.

This transformation had considerable consequences. It would serve no purpose here to dwell on the rupture that occurred then in the pattern of scientific discourse and on the manner in which the twofold problematic of life and man disrupted and redistributed the order of the classical episteme. If the question of man was raised—insofar as he was a specific living being, and specifically related to other living beings—the reason for this is to be sought in the new mode of relation between history and life: in this dual position of life that placed it at the same time outside history, in its biological environment, and inside human historicity, penetrated by the latter's techniques of knowledge and power. There is no need either to lay further stress on the proliferation of political technologies that ensued, investing the body, health, modes of subsistence and habitation, living conditions, the whole space of existence.

Another consequence of this development of bio-power was the growing importance assumed by the action of the norm, at the expense of the juridical system of the law. Law cannot help but be armed, and its arm *par excellence* is death; to those who transgress it, it replies, at least as a last resort, with that absolute menace. The law always refers to the sword. But a power whose task is to take charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms. It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm. I do not mean to say that the law fades into the background or that the institutions of justice tend to disappear, but rather that the law operates more and more as a norm, and that the judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory. A normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life. We have entered a phase of juridical regression in comparison with the pre-seventeenth-century societies we are acquainted with; we should not be deceived by all the constitutions framed throughout the world since the French Revolution, the codes written and revised, a whole continual and clamorous legislative activity: these were the forms that made an essentially normalizing power acceptable.

Moreover, against this power that was still new in the nineteenth century, the forces that resisted relied for support on the very thing it invested, that is, on life and man as a living being. Since the last century, the great struggles that have challenged the general system of power were not guided by the belief in a return to former rights, or by the age-old dream of a cycle of time or a Golden Age. One no longer aspired toward the coming of the emperor of the poor, or the kingdom of the latter days, or even the restoration of our imagined ancestral rights; what was demanded and what served as an objective was life, understood as the basic needs, man's concrete essence, the realization

of his potential, a plenitude of the possible. Whether or not it was utopia that was wanted is of little importance; what we have seen has been a very real process of struggle; life as a political object was in a sense taken at face value and turned back against the system that was bent on controlling it. It was life more than the law that became the issue of political struggles, even if the latter were formulated through affirmations concerning rights. The "right" to life, to one's body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and, beyond all the oppressions or "alienations," the "right" to rediscover what one is and all that one can be, this "right"—which the classical juridical system was utterly incapable of comprehending—was the political response to all these new procedures of power which did not derive, either, from the traditional right of sovereignty.

This is the background that enables us to understand the importance assumed by sex as a political issue. It was at the pivot of the two axes along which developed the entire political technology of life. On the one hand, it was tied to the disciplines of the body: the harnessing, intensification, and distribution of forces, the adjustment and economy of energies. On the other hand, it was applied to the regulation of populations, through all the far-reaching effects of its activity. It fitted in both categories at once, giving rise to infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or psychological examinations, to an entire micropower concerned with the body. But it gave rise as well to comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups taken as a whole. Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a standard for the disciplines and as a basis for regulations. This is why in the nineteenth century sexuality was sought out in the smallest details of individual existences; it was tracked down in behavior, pursued in dreams; it was suspected of underlying the least follies; it was traced back into the earliest years of childhood; it became the stamp of individuality—at the same time what enabled one to analyze the latter and what made it possible

to master it. But one also sees it becoming the theme of political operations, economic interventions (through incitements to or curbs on procreation), and ideological campaigns for raising standards of morality and responsibility: it was put forward as the index of a society's strength, revealing of both its political energy and its biological vigor. Spread out from one pole to the other of this technology of sex was a whole series of different tactics that combined in varying proportions the objective of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations.

Whence the importance of the four great lines of attack along which the politics of sex advanced for two centuries. Each one was a way of combining disciplinary techniques with regulative methods. The first two rested on the requirements of regulation, on a whole thematic of the species, descent, and collective welfare, in order to obtain results at the level of discipline; the sexualization of children was accomplished in the form of a campaign for the health of the race (precocious sexuality was presented from the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth as an epidemic menace that risked compromising not only the future health of adults but the future of the entire society and species); the hysterization of women, which involved a thorough medicalization of their bodies and their sex, was carried out in the name of the responsibility they owed to the health of their children, the solidity of the family institution, and the safeguarding of society. It was the reverse relationship that applied in the case of birth controls and psychiatrization of perversions: here the intervention was regulatory in nature, but it had to rely on the demand for individual disciplines and constraints (*dressages*). Broadly speaking, at the juncture of the "body" and the "population," sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death.

The blood relation long remained an important element in the mechanisms of power, its manifestations, and its rituals. For a society in which the systems of alliance, the political form of the sovereign, the differentiation into orders and castes, and the value of descent lines were predominant; for a society in which famine, epidemics, and violence made death imminent, blood constituted one of the fundamental values. It owed its high value at the same time to its instrumental role (the ability

to shed blood), to the way it functioned in the order of signs (to have a certain blood, to be of the same blood, to be prepared to risk one's blood), and also to its precariousness (easily spilled, subject to drying up, too readily mixed, capable of being quickly corrupted). A society of blood—I was tempted to say, of "sanguinity"—where power spoke *through* blood: the honor of war, the fear of famine, the triumph of death, the sovereign with his sword, executioners, and tortures; blood was *a reality with a symbolic function*. We, on the other hand, are in a society of "sex," or rather, a society "with a sexuality": the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used. Through the themes of health, progeny, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body, power spoke *of* sexuality and *to* sexuality; the latter was not a mark or a symbol, it was an object and a target. Moreover, its importance was due less to its rarity or its precariousness than to its insistence, its insidious presence, the fact that it was everywhere an object of excitement and fear at the same time. Power delineated it, aroused it, and employed it as the proliferating meaning that had always to be taken control of again lest it escape; it was *an effect with a meaning-value*. I do not mean to say that a substitution of sex for blood was by itself responsible for all the transformations that marked the threshold of our modernity. It is not the soul of two civilizations or the organizing principle of two cultural forms that I am attempting to express; I am looking for the reasons for which sexuality, far from being repressed in the society of that period, on the contrary was constantly aroused. The new procedures of power that were devised during the classical age and employed in the nineteenth century were what caused our societies to go from *a symbolics of blood* to *an analytics of sexuality*. Clearly, nothing was more on the side of the law, death, transgression, the symbolic, and sovereignty than blood; just as sexuality was on the side of the norm, knowledge, life, meaning, the disciplines, and regulations.

Sade and the first eugenists were contemporary with this transition from "sanguinity" to "sexuality." But whereas the first dreams of the perfecting of the species inclined the whole

problem toward an extremely exacting administration of sex (the art of determining good marriages, of inducing the desired fertilities, of ensuring the health and longevity of children), and while the new concept of race tended to obliterate the aristocratic particularities of blood, retaining only the controllable effects of sex, Sade carried the exhaustive analysis of sex over into the mechanisms of the old power of sovereignty and endowed it with the ancient but fully maintained prestige of blood; the latter flowed through the whole dimension of pleasure—the blood of torture and absolute power; the blood of the caste, which was respected in itself and which nonetheless was made to flow in the major rituals of parricide and incest; the blood of the people, which was shed unreservedly since the sort that flowed in its veins was not even deserving of a name. In Sade, sex is without any norm or intrinsic rule that might be formulated from its own nature; but it is subject to the unrestricted law of a power which itself knows no other law but its own; if by chance it is at times forced to accept the order of progressions carefully disciplined into successive days, this exercise carries it to a point where it is no longer anything but a unique and naked sovereignty: an unlimited right of all-powerful monstrosity.

While it is true that the analytics of sexuality and the symbolics of blood were grounded at first in two very distinct regimes of power, in actual fact the passage from one to the other did not come about (any more than did these powers themselves) without overlappings, interactions, and echoes. In different ways, the preoccupation with blood and the law has for nearly two centuries haunted the administration of sexuality. Two of these interferences are noteworthy, the one for its historical importance, the other for the problems it poses. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thematic of blood was sometimes called on to lend its entire historical weight toward revitalizing the type of political power that was exercised through the devices of sexuality. Racism took shape at this point (racism in its modern, "biologizing," statist form); it was then that a whole politics of settlement (*peuplement*), family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a

long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life, received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race. Nazism was doubtless the most cunning and the most naive (and the former because of the latter) combination of the fantasies of blood and the paroxysms of a disciplinary power. A eugenic ordering of society, with all that implied in the way of extension and intensification of micropowers, in the guise of an unrestricted state control (*étatisation*), was accompanied by the oneiric exaltation of a superior blood; the latter implied both the systematic genocide of others and the risk of exposing oneself to a total sacrifice. It is an irony of history that the Hitlerite politics of sex remained an insignificant practice while the blood myth was transformed into the greatest blood bath in recent memory.

At the opposite extreme, starting from this same end of the nineteenth century, we can trace the theoretical effort to reinscribe the thematic of sexuality in the system of law, the symbolic order, and sovereignty. It is to the political credit of psychoanalysis—or, at least, of what was most coherent in it—that it regarded with suspicion (and this from its inception, that is, from the moment it broke away from the neuropsychiatry of degenerescence) the irrevocably proliferating aspects which might be contained in these power mechanisms aimed at controlling and administering the everyday life of sexuality: whence the Freudian endeavor (out of reaction, no doubt, to the great surge of racism that was contemporary with it) to ground sexuality in the law—the law of alliance, tabooed consanguinity, and the Sovereign-Father—in short, to surround desire with all the trappings of the old order of power. It was owing to this that psychoanalysis was—in the main, with a few exceptions—in theoretical and practical opposition to fascism. But this position of psychoanalysis was tied to a specific historical conjuncture. And yet, to conceive the category of the sexual in terms of the law, death, blood, and sovereignty—whatever the references to Sade and Bataille, and however one might gauge their “subversive” influence—is in the last analysis a historical “retro-

version." We must conceptualize the deployment of sexuality on the basis of the techniques of power that are contemporary with it. . . .

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Samuel von Pufendorf, *Le Droit de la nature* (French trans. 1734), p. 445.

<sup>2</sup> "Just as a composite body can have properties not found in any of the simple bodies of which the mixture consists, so a moral body, by virtue of the very union of persons of which it is composed, can have certain rights which none of the individuals could expressly claim and whose exercise is the proper function of leaders alone" (*Ibid.*, p. 452).

R. 18

ARCHIVES | 1993

## ANDREOTTI AT CRUX OF MURDER INQUIRY

By ALAN COWELL JUNE 10, 1993

About the Archive

This is a digitized version of an article from The Times's print archive. To preserve articles as they originally appeared in print -- before the start of online publication in 1996 -- The Times does not alter, edit or update these articles.

Occasionally the digitization process introduces transcription errors or other problems. Please send reports of such problems -- along with other suggestions or feedback -- to archive\_feedback@nytimes.com.]

Magistrates investigating corruption in Italy asked the Senate today to permit a formal inquiry into evidence that Giulio Andreotti, Italy's master politician, ordered the murder of a journalist in 1979.

The magistrates' evidence was set out in a 90-page dossier asking the Senate to suspend Mr. Andreotti's parliamentary immunity so he can be interrogated and tried. Mr. Andreotti is already facing charges of corruption and collusion with the Mafia.

The dossier did not constitute a formal indictment. But the magistrates have concluded that the weight of testimony implicating Mr. Andreotti demanded a formal investigation. 'Falsehoods,' He Explained

In response, the 74-year-old Christian Democrat told a television interviewer that he would support suspension of his immunity, as he did on May 13 when he was accused of associating with the Mafia, to clear his name.

"I will certainly request that they proceed with the investigation, and I think it should proceed as soon as possible," he said. He described the accusations, which

were disclosed by his lawyer in April, as "calumnies and falsehoods."

If the latest accusation against Mr. Andreotti -- seven times the Prime Minister -- is proved, it would illuminate a underworld of mob connections, murder and graft behind the public facade of one of the West's most durable politicians.

The magistrates' accusations are based on the testimony of a leading Mafia informer, Tommaso Buscetta, who lives in the United States under a witness-protection program. Death of an Editor

When Italian magistrates interviewed Mr. Buscetta in Florida in April, he reportedly told them that he had heard from two Mafia bosses of the supposed involvement of Mr. Andreotti in the murder of the journalist, Carmine (Mino) Pecorelli. Mr. Buscetta had already given evidence to the Rome magistrates about the killing, but details of what he said last month have not been disclosed.

Mr. Andreotti was Prime Minister in March 1979 when Mr. Pecorelli was shot dead outside his office here. The journalist was editor of *Opinione Politica*, a newsletter that specialized in political leaks and reportedly was close to one of Mr. Andreotti's adversaries in the secret service.

According to the magistrates, Mr. Buscetta said he had been told that Mr. Pecorelli was killed at Mr. Andreotti's request because the Prime Minister was concerned that the journalist might have learned secrets about the 1978 murder of a former Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, by Red Brigade terrorists. Mr. Andreotti has always insisted that Mr. Buscetta's testimony was based on hearsay from other mobsters.

Mr. Andreotti and his Christian Democrat allies have intensified their campaign to discredit the informers, whose numbers have swollen over the last year as a result of new witness-protection programs and an erosion of the mob's traditional oath of silence.

Most evidence leading to a recent wave of arrests of top Mafiosi has been based on the testimony of turncoats.

In Mr. Andreotti's case, moreover, Mafia informers have accused him of being the mob's protector in Rome. Mr. Andreotti, by contrast, insists that some of the toughest anti-Mafia legislation was introduced during his periods in office. The Slide of a Stalwart

Apart from the murder and Mafia allegations, Mr. Andreotti has also been accused in the country's vast corruption scandal. These charges have contributed to the widespread decline in public support for the Christian Democrats, which were once the nation's political center, backed by the Catholic Church.

Since early last year, 2,500 politicians and business executives have been implicated in a vast array of scandals, centering on the awarding of public-works contracts in return for bribes and political contributions.

The party's decline, like that of the corruption-stained Socialists, began in national elections in April 1992 and deepened last weekend when local elections left all the mainstream parties in crisis.

A version of this article appears in print on June 10, 1993, on Page A00007 of the National edition with the headline: ANDREOTTI AT CRUX OF MURDER INQUIRY.



R. 22

## SUOR CORNELIA

### San Paolo Film

Ecco noi facevamo la selezione per poter ridurre i 16 mm ed eravamo in cinque suore e tre sacerdoti. Noi eravamo le cinque.... un po' fuori norma perché (ride) eravamo sempre in giro, perché andavamo al cinema.

Dovendo scegliere i film, frequentavamo il festival di Venezia e il festival di Cannes, il festival di Locarno, il festival di Salerno per i ragazzi. Frequentavamo questi momenti di riflessione sul cinema per scegliere le pellicole da dovere poi distribuire.

Ma se la censura, da una parte, ha inasprito, dall'altra ha anche favorito la curiosità e quindi la necessità di riflettere sul cinema all'interno della Chiesa. Intanto si ha paura dell'immagine perché è più forte della parola, e quindi la Chiesa inizialmente si difende, come tutti si difendono dall'immagine.

È la Chiesa che comincia a dire: visto che il cinema è così, perché non ne facciamo oggetto di formazione e di dibattito? E cominciano i cosiddetti 'Cinecircoli'. Abbiamo cominciato a pensare che forse era meglio riflettere sul cinema, piuttosto che censurarlo.

Uno degli aspetti più significativi è che il cinema religioso non ha mai fatto fortuna. Il cinema è essenzialmente laico, perché racconta la vita delle persone.

Era una cosa stranissima, ma se a dei convegni religiosi si doveva invitare un regista, si invitava Pasolini. Non si è mai invitato Fellini, per esempio. Pochi registi avevano una tale profondità spirituale. Pasolini era un uomo senza difese. Non si difendeva mai e ha fatto la fine che ha fatto proprio perché non si è mai difeso.

Io a Palermo non sento il cinema, nell'aria, si va al cinema, ma non si parla tanto di cinema.

We used to make the selection to be able to reduce the 16 mm films, and we were five sisters and three priests. We were the five... a bit out of the norm because (laughs) we were always around, because we went to the movies.

Having to choose the films, we attended the Venice Film Festival and the Cannes Film Festival, the Locarno Film Festival, the Salerno Festival for children. We attended these moments of appraisal of cinema to choose the films to be then distributed.

But while the censorship, on the one hand, has increased, on the other it has also encouraged curiosity and therefore the need to reflect on cinema within the Church. Meanwhile, there is fear of the image because it is stronger than the word, and so the Church initially defends itself, as all defend themselves from the image.

It was the Church that began to say: seeing that cinema is like this, why not make it the object of training and debate? And the so-called Cinecircoli, we began to think that perhaps it was better to think about cinema, rather than censor it.

One of the most significant aspects is that religious cinema has never been much of a success. Cinema is essentially secular, because it tells the lives of people.

It was a very strange thing, but if a director had to be invited to some religious conference, it would be Pasolini who was invited. Fellini has never been invited, for example, few directors had such spiritual depth. He was a man without defences. He never defended himself and he suffered the fate he did precisely because he never defended himself.

In Palermo I do not really feel the cinema, people go to the cinema, but they do not talk much about it.

Videomobile, 2018 Masbedo  
at Manifesta 12  
16.06—04.11.18 Palermo, Italy

R. 24

# L'ANNO IN CUI IL FUTURO FINÌ

Franco Berardi (Bifo)

## Premessa: le due memorie del settantasette

Quando si parla del millenovecentosettantasette si mettono in moto una serie di catene associative, immagini, ricordi, concetti e parole spesso incoerenti tra loro.

Il '77 è l'anno in cui esplose e si dispiegò un movimento di studenti e di giovani proletari che si espresse in forma particolarmente intensa nelle città di Bologna e di Roma. In alcuni contesti *settantasette* evoca un'idea di violenza, sopraffazione, anni di piombo, paura nelle strade e nelle scuole. In altri contesti significa invece creatività, felice espressione di bisogni sociali e culturali, autorganizzazione di massa, comunicazione innovativa. Come possono convivere queste due visioni, spesso nella mente delle stesse persone? Il 1977 è un punto di giunzione, o piuttosto un punto di cesura, il punto in cui si incontrano (o forse si separano, ma è lo stesso) due epoche diverse. Perciò si tratta del momento di emergenza e di formazione di due visioni incompatibili, di due percezioni dissonanti della realtà. In quell'anno giunge a maturazione la storia di un secolo, il secolo del capitalismo industriale e delle lotte operaie, il secolo della responsabilità politica e delle grandi organizzazioni di massa. Inizia a baluginare l'epoca postindustriale, la rivoluzione microelettronica, il principio della rete, la proliferazione degli agenti di comunicazione orizzontale, e quindi anche la dissoluzione della politica organizzata, la crisi degli stati nazionali e dei partiti di massa.

Non dovremmo dimenticare che quello – oltre ad essere l'anno dei movimenti di contestazione creativa nelle università e nei quartieri italiani – fu molte altre cose, non tutte allineate nella stessa direzione e sotto lo stesso segno. Fu l'anno dell'emergere del *punk*, l'anno del Giubileo della Regina contestato dai Sex Pistols che mettono a soqquadro la capitale britannica per giorni e giorni con musica e barricate lanciando l'urlo che segna come una maledizione il ventennio successivo: "NO FUTURE". Ma è anche l'anno in cui nei *garages* della Silicon Valley ragazzi come Wozniak e Steve Jobs, *hippies* libertari e psichedelici riuscirono a creare le interfacce *user friendly* che renderanno di lì a pochi anni possibile un accesso sempre più vasto, sempre più popolare all'informatica e poi alla telematica di rete. È l'anno in cui Simon Nora e Alain Minc scrivono un rapporto al Presidente della Repubblica francese, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, intitolato *L'informatisation de la société*, nel

quale si delineano le trasformazioni sociali, politiche, urbanistiche prevedibili nell'epoca successiva, in seguito all'introduzione nel lavoro e nella comunicazione delle tecnologie digitali e della telematica (ovvero informatica lontana, ovvero collegamento in rete di computer, ovvero Internet).

Il 1977 è anche l'anno in cui vengono processati i ribelli della Banda dei Quattro, Chang Ching, Wang Hung Wen, Yao Wen Juan e Chang Chung Chao. I quattro ultramaoisti di Shanghai vennero trascinati in catene a Pechino e là condannati a pene detentive lunghissime perché rappresentavano agli occhi del nuovo gruppo dirigente denghista l'utopia di una società equalitaria nella quale ogni regola economica è cancellata a favore di un primato assoluto dell'ideologia. L'utopia comunista comincia la sua lunga crisi proprio nel punto in cui era stata portata alle sue estreme, sanguinose conseguenze, proprio là dove la Rivoluzione Culturale Proletaria aveva scatenato le tendenze più radicali e più intrasigenti. Ma è anche l'anno in cui a Praga e a Varsavia si diffondono le prime azioni di dissenso operaio, è l'anno in cui i dissidenti cecoslovacchi firmano Charta '77. È l'anno in cui Yuri Andropov, direttore a quel tempo del Kgb scrive una lettera al cadavere ambulante di Leonid Brezhnev, segretario del Partito e massima autorità dell'Unione sovietica, per dirgli che se l'Urss non riuscirà rapidamente a recuperare il distacco nel campo delle tecnologie dell'informazione, il socialismo è destinato a crollare. Il '77 dunque non si può comprendere limitandosi a sfogliare l'album italiano nel quale compaiono le fotografie di giovanotti dai capelli lunghi col viso coperto da un passamontagna o da una sciarpa. Non si può comprendere limitandosi ad ascoltare slogan truculenti in parte ideologici e in parte bizzarramente surrealisti.

In quell'anno si volta la pagina del ventesimo secolo, come nel 1870-71 nelle strade insanguinate di Parigi la Comune aveva voltato la pagina del diciannovesimo secolo e mostrato con che luci e con che ombre il ventesimo secolo si annunciava all'orizzonte. Cerchiamo di avere presente questa complessità, quando parliamo di quella vicenda italiana che fu il movimento autonomo e creativo, perché solo a partire da questa complessità potremo capire che cosa accadde effettivamente al di là della cronaca di piazza, al di là delle manifestazioni degli scontri, delle molotov, al di là del dibattito sulla violenza, al di là della repressione violenta con cui lo stato e la sinistra investirono il movimento fino a criminalizzarlo e fino a spingerlo nelle braccia del terrorismo brigatista.

#### L'accesso al postindustriale

Per prima cosa dobbiamo focalizzare l'attenzione intorno al mutamento produttivo che investe le società occidentali a partire dagli anni settanta e diviene poi sempre più profondo, rapido, sconvolgenti nei due decenni successivi. Si tratta di una trasformazione determinata dalla diffusione delle tecnologie microelettroniche (e poi dalla digitalizzazione), ma anche dalla crescente disaffezione degli operai industriali al lavoro di fabbrica. "Disaffezione" è una parola chiave per comprendere la situazione sociale e la cultura intorno a cui si forma il movimento del '77. Disaffezione al lavoro è la formula con cui si definiva (da parte dell'*establishment* giornalistico, padronale e anche sindacale) la tendenza degli operai, soprattutto dei giovani operai, a darsi ammalati, mettersi in mutua, lavorare poco e male.

Gli imprenditori segnalavano che la disaffezione era la causa principale della caduta degli indici di produttività. E in effetti le cose andavano davvero così.

“È ora è ora lavora solo un'ora”

“Lavoro zero reddito intero / tutta la produzione all'automazione”

erano gli slogan lanciati a metà degli anni settanta dai giovani operai autonomi nelle fabbriche più “estremiste” come le Carrozzerie di Mirafiori o il Petrochimico di Marghera, o la Siemens di Milano. Si trattava di slogan rozzi, elementari. Ma nascondevano un mutamento culturale e anche una riflessione politica tutt'altro che superficiale. Il significato di quegli slogan, e di quella disaffezione, infatti, era la fine dell'etica del lavoro, e la fine – correlativa – della necessità sociale del lavoro industriale. Erano gli anni in cui la tecnologia cominciava a rendere possibile una progressiva sostituzione del lavoro operaio. Ed erano gli anni in cui il rifiuto del lavoro si faceva strada nella cultura giovanile e nella teorizzazione di gruppi come Potere operaio e Lotta continua, che avevano ottenuto un certo ascolto nelle fabbriche del nord soprattutto nel '69/70.

Ora il movimento degli studenti e dei giovani proletari che si diffuse nel '77 dalle università ai circoli del proletariato giovanile, ai quartieri riprendeva gli slogan e le ipotesi del rifiuto del lavoro, e ne faceva un elemento di separazione profonda, traumatica, dalla tradizione culturale e politica della sinistra.

L'etica del lavoro, su cui si era fondata l'esperienza del movimento operaio tradizionale, iniziava a crollare. Prima nella coscienza di giovani operai desiderosi di libertà e di ozio e di cultura, poi per le potenzialità tecnologiche stesse del sistema produttivo. La riduzione del tempo di lavoro necessario grazie all'introduzione di tecnologie automatiche, e il processo di rifiuto del lavoro sono convergenti e in qualche misura interdipendenti. A partire dagli anni sessanta gli operai di fabbrica avevano cominciato a mostrare una crescente insubordinazione sindacale, politica e comportamentale. Si diffondeva il rifiuto del lavoro alienato perché la classe operaia di fabbrica aveva cominciato a conoscere forme di vita più ricche, grazie alla scolarizzazione, alla mobilità, alla diffusione di una cultura critica a livello popolare. Dopo il '68, poi, l'insubordinazione operaia si era incontrata con il movimento degli studenti e del lavoro intellettuale, e i due fenomeni si erano fusi in alcuni casi consapevolmente.

Rifiuto del lavoro industriale, rivendicazione di spazi sempre più ampi di libertà, e quindi assenteismo, insubordinazione, sabotaggio, lotta politica organizzata contro il padronato e contro i ritmi di lavoro. Tutto questo aveva contrassegnato la storia sociale dei primi anni sessanta fino ad esplodere in vere e proprie insurrezioni pacifiche degli operai contro il lavoro industriale, come era accaduto nella primavera del 1973 quando gli operai dell'auto si erano ribellati in tutta Europa, dalla Renault alla Opel di Russelsheim e di Colonia, fino alla Fiat Mirafiori di Torino che per alcuni mesi fu percorsa da cortei di giovanissimi che si mettevano un cordino rosso al collo e ululavano come indiani dentro i reparti. Gli indiani metropolitani, queste orde di contestatori culturali che si diffusero nel 1977 universitario erano nati nei reparti della Fiat, per rifiuto della miseria salariale e dell'abbruttimento del lavoro industriale. Ma al contempo si era andata sviluppando anche la ricerca di procedure produttive sempre più automatizzate, con uso integrato della microelettronica e di sistemi flessibili. Gli operai volevano lavorare di meno,

e gli ingegneri studiavano tecnologie adatte a ridurre il tempo di lavoro necessario, ad automatizzare la produzione. Tra la fine del decennio settanta e l'inizio di quello successivo queste due tendenze si incontrarono. Ma purtroppo si incontrarono sotto il segno della reazione capitalistica e della vendetta antiproletaria, non sotto il segno del potere operaio e dell'autorganizzazione. Il movimento operaio non era riuscito a tradurre la protesta operaia in autorganizzazione del processo produttivo.

E arrivarono gli anni della controffensiva. Invece di ridurre il tempo di lavoro socialmente necessario e di liberare tempo di vita dal lavoro, il capitale riuscì così, negli anni della ristrutturazione e dell'affermazione del neoliberismo, a distruggere l'organizzazione operaia attraverso i licenziamenti delle avanguardie. Iniziava il ridimensionamento quantitativo e politico della forza operaia. Iniziava la controrivoluzione liberista. Ma al centro di questo passaggio ci sta proprio il movimento del '77, che si presentò consapevolmente, dichiaratamente, come un movimento contro il lavoro industriale.

"È ora è ora lavora solo un'ora"

era lo slogan che gli autonomi creativi lanciarono per rispondere allo slogan sindacale:

"È ora è ora potere a chi lavora."

Il movimento del '77 aveva messo il non lavoro, il rifiuto del lavoro al centro della dinamica sociale e dell'innovazione tecnologica, però questo non riuscì a tradursi in azione politica consapevole e organizzata. L'innovazione tecnologica produsse una gigantesca ristrutturazione negli anni ottanta e novanta. Ma questa ristrutturazione ebbe caratteri antioperai, antisociali, e mise in moto quel processo di devastazione della società che negli anni novanta è precipitata (e non smette di precipitare). Perché il movimento non riuscì a tradurre la sua vocazione sociale e le sue intuizioni culturali in azione politica di lungo periodo per l'autorganizzazione della società e del processo produttivo? È questo il punto su cui occorre soffermarsi.

Due sono le ragioni per cui il movimento non riuscì a tradurre l'intuizione antilavorista in un programma politico credibile. La prima ragione di quella incapacità va cercata nell'intima contraddittorietà del movimento, nel fatto che esso si concepì al tempo stesso come l'ultimo movimento comunista del ventesimo secolo, e anche come il primo movimento postindustriale quindi postcomunista. La seconda ragione sta nella repressione a cui il movimento venne sottoposto: una repressione violenta e prolungata, le cui caratteristiche occorre approfondire.

Ma vediamo le cose con ordine.

Gli studenti e i giovani operai che si mobilitarono nei primi mesi dell'anno settantasette, ma che già da alcuni anni si stavano organizzando in mille forme nuove (i centri del proletariato giovanile, le radio libere, i comitati autonomi di fabbrica e di quartiere i collettivi autonomi nelle scuole e così via) esprimevano comportamenti e bisogni che avevano ormai poco a che fare con i bisogni e i comportamenti del proletariato industriale tradizionale. La domanda più forte era quella esistenziale. La qualità della vita, il desiderio di un'esistenza realizzata, la volontà di liberare il tempo e il corpo dai vincoli della prestazione lavorativa industriale. Questi erano i temi forti, queste erano le linee lungo le quali si esprimevano e si accumulavano l'insubordinazione e l'autonomia. Eppure la rappresentazione ideologica predominante all'interno del movimento era quella che discendeva linearmente dai

movimenti rivoluzionari novecenteschi, dalla storia del comunismo terzinternazionalista. Per quanto il leninismo fosse largamente messo in questione in quegli anni, l'idea prevalente era quella di un movimento rivoluzionario destinato ad abbattere lo stato borghese e a costruire in qualche modo (piuttosto vago, per la verità) una società comunista. Questo tipo di rappresentazione non si confaceva più alla realtà di movimenti che erano tutti incentrati sulla conquista di spazi e di tempi, e che si manifestavano su un terreno sempre meno politico e sempre più esistenziale.

E il modello dialettico (abbattimento, abolizione, instaurazione di un nuovo sistema) non corrispondeva in nulla alla realtà di lotte che funzionavano invece come elemento dinamico, come conflitto aperto e come ridefinizione del terreno stesso dello scontro, ma non potevano e non intendevano dirigersi verso una sorta di attacco finale al cuore dello stato, o verso una rivoluzione destinata al sovertimento dialettico. Lo scarto tra rappresentazione ideologica e realtà socioculturale di quell'area che chiamammo allora proletariato giovanile fu la causa principale della sua incapacità di tradurre l'azione contestativa in un processo di autorganizzazione sociale di lungo periodo, nella creazione di laboratori di sperimentazione politica, culturale, tecnologica. Per che scopo ci si stava mobilitando? Per una rivoluzione comunista classica, con abbattimento dello stato e finale presa del potere politico? Solo alcuni credevano che una cosa simile potesse avere qualche significato, ma di fatto questo orizzonte politico non veniva esplicitamente abbandonato, ridefinito. Il movimento bolognese fu, in questo senso, il punto di massima consapevolezza, e abbandonò in maniera dichiarata e polemica il leninismo residuo e il modello storicista della rivoluzione. Ma non riuscì a essere conseguente fino al punto di rompere (come forse avrebbe dovuto fare) ogni rapporto con le componenti di movimento che invece ribadivano, sia pure contraddittoriamente, un progetto di tipo leninista e rivoluzionario.

C'è un'altra ragione decisiva di quello scacco che il movimento subì, e questa ragione è la repressione che il regime politico del compromesso storico scatenò contro gli studenti, gli operai autonomi, i giovani in generale, e poi contro gli intellettuali, i docenti, gli scrittori, contro le radio libere, le librerie, ogni centro di vita intellettuale innovativa che esistesse nel paese.

Lo sconsolante riflusso intellettuale che ha colpito l'Italia all'inizio degli anni ottanta e che ha devastato l'arte, la scienza, l'università, la ricerca, il cinema, per tacere del pensiero politico è dovuto proprio allo sterminio culturale che lo stato democristiano-stalinista mise in opera prima nel 1977, e poi nel 1979 (7 aprile, 21 dicembre: arresti di massa di intellettuali legati all'autonomia molti dei quali vennero riconosciuti innocenti dopo aver scontato cinque anni di galera senza prove). Il movimento del '77 conteneva certamente un'ambiguità profonda. Era un'ambiguità culturale, intellettuale, filosofica. Non era banalmente l'ambiguità tra i violenti cattivi e i creativi buoni. Era il sovrapporsi di due concezioni del processo di modernizzazione e di autonomizzazione sociale.

Da una parte vi era il movimento creativo che metteva al centro dell'azione politica i *media*, l'informazione, l'immaginario, la cultura, la comunicazione, pensando che il potere si giocava in quei luoghi e non nella sfera della grande politica di stato o della grande politica rivoluzionaria.

Dall'altra vi era l'autonomia organizzata convinta che lo stato avesse il ruolo decisivo e che si dovesse contrapporgli una soggettività strutturata in modo classicamente politico. Quel movimento

avrebbe dovuto maturare, rafforzare le sue strutture produttive e comunicative, avrebbe dovuto trasformarsi in processo generalizzato di autorganizzazione dell'intelligenza collettiva. Era questo il progetto che nel giugno del 1977 venne proposto al movimento in un numero di "A/traverso" intitolato *La rivoluzione è finita abbiamo vinto*. La proposta era quella di costruire un movimento di ingegneri dai piedi scalzi, di connettere tecnologia, scienza e zone temporaneamente liberate. Era una visione minoritaria, nel movimento di quell'anno, ma un numero crescente di persone, di giovani ricercatori, di studenti e di artisti cominciava a intravedere la possibilità di un processo di autorganizzazione del sapere e della creatività.

Radio Alice e le altre radio di movimento rappresentarono un primo tentativo di articolare insieme tecnologia, comunicazione e innovazione sociale.

Tutto questo era legato, certo, a una retorica di tipo novecentesco, a una retorica guerrigliera.

Ma in gioco era il destino sociale dell'intelligenza tecnico-scientifica e dell'intelligenza creativa e comunicativa. La coscienza di questo passaggio cominciava a formarsi in quegli anni.

Escono in quegli anni i libri in cui si manifesta la consapevolezza di un passaggio sociale, tecnologico e antropologico. È del 1973 il libro di Daniel Bell *La società postindustriale*, mentre Jean-François Lyotard pubblica nel 1978 *La condition postmoderne*. Jean Baudrillard aveva scritto nel 1976 *L'échange symbolique et la mort*. Il movimento bolognese, in effetti, ebbe sempre una connessione molto forte con i punti alti della ricerca filosofica, e alimentò a sua volta alcuni sviluppi della riflessione in Francia, in Germania, negli Stati Uniti. E quella connessione ebbe risvolti direttamente politici (come l'organizzazione del convegno internazionale contro la repressione che si svolse a Bologna nel settembre del 1977), ma ebbe anche, più a lunga scadenza, risvolti di tipo filosofico, interpretativo, concettuale.

Il 1977, dunque, può essere descritto come il punto di separazione tra l'epoca industriale e delle grandi formazioni politiche, ideologiche e statali – e quella successiva, l'epoca proliferante delle tecnologie digitali, della diffusione molecolare dei dispositivi trasversali del potere.

In questo quadro occorre comprendere anche il rapporto conflittuale tra il movimento e la sinistra tradizionale, che ereditava i suoi rituali e le sue ideologie dalla storia passata dell'epoca industriale. Il distacco poté apparire una delle tante, interminabili dispute dottrinarie e politiche interne al movimento operaio di cui la storia del ventesimo secolo è costellata (a cominciare dalla rottura della prima internazionale, per continuare con il grande scisma bolscevico, con il conflitto tra *Linkskommunismus* e terza internazionale, la guerra tra stalinismo e trotzkismo negli anni trenta, e poi la rottura russo-cinese e la guerra tra rivoluzionari e riformisti negli anni sessanta). Ma non era così. Non si trattava di una delle discussioni dogmatiche in cui ci si disputava l'egemonia sul movimento comunista, perché il movimento comunista si fondava su premesse che la generazione del '77 liquida nel momento stesso del suo costituirsi in movimento. Prima di tutto venne abbandonata la



R. 32

In a previous lecture on "apparatuses of security," I tried to explain the emergence of a set of problems specific to the issue of population; on closer inspection, it turned out that we would also need to take into account the problematic of government. In short, one needed to analyze the series: security, population, government. I would now like to try to begin making an inventory of this question of government.

Throughout the Middle Ages and classical Antiquity, we find a multitude of treatises presented as "advice to the prince," concerning his proper conduct, the exercise of power, the means of securing the acceptance and respect of his subjects, the love of God and obedience to him, the application of divine law to the cities of men, and so on. But a more striking fact is that, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, there develops and flourishes a notable series of political treatises that are no longer exactly "advice to the prince," and not yet treatises of political science, but instead are presented as works on the "art of government." Government as a general problem seems to me to explode in the sixteenth century, posed by discussions of quite diverse questions. One has, for example, the question of the government of oneself, that ritualization of the problem of personal conduct characteristic of the sixteenth century Stoic revival. There is the problem too of the government of souls and lives, the entire theme of Catholic and Protestant pastoral doctrine. There is government of children and the great problematic of pedagogy that emerges and

develops during the sixteenth century. And, perhaps only as the last of these questions to be taken up, there is the government of the state by the prince. How to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor—all these problems, in their multiplicity and intensity, seem to me to be characteristic of the sixteenth century, which lies, to put it schematically, at the crossroads of two processes: the one that, shattering the structures of feudalism, leads to the establishment of the great territorial, administrative, and colonial states; and a totally different movement that, with the Reformation and Counter-reformation, raises the issue of how one must be spiritually ruled and led on this earth in order to achieve eternal salvation.

There is a double movement, then, of state centralization, on the one hand, and of dispersion and religious dissidence, on the other. It is, I believe, at the intersection of these two tendencies that the problem comes to pose itself with this peculiar intensity, of how to be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what methods, and so on. There is a problematic of government in general.

Out of all this immense and monotonous literature on government which extends to the end of the eighteenth century, with the transformations I will try to identify in a moment, I would like to underline some points that are worthy of notice because they relate to the actual definition of what is meant by the government of the state, of what we would today call the political form of government. The simplest way to do this is to compare all of this literature with a single text that, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, never ceased to function as the object of explicit or implicit opposition and rejection, and relative to which the whole literature on government established its standpoint—Machiavelli's *The Prince*. It would be interesting to trace the relationship of this text to all those works that succeeded, criticized, and rebutted it.

We must first of all remember that Machiavelli's *The Prince* was not immediately made an object of execration; on the contrary, it was honored by its immediate contemporaries and immediate successors, and once again at the end of the eighteenth century (or perhaps rather at the very beginning of the nineteenth century), at the very moment when all this literature on the art of government was about to come to an end. *The Prince* reemerges at the beginning

# Machiavelli

of the nineteenth century, especially in Germany, where it is translated, prefaced, and commented upon by writers such as A. W. Rehberg, H. Leo, Leopold von Ranke, and Kellerman. In Italy as well, it makes its appearance in context that is worth analyzing, one that is partly Napoleonic but also partly created by the Revolution and the problems of revolution in the United States, of how and under what conditions a ruler's sovereignty over the state can be maintained. But this is also the context in which there emerges, with Clausewitz, the problem (whose political importance was evident at the Congress of Vienna in 1815) of the relationship between politics and strategy, and the problem of relations of force and the calculation of these relations as a principle of intelligibility and rationalization in international relations; and finally, in addition, it connects with the problem of Italian and German territorial unity, since Machiavelli had been one of those who tried to define the conditions under which Italian territorial unity could be restored.

This is the context in which Machiavelli reemerges. But it is clear that, between the initial honor accorded him in the sixteenth century and his rediscovery at the start of the nineteenth, there was a whole "affair" around his work, one that was complex and took various forms: some explicit praise of Machiavelli (Naudé, Machon), numerous frontal attacks (from Catholic sources: Ambrozio Politi, *Disputationes de Libris a Christiano detestandis*; and from Protestant sources: Innocent Gentillet, *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner contre Nicolas Machiavel*, 1576), and also a number of implicit critiques (Guillaume de La Perrière, *Miroir Politique*, 1567; Th. Elyott, *The Governor*, 1580; P. Paruta, *Della Perfezione della Vita politica*, 1579).

This whole debate should not be viewed solely in terms of its relation to Machiavelli's text and what were felt to be its scandalous or radically unacceptable aspects. It needs to be seen in terms of something it was trying to define in its specificity, namely, an art of government. Some authors rejected the idea of a new art of government centered on the state and reason of state, which they stigmatized with the name of Machiavellianism; others rejected Machiavelli by showing that there existed an art of government that was both rational and legitimate, and of which Machiavelli's *The Prince* was only an imperfect approximation or caricature; finally, there were others who, in order to prove the legitimacy of a partic-

ular art of government, were willing to justify some at least of Machiavelli's writings (this was what Naudé did to the *Discourses on Livy*; Machon went so far as to attempt to show that nothing was more Machiavellian than the way in which, according to the Bible, God himself and his prophets had guided the Jewish people).

All these authors shared a common concern to distance themselves from a certain conception of the art of government which, once shorn of its theological foundations and religious justifications, took the sole interest of the prince as its object and principle of rationality. Let us leave aside the question of whether the interpretation of Machiavelli in these debates was accurate or not. The essential thing is that they attempted to articulate a kind of rationality that was intrinsic to the art of government, without subordinating it to the problematic of the prince and of his relationship to the principality of which he is lord and master.

Thus, the art of government is defined in a way that differentiates it from a certain capacity of the prince, which some think they can find expounded in Machiavelli's writings but others are unable to find; others still will criticize this art of government as a new form of Machiavellianism.

This politics of *The Prince*, fictitious or otherwise, from which people sought to distance themselves, was characterized by one principle: for Machiavelli, it was alleged, the prince stood in a relation of singularity and externality, and thus of transcendence, to his principality. The prince acquires his principality by inheritance or conquest, but in any case he does not form part of it, he remains external to it. The link that binds him to his principality may have been established through violence, through family heritage, or by treaty, with the complicity or the alliance of other princes; this makes no difference—the link remains, in any event, a purely synthetic one, and there is no fundamental, essential, natural, and juridical connection between the prince and his principality. As a corollary of this, given that this link is external, it will be fragile and continually under threat—from outside by the prince's enemies who seek to conquer or recapture his principality, and from within by subjects who have no a priori reason to accept his rule. Finally, this principle and its corollary lead to a conclusion, deduced as an imperative: that the objective of the exercise of power is to reinforce, strengthen, and protect the principality, but with this last un-

*Principality or "fragile" only  
Governmentality*

205

derstood to mean not the objective ensemble of its subjects and the territory but, rather, the prince's relation with what he owns, with the territory he has inherited or acquired, and with his subjects. This fragile link is what the art of governing or of being prince, as espoused by Machiavelli, has as its object. Consequently, the mode of analysis of Machiavelli's text will be twofold: to identify dangers (where they come from, what they consist in, their severity: which are the greater, which the slighter), and second, to develop the art of manipulating the relations of forces that will allow the prince to ensure the protection of his principality, understood as the link that binds him to his territory and his subjects.

Schematically, one can say that Machiavelli's *The Prince*, as profiled in all these implicitly or explicitly anti-Machiavellian treatises, is essentially a treatise about the prince's ability to keep his principality. And it is this savoir-faire that the anti-Machiavellian literature wants to replace with something else that's new, namely, the art of government. Having the ability to retain one's principality is not at all the same thing as possessing the art of governing. But what does this latter ability comprise? To get a view of this problem, which is still at a raw and early stage, let us consider one of the earliest texts of this great anti-Machiavellian literature—Guillaume de La Perrière's *Miroir Politique*.

This text, disappointingly thin in comparison with Machiavelli, prefigures a number of important ideas. First of all, what does La Perrière mean by "to govern" and "governor"? What definition does he give of these terms? He writes: "governor can signify monarch, emperor, king, prince, lord, magistrate, prelate, judge and the like." Like La Perrière, others who write on the art of government constantly recall that one speaks also of "governing" a household, souls, children, a province, a convent, a religious order, a family.

These points of simple vocabulary actually have important political implications: Machiavelli's prince, at least as these authors interpret him, is by definition unique in his principality and occupies a position of externality and transcendence. We have seen, however, that practices of government are, on the one hand, multifarious and concern many kinds of people—the head of a family, the superior of a convent, the teacher or tutor of a child or pupil—so that there are several forms of government among which the prince's relation to his state is only one particular mode; on the

other hand, though, all these other kinds of government are internal to the state or society. It is within the state that the father will rule the family, the superior the convent, and so on. Thus, we find at once a plurality of forms of government and their immanence to the state: the multiplicity and immanence of these activities distinguish them radically from the transcendent singularity of Machiavelli's prince.

To be sure, among all these forms of government that interweave within the state and society, there remains one special and precise form: there is the question of defining the particular form of governing that can be applied to the state as a whole. Thus, seeking to produce a topology of forms of the art of government, La Mothe Le Vayer, in a text from the following century (consisting of educational writings intended for the French Dauphin), says that there are three fundamental types of government, each of which relates to a particular science or discipline: the art of self-government, connected with morality; the art of properly governing a family, which belongs to economy; and, finally, the science of ruling the state, which concerns politics. In comparison with morality and economy, politics evidently has its own specific nature, which La Mothe Le Vayer states clearly. What matters, notwithstanding this topology, is that the art of government is always characterized by the essential continuity of one type with the other, and of a second type with a third.

This means that, whereas the doctrine of the prince and the juridical theory of sovereignty are constantly attempting to draw the line between the power of the prince and any other form of power—because its task is to explain and justify this essential discontinuity between them—in the art of government the task is to establish a continuity, in both an upward and a downward direction.

Upward continuity means that a person who wishes to govern the state well must first learn how to govern himself, his goods, and his patrimony, after which he will be successful in governing the state. This ascending line characterizes the pedagogies of the prince, which are an important issue at this time, as the example of La Mothe Le Vayer shows: he wrote for the Dauphin first a treatise of morality, then a book of economics, and, finally, a political treatise. It is the pedagogical formation of the prince, then, that will assure this upward continuity. On the other hand, we also have a

downward continuity in the sense that, when a state is well run, the head of the family will know how to look after his family, his goods, and his patrimony, which means that individuals will, in turn, behave as they should. This downward line, which transmits to individual behavior and the running of the family the same principles as the good government of the state, is just at this time beginning to be called "police." The prince's pedagogical formation ensures the upward continuity of the forms of government, and police the downward one. The central term of this continuity is the government of the family, termed "economy."

The art of government, as becomes apparent in this literature, is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce economy—that is to say, the correct way of managing individuals, goods, and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children, and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper—how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father toward his family into the management of the state.

This, I believe, is the essential issue in the establishment of the art of government—the introduction of economy into political practice. And if this is the case in the sixteenth century, it remains so in the eighteenth. In Rousseau's *Encyclopedia* article on "Political Economy," the problem is still posed in the same terms. What he says here, roughly, is that the word "economy" can only properly be used to signify the wise government of the family for the common welfare of all, and this is its actual original use; the problem, writes Rousseau, is how to introduce it, mutatis mutandis, and with all the discontinuities that we will observe below, into the general running of the state. To govern a state will mean, therefore, to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising toward its inhabitants, and the wealth and behavior of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods.

An expression that was important in the eighteenth century captures this very well: François Quesnay speaks of good government as "economic government." This latter notion becomes tautological, given that the art of government is just the art of exercising power in the form, and according to the model, of the economy. But the reason why Quesnay speaks of "economic government" is that the

word "economy," for reasons I will explain later, is in the process of acquiring a modern meaning, and it is at this moment becoming apparent that the very essence of government—that is, the art of exercising power in the form of economy—is to have as its main objective that which we are today accustomed to call "the economy."

The word "economy," which in the sixteenth century signified a form of government, comes in the eighteenth century to designate a level of reality, a field of intervention, through a series of complex processes that I regard as absolutely fundamental to our history.

The second point I should like to discuss in Guillaume de La Perrière's book consists of the following statement: "government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end."

I would like to link this sentence with another series of observations. Government is the right disposition of things. I would like to pause over this word "things" because, if we consider what characterizes the ensemble of objects of the prince's power in Machiavelli, we will see that for Machiavelli the object and, in a sense, the target of power are two things—on the one hand, the territory, and, on the other, its inhabitants. In this respect, Machiavelli simply adapted to his particular aims a juridical principle that from the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century defined sovereignty in public law: sovereignty is exercised not on things but, above all, on a territory and consequently on the subjects who inhabit it. In this sense, we can say that the territory is the fundamental element both in Machiavellian principality and in juridical sovereignty as defined by the theoreticians and philosophers of right. Obviously enough, these territories can be fertile or infertile, the population dense or sparse, the inhabitants rich or poor, active or lazy, but all these elements are mere variables by comparison with territory itself, which is the very foundation of principality and sovereignty. On the contrary, in La Perrière's text, you will notice that the definition of government in no way refers to territory: one governs *things*. But what does this mean? I think this is not a matter of opposing things to men but, rather, of showing that what government has to do with is not territory but, rather, a sort of complex composed of men and things. The things, in this sense, with which government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links,

their imbrication with those things that are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, and so on; men in their relation to those other things that are customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, and so on; and finally men in their relation to those still other things that might be accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, and so on. The fact that government concerns things understood in this way, this imbrication of men and things, is, I believe, readily confirmed by the metaphor that is inevitably invoked in these treatises on government, namely, that of the ship. What does it mean to govern a ship? It means clearly to take charge of the sailors, but also of the boat and its cargo; to take care of a ship means also to reckon with winds, rocks, and storms; and it consists in that activity of establishing a relation between the sailors, who are to be taken care of, and the ship, which is to be taken care of, and the cargo, which is to be brought safely to port, and all those eventualities like winds, rocks, storms, and so on. This is what characterizes the government of a ship. The same goes for the running of a household. Governing a household, a family, does not essentially mean safeguarding the family property; what it concerns is the individuals who compose the family, their wealth and prosperity. It means reckoning with all the possible events that may intervene, such as births and deaths, and with all the things that can be done, such as possible alliances with other families; it is this general form of management that is characteristic of government. By comparison, the question of landed property for the family, and the question of the acquisition of sovereignty over a territory for a prince, are only relatively secondary matters. What counts essentially is this complex of men and things; property and territory are merely one of its variables.

This theme of the government of things as we find it in La Perrière can also be met with in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Frederick the Great has some notable pages on it in his *Anti-Machiavel*. He says, for instance, let us compare Holland with Russia: Russia may have the largest territory of any European state, but it is mostly made up of swamps, forests, and deserts, and is inhabited by miserable groups of people totally destitute of activity and industry; if one takes Holland, on the other hand, with its tiny territory, again mostly marshland, we find that it nevertheless pos-

sesses such a population, such wealth, such commercial activity, and such a fleet as to make it an important European state, something that Russia is only just beginning to become.

To govern, then, means to govern things. Let us consider once more the sentence I quoted earlier, where La Perrière says: "government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end." Government, that is to say, has a finality of its own, and in this respect again, I believe, it can be clearly distinguished from sovereignty. Of course, I do not mean that sovereignty is presented in philosophical and juridical texts as a pure and simple right; no jurist or, *a fortiori*, theologian ever said that the legitimate sovereign is purely and simply entitled to exercise his power regardless of its ends. The sovereign must always, if he is to be a good sovereign, have as his aim "the common welfare and the salvation of all." Take for instance a late seventeenth-century author, Pufendorf says: "Sovereign authority is conferred upon them [the rulers] only in order to allow them to use it to attain or conserve what is of public utility." The ruler may not have consideration for anything advantageous for himself, unless it also be so for the state. What does this common good or general salvation consist of, which the jurists talk about as being the end of sovereignty? If we look closely at the real content that jurists and theologians give to it, we can see that "the common good" refers to a state of affairs where all the subjects without exception obey the laws, accomplish the tasks expected of them, practice the trade to which they are assigned, and respect the established order insofar as this order conforms to the laws imposed by God on nature and men: in other words, "the common good" means essentially obedience to the law, either that of their earthly sovereign or that of God, the absolute sovereign. In every case, what characterizes the end of sovereignty, this common and general good, is in sum nothing other than submission to sovereignty. This means that the end of sovereignty is the exercise of sovereignty. The good is obedience to the law, hence the good for sovereignty is that people should obey it. This is an essential circularity; whatever its theoretical structure, moral justification, or practical effects, it comes very close to what Machiavelli said when he stated that the primary aim of the prince was to retain his principality. We always come back to this self-referring circularity of sovereignty or principality.

Now, with the new definition given by La Perrière, with his attempt at a definition of government, I believe we can see a new kind of finality emerging. Government is defined as a right manner of disposing things so as to lead not to the form of the common good, as the jurists' texts would have said, but to an end that is "convenient" for each of the things that are to be governed. This implies a plurality of specific aims: for instance, government will have to ensure that the greatest possible quantity of wealth is produced, that the people are provided with sufficient means of subsistence, that the population is enabled to multiply, and so on. Thus, there is a whole series of specific finalities that become the objective of government as such. In order to achieve these various finalities, things must be disposed—and this term, "dispose," is important because, with sovereignty, the instrument that allowed it to achieve its aim—that is, obedience to the laws—was the law itself: law and sovereignty were absolutely inseparable. On the contrary, with government it is a question not of imposing law on men but of disposing things: that is, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics—to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such-and-such ends may be achieved.

I believe we are at an important turning point here: whereas the end of sovereignty is internal to itself and possesses its own intrinsic instruments in the shape of its laws, the finality of government resides in the things it manages and in the pursuit of the perfection and intensification of the processes it directs; and the instruments of government, instead of being laws, now come to be a range of multiform tactics. Within the perspective of government, law is not what is important: this is a frequent theme throughout the seventeenth century, and it is made explicit in the eighteenth-century texts of the Physiocrats, which explain that it is not through law that the aims of government are to be reached.

Finally, a fourth remark, still concerning this text from La Perrière. He says that a good ruler must have patience, wisdom, and diligence. What does he mean by patience? To explain it, he gives the example of the king of bees, the bumblebee, who, he says, rules the beehive without needing a sting; through this example, God has sought to show us in a mystical way that the good governor does not have to have a sting—that is to say, a weapon of killing, a

sword—in order to exercise his power; he must have patience rather than wrath, and it is not the right to kill, to employ force, that forms the essence of the figure of the governor. And what positive content accompanies this absence of sting? Wisdom and diligence. Wisdom, understood no longer in the traditional sense as knowledge of divine and human laws, of justice and equality, but rather, as the knowledge of things, of the objectives that can and should be attained, and the disposition of things required to reach them: it is this knowledge that is to constitute the wisdom of the sovereign. As for his diligence, this is the principle that a governor should only govern in such a way that he thinks and acts as though he were in the service of those who are governed. And here, once again, La Perrière cites the example of the head of the family who rises first in the morning and goes to bed last, who concerns himself with everything in the household because he considers himself as being in its service. We can see at once how far this characterization of government differs from the idea of the prince as found in or attributed to Machiavelli. To be sure, this notion of governing, for all its novelty, is still very crude here.

This schematic presentation of the notion and theory of the art of government did not remain a purely abstract question in the sixteenth century, and it was of concern not only to political theoreticians. I think we can identify its connections with political reality. The theory of the art of government was linked, from the sixteenth century, to the whole development of the administrative apparatus of the territorial monarchies, the emergence of governmental apparatuses; it was also connected to a set of analyses and forms of knowledge that began to develop in the late sixteenth century and grew in importance during the seventeenth. These were essentially to do with knowledge of the state, in all its different elements, dimensions, and factors of power, questions that were termed precisely "statistics," meaning the science of the state. Finally, as a third vector of connections, I do not think one can fail to relate this search for an art of government to mercantilism and the Camerists' science of police.

To put it very schematically, in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, the art of government finds its first form of crystallization, organized around the theme of reason of state, understood not in the negative and pejorative sense we give to it

today (as that which infringes on the principles of law, equity, and humanity in the sole interests of the state) but in a full and positive sense: the state is governed according to rational principles that are intrinsic to it and cannot be derived solely from natural or divine laws or the principles of wisdom and prudence. The state, like nature, has its own proper form of rationality, albeit of a different sort. Conversely, the art of government, instead of seeking to found itself in transcendental rules, a cosmological model, or a philosophico-moral ideal, must find the principles of its rationality in that which constitutes the specific reality of the state. In my subsequent lectures, I will be examining the elements of this first form of state rationality. But we can say here that, right until the early eighteenth century, this form of "reason of state" acted as a sort of obstacle to the development of the art of government.

This is for a number of reasons. First, there are the strictly historical ones, the series of great crises of the seventeenth century: first the Thirty Years' War with its ruin and devastation; then, in the midcentury, the peasant and urban rebellions; and finally the financial crisis, the crisis of revenues that affected all Western monarchies at the end of the century. The art of government could only spread and develop in subtlety in an age of expansion, free from the great military, political, and economic tensions that afflicted the seventeenth century from beginning to end. Massive and elementary historical causes thus blocked the propagation of the art of government. I think also that the doctrine formulated during the sixteenth century was impeded in the seventeenth by a series of other factors I might term, to use expressions I do not much care for, "mental" and "institutional" structures. The preeminence of the problem of the exercise of sovereignty—both as a theoretical question and as a principle of political organization—was the fundamental factor here so long as sovereignty remained the central question. So long as the institutions of sovereignty were the basic political institutions and the exercise of power was conceived as an exercise of sovereignty, the art of government could not be developed in a specific and autonomous way. I think we have a good example of this in mercantilism. Mercantilism might be described as the first sanctioned effort to apply this art of government at the level of political practices and knowledge of the state; in this sense one can in fact say that mercantilism represents a first threshold of

rationality in this art of government which La Perrière's text had defined in terms more moral than real. Mercantilism is the first rationalization of exercise of power as a practice of government; for the first time with mercantilism we see the development of knowledge [*savoir*] of state that can be used as a tactic of government. All this may be true, but mercantilism was blocked and arrested, I believe, precisely by the fact that it took as its essential objective the might of the sovereign: it sought a way not so much to increase the wealth of the country as to allow the ruler to accumulate wealth, build up his treasury, and create the army with which he could carry out his policies. And the instruments mercantilism used were laws, decrees, regulations—that is, the traditional weapons of sovereignty. The objective was the sovereign's might, the instruments those of sovereignty: mercantilism sought to reinsert the possibilities opened up by a consciously conceived art of government within a mental and institutional structure, that of sovereignty, which by its very nature stifled them.

Thus, throughout the seventeenth century up to the liquidation of the themes of mercantilism at the beginning of the eighteenth, the art of government remained in a certain sense immobilized. It was trapped within the inordinately vast, abstract, rigid framework of the problem and institution of sovereignty. This art of government tried, so to speak, to reconcile itself with the theory of sovereignty by attempting to derive the ruling principles of an art of government from a renewed version of the theory of sovereignty—and this is where those seventeenth-century jurists come into the picture who formalize or ritualize the theory of the contract. Contract theory enables the founding contract, the mutual pledge of ruler and subjects, to function as a sort of theoretical matrix for deriving the general principles of an art of government. But although contract theory, with its reflection on the relationship between ruler and subjects, played a very important role in theories of public law, in practice, as is evidenced by the case of Hobbes (even though what Hobbes was aiming to discover was the ruling principles of an art of government), it remained at the stage of the formulation of general principles of public law.

On the one hand, there was this framework of sovereignty, which was too large, too abstract, and too rigid; and, on the other, the theory of government suffered from its reliance on a model that

was too thin, too weak, and too insubstantial, that of the family—an economy of enrichment still based on a model of the family was unlikely to be able to respond adequately to the importance of territorial possessions and royal finance.

How, then, was the art of government able to outflank these obstacles? Here again a number of general processes played their part: the demographic expansion of the eighteenth century, connected with an increasing abundance of money, which in turn was linked to the expansion of agricultural production through a series of circular processes with which the historians are familiar. If this is the general picture, then we can say more precisely that the art of government found fresh outlets through the emergence of the problem of population; or let us say, rather, that a subtle process took place, which we must seek to reconstruct in its particulars, through which the science of government, the recentering of the theme of economy on a different plane from that of the family, and the problem of population are all interconnected.

It was through the development of the science of government that the notion of economy came to be recentered onto that different plane of reality we characterize today as the "economic," and it was also through this science that it became possible to identify problems specific to the population. But, conversely, we can say as well that it was thanks to the perception of the specific problems of the population, and thanks to the isolation of that area of reality we call the economy, that the problem of government finally came to be thought, considered, and calculated outside of the juridical framework of sovereignty. And, further, that "statistics"—which in mercantilist tradition only ever worked within and for the benefit of a monarchical administration that functioned according to the form of sovereignty—now becomes the major technical factor, or one of the major technical factors, of the unfreezing [*déblocage*] of the art of government.

In what way did the problem of population make possible the unfreezing of the art of government? The perspective of population, the reality accorded to specific phenomena of population, render possible the final elimination of the model of the family and the recentering of the notion of economy. Whereas statistics had previously worked within the administrative frame and thus in terms of the functioning of sovereignty, it now gradually reveals that pop-

ulation has its own regularities, its own rate of deaths and diseases, its cycles of scarcity, and so on; statistics shows also that the domain of population involves a range of intrinsic, aggregate effects, phenomena that are irreducible to those of the family, such as epidemics, endemic levels of mortality, ascending spirals of labor and wealth; finally, it shows that, through its shifts, customs, activities, and so on, population has specific economic effects. Statistics, by making it possible to quantify these specific phenomena of population, also shows that this specificity is irreducible to the dimension of the family. The latter now disappears as the model of government, except for a certain number of residual themes of a religious or moral nature. On the other hand, what now emerges into prominence is the family considered as an element internal to population, and as a fundamental instrument in its government.

In other words, prior to the emergence of population, it was impossible to conceive the art of government except on the model of the family, in terms of economy conceived as the management of a family. From the moment when, on the contrary, population appears absolutely irreducible to the family, the latter becomes of secondary importance compared to population as an element internal to population: that is, no longer a model but a segment. Nevertheless, it remains a privileged segment, because whenever information is required concerning the population (sexual behavior, demography, consumption, and so on), it must be obtained through the family. But the family becomes an instrument rather than a model—the privileged instrument for the government of the population and not the chimerical model of good government. This shift from the level of the model to that of an instrument is, I believe, absolutely fundamental, and it is from the middle of the eighteenth century that the family appears in this dimension of instrumentality relative to the population, with the institution of campaigns to reduce mortality, and to promote marriages, vaccinations, and so on. Thus, what makes it possible for the theme of population to unblock the field of the art of government is this elimination of the family as model.

In the second place, population comes to appear above all else as the ultimate end of government. In contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the

welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, and so on; and the means the government uses to attain these ends are themselves all, in some sense, immanent to the population; it is the population itself on which government will act either directly, through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly, through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, and so on. The population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign; the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of the government, aware, vis-à-vis the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it. Interest as the consciousness of each individual who makes up the population, and interest considered as the interest of the population regardless of what the particular interests and aspirations may be of the individuals who compose it: this is the new target and the fundamental instrument of the government of population. This is the birth of a new art, or at any rate of a range of absolutely new tactics and techniques.

Finally, population is the point around which is organized what in sixteenth-century texts came to be called the "patience" of the sovereign, in the sense that the population is the object that government must take into account in all its observations and knowledge [*savoir*], in order to be able to govern effectively in a rational and conscious manner. The constitution of knowledge [*savoir*] of government is absolutely inseparable from that of a knowledge of all the processes related to population in its larger sense—that is, what we now call the economy. I said in my last lecture that the constitution of political economy depended upon the emergence, from among all the various elements of wealth, a new subject—population. The new science called "political economy" arises out of the perception of new networks of continuous and multiple relations between population, territory, and wealth; and this is accompanied by the formation of a type of intervention characteristic of government, namely, intervention in the field of economy and population. In other words, the transition that takes place in the eighteenth century from an art of government to a political science,

from a regime dominated by structures of sovereignty to one ruled by techniques of government, turns on the theme of population, hence also on the birth of political economy.

This is not to say that sovereignty ceases to play a role from the moment when the art of government begins to become a political science. On the contrary, I would say that the problem of sovereignty was never posed with greater force than at this time, because it no longer involved—as it had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—an attempt to derive an art of government from a theory of sovereignty; instead, given that such an art now existed and was spreading, it involved an attempt to see what juridical and institutional form, what foundation in the law, could be given to the sovereignty that characterizes a state. It suffices to read in chronological succession two different texts by Rousseau. In his *Encyclopédia* article on "Political Economy," we can see the way in which Rousseau sets up the problem of the art of government by pointing out (and the text is very characteristic from this point of view) that the word "economy" essentially signifies the management of family property by the father, but that this model can no longer be accepted, even if it had been valid in the past; today, says Rousseau, we know that political economy is not the economy of the family. And even without making explicit reference to the Physiocrats, to statistics, or to the general problem of the population, he sees quite clearly this turning point consisting in the fact that the economy of "political economy" has a totally new sense that cannot be reduced to the old model of the family. He undertakes in this article the task of giving a new definition of the art of government. Later he writes *The Social Contract*, where he poses the problem of how it is possible, using concepts such as nature, contract, and general will, to provide a general principle of government that allows room both for a juridical principle of sovereignty and for the elements through which an art of government can be defined and characterized. Consequently, sovereignty is far from being eliminated by the emergence of a new art of government, even by one that has passed the threshold of political science; on the contrary, the problem of sovereignty is made more acute than ever.

As for discipline, this is not eliminated either; clearly, its modes of organization, all the institutions within which it had developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—schools, manufac-

ries, armies, and so on—all this can only be understood on the basis of the development of the great administrative monarchies. Nevertheless, though, discipline was never more important or more valorized than at the moment when it became important to manage a population: the managing of a population not only concerns the collective mass of phenomena, the level of its aggregate effects, but it also implies the management of population in its depths and its details. The notion of a government of population renders all the more acute the problem of the foundation of sovereignty (consider Rousseau) and all the more acute equally the necessity for the development of discipline (consider all the history of the disciplines, which I have attempted to analyze elsewhere).

Accordingly, we need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security. In any case, I wanted to demonstrate the deep historical link between the movement that overturns the constants of sovereignty in consequence of the problem of choices of government; the movement that brings about the emergence of population as a datum, as a field of intervention, and as an objective of governmental techniques; the process that isolates the economy as a specific sector of reality; and political economy as the science and the technique of intervention of the government in that field of reality. Three movements—government, population, political economy—that constitute from the eighteenth century onward a solid series, one that even today has assuredly not been dissolved.

In conclusion, I would like to say that, on second thought, the more exact title I would like to have given to the course of lectures I have begun this year is not the one I originally chose, "Security, Territory, and Population": what I would like to undertake is something I would term a history of "governmentality." By this word I mean three things:

1. The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power,

which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.

2. The tendency that, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led toward the preeminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, and so on) of this type of power—which may be termed “government”—resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of knowledges [*savoirs*].
3. The process or, rather, the result of the process through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and gradually becomes “governmentalized.”

We all know the fascination that the love, or horror, of the state exercises today; we know how much attention is paid to the genesis of the state, its history, its advance, its power, abuses, and so on. The excessive value attributed to the problem of the state is expressed, basically, in two ways: the one form, immediate, affective, and tragic, is the lyricism of the cold monster we see confronting us. But there is a second way of overvaluing the problem of the state, one that is paradoxical because it is apparently reductionist: it is the form of analysis that consists in reducing the state to a certain number of functions, such as the development of productive forces and the reproduction of relations of production, and yet this reductionist vision of the relative importance of the state’s role nevertheless invariably renders it absolutely essential as a target needing to be attacked and a privileged position needing to be occupied. But the state, no more probably today than at any other time in its history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, to speak frankly, this importance. Maybe, after all, the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think. Maybe what is really important for our modernity—that is, for our present—is not so much the statization [*étatisation*] of society, as the “governmentalization” of the state.

We live in the era of a “governmentality” first discovered in the

eighteenth century. This governmentalization of the state is a singularly paradoxical phenomenon: if in fact the problems of governmentality and the techniques of government have become the only political issue, the only real space for political struggle and contestation, this is because the governmentalization of the state is, at the same time, what has permitted the state to survive. It is possible to suppose that if the state is what it is today, this is so precisely thanks to this governmentality, which is at once internal and external to the state—since it is the tactics of government that make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on. Thus, the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.

And maybe we could even, albeit in a very global, rough, and inexact fashion, reconstitute the great forms, the great economies of power in the West in the following way. First came the state of justice, born in a territoriality of feudal type and corresponding in large part to a society of the law—customary laws and written laws—with a whole game of engagements and litigations. Second, the administrative state, born in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in a frontier and no longer feudal territoriality, an administrative state that corresponds to a society of regulations and disciplines. Finally, the state of government, which is no longer essentially defined by its territoriality, by the surface it occupies, but by a mass: the mass of the population, with its volume, its density, with the territory that it covers, to be sure, but only in a sense as one of its components. And this state of government, which is grounded in its population and which refers and has resort to the instrumentality of economic knowledge, would correspond to a society controlled by apparatuses of security.

There, if you like, are certain pointers [*propos*] for positioning this phenomenon—which I believe to be important—of governmentality. I will try further to show how such governmentality is born, in one part, out of an archaic model, that of the Christian pastoral, and secondly, while drawing support from a diplomatico-military model, or better, technics, and finally, thirdly, how governmentality could not have assumed the dimensions it has except thanks to a series of quite particular instruments, whose formation is precisely contemporary with the art of government, and which

could call, in the old sense of the term, that of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the pastoral, the new diplomatico-military technics, and finally the police, I believe, were the three elements from which the phenomenon of the governmentalization of the state, so fundamental in the history of the West, could be produced.

## NOTES

- This essay was presented as part of a course on "Security, Territory, and Population" (see summary in *Essential Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 67-71) that Foucault gave at the Collège de France in the 1977-78 academic year. It was first published in 1978. [eds.]

# Preface

One day, for the first time since leaving school long ago, I was awarded a prize. But this time the prize, for my book *La Fable cinématographique*, was awarded in Italy. The conjunction seemed to me to say something about my relationship with cinema: for in various ways, that country had been instrumental in educating me in the seventh art. There was Rossellini of course, and that winter evening in 1964 when I had been overwhelmed by *Europa '51*, while experiencing an equally strong resistance to that tale of the bourgeoisie acceding to sanctity through the working class. There were the books and magazines that a cinephile Italianist friend used to send me in those days, from which I tried simultaneously to learn cinema theory, Marxism and the Italian language. And then there was the strange back room in a Neapolitan pub where, on a sort of badly hung sheet, I watched James Cagney and John Derek speaking Italian in a dubbed monochrome version of a Nicholas Ray film called *A l'ombra del patibolo*, better known to movie purists as *Run for Cover*.

If these memories surged back when I received that unexpected prize, it was not for simple circumstantial reasons; and if I mention them today, it is not out of misty-eyed nostalgia for years gone by. It is because they outline quite accurately the particular nature of my approach to cinema. Cinema is not an object on which I could have leaned as a philosopher or critic. My relationship with it is a play of encounters and distances which can be discerned through these three

memories. They summarize the three types of distance through which I have tried to talk about cinema: between cinema and art, cinema and politics, cinema and theory.

The first of these divergences, symbolized by the wayside backroom theatre showing Nicholas Ray, is that of *cinepholie*, or the love of cinema. Cinephilia is a relationship with cinema governed by passion rather than theory. It is well known that passion lacks discrimination. Cinephilia was a jumbling of the accepted criteria. A jumbling of venues: a zigzag line between the cinémathèques where the memory of an art was preserved and the old movie theatres in remote parts of town showing derided Hollywood movies of all kinds, where cinephiles sought and unearthed their treasure in the intensity of a Western cavalcade, a bank raid or child's smile. Cinephilia was a link between the worship of art and the democracy of entertainment and emotion, challenging the criteria through which cinema was gaining acceptance as high culture. It affirmed that the greatness of cinema lay not in the metaphysical high-mindedness of its subjects or the visual impact of its plastic effects, but in an imperceptible difference in the ways of putting traditional stories and emotions into images. It called that difference *mise en scène* – staging, direction, production – without being too sure what it meant. Not knowing what it is that one loves and why one loves it is, they say, a characteristic of passion. It is also the path to a certain kind of wisdom. Cinephilia used to discuss the objects of its passion in terms of a rather rough-and-ready phenomenology of *mise en scène* seen as establishing a 'relation to the world'. But in the process, it questioned the dominant categories that existed for thinking about art. Twentieth-century art is often described in terms of the modernist paradigm: identification of the modern artistic revolution with the concentration of each art on its own medium, in contrast to the mercantile aestheticization of images from life. That sort of modernity appeared to

crumble during the 1960s under the combined effects of political suspicion focused on artistic autonomy and the ever-growing avalanche of commercial and advertising forms. But this view – that modernist purity succumbed to the post-modern ‘anything goes’ – ignores the fact that such blurring of dividing lines developed in a more complex way in other settings, including cinema. Cinephilia questioned the categories of artistic modernism not by deriding high art but by restoring a closer and less obvious linkage between the types of art, the emotions of the narrative, and by discovering the splendour that the most commonplace objects could acquire on a lighted screen in a dark auditorium: a hand lifting a curtain or fumbling with a door handle, a head leaning out of a window, a fire or car headlights in the night, drinking glasses glittering on a bar ... it introduced us to a positive understanding, in no way ironic or disillusioned, of the impurity of art.

Probably it did so because of the difficulty in reconciling the sense, the rationale behind its emotions with the reasoning needed to navigate politically through the world’s conflicts. The smile and gaze of the young John Mohune in *Moonfleet* establish a form of equality with the scheming of his false friend Jeremy Fox; but how was a student discovering Marxism in the early 1960s to relate that to the struggle against social inequality? The obsessional quest for justice by the hero of *Winchester '73* hunting the murdering brother, the joined hands of the outlaw Wes McQueen and the wild girl Colorado on the rock where they are cornered by the forces of order in *Colorado Territory* – what relation did they have to the struggle of the new workers’ world against the world of exploitation? To bring them together one needed to postulate a mysterious equivalence between the historical materialism underlying the workers’ struggle and the implicit materialism of the cinematic relation of bodies to their environment. It is at this very point that the vision conveyed by *Europa '51*

introduces a problem. Irena's progression from bourgeois apartment to working-class suburban tower block and the factory floor seemed at first to connect the two materialisms perfectly. The physical advance of the heroine, venturing gradually into unfamiliar zones, made the progress of the plot and the camera work coincide with the progressive uncovering of the world of labour and oppression. Unhappily, the fine straight materialist line broke when Irena went up a flight of stairs leading to a church and then descended towards a consumptive prostitute, charitable good works and the spiritual itinerary of sainthood.

To deal with that, one had to say the materialism of the *mise en scène* had been deflected by the filmmaker's personal ideology, a re-run of the old Marxist argument praising Balzac for showing the realities of capitalist society despite holding reactionary views. But the uncertainties of the Marxist aesthetic then redoubled those of the cinephile aesthetic, by suggesting the only true materialists are materialists unintentionally. This paradox seemed to be confirmed, in the same period, by my appalled viewing of *The General Line*, whose multitudes of piglets suckling from an ecstatic sow amid torrents of milk I had found repellent, in a sniggering audience most of whose members nevertheless, like me, must have had communist sympathies and believed in the merits of collectivized agriculture. It is often said militant films preach only to the converted. But what is one to say when the quintessential communist film produces a negative effect on the converted themselves? The gap between cinephilia and communism could apparently only be narrowed where the aesthetic principles and social relations depicted were fairly remote from our own, as in that final sequence from Mizoguchi's *Shin Heike Monogatari*, when the rebellious son passes with his companions in arms above the plain where his frivolous mother is enjoying the pleasures of her class and

gives the closing lines of the film: 'Enjoy yourselves, rich ones! Tomorrow belongs to us.' Doubtless the charm of this sequence stems from the way it showed us the visual delights of the doomed old world along with the aural delight of the words announcing the new one.

The problem of how to narrow that gap, how to engineer an equivalence between the pleasure derived from shadows projected on a screen and the intelligence proper to an art or a worldview, led to the thought that some sort of cinema theory might be needed. But no combination of classical Marxist theory and classical thought on cinema enabled me to decide whether the ascent or descent of a staircase was idealist or materialist, progressive or reactionary. No combination would ever make it possible to identify the criteria distinguishing what was art in cinema from what was not, or to read the political message carried by the placing of bodies in a shot or a sequential linkage between two shots.

So, perhaps the thing to do would be to approach the matter from the other direction, to examine that apparent unity between an art, a form of feeling and a coherent worldview, and call the study 'cinema theory'. To wonder whether cinema exists only as a set of irreducible gaps between things that have the same name without being members of a single body. Cinema in effect is a multitude of things. It is the material place where we go to be entertained by the spectacle of shadows, even though the shadows touch our emotions in a deep and secret way not expressed in the condescending term 'entertainment'. It is also the residue of those presences that accumulates and settles in us as their reality fades and alters over time: that other cinema reconstituted by our memories and our words, which can be distinctly different from what had been projected on screen. Cinema is also an ideological apparatus producing images that circulate in society and in which society recognizes its modern stereotypes, its legends

from the past and its imagined futures. Then again it is the concept of an art, a problematic dividing line that isolates those works meriting consideration as high art from the merely competent output of an industry. But cinema is also a utopia: the scripture of a movement celebrated in the 1920s as the great universal symphony, the exemplary manifestation of an energy inhabiting all art, labour and society. And cinema, lastly, can be a philosophical concept, a theory of the actual movement of things and of thought, exemplified by Gilles Deleuze whose two books *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* mention films and their processes on every page while being neither a theory nor a philosophy of cinema, but more a metaphysics.

That multiplicity, proof against any unitary theory, elicits a variety of reactions. Some try to separate the wheat from the chaff: to distinguish what relates to cinema as art from the output of the entertainment and propaganda industries; or the film itself, the aggregate of prints, shots and camera movements one studies in the monitor, from the deforming memories or added statements. Perhaps such rigour is short-sighted. To restrict oneself to art is to forget that art itself exists only as an unstable frontier which, to exist, needs to be crossed incessantly. Cinema belongs to the aesthetic art regime where the old standards of representation for distinguishing the fine arts from the mechanical arts and setting everything in its place no longer exist. It belongs to an art regime in which the purity of new forms is often derived from pantomime, circus acts or commercial graphics. To consider only the shots and processes that compose a film is to forget that cinema is an art as well as a world to itself, that those shots and effects that vanish in the moment of projection need to be extended, to be transformed by the memory and words that make cinema exist as a shared world far beyond the material reality of its projections.

Writing on cinema, for me, means assuming two apparently contradictory positions. The first is that there is no concept that covers all forms of cinema, no theory that unifies all the problems they pose. Between the word *Cinema* that unites Gilles Deleuze's two volumes and the old-time large auditorium lined with red plush seats showing in succession a newsreel, a documentary and a feature, separated by intermissions with ice cream, the only link is the homonym. The other position holds on the contrary that where there is homonymy there must exist a common thought environment, that cinematic thought is what circulates in that environment, working from inside the separations and trying to determine this or that tangle between different cinemas or 'problems of cinema'. This position could be called an amateur's position. I have never taught film, film theory or aesthetics. I have encountered cinema at different moments in my life: during the cinephile enthusiasm of the 1960s; the examination of relations between cinema and history in the 1970s; or the 1990s effort to map the aesthetic paradigms underlying thought on the seventh art. But the amateur's position is not that of an eclectic supporting the wealth of empirical diversity against the colourless rigour of theory. Amateurism is also a theoretical and political position, one that sidelines the authority of specialists by re-examining the way the frontiers of their domains are drawn at the points where experience and knowledge intersect. Amateur politics asserts that cinema belongs to all those who have travelled, in one way or another, through the system of gaps and distances contained in its name, and that everyone has the right to trace, between any two points in that topography, an individual route that adds to cinema treated as a world, and adds to our understanding of it.

That is why I have spoken elsewhere of 'cinematic fable' and not of cinema theory. I wanted to position myself in a universe without hierarchy where the films recomposed by

our perceptions, feelings and words count for as much as the ones printed on the film itself; where cinema theories and aesthetics are themselves seen as stories, as singular adventures of thought generated by the multiple character of cinema. For forty of fifty years, while continuing to discover new films or new discourses on cinema, I have also retained memories of films, shots and snatches of dialogue that are more or less deformed compared to the original. At various moments I have confronted my memories with the reality of the films, or reconsidered their interpretation. I watched Nicholas Ray's *They Live by Night* to relive the dazzling impression of the moment when Bowie encounters Keechie in a garage doorway. I did not find this shot since it does not exist. But I tried to understand the singular power of the suspension of narrative that I had condensed into that imaginary shot. Twice I returned to *Europa '51*: once to overturn my first interpretation, and validate the sidestep taken by Irena, leaving the topography of the working-class world arranged for her by her cousin, a Communist journalist, to move to the other side where the spectacles of the social world can no longer be imprisoned in the modes of thought elaborated by government, media or social sciences; and a second time to re-examine the all too-easy contrasting of the representation's social schemes with the unrepresentable in art. I watched Anthony Mann's westerns again to understand why I had been so fascinated by them. It was not simply the childish pleasure of cavalcades across great landscapes or the adolescent pleasure of perverting the received standards of art, but also the perfection of balance between two things: the Aristotelian rigour of the plot which, by way of realizations and vicissitudes, gives every character their due happiness or misfortune, and the way the body of the heroes played by James Stewart extracted itself, through the fine detail of its movements, from the ethical universe which gave meaning to that rigour in the

action. I saw *The General Line* again and understood why I had been so repelled by it thirty years earlier. It was not its ideological content but its form – cinematography conceived as the direct expression of thought in a specific language of the visible. To appreciate it one had to understand that those torrents of milk and platoons of piglets were not in fact torrents of milk or piglets but the dreamed-of ideograms of a new language. Belief in that language had perished before the belief in agrarian collectivization. That is why, by 1960, that film was physically unbearable; and why, perhaps, we had to wait to grasp its beauty until all we could see in it was the splendid utopia of a language, surviving the catastrophic collapse of a social system.

From these meanderings and returns it was possible to pinpoint the hard kernel signified by the expression ‘cinematic fable’. In the first place this term signifies the tension that underlies the gaps in cinema, the tension between art and history. Cinema was born in an age of great suspicion where stories were concerned, a time when it was thought that a new art was being born that no longer told stories, no longer described the spectacle of things, no longer disclosed the emotional states of characters but inscribed the product of thought directly into the movement of changing forms. It seemed the art most likely to fulfil that dream. ‘Cinema is truth. A story is a lie,’ Jean Epstein said. This truth could be understood in different ways. Jean Epstein saw it as writing with light, inscribing on film not images of things but vibrations in a palpable material reduced to immaterial energy; Eisenstein saw cinema as a language of ideograms expressing thought directly as palpable stimuli tilling the soil of Soviet consciousness like a tractor; and Vertov saw cinema as the thread stretched between all the acts that were building the palpable reality of communism. The ‘theory’ of cinema had first been its utopia, the idea of a scripture of movement, in

keeping with a new age in which the rational reorganization of the palpable world would coincide with the movement of that world's energies.

That promise seemed to have been broken when Soviet artists were required to produce positive images of the new man and German film directors went to cast their own light and shadows on the formatted stories of the Hollywood industry. Cinema, supposed to be the new anti-representational art, seemed to be doing the opposite: restoring action sequences, psychological plotting and codes of expression that the other arts had striven to break up. The montage which had been the dream of a new language for a new world seemed in Hollywood to have reverted to the traditional functions of narrative art: slickly cut action sequences and intensified emotions to encourage audience identification with tales of love and bloodshed. This development elicited various sceptical responses: disenchantment with a fallen art or alternatively, ironic revision of the dream of a new language. It also contributed in different ways to the dream of a cinema reverting to its true vocation: Bresson saw it as the reassertion of a radical split between the spiritual montage and automatism specific to the cinematograph and the theatrical games of the cinema. For Rossellini or André Bazin, it was the other way round, assertion of cinema primarily as a window opened on the world: a way of deciphering it or making it reveal its inner reality even in its surface appearances.

I thought it necessary to go back over these phases and these contrasts. Although cinema has not lived up to the promise of a new anti-representational art, it is not because of any capitulation to the rule of commerce. Rather, there was always something contradictory in the very wish to identify with a language of sensation. Cinema was being asked to fulfil the dream of a century of literature: to replace yesterday's stories and characters with the impersonal deployment of signs

written on things, restoring the speeds and intensities of the real world. Literature had been able to carry that dream because its discourse on things and their intensities stayed written in the double game of words, which hide from the eye the palpable richness which shimmers in the mind. Cinema just shows what it shows. It could only take up the dream of literature at the cost of making it a pleonasm: piglets cannot be both piglets and words at the same time. The art of cinema cannot only be the deployment of the specific powers of its machine. It exists through the play of gaps and improprieties. This book attempts to analyse some of its aspects in terms of a triple relationship. Firstly cinema with literature, from which film draws its narrative models and from which it seeks to emancipate itself; and also its relationship with two extremes in which art is often said to lose its way: where it applies its powers to the service of mere entertainment; and where it tries on the contrary to exceed those powers to transmit thought and teach political lessons.

The relationship between cinema and literature is illustrated here by two examples taken from very different poetics: Hitchcock's classical narrative cinema, a detective thriller plot containing the plan for a sequence of operations to create and then dissipate an illusion; and Bresson's modernist cinematography, constructing a film based on a literary text to demonstrate the specificity of a language of images. The two attempts experience the resistance of their object in different ways, however. In two scenes from *Vertigo*, the ability of the 'master of suspense' to make the narrative of an intellectual machination coincide with the presentation of visual charm becomes deficient. There is nothing accidental about this deficiency which touches on the relationship between showing and telling. The virtuoso filmmaker becomes clumsy when he gets close to the 'literary' heart of the work he is adapting. The detective thriller in effect is a double object. It is the presumed

model of a narrative logic that dissipates appearances by conducting the evidence towards the truth. And, it is also bitten by its opposite: the logic of defection from causes and entropy of meaning, a virus that great literature has passed on to the 'minor' genres. For literature is not just a reservoir of stories or a way of telling them, it is a means of constructing the very world in which stories can occur, events link with one another in sequence, appearances arise. The proof of this is given in a different way when Bresson adapts a literary work descended from the great naturalist tradition: in *Mouchette*, the relationship between the language of images and the language of words is played out in reverse. Bresson's tendency towards fragmentation, intended to drive out the peril of 'representation', and the care he takes to evacuate the literary burden from his images have the paradoxical effect of subjecting the movement of images to forms of narrative sequencing from which the art of words had been freed. So, it is the performance of speaking bodies that is left to restore its lost substance to the visible. But to do that, it has to reject the simplistic contrast made by the director between the cinematic 'model' and the actor in 'filmed theatre'. While Bresson symbolizes the vices of theatre with a representation of *Hamlet* in troubadour style, the power of elocution he gives his *Mouchette* discreetly joins the similar power bestowed by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, two directors influenced by Brechtian theatre, on the workers, peasants and shepherds borrowed from the dialogues of Pavese or Vittorini. The literary, the cinematic and the theatrical thus come to seem not the specific qualities of different arts but aesthetic forms, relationships between the power of words and that of the visible, between the sequences of stories and the movements of bodies, that cross the frontiers assigned to the arts.

Rossellini has the same problem – what body to use to transmit the power of a text? – when he presents the thought

of philosophers to a mass audience on television. The difficulty is not, as prevailing opinion suggests, that the flatness of the image crudely resists the depths of thought, but that the density specific to each makes it impossible to establish a simple relationship of cause and effect between them. So Rossellini has to give his philosophers very singular bodies to make one density perceptible in the forms of the other. This passage between two regimes of meaning is again in play when Minnelli stages – with songs – the relationship between art and entertainment. One might have thought the false problem of where the one ends and the other begins would disappear once the champions of artistic modernity had contrasted the perfect art of acrobats with the fusty emotion of stories. But the master of musical comedy shows us that all the labour of art – with or without the uppercase – is to construct transitions between the two. Pure performance is the utopian horizon towards which, while unable to reach it, there strives the tension between the play of forms and the emotion of stories: the tension on which the cinematic art of shadows lives.

That utopian extreme was also what made cinema seem capable of eliminating the gap between art, life and politics. Vertov's films offer the finished example of cinematic thought as real communism, identified with the very development of the links between all three movements. Such cinematic communism rejecting both narrative art and strategists' Realpolitik could only repel experts in both disciplines. But it is still the radical gap that enables us to think about the unresolved tension between cinema and politics. Once the belief in a new language for a new life had faded, cinema politics became entangled in contradictions specific to the expectations of critical art. The gaze focused on the ambiguities of cinema is itself marked by the duplicity expected of it: that it should raise awareness by the clarity of a disclosure and

arouse energy by presenting an oddity, that it should reveal at the same time all the ambiguity of the world and how to deal with that ambiguity. The obscurity of the relationship assumed to exist between clarity of vision and the energies of action is projected onto it. Cinema can illuminate action, but perhaps only by casting doubt on the obviousness of that relation. Straub and Huillet do it by giving two shepherds the task of arguing the aporiae of the law. Pedro Costa does it by reinventing the reality of a Cape Verdean stonemason's meandering progress, between an exploited past and unemployed present, between the garish alleys of the shantytown and the white cubes of the housing estate. Béla Tarr charts slowly the accelerated passage to death of a young girl, and in doing so he captures the deceitfulness of great hopes. Tariq Teguia in the West of Algeria crosses a land surveyor's meticulous measurements with the wandering course of migrants bound for the promised lands of prosperity. Cinema does not present a world others might have to transform. It combines in its own way the muteness of facts and the sequencing of actions, the rightness of the visible and its own simple identity. The political effectiveness of the forms of the art is something for politics to build into its own scenarios. The same cinema that speaks for the rebellious by saying 'Tomorrow belongs to us' also signals that it can offer no tomorrows other than its own. This is what Mizoguchi shows us in another of his films, *Sansho the Bailiff*. This one recounts the family history of a provincial governor who has been forced into exile because of the concern he showed for oppressed peasants. His wife is kidnapped and his children, Zushio and Anju, are sold into slavery. To enable her brother to escape, to rescue her captive mother and to fulfil her father's promise to liberate the slaves, Anju sinks slowly into the waters of a lake and commits suicide. But this completion of the logic of action is also its bifurcation. On the one hand cinema participates in the

struggle for emancipation, on the other it is dissipated in circular ripples on a lake surface. Zushio is to take up this double logic on his own account at the end when he abandons his duty to seek out his blind mother on the island even after the slaves have been freed. All the gaps in cinema can be summed up by the film's closing panoramic shot, which signals a shift from the great battle for freedom we have been watching up to this point. With this shift we are being told: These are the limits of what I can do. The rest is up to you.



*Sansho the Bailiff*, Kenji Mizoguchi, Daiei Studios, 1954

R. 70

# The New Rules of Algorithmic Institutions

Stefano Harney

“Sorry, there’s nothing I can do. Those are the rules.” There was a time when a bureaucrat said this to you and you thought, “bullshit, I bet you could help me with one phone call, with one signature, or just by handing me the correct form.” Perhaps that bureaucrat facing you worked for the ministry of education, for the tax office, or for the city council. You may have been seeking permission, looking for an exception, or trying to get information. Your fear, as you approached the counter, was: “This guy is not going to help me.” He’s not going to explain, and probably doesn’t care. He could, if he wanted to, but he just doesn’t give a shit, or he doesn’t like your face, or you’ve somehow already pissed him off, or he’s just having a bad day.

Today, however, when we hear “sorry, I can’t help you, those are the rules,” we often experience the uncanny feeling that the bureaucrat with whom we are pleading is as helpless as we are. We may still hope this official can help us with a mere keystroke, but increasingly we suspect that we are hearing a disheartening new truth. These words tend to come to us these days over the phone when we call our insurance company, or across the desk when we talk to a bank officer, or to our inbox when we’ve written to our human resources department. Today’s bureaucracy is corporate, and our world is, to twist a phrase by

Stefano Harney The New Rules of Algorithmic Institutions in Former West: Art and The Contemporary after 1989, (The MIT Press 2016) p. 447—457

Theodor Adorno, privately administered. And this administration not only *runs on* the proliferation of algorithms and enterprise planning tools, but, we might fear, is in fact *run by* such tools. Forty years ago we may have been dealing with fickle Western welfare state bureaucrats, or administrators of socialist republics, or new governments in postcolonial states. This was the administered world Adorno bemoaned. But we were certainly dealing with humans for whom bureaucracy was a government job, sometimes a good one. These humans had bosses, and behind all this bureaucracy was some idea, however attenuated, of the welfare state, or socialism, or national development.

One used to shout, “I pay your salary” at the final moment of defeat in a confrontation with such bureaucratic power. But this cry of defeat was also an appeal beyond that bureaucracy to this or that political party and to some kind of abstract governance, of which the offending bureaucrat was merely a servant. Of course, this was a moment of defeat precisely because this abstract governance was often nothing more than its workers hailed by its citizens, and its citizens hailed by its workers. But it revealed our cherished belief that a public bureaucracy might also need to seek legitimacy in the people, as much as our experience showed us otherwise.

Today, such appeals have not disappeared so much as they have been reversed. The contemporary image of the public bureaucrat is an armed one, an FBI agent, or other national equivalents, and the appeal is not so much one made to them, as made to you. This armed bureaucrat is more concerned that your actions line up with the ideology he represents than with listening to appeals from you about how he should line up. Disturbingly, today’s public bureaucrat occupies a more sinister place than the stubborn clerk behind the desk ever did. Today, it is the armed bureaucrat who is planted most firmly in our imagination, or, perhaps better to say, in our nightmares. Certainly this is so in the Americas, from the mass disappearances of students in Mexico, to the murder of black children on the streets of the United States and Brazil, to the assassination of land activists in Guatemala. In the daily lives of many so-called citizens, it is these bureaucratic assassins, and not the airbrushed CSI agents, who are the faces of the public bureaucracy working for the only remaining official ideology, a “good business climate.”

Next to this new model of the armed public bureaucrat, the private bureaucrats of this good business climate may seem like mild figures, but we nonetheless feel a kind of impunity in insurance agents, credit assessors, or national test administrators. Privately administered services seem disconnected even from an imagined political legitimacy. Indeed, privatization claims something higher than mere political legitimacy. It claims moral, or even evolutionary legitimacy. Privatization has been proposed as the solution to both the corruption and the arbitrary power said to congenitally afflict government bureaucracies. The idea is that a government service is just like a business and that a competitive

market in government services would improve quality, because only high quality would survive the competition. If we can get past the bizarre idea that providing a free lunch to children in schools is the same as providing mobile phone plans, we still face the problem that real businesses strive to eliminate competition precisely to create monopolies and rid themselves of markets. Even then, we would have to ignore the inability of privatization ideologues to recognize the difference between a simile and a metaphor. Services might benefit from competition as if there were a market, but that is completely different from sticking government services in the actual market. Free lunches are free because kids can't afford them, and those are facts on the ground that cannot be changed by a good business plan. But given that privatization also has presented itself as the apotheosis of services as businesses, the facts do not seem to matter.

Now, there are some who will say this new privately administered world means a responsive bureaucracy emphasizing customer service and competing for the chance to serve us. They will say that any remaining defects will be sorted out by better management systems. And they will say that whatever these defects, this privately administered world serves the public interest better than the publicly administered bureaucracies ever did. But, of course, this last claim depends on the idea that what is good for us is markets. Only then do agents of the market appear to be more obviously in the public interest. Because, in the end, private administrators administer not for publics, but for markets; indeed, they administer with the aim of replacing publics with markets, and then measure themselves by this success alone. Of course, for most of us, such potential political analysis degenerates in the face of our daily bureaucratic experiences of the actually existing private bureaucracy, as we continue to wait on hold, get transferred to another department, and referred yet again to the Frequently Asked Questions section.

Indeed, our experience as customers in this privately administered world is a series of self-serve airline kiosks, complete with airline agents who have to push the buttons for us. An algorithm created those kiosks, and it awaits other algorithms that will create us as customers who can actually figure out how to use them. We are caught between two algorithms in that line at the airport, one working on workers, and one working on customers, one retraining workers, one training us, one eliminating work, one putting us to work in the shells of the old staff. This combination of consumption and production articulated by the algorithm is where the privately administered world moves from the absurd to the sinister. It has been made for efficiency, for productivity, for a good business climate, which, algorithmically speaking, can always get better. The private bureaucrat is just there to input us into the algorithm, or to spit us out of one.

Private bureaucrats work not just on behalf of existing markets, but in order to create ever-new ones through privatization. Algorithms

never rest. They evolve to create more intense and extensive markets. And lest we forget, contrary to the ideologues of privatization, producing markets means producing more forms of monopoly over more aspects of the production of life, or to put it in more traditional critical language, the expansion and intensification of social production for private gain. Privatization uses the algorithm to generate monopoly power in a world where some are said to be in need of market discipline, incentives, or entrepreneurship, and others are ready to give it to them.

Or, to put this another way, most of us have only ourselves and each other to privatize. Our encounter with the institutions of this privately administered world is today precisely an exercise in the privatization of all we have left: ourselves. And worse, it is a felt compulsion to privatize any person or thing refusing improvement, resisting the algorithm. It is not so much that privatized bureaucracy has been improved to serve us as it is that we must be improved to serve it. Just like the armed clerks of today's public bureaucracies who demand we improve our vigilance, our resilience, our obedience, and our compliance, these institutions of the privately administered world demand the continuous improvement of our productivity precisely in administering privatization. And privatizing ourselves means being subjected to an algorithm that will always demand more improvement, and always ensure the fruits of our labor become someone else's property, someone else's monopoly. But despite this gloomy forecast, what is interesting about this development is both the latent power and the apparent powerlessness that accompany the privately administered world. The powerlessness appears first and more vividly. Like the private bureaucrat to whom we appeal, we feel no agency; every day, we must compete all over again, account for ourselves all over again, for the job we are in, for the benefits we receive, for the grant we have been given. We know the private bureaucrat is in the same position. She too is powerless to challenge the algorithm. On the other hand, our power comes not from being the ones who operate the algorithm, but from being its raw material. It has nothing to privatize without us and nothing if it privatizes all of us. By now the careers of these algorithmic institutions tread a familiar and common path, whether they are museums, universities, hospitals, military forces, or childcare centers. First they privatize themselves and then everything and everybody around them. But the curious effect of all this is that many of us become the private bureaucrats—we administer this privatization. We're the ones who say "sorry, I can't help you," and we mean it.

Imagine a museum of contemporary art in a European capital, perhaps a city that is undergoing an uneasy transition from its heritage as a classical bureaucratic polity to an economy driven by a new logistical capitalism. This new logistical capitalism emphasizes services, tourism, transport, finance, health industries, and culture. "Access plus speed" is the formula of logistics, and logistical capitalism, powered by algorithms

and their metrics, presses only these imperatives. With metrics, no one cares what you have achieved. They only want to compare it against what more you could—and will—achieve. For instance, both residents and visitors must have more access than whatever they have now, whenever and wherever they want it, whether to banking to shop hours to medical clinics to taxis. At the same time, shops and clinics collect big data, and the residents and visitors demanding access have access demanded of them. It seems like everyone in the city is beginning to participate in this privately administered world of access and speed, handheld devices at the ready. Culture, too, must be accessible and quickly available, and, in turn, audiences must be accessed through participation, outreach, and education. The city starts an all-night art festival, throwing open the doors of its museums, galleries, theaters, and palaces, including our museum of contemporary art, housed in a fine eighteenth-century building granted and refurbished by the state in the 1990s. The city believes its all-night art event is about presenting a more civilized and lively life. But the event is also a welcome party for logistical capitalism.

And logistical capitalism is not optional. Those who fail to grant access at speed begin to look like obstacles to others. Soon we hear that the museum of contemporary art needs new leadership, leadership for an era of disruptive innovation. A new leader arrives, a former heritage minister from an Australian regional government. A new head curator also arrives, courtesy of a high-profile international search company. The curator is back in his home city after several years away in Manchester running the modern art museum there. The new leadership team sets about making the museum more algorithmic.

The leadership team hires consultants from KPMG, who are recommended to them by the international search company that facilitated their hiring. The consultants recommend an enterprise planning system, covering payroll and finance, human resources, purchasing, and maintenance and supply. Enterprise planning systems are based on algorithms. These algorithms calculate organizational efficiencies, and they automate management decisions. KPMG promises savings from efficiencies, and from phasing out decision-makers whose decisions are now made algorithmically; a whole layer of lower managers, who were once ordering supplies, calculating vacation time, or overseeing repairs, begin to vanish. Moreover, by calculating efficiencies, it soon becomes clear groundskeepers, janitors, and security guards have insufficient job spans and overlapping duties. They can be rationalized. The janitor can lock up. The security guard can also open up in the morning.

By now, some of the assistant curators are raising concerns about a favorite groundskeeper, who is being pushed into early retirement against his will. In response to this discontent, KPMG recommends an executive leadership course for the new head of the museum and her chief curator. The leadership course stresses empathy as the key leadership ingredient for an era of disruptive change. The management

team subsequently begins weekly news blasts to all employees by e-mail. Featured prominently in the news blast is a high-definition photograph of the new head of the museum above a weekly column regularly expressing empathy. Next comes the café and restaurant. Here, KPMG tells the museum they must focus on core competencies as an organization, and they ask the management team to list what they regard as core skills at an away day. No one lists restaurateur. KPMG seizes on this. It's time to outsource the café and restaurant to those for whom the restaurant business is a core competency. This will mean a good deal of change in the café and many familiar faces may not make the transition. It will be helpful, therefore, to create some buzz about a celebrity chef who is interested in opening on the premises, and KPMG knows people who have contacts in the food and beverage industry.

It becomes clear to all who still work at the museum that they are being measured and evaluated in a new way, accessed in a new way, with new speed, not just by audiences and publics, but by management. New job coaching and mentoring schemes are set up and employees are asked to create a series of goals and objectives for themselves over the coming fiscal year. These will be revisited. The leadership is being encouraged to "create buzz." The new head of the museum gives interviews about exciting times at the museum, and the head curator attracts Siemens corporate funds for a major new exhibit on neglected conceptual women artists from Eastern Europe. The café reopens serving Peet's Coffee from Berkeley, California. It advertises longer hours. One curator whispers to another, "*this coffee is better.*"

The disruptive innovation at the museum of modern art is so successful by the second year that even a 40 percent cut in funding from the regional government does not put the museum in the red. But the funding cut does begin the conversation about long-term institutional sustainability in the new fiscal reality. An algorithmic modeling of land values in the center of the city is introduced at a meeting of the leadership team on this new fiscal reality. Values have sky-rocketed since the city's business-friendly new mayor decided to spur investment in housing by introducing market rates for some renters and making Airbnb rentals legal. The museum building is a rapidly appreciating asset according to the model, and is now an asset against which any bank would be happy to lend. In fact, with a new addition, a model of leveraging the land and building presents itself as a solution to the short-term fiscal reality. Selling the back of the current museum garden, together with debt financing against the original museum building, could in fact fund the new education and outreach wing of the museum.

The new education and outreach wing, including a members' private rooftop lounge, will also attract corporate funding and gifts from private donors, with consultants hired to shape a culture of giving—consultants recommended by KPMG. The celebrity chef caters a fundraising dinner for invited guests to kick off the campaign.

Education and outreach are identified as priorities—over, for instance, more gallery space—because the museum is also rethinking audiences. No longer can we assume that there is an audience out there for every contemporary exhibit. These audiences must be created. Through outreach, we gather new levels of information about potential audiences, and through education, we assemble these audiences. Obviously we will have to hire a social media specialist for these purposes, recommended by the fundraising consultants.

This museum is an invention, but such are the pressures of logistical capitalism today that I know anyone associated with a museum anywhere recognizes almost everything I have said, or will shortly. I could have told this story, with some variations, for hospitals, or schools, or universities. Algorithmic institutions fit a pattern, the pattern of logistical capitalism, access at speed—to our labor, to our mood, to our future. These institutions may be nominally public, but they are privately administered in every way, including the levels of leadership and ownership. Banks, investors, and donors effectively own these institutions, and leaders work only nominally for the state. They work for the owners.

But, now, let us consider the potentials opened by this dire situation. I want to do so by way of the work of an artist rebelling from within the algorithm, in the belly of logistical capitalism as it manifests itself in us as private administrators of our world. The artist is Jack Tan, a Londoner born in Singapore. In 2015, Tan produced a show at the Institute of Contemporary Arts at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore, entitled *How to Do Things With Rules*. His show enacts the privately administered world, and slows logistical capitalism down until it becomes playable and pliable. But, first, we should take note of an exhibition and residency by Tan that preceded the LASALLE exhibit. *Closure* was a series of activities in residency and a show created by Tan in 2012 to mark the winding down of the General Social Care Council, itself the evolution of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work founded in 1970. With the dissolution of this Council, there would no longer be any specialist regulator of social workers in Britain. The Council was criticized for failures in regulation, and eliminated in the name of efficiency and fiscal restraint. Another public bureaucracy “unsetted.” Shortly after this closure, the government announced it was going to marketize and privatize child protection as part of a wider move toward privately administered social care. Around the same time, perhaps not coincidentally, social workers in Greece and Spain began to emerge as leaders in the struggle against austerity, privatization, and public indebtedness. Britain too has a radical tradition in social work, from anti-racist and feminist social workers in the 1970s to the Social Work Action Network today operating in Britain and Ireland and active in solidarity actions with migrants. Tan allows these political stakes to form the backdrop of his work in *Closure*.

Tan created a series of *kudurru* to mark the actual closure of the Council. *Kudurru* are stones that were used in Babylonia to mark boundaries of granted land. The original stones were kept in temples, and copies placed on the boundaries of the land itself. The stones were engraved with the contract granting the land from the king to his landowners, and also included engravings of the gods that protected the contract and who would curse those who broke it, as well as other illustrations. One set of two *kudurru* created by Tan is entitled *Travel Reimbursement Forms* (2012). These are ceramics that resemble melting desserts, with text from the actual forms scratched into their surface. Another set of short, rounded pillars, ceramic and acrylic, each in a different bright color, is called *Committee* (2012). They stand around as if waiting for a meeting to start. One column is slightly tilted at the top, suggesting a meeting gone on too long. The viewer is tempted to consider these objects from the perspective of a contract, especially given that Tan himself was a practicing human rights lawyer before turning to art. Certainly, it is possible to think of the stones as trying to prevent or at least mark a broken wage contract, and perhaps even mark a change in the social contract emblematic of a privately administered world. But just as Tan is more than his legal background, I think these objects are about more than contracts, even if one hopes the curse of a broken contract in these stones does indeed reach the conspirators who profit from privatization of publicly generated wealth.

It might be more interesting to look at them in terms of time and space, the time of walking from one ceramic to another, and the space thereby demarcated and named. The publicly administered world has been one of boundaries, marked by the high counter, the glass wicket, the closed office door. And not just of space, but also of time, of opening hours, waiting times, processing schedules. As much as these boundaries have frustrated us, Tan's work suggests that they also have protected us, or, more precisely, have given us something to protect. Time and space were divided into public and private. Public space was the space of work for the bureaucrat, and work had its clock. Private space was the place work was not supposed to go, and private time was just that. Even private space at work was protected. I remember the way post office clerks in downtown Manhattan had their booths covered in family photos, pictures of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and union posters. This was work space, but it was private in the sense that it represented interests different from work. I should add, however, that this protection, as a defensive effort, was always limited, as those postal clerks knew. And, ultimately, it could not protect us from what was to come. The private, as we know, was in fact full of the work of social reproduction, and the public was not for everyone. Protecting the time and space of the public and private was already a rearguard action, given how much of our world was already privatized. But Tan's work helps us to see why the stakes of public bureaucracy have been so high: not

because of what was protected, but of what the protection feared, a world where administration and work knew no boundaries of time or space. When I returned to that Manhattan post office after the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, all the pictures and posters were removed, and clerks sat in sterile booths. Any interest other than work had been expunged. *Closure* has marked this fear, but also the vindication of this fear.

On the other hand, *How to Do Things With Rules* is an equally resistant show, though rather than confronting a fear, it takes full advantage of our new position as administrators of a privatized world, raising the question of whether it is really a good idea to give us these responsibilities, loosed from the divisions of time and space. Scholars from Franco Berardi to Peter Fleming have illustrated in recent years a world where work and life appear coextensive in both time and space. There has been a strange collapse in the division of relative surplus labor and absolute surplus labor according to these scholars, as if work-time and work-place have dissolved as boundaries. Black radical and Italian autonomist feminists have long pointed to this social factory, and they have also noted how, as the walls of work have come down, new barbed wire fences, lined with armed bureaucrats, rise, and new zones within such fences reach through the social factory. In this privately administered world, with public muscle to back it up, we might imagine Tan's new work would stress the futility of our own administrative acts, and the power of algorithmic measures that perpetuate these acts.

Instead, Tan creates something remarkable: a workshop of rules. This "workshop" manages to retain both senses of the word, a place where something is made, and a place made to make something. And in this simple yet profound move, Tan gives us a way to sense ourselves as both makers of rules and conveners of those rules. In a more philosophical language, the seriality of following a rule made elsewhere in time and space, though nonetheless by human labor, gives way to a view of the *practico-inert* as an immediately present collective performance. This is no more evident than in Tan's 2015 work, *Karaoke Court*. Performed first in Singapore at the show *How To Do Things With Rules*, and subsequently in London, Tan explains the event this way:

*Karaoke Court* is a work that explores karaoke singing as a platform for resolving disputes. The work is a revival of the spirit of Central Arctic Eskimo Song Duels, where litigants presented their grievances to the entire Inuit community for judgment in the form of humorous and satirical song. Participants are invited to resolve their disputes by singing karaoke in front of an audience who will decide who wins. The processes and decision of the Karaoke Court are made legally binding via the participants' signing of an Arbitration Contract.

I was part of the audience for this performance in Singapore, in which the audience was also the jury as, informally, audiences often are in karaoke bars in Singapore. Small claims courts are a popular venue of privatization. Property and family disputes are *worked out* through the law, and they are *worked on* by those who attend, and those who watch. Private interests predominate. There is no appeal to the nation here, or even in many cases to the abstraction of justice. Karaoke is another matter. Singers make grand appeals to emotion, to abstract ideals, and to something beyond themselves. The jury responds, displacing the judge who enforces privatization. Tan also wanted to show Singaporeans they could be part of a process of governance in a nation that tends to offer citizens spectator status at best on governmental matters. But by staging it against our global privately administered world, the work asks not whether Singaporeans could participate more in governance, but whether participation is any longer the right term, if it ever was. In a world where everyone makes the rules, and no one does, governance may not exist much longer.

Tan also gave life-coaching sessions in the gallery, by appointment, to artists and aspiring artists. Calling it *Art School Surgery*, Tan told me that he was soon fully booked, and that "clients" took the experience very seriously. This raises the question: What does it mean to take such therapy seriously, knowing that it has been set up as art? As with the performance artist Valentina Desideri's *Political Therapy*—a form of "fake" therapy that often evokes highly serious and emotional conversations about politics between the artist and the client—*Art School Surgery* is not a case of clients forgetting themselves or being seduced into an act of art. Instead, the clients sense that therapy itself, what one might call the rules of well-being in the name of improvement, is being workshopped. The algorithm proposes itself as the only true maker of rules. This workshop on coaching, that is also a workshop of coaching, suspends the algorithm, and gives us a chance to ask what we might be able to do with rules.

Becoming part of Tan's court, being coached by him, or holding a meeting at his conference table—complete with ping-pong balls for making decisions—we begin to realize we have convened ourselves, assembled to discuss the rules of assembly. We have started the meeting to make the rules, not with the rules. Very quickly we realize the condition of this privately administered world, and it takes us back to the leadership team of the museum for contemporary art. In the privately administered world, there are still people in charge, but there is no longer anyone in authority. Institutions no longer have rules based on the reason of their institutions, however maddening or partial those rules might have been. The rules now are algorithmic, and the algorithm is set only to privatization, to the accumulation of bodies and things for surplus profit and monopoly. What is a leader to say in such situations? Indeed, what is she to do except express empathy yet again? Armed bureaucrats

continue to run amok haranguing and shooting people from Ferguson, Missouri to Rio de Janeiro. But though they are said to take the law into their own hands, the opposite is the case. They are produced by the algorithms of policing, like the notorious “broken windows” algorithm made famous in New York. These algorithms, and not any higher leadership, make the deadly rules behind a good business environment. Rules have been emptied by these algorithms. What Jack Tan lets us do is to step in where this leadership used to be. The rest is up to us.

R. 82

# Masbedo, Videomobile Manifesta 12, Palermo, Italy 2018

## Protocol no. 90/6 **MASBEDO**

2018

Site-specific video installation  
Sala delle Capriate - Archivio di Stato di Palermo

### Nota dell'artista

Abbiamo pensato di lavorare all'immagine di un pupo perché è un oggetto scultoreo capace di assorbire in sé le immagini di stati d'animo controllati, riuscendo così ad amplificare il proprio significato vivo e perturbante, restituendoci mistero ed emozività. Il pupo si muove qui in un palco video, collocato in alto a modo di un'icona, dietro ad un sipario sospeso fatto di cavi e luci led. Il pupo è la metafora di un artista. L'artista è un uomo che libera le cose anche quando è legato e controllato. La voce dell'artista non si ascolta, ma c'è, è come se fosse un rumore vivo, proprio come quello generato dai movimenti del pupo. Nello specifico, l'installazione allestita all'Archivio di Stato di Palermo, si ispira alle vicissitudini del regista Vittorio De Seta. Più volte, nel corso della sua carriera professionale, De Seta subì il controllo delle Autorità. La sua arte, così vicina al mondo dei lavoratori più umili, pescatori, contadini e minatori, era sospettata di nascondere una strisciante appartenenza alle società sovversive "comuniste". Durante il periodo di sopralluoghi all'Archivio di Stato di Palermo, grazie all'esperienza unica dei

personale responsabile, abbiamo scoperto l'esistenza di un faldone molto particolare. Datato 1956, contiene numerose pratiche e denunce imputate ad artisti, registi, scrittori e giornalisti. Il documento, che ha attratto da subito la nostra attenzione, fu redatto dai carabinieri di Petralia Sottana, un piccolo paese nel Parco delle Madonie. Questa carta è diventata per noi il simbolo di quanto la nostra videoinstallazione vorrebbe "comunicare" e abbiamo così deciso di esporla all'ingresso della Sala delle Capriate, luogo di assoluto mistero e silenzio deputato alla conservazione di una memoria non organizzabile, un archivio accatastato secondo le non regole del tempo e del caso. Migliaia e migliaia di documenti non catalogati che il tempo ha trasformato in materia rattrappito.

Il pupo è animato da Mimmo Cuticchio ed è stato costruito appositamente per questa videoinstallazione dalla sua famiglia.

### Artist's note

We decided to work on the image of a puppet because it is a sculptural object capable of absorbing images of controlled moods within itself, thus amplifying its own living and disturbing significance, conveying a sense of mystery and emotionality. The puppet moves here on a video stage, placed high up rather like an icon, behind a suspended curtain of cables and LED lights. The puppet is the metaphor of an artist. The artist is a man who frees things even when he is himself tied up and controlled. The artist's voice is not heard, but it's there; it is like a live noise, just like that generated by the movements of the puppet. Specifically, the installation set up in the Archivio di Stato di Palermo (State Archives of Palermo) is inspired by the vicissitudes of the film director Vittorio De Seta. Several times, during his professional career, De Seta was subjected to the control of the authorities. His art, so close to the world of the humblest workers, fishermen, farmers and miners, was suspected of concealing a hidden agenda in favour of "communist" subversive societies. During the period of work undertaken

in the State Archives of Palermo, and thanks to the unique experience of the staff who work there, we discovered the existence of a very unusual folder. Dated 1956, it contains numerous dossiers and reports concerning artists, directors, writers and journalists. The document, which immediately attracted our attention, was compiled by the Carabinieri of Petralia Sottana, a small town in the Parco delle Madonie. For us, this dossier became the symbol of what our video installation sought to communicate and we decided to display it at the entrance to the Sala delle Capriate, a place of absolute mystery and silence dedicated to the preservation of a non-organisable memory, an archive arranged in accordance with the non-rules of time and chance. Thousands and thousands of un-catalogued documents that time has transformed into stratified matter, paper fossils, dust and faded ink.

The puppet is animated by Mimmo Cuticchio and was made specifically for this video installation by his family.

R. 84

# Feminism and the Politics of the Commons

Silvia Federici

Our perspective is that of the planet's commoners: human beings with bodies, needs, desires, whose most essential tradition is of cooperation in the making and maintenance of life; and yet have had to do so under conditions of suffering and separation from one another, from nature and from the common wealth we have created through generations.

— The Emergency Exit Collective, *The Great Eight Masters and the Six Billion Commoners*, 2008

The way in which women's subsistence work and the contribution of the commons to the concrete survival of local people are both made invisible through the idealizing of them are not only similar but have common roots. . . . In a way, women are treated like commons and commons are treated like women.

— Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalized Economy*, 1999

Reproduction precedes social production. Touch the women, touch the rock.

— Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto*, 2008

Silvia Federici Feminism and the Politcs  
of the Commons in Former West:  
Art and The Contemporary after 1989,  
(The MIT Press 2016) p. 379—389

## Introduction: Why Commons

At least since the Zapatistas took over the *zócalo* in San Cristobal de las Casas on 31 December 1993 to protest legislation dissolving the *ejidal* lands of Mexico, the concept of “the commons” has been gaining popularity among the radical left, internationally and in the United States, appearing as a basis for convergence among anarchists, Marxists, socialists, ecologists, and eco-feminists.<sup>1</sup>

There are important reasons why this apparently archaic idea has come to the center of political discussion in contemporary social movements. Two in particular stand out. On one side is the demise of the statist model of revolution that for decades had sapped the efforts of radical movements to build an alternative to capitalism. On the other, the neoliberal attempt to subordinate every form of life and knowledge to the logic of the market has heightened our awareness of the danger of living in a world in which we no longer have access to seas, trees, animals, and our fellow beings except through the cash nexus. The “new enclosures” have also made visible a world of communal properties and relations that many had believed to be extinct or had not valued until threatened with privatization.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the new enclosures have demonstrated not only that the common has not vanished, but also that new forms of social cooperation are constantly being produced, including in areas of life where none previously existed, like, for example, the Internet.

The idea of the common/s, in this context, has offered a logical and historical alternative to both state and private property, the state and the market, enabling us to reject the fiction that they are mutually exclusive and exhaustive of our political possibilities. It has also served an ideological function as a unifying concept prefiguring the cooperative society that the radical left is striving to create. Nevertheless, ambiguities as well as significant differences remain in the interpretations of this concept, which we need to clarify if we want the principle of the commons to translate into a coherent political project.<sup>3</sup>

What, for example, constitutes a common? We have land, water, air commons, digital commons; our acquired entitlements (e.g., social security pensions) are often described as commons, and so are languages, libraries, and the collective products of past cultures. But are all these commons equivalent from the viewpoint of their political potential? Are they all compatible? And how can we ensure that they do not project a unity that remains to be constructed? Finally, should we speak of “commons” in the plural, or “the common” as autonomist Marxists propose we do, this concept designating, in their view, the social relations characteristic of the dominant form of production in the post-Fordist era?

With these questions in mind, I look at the politics of the commons from a feminist perspective, in which “feminist” refers to a standpoint shaped by the struggle against sexual discrimination and over reproductive work, which, to paraphrase Marxist historian Peter Linebaugh’s comment

above, is the rock upon which society is built and by which every model of social organization must be tested. This intervention is necessary, in my view, to better define this politics and clarify the conditions under which the principle of the common/s can become the foundation of an anti-capitalist program. Two concerns make these tasks especially important.

### Global Commons, World Bank Commons

First, since at least the early 1990s, the language of the commons has been appropriated by the World Bank and the United Nations and put at the service of privatization. Under the guise of protecting biodiversity and conserving the global commons, the Bank has turned rain forests into ecological reserves, has expelled the populations that for centuries had drawn their sustenance from them, while ensuring access to those who can pay, for instance, through eco-tourism.<sup>4</sup> For its part, the UN has revised the international law governing access to the oceans in ways that enable governments to concentrate the use of seawaters in fewer hands, again in the name of preserving the common heritage of mankind.<sup>5</sup>

The World Bank and the UN are not alone in their adaptation of the idea of the commons to market interests. Responding to different motivations, a revalorization of the commons has become trendy among mainstream economists and capitalist planners; witness the growing academic literature on the subject and its cognates: social capital, gift economies, altruism. Witness also the official recognition of this trend through the conferral of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2009 to the leading voice in this field, the political scientist Elinor Ostrom.<sup>6</sup>

Development planners and policymakers have discovered that, under proper conditions, a collective management of natural resources can be more efficient and less prone to conflict than privatization, and that commons can be made to produce very well for the market.<sup>7</sup> They have also recognized that, carried to the extreme, the commodification of social relations has self-defeating consequences. The extension of the commodity form to every corner of the social factory, which neoliberalism has promoted, is an ideal limit for capitalist ideologues, but it is a project not only unrealizable, but undesirable from the viewpoint of long-term reproduction of the capitalist system. Capitalist accumulation is structurally dependent on the free appropriation of immense quantities of labor and resources that must appear as externalities to the market, like the unpaid domestic work that women have provided, upon which employers have relied for the reproduction of the workforce.

It is no accident, then, that long before the Wall Street meltdown, a variety of economists and social theorists warned that the marketization of all spheres of life is detrimental to the market's well-functioning, for markets, too, the argument goes, depend on the existence of non-monetary relations like confidence, trust, and gift giving.<sup>8</sup> In brief, capital is learning

about the virtues of the common good. Even *The Economist*, the organ of capitalist free-market economics for more than 150 years, in its 31 July 2008 issue, cautiously joins the chorus:

The economics of the ‘new commons’ is still in its infancy. It is too soon to be confident about its hypotheses. But it may yet prove a useful way of thinking about problems, such as managing the internet, intellectual property or international pollution, on which policymakers need all the help they can get.<sup>9</sup>

We must be very careful, then, not to craft the discourse on the commons in such a way as to allow a crisis-ridden capitalist class to revive itself, posturing, for instance, as the environmental guardian of the planet.

### What Commons?

A second concern is that, while international institutions have learned to make commons functional to the market, the question of how commons can become the foundation of a non-capitalist economy is still unanswered. From Linebaugh’s work, especially *The Magna Carta Manifesto*, we have learned that commons have been the thread that has connected the history of the class struggle into our time, and indeed, the fight for the commons is all around us.<sup>10</sup> Mainers are fighting to preserve access to their fisheries under attack by corporate fleets; residents of Appalachia are organizing to save their mountains threatened by strip mining; open source and free software movements are opposing the commodification of knowledge and opening new spaces for communications and cooperation. We also have many invisible commoning activities and communities that people are creating in North America, which writer Chris Carlsson has described in his book *Nowtopia*. As Carlsson shows, much creativity is invested in the production of “virtual commons” and forms of sociality that thrive under the radar of the money/market economy.<sup>11</sup>

Most important has been the creation of urban gardens, which have spread in the 1980s and 1990s across the United States, thanks mostly to the initiatives of immigrant communities from Africa, the Caribbean, or the south of the country. Their significance cannot be overestimated. Urban gardens have opened the way to a “rurbanization” process that is indispensable if we are to regain control over our food production, regenerate our environment, and provide for our subsistence. The gardens are far more than a source of food security; they are centers of sociality, knowledge production, and cultural and intergenerational exchange. As agroecologist Margarita Fernandez writes of urban gardens in New York, they “strengthen community cohesion” as places where people come together not just to work the land, but to play cards, hold weddings, and have baby showers or birthday parties.<sup>12</sup> Some have

partner relationships with local schools whereby they give children environmental education after school. Not least, gardens are “a medium for the transport and encounter of diverse cultural practices” so that African vegetables and farming practices, for example, mix with those of the Caribbean.<sup>13</sup>

Still, the most significant feature of urban gardens is that they produce for neighborhood consumption rather than for commercial purposes. This distinguishes them from other reproductive commons that either produce for the market, like the fisheries of Maine’s “Lobster Coast,”<sup>14</sup> or are bought on the market, like the land trusts that preserve open spaces. The problem, however, is that urban gardens have remained a spontaneous grassroots initiative and there have been few attempts by movements in the US to expand their presence and to make access to land a key terrain of struggle. More generally, the left has not posed the question of how to bring together the many proliferating commons that are being defended, developed, and fought for, so that they can form a cohesive whole and provide a foundation for a new mode of production.

An exception is the theory proposed by philosophers Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in *Empire* (2000), *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004), and *Commonwealth* (2009), which argues that a society built on the principle of “the common” is *already evolving* from the informatization and “cognitivization” of production.<sup>15</sup> According to this theory, as production presumably becomes production of knowledge, culture, and subjectivity, organized through the Internet, a common space and common wealth are created that escape the problem of defining rules of inclusion or exclusion. For access and use multiply the resources available on the Internet rather than subtracting from them, thus signifying the possibility of a society built on abundance—the only remaining hurdle confronting the “multitude” being how to prevent the capitalist “capture” of the wealth produced.

The appeal of this theory is that it does not separate the formation of “the common” from the organization of work and production, but sees it as immanent to it. Its limit is that its picture of the common absolutizes the work of a minority possessing skills not available to most of the world population. It also ignores that this work produces commodities for the market, and it overlooks the fact that online communication/production depends on economic activities—mining, microchip, and rare earth production—that, as presently organized, are extremely destructive, socially and ecologically.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, with its emphasis on knowledge and information, this theory skirts the question of the reproduction of everyday life. This, however, is true of the discourse on the commons as a whole, which is mostly concerned with the formal preconditions for the existence of commons, and less with the material requirements for the construction of a commons-based economy enabling us to resist dependence on wage labor and subordination to capitalist relations.

It is in this context that a feminist perspective on the commons is important. It begins with the realization that, as the primary subjects of reproductive work historically and in our time, women have depended on access to communal natural resources more than men, have been most penalized by their privatization, and most committed to their defense. As I wrote in *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (2004), in the first phase of capitalist development, women were at the forefront of the struggle against land enclosures both in England and in the “New World,” and they were the staunchest defenders of the communal cultures that European colonization attempted to destroy.<sup>17</sup> In Peru, when the Spanish *conquistadores* took control of their villages, women fled to the high mountains where they recreated forms of collective life that have survived to this day. Not surprisingly, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the most violent attack on women in the history of the world: the persecution of women as witches. Today, in the face of a new process of primitive accumulation, women are the main social force standing in the way of a complete commercialization of nature, supporting a non-capitalist use of land and a subsistence-oriented agriculture. Women are the subsistence farmers of the world. In Africa, they produce 80 percent of the food people consume, despite the attempts made by the World Bank and other agencies to convince them to divert their activities to cash-cropping. In the 1990s, in many African towns, in the face of rising food prices, they have appropriated plots in public lands and planted corn, beans, cassava “along roadsides . . . in parks, along rail-lines,” changing the urban landscape of African cities and breaking down the separation between town and country in the process.<sup>18</sup> In India, the Philippines, and across Latin America, women have replanted trees in degraded forests, joined hands to chase away loggers, made blockades against mining operations and the construction of dams, and led the revolt against the privatization of water.<sup>19</sup>

The other side of women’s struggles for direct access to means of reproduction has been the formation across the Third World, from Cambodia to Senegal, of credit associations that function as money commons.<sup>20</sup> Differently named, the *tontines* (as they are called in parts of Africa) are autonomous, self-managed, women-made banking systems that provide cash to individuals or groups who have no access to banks, working purely on a basis of trust. In this, they are completely different from the microcredit systems promoted by the World Bank, which function on a basis of mutual policing and shame, reaching the extreme (e.g., in Niger) of posting pictures in public places of the women who fail to repay the loans, so that some women have been driven to suicide.<sup>21</sup>

Women have also led the effort to collectivize reproductive labor both as a means to economize the cost of reproduction and to protect each other from poverty, state violence, and the violence of individual men. An outstanding example is that of the *ollas communes* (common cooking pots) that women in Chile and Peru set up in the 1980s when, due to stiff inflation, they could no longer afford to shop alone.<sup>22</sup> Like land reclamations or the formation of *tontines*, these practices are the expression of a world where communal bonds are still strong. But it would be a mistake to consider them something pre-political, “natural,” or simply a product of “tradition.”

After repeated phases of colonization, nature and customs no longer exist in any part of the world, except where people have struggled to preserve and reinvent them. As historian Leo Podlashuc has noted in “Saving Women: Saving the Commons,” grassroots women’s communalism today leads to the production of a new reality; it shapes a collective identity, it constitutes a counterpower in the home and the community, and it opens a process of self-valorization and self-determination from which there is much we can learn.<sup>23</sup>

The first lesson we can gain from these struggles is that the “commoning” of the material means of reproduction is the primary mechanism by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created. It is also the first line of resistance to a life of enslavement and the condition for the construction of autonomous spaces undermining from within the hold that capitalism has on our lives. Undoubtedly, the experiences I have described are models that cannot be transplanted. For us in North America, the reclamation and commoning of the means of reproduction must necessarily take different forms. But here, too, by pooling our resources and re-appropriating the wealth that we have produced, we can begin to delink our reproduction from the commodity flows that, through the world market, are responsible for the dispossession of millions across the world. We can begin to disentangle our livelihood not only from the world market, but also from the war machine and prison system on which the US economy now depends. Not last, we can move beyond the abstract solidarity that so often characterizes relations in the movement and which limits our commitment, our capacity to endure, and the risks we are willing to take.

In a country where private property is defended by the largest arsenal of weaponry in the world, and where three centuries of slavery have produced profound divisions in the social body, the re-creation of the common/s appears as a formidable task that could only be accomplished through a long-term process of experimentation, coalition building, and reparations. Though this task may now seem more difficult than passing through the eye of a needle, it is also the only possibility we have for widening the space of our autonomy, and refusing to accept that our reproduction occurs at the expense of the world’s other commoners and commons.

What this task entails is powerfully expressed by feminist sociologist Maria Mies when she points out that the production of commons requires first a profound transformation in our everyday life, in order to recombine what the social division of labor in capitalism has separated. For the distancing of production from reproduction and consumption leads us to ignore the conditions under which what we eat, wear, or work with have been produced, their social and environmental cost, and the fate of the population on whom the waste we produce is unloaded.<sup>24</sup> In other words, we need to overcome the state of irresponsibility concerning the consequences of our actions that results from the destructive ways in which the social division of labor is organized in capitalism; short of that, the production of our life inevitably becomes a production of death for others. As Mies points out, globalization has worsened this crisis, widening the distances between what is produced and what is consumed, thereby intensifying, despite the appearance of an increased global interconnectedness, our blindness to the blood in the food we eat, the petroleum we use, the clothes we wear, and the computers we communicate with.<sup>25</sup>

Overcoming this state of oblivion is where a feminist perspective teaches us to start in our reconstruction of the commons. No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life and our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed, if commoning has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject. This is how we must understand the slogan “no commons without community.” But “community” has to be intended not as a gated reality, a grouping of people joined by exclusive interests separating them from others, as with communities formed on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but rather as a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation, and a responsibility to each other and to the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals.

Certainly, the achievement of such community, like the collectivization of our everyday work of reproduction, can only be a beginning. It is no substitute for broader anti-privatization campaigns and the reclamation of our common wealth. But it is an essential part of our education in collective government and our recognition of history as a collective project, which is perhaps the main casualty of the neoliberal era of capitalism.

On this account, we, too, must include in our political agenda the communalization of housework, reviving that rich feminist tradition that in the US stretches from the utopian socialist experiments of the mid-nineteenth century to the attempts that “materialist feminists” made from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century to reorganize and socialize domestic work, and thereby the home and the neighborhood, through collective housekeeping—attempts that continued until the 1920s, when the Red Scare put an end to them.<sup>26</sup> These practices and,

most importantly, the ability of past feminists to look at reproductive labor as an important sphere of human activity not to be negated but to be revolutionized, must be revisited and revalorized.

One crucial reason for creating collective forms of living is that the reproduction of human beings is the most labor-intensive work on Earth and, to a very large extent, it is work that is irreducible to mechanization. We cannot mechanize childcare, care for the ill, or the psychological work necessary to reintegrate our physical and emotional balance. Despite the efforts that futuristic industrialists are making, we cannot robotize care except at a terrible cost for the people involved. No one will accept nursebots as caregivers, especially for children and the ill. Shared responsibility and cooperative work, not given at the cost of the health of the providers, are the only guarantees of proper care. For centuries, the reproduction of human beings has been a collective process. It has been the work of extended families and communities on which people could rely, especially in proletarian neighborhoods, even when they lived alone, which meant that old age was not accompanied by the desolate loneliness and dependence, in which so many of our elderly live. It is only with the advent of capitalism that reproduction has been completely privatized, a process that is now carried out to a degree that it destroys our lives. This trend must be reversed, and the present time is propitious for such a project.

As the capitalist crisis destroys the basic elements of reproduction for millions of people across the world, including the US, the reconstruction of our everyday life is a possibility and a necessity. Like strikes, social/economic crises break the discipline of wage work, forcing new forms of sociality upon us. This is what occurred during the Great Depression, which produced a movement of hobos who turned the freight trains into their commons, seeking freedom in mobility and nomadism.<sup>27</sup> At the intersections of railroad lines, they organized *hobo jungles*, pre-figurations, with their self-governance rules and solidarity, of the communist world in which many of the hobos believed.<sup>28</sup> However, but for a few Boxcar Berthas,<sup>29</sup> this was predominantly a masculine world, a fraternity of men, and, in the long term, it could not be sustained. Once the economic crisis and the war came to an end, the hobos were domesticated by the two great engines of labor power fixation: the family and the house. Mindful of the threat of working class recomposition during the Depression, North American capital excelled in its application of the principle that has characterized the organization of economic life: cooperation at the point of production, separation, and atomization at the point of reproduction. The atomized, serialized family house that Levittown provided, compounded by its umbilical appendix, the car, not only sedentarized the worker, but put an end to the type of autonomous workers' commons that hobo jungles had represented.<sup>30</sup> Today, as millions of Americans' houses and cars are being repossessed, as foreclosures, evictions, and massive loss of employment are again breaking down the pillars of the capitalist discipline of work, new common grounds are again

taking shape, like the tent cities that are sprawling from coast to coast. This time, however, it is women who must build the new commons so that they do not remain transient spaces, temporary autonomous zones, but become the foundation of new forms of social reproduction.

If the house is the *oikos* on which the economy is built, then it is women, historically the house workers and house prisoners, who must take the initiative to reclaim the house as a center of collective life, one traversed by multiple people and forms of cooperation, providing safety without isolation and fixation, allowing for the sharing and circulation of community possessions, and, above all, providing the foundation for collective forms of reproduction. As has already been suggested, we can draw inspiration for this project from the programs of the nineteenth century materialist feminists who, convinced that the home is an important "spatial component of the oppression of women," organized communal kitchens, cooperative households calling for workers' control of reproduction.<sup>31</sup>

These objectives are crucial at present. Breaking down the isolation of life in the home is not only a precondition for meeting our most basic needs and increasing our power with regard to employers and the state. As political economist Massimo de Angelis has reminded us, it is also a protection from ecological disaster.<sup>32</sup> For there can be no doubt about the destructive consequences of the "un-economic" multiplication of reproductive assets and self-enclosed dwellings that we now call our homes, dissipating warmth into the atmosphere during the winter, exposing us to unmitigated heat in the summer. Most importantly, we cannot build an alternative society and a strong self-reproducing movement unless we redefine our reproduction in a more cooperative way and put an end to the separation between the personal and the political, and between political activism and the reproduction of everyday life.

It remains to be clarified that assigning women this task of commoning/collectivizing reproduction is not to concede to a naturalistic conception of femininity. Understandably, many feminists view this possibility as a fate worse than death. It is deeply sculpted in our collective consciousness that women have been designated as men's common, a natural source of wealth and services to be as freely appropriated by them as the capitalists have appropriated the wealth of nature. But to paraphrase urban historian Dolores Hayden, the reorganization of reproductive work, and therefore the reorganization of housing and public space, is not a question of identity; it is a question of labor and, we can add, a question of power and safety.<sup>33</sup> I am reminded here of the experience of the women members of the Landless Workers's Movement of Brazil, or *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* who, after their communities won the right to maintain the land that they had occupied, insisted that the new houses be built to form one compound so that they could continue to communalize their housework, wash together, cook together, take turns with men as they had done in the course of the struggle, and be ready to run to give each other support when abused by men. Arguing that women should take

the lead in the collectivization of reproductive work and housing is not to naturalize housework as a female vocation. It is rather to refuse to obliterate the collective experiences, the knowledge, and the struggles that women have accumulated concerning reproductive work, a history that has been an essential part of our resistance to capitalism. Reconnecting with this history is a crucial step for women and men today both to undo the gendered architecture of our lives and to reconstruct our homes and lives as commons.

This text was first published in Craig Hughes, Stevie Peace, and Kevin Van Meter for the Team Colors Collective, eds., *Uses of a Whirlwind, Movement, Movements, and Contemporary Radical Currents in the United States* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010), reprinted here with permission from the author and AK Press.

1. A key source on the politics of the commons and its theoretical foundations is the United Kingdom-based electronic journal *The Commoner*, now entering its fourteenth year of publication. Online at: <http://www.commoner.org.uk>.
2. A case in point is the struggle that is taking place in many communities in Maine against Nestlé's appropriation of Maine's waters to bottle Poland Spring. Nestlé's theft has made people aware of the vital importance of these waters and the supporting aquifers and has truly reconstituted them as a common. See Food and Water Watch, "Fact Sheet," July 2009, online at: [http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/nestle\\_bottle\\_community\\_water\\_fs\\_july\\_2009\\_1.pdf](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/nestle_bottle_community_water_fs_july_2009_1.pdf).
3. For debates on the commons, see the journal/newspaper *Turbulence: Ideas For Movement*, online at: <http://turbulence.org.uk>.
4. For more on this subject, see Ana Isla, "Who Pays for the Kyoto Protocol?: Selling Oxygen and Selling Sex in Costa Rica," in *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology*, ed. Ariel Salleh (London: Pluto Press, 2009). The author describes how the conservation of biodiversity has provided the World Bank and other international agencies with the pretext to enclose rain forests on the grounds that they represent "carbon sinks" and "oxygen generators."
5. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, adopted in November 1994, establishes a 200-mile offshore limit, defining an exclusive economic zone in which nations can exploit, manage, and protect the resources contained, from fisheries to natural gas. The convention also regulates deep-sea mining and the use of the resulting revenues. On the development of the concept of the "common heritage of mankind" in UN debate, see Susan J. Buck, *The Global Commons: An Introduction* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1998).
6. As described by Wikipedia, Ostrom's work focuses on common pool resources and "emphasizes how humans interact with ecosystems to maintain long-term sustainable resource yields." See "Elinor Ostrom," online at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elinor\\_Ostrom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elinor_Ostrom) (accessed 9 January 2010).
7. For more on this topic, see *In Land We Trust: Environment, Private Property and Constitutional Change*, Calestous Juma and J. B. Ojwang, eds. (London: Zed Books, 1996). This is an early treatise on the effectiveness of communal property relations in the context of capitalist development and efforts.
8. David Bollier, *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 36–39.
9. Data Team, "Commons sense," *The Economist*, 31 July 2008, online at: <http://www.economist.com/node/11848182>.
10. See Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).
11. See Chris Carlsson, *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners are Inventing the Future Today!* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2008).
12. Margarita Fernandez, "Cultivating Community, Food, and Empowerment: Urban Gardens in New York City," Project Course Paper, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Hixon Center for Urban Ecology, Fall 2003, online at: [http://hixon.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/follows/paper/fernandez\\_margarita\\_2003\\_report.pdf](http://hixon.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/follows/paper/fernandez_margarita_2003_report.pdf).
13. Ibid.

14. The fishing commons of Maine are presently threatened with a new privatization policy justified in the name of preservation and ironically labeled "catch shares." This is a system, already applied in Canada and Alaska, whereby local governments set limits on the amount of fish that can be caught by allocating individual shares on the basis of the amount of fishing that boats have done in the past. This system has proven to be disastrous for small, independent fishermen who are forced to sell their share to the highest bidders. Protest against its implementation has mounted in the fishing communities of Maine. Laurie Schreiber, "Cash Shares or Share-Croppers?", *Fishermen's Voice*, vol. 14, no. 12 (December 2009).
15. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Hardt and Negri, *Multitudes: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
16. It has been calculated, for example, that 33,000 liters of water and 15–19 tons of material are required just to produce a personal computer. See Saral Sarkar, *Eco-Socialism or Eco-Capitalism?: A Critical Analysis of Humanity's Fundamental Choices* (London: Zed Books, 1999), p. 126; and Elizabeth Dias, "First Blood Diamonds, Now Blood Computers?", *Time Magazine*, 24 July 2009, online at: <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1912594,00.html>. Dias cites claims made by Global Witness—an organization campaigning to prevent resource-related conflicts—that the trade in the minerals at the heart of the electronic industry feeds the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
17. See Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004).
18. Donald B. Freeman, "Survival Strategy or Business Training Ground? The Significance of Urban Agriculture for the Advancement of Women in African Cities," *African Studies Review*, vol. 36, issue 3 (December 1993), pp. 1–22; and Silvia Federici, "Witch-Hunting, Globalization, and Feminist Solidarity in Africa Today," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 10 (October 2008), pp. 29–35.
19. Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991); Vandana Shiva, *Ecology, and The Politics of Survival: Conflicts Over Natural Resources in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), pp. 102–117, 274.
20. Leo Podlashuc, "Saving Women: Saving the Commons," in *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology*, ed. Ariel Salleh (London: Pluto Press, 2009), pp. 268–290.
21. I owe this information to Ousseina Alidou, former Director of the Center for African Studies and Professor in the Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures, and the Graduate Program in Comparative Literature at Rutgers University, New Jersey.
22. See Jo Fisher, *Out of the Shadows: Women, Resistance and Politics in South America* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1993); and Carol Andreas, *When Women Rebel: The Rise of Popular Feminism in Peru* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1985).
23. Podlashuc, "Saving Women."
24. Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, "Defending, Reclaiming, and Reinventing the Commons," in *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalized Economy* (London: Zed Books, 1999), p. 153.
25. Ibid.
26. Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs For American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981); and Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: Norton and Company, 1986).
27. Lecture by George Caffentzis, "Three Temporal Dimensions of Class Struggle" (ISA Annual Meeting, San Diego, March 2006).
28. See Nels Anderson, *On Hobos and Homelessness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Caffentzis, "Three Temporal Dimensions of Class Struggle."
29. *Boxcar Bertha* (1972) is Martin Scorsese's adaptation of Ben Reitman's *Sister of the Road: The Autobiography of Boxcar Bertha* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2002).
30. See Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*.
31. See Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*.
32. See Massimo De Angelis, *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).
33. See Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, p. 230.



R. 98

# AN ANALYSIS OF THE GRADES OF ITALO-AMERICAN AND YANKEE BOYS<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD O. ULIN  
Tufts University

SINCE AMERICANS of Italian background form a considerable segment of the American population, the performance of Italo-American youngsters in the American public school deserves study. This area, however, is as yet a relatively unexplored one. Tait (13) has made a closely confined statistical study of the effects on Italo-American school children of some aspects of American culture. Child's Italian or American (1) is a penetrating analysis of second-generation New Haven Italians. In his Street Corner Society (16) Whyte has described the social structure and leadership patterns operative among Italo-Americans in Boston's depressed North End. Covello (3) has outlined the problems of educating Italo-American children in a New York slum area. These observers and others have made important contributions in the general field, but as yet none has dealt directly with the actual performance of today's Italo-American youngster in a suburban American public school.

## PROBLEM AND PROCEDURE

To this end the investigator has made an analysis of the performance of Italo-American boys in the 900 pupil high school of a fairly typical middle class suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. Subjects of his study were 41 Italo-American and 141 Yankee boys in the town's one high school. Second and third-generation Italo-Americans and third-generation Yankees, the boys ranged in age from 14 to 19 and were enrolled in all curricula of the school. Italo-American subjects traced their antecedents with few impurities to the provinces of Southern Italy. So-called Yankee boys were what are sometimes referred to as "non-ethnics", those to whom no nationality label is ordinarily applied. They were at least third-generation white, Protestant "Old Americans" who perceived themselves as "Yankee", an opinion of themselves which was shared by their neighbors.

Over a period of three years, through interviews, observational techniques, an examination of school

records, and the use of two questionnaires expressly designed for the purpose, the author was in a position to define the school achievement of his Italo-American subjects, contrast it with that of 141 so-called Yankee students, and then suggest some of the factors which contribute to the difference.

### Italo-American and Yankee Grade Differences

First, to establish a convenient index of scholastic achievement, the investigator converted the grade indices of all his subjects to single-digit, normalized, standardized scores of the stanine variety (8). As he had hypothesized, the scholastic achievement of Italo-American students showed itself to be a considerable cut below that of Yankee students. The mean Italo-American scholastic stanine score (3.85) fell short of the mean Yankee score (5.26) by 1.41 stanines. The difference between these two means proved statistically significant ( $t = 5.04$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). As tested by chi square, subjects divided into a) those in Stanines 1-5, and b) those in Stanines 6-9, the significance of this difference was further confirmed (chi square = 9.2,  $p < .005$ ).

### Italo-American - Yankee Grades

	Low Grades Stanines 1-5	High Grades Stanines 6-9
Italo-American	32	8
Yankees	79	69

It should be remembered that teachers' classroom grades are, in large part, subjective. In assigning any student a course mark, a teacher ordinarily has in mind not only a) some absolute standard of accomplishment, but also b) the relative accomplishment of the student *vis-a-vis* all students in the school, c) his relative achievement *vis-a-vis* other students in his particular class, and d) the

student's achievement relative to his own potential. What weight a teacher assigns each of these four factors in his grading is a matter of his own personal predilection.

To the extent that teachers in the school are guided by c and d, students who have low IQ's or who are in classes with other low achievers have an advantage in grades. Since compared with Yankees, these Italo-American students do have low IQ's and congregate in classes populated by low achievers, their accomplishment brings them higher grades than the same level of accomplishment brings Yankee students, who, by comparison, have high capacity and congregate in fast moving classes. Therefore, the discrepancy between the mean Italo-American and Yankee stanines may actually be, if anything, greater than that shown by the figures.

#### ANALYSIS OF DATA

##### Italo-American - Yankee Intelligence Differences

To explain similarities in or differences between Italo-American and Yankee school children, one turns naturally to available measures of intelligence. Most subjects had taken at least the Otis Gamma and a few also the Otis Beta. In these latter instances, the investigator averaged the two scores in arriving at the boys' IQ's. All were then converted to stanine scores. The following table shows their frequency pattern:

Stanine	IQ Range	Frequency	
		Italo-American	Yankee
Low	1 73-87	2	1
	2 88-92	7	3
	3 93-99	5	9
	4 100-106	6	16
	5 107-112	11	31
	6 113-118	3	34
	7 119-123	1	18
	8 124-129	1	17
High	9 130-144	0	9

When the Otis IQ scores were averaged, the mean Italo-American IQ (96.2) proved 12.3 points below the mean Yankee IQ (108.5). A similar discrepancy appears when the Otis IQ scores are converted to stanine scores: the mean Yankee stanine score (6.52) outdistances the mean Italo-American stanine score (3.97) by a considerable degree. A t-test shows this difference to be one of pronounced statistical significance ( $t = 9.1$ ,  $p < .0005$ ). When the subjects are dichotomized into a) those falling in Stanines 1-5, and b) those in Stanines 6-9, chi square confirms the significance of this difference ( $\chi^2 = 20.9$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Thus far no account has been taken of socio-economic status. However, one of the most clear-cut pictures to emerge from the author's Personal Data Questionnaire was the decisive difference between the socio-economic levels of Italo-American and Yankee subjects. In a six-category scheme similar to those used by the U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1938 (14) and the Harvard University Mobility Study (9), all of the subjects' families were ranked by three independent judges according to father's occupation. Then on the basis of further inquiry, the investigator made adjustments in ratings in those cases where such factors as the size and nature of family income, type and location of residence, and the education and community standing of parents indicated that the father's occupational group did not accurately reflect the family's socio-economic status.

The mean SES (socio-economic status) of the Italo-American boys equalled 4.05, of Yankee boys 1.88, the gap between them on the six-category scale being 2.17. T-test analysis shows this difference significant at the .0005 level. Both Italo-American and Yankee families ran the gamut from occupational Group 1 to 6, but whereas 82 percent of the Yankee families fell in the top two categories, only 24 percent of the Italo-American families did likewise. While 45 percent of the Italo-American families fell in the two lowest brackets, only three percent of the Yankee families did so. The Yankee position in the community "pecking order" obviously comes well in advance of that of the town's Italo-American residents. The cleavage between Italo-American and Yankee socio-economic status, therefore, is clear cut, and as later evidence indicates, it constitutes the most outstanding characteristic differentiating the two groups.

Once the effects of SES are neutralized, in fact, it is found that IQ ceases to be a significant ethnic predictor. With SES held constant, the zero-order correlation between IQ and Ethnicity drops from a highly significant -.40 to a non-significant -.11. Independent of SES, therefore, the IQ has little power to distinguish between the Italo-American and Yankee students. It may be said that equated for socio-economic status, Italo-American boys are not significantly different from Yankee boys in intelligence, at least as intelligence is ordinarily measured by school IQ tests. What little residual bias remains in favor of Yankee IQ's may be attributable to the verbal and abstract nature of the tests, as Davis (5), Hess (11), Eels (6), and others have suggested.

##### Grades - Socio-Economic Status

The strength of the socio-economic factor as a differentiator between Italo-American and Yankee boys let to the hypothesis that SES alone might be enough to account for the difference between Italo-American and Yankee academic performance.

A number of competent researchers, including Coleman (2), Davis (4), Gough (7), Heintz (10), Shaw (12), and Warner (15), have demonstrated the strong connection between school achievement and socio-economic background. Consonant with the findings of these studies, the present investigation shows that SES can be labelled the major contributing factor. But the data at hand also show that SES alone is not enough to account for all the significant variance in the grades made by the two ethnic groups. When SES is held constant, the correlation between Ethnicity and Grades falls from .32 to .18. True, the decline is sharp, but the .18 correlation remains a significant one at the .05 level. While SES, therefore, can be held accountable for a major share of the variance, the residual variance is still significant. Thus it may be said that even when the effects of SES are neutralized, Italo-American boys continue to get grades which are significantly lower than those made by their Yankee classmates.

#### DISCUSSION

Evidently other factors are involved. These factors, the investigator hypothesizes, are contained in the variant value-structures adhered to by Italo-American and Yankee boys. It may be assumed that, other things being equal, people normally follow their interests, apply effort, and do relatively well in areas and activities which they consider important. Conversely, they can be expected to avoid, exert little effort, and do poorly in areas and activities which they consider relatively unimportant. While little empirical work has as yet been done directly on the values of high school students, on the basis of his own experience, as a secondary school teacher, this investigator strongly suspects that that non-intellectual, motivational factors play a decisive role in academic success. Therefore, in work to follow up the analysis here described the investigator plans to turn his attention to the value-structures of Yankee and Italo-American boys as possible predictors of their grades.

#### FOOTNOTE

1. This article is based on research done in connection with the author's unpublished doctoral dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Ed. D. degree at Harvard University in 1958, as well as on research supported by Public Health Service Research Grants M-3785(A), M-4713(A), and MH-06902-01, from the National Institute of Mental Health, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

#### REFERENCES

1. Child, I. L., Italian or American (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943).
2. Coleman, H. A., "The Relationship of Socio-Economic Status to the Performance of Junior High School Students", Journal of Experimental Education, IX (1940), pp. 61-63.
3. Covello, Leonard, The Social Background of the Italo-American Child, unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, New York University, 1944.
4. Davis, K. A., "A Conceptual Analysis of Stratification", American Sociological Review, I (1942), pp. 309-330.
5. Davis, W. A., Social Class Influences on Learning (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948).
6. Eels, K., and others, Intelligence and Cultural Differences (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).
7. Gough, H. G., "Relationship of Socio-Economic Status to Personality Inventory and Achievement Test Scores", Journal of Educational Psychology, XXXVII (1946), pp. 527-540.
8. Hart, I., Using Stanines to Obtain Composite Scores Based on Test Data and Teachers' Ranks (Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York: World Book Company, 1957).
9. Harvard Mobility Study, Aspirations of High School Boys (Harvard University Laboratory of Social Relations, 1951), mimeographed.
10. Heintz, E., "His Father is Only the Janitor", Phi Delta Kappan, XXXV (1954), pp. 265-270.
11. Hess, R. C., and Davis, W. A., "What About IQ's?", National Education Association Journal, XXXVIII (1949), pp. 64-65.
12. Shaw, D. C., "Relation of Socio-Economic Status to Educational Achievement in Grades Four to Eight", Journal of Educational Research, XXXVII (1943), pp. 197-201.
13. Tait, J. W., Some Aspects of the Effect of the Dominant American Culture Upon Children of Italian Parentage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).
14. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, A Social-Economic Grouping of the Gainful Workers of the United States (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1938).
15. Warner, W. L., and others, Democracy in Jonesville (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949).
16. Whyte, William F., Street Corner Society, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

R. 102

## WE REFUGEES

1. IN 1943, IN A SMALL JEWISH PERIODICAL, *The Menorah Journal*, Hannah Arendt published an article titled "We Refugees." In this brief but important essay, after sketching a polemical portrait of Mr. Cohn, the assimilated Jew who had been 150 percent German, 150 percent Viennese, and 150 percent French but finally realizes bitterly that "on ne parvient pas deux fois," Arendt overturns the condition of refugee and person without a country—in which she herself was living—in order to propose this condition as the paradigm of a new historical consciousness. The refugee who has lost all rights, yet stops wanting to be assimilated at any cost to a new national identity so as to contemplate his condition lucidly, receives, in exchange for certain unpopularity, an inestimable advantage: "For him history is no longer a closed book, and politics ceases to be the privilege of the Gentiles. He knows that the banishment of the Jewish people in Europe was followed immediately by that of the majority of the European peoples. Refugees expelled from one country to the next represent the avant-garde of their people."

It is worth reflecting on the sense of this analysis, which today, precisely fifty years later, has not lost any of its currency. Not only does the problem arise with the same urgency, both in Europe and elsewhere, but also, in the context of the inexorable decline of the nation-state and the general corrosion of traditional legal-political categories, the refugee is perhaps the only imaginable figure of the people in our day. At least until the process of the dissolution of the nation-state and its sovereignty has come to an end, the refugee is the sole category in which it is possible today to perceive the forms and limits of a political community to come. Indeed, it may be that if we want to be equal to the absolutely novel tasks that face us, we will have to abandon without misgivings the basic concepts in which we have represented political subjects up to now (man and citizen with their rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, etc.) and to reconstruct our political philosophy beginning with this unique figure.

2. The first appearance of refugees as a mass phenomenon occurred at the end of World War I, when the collapse of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires, and the new order created by the peace treaties, profoundly upset the demographic and territorial structure of Central and Eastern Europe. In just a short time, a million and a half White Russians, seven hundred thousand Armenians, five hundred thousand Bulgarians, a million Greeks, and hundreds of thousands of Germans, Hungarians, and Romanians

left their countries and moved elsewhere. To these masses in motion should be added the explosive situation determined by the fact that in the new states created by the peace treaties on the model of the nation-state (for example, in Yugoslavia and in Czechoslovakia), some 30 percent of the populations comprised minorities that had to be protected through a series of international treaties (the so-called Minority Treaties), which very often remained a dead letter. A few years later, the racial laws in Germany and the Civil War in Spain disseminated a new and substantial contingent of refugees throughout Europe.

We are accustomed to distinguishing between stateless persons and refugees, but this distinction, now as then, is not as simple as it might at first glance appear. From the beginning, many refugees who technically were not stateless preferred to become so rather than to return to their homeland (this is the case of Polish and Romanian Jews who were in France or Germany at the end of the war, or today of victims of political persecution as well as of those for whom returning to their homeland would mean the impossibility of survival). On the other hand, the Russian, Armenian and Hungarian refugees were promptly denationalized by the new Soviet or Turkish governments, etc. It is important to note that starting with the period of World War I, many European states began to introduce laws which permitted their own citizens to be denaturalized and denationalized. The first was France, in 1915, with regard to naturalized citizens of "enemy" origins; in 1922 the example was followed by Belgium, which revoked the naturalization of citizens who had committed "anti-national" acts during the war; in 1926 the Fascist regime in Italy passed a similar law concerning citizens who had shown themselves to be "unworthy of Italian citizenship"; in 1933 it was Austria's turn, and so forth, until in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws divided German citizens into full citizens and citizens without political rights. These laws—and the mass statelessness that resulted—mark a decisive turning point in the life of the modern nation-state and its definitive emancipation from the naïve notions of "people" and "citizen."

This is not the place to review the history of the various international commissions through which the states, the League of Nations, and later, the United Nations attempted to deal with the problem of refugees—from the Nansen Bureau for Russian and Armenian refugees (1921), to the High Commission for Refugees from Germany (1936), the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees (1938), and the International Refugee Organization of the United Nations (1946), up to the present High Commission for Refugees (1951)—whose activity, according to its statute, has only a "humanitarian and social," not political, character. The basic point is that every time refugees no longer represent individual cases but rather a mass phenomenon (as happened between the two wars, and has happened again now), both these organizations and the single states have proven, despite the solemn evocations of the inalienable rights of man, to be absolutely incapable not only of resolving the problem but also simply of dealing with it adequately. In this way the entire ques-

tion was transferred into the hands of the police and of humanitarian organizations.

3. The reasons for this impotence lie not only in the selfishness and blindness of bureaucratic machines, but in the basic notions themselves that regulate the inscription of the *native* (that is, of life) in the legal order of the nation-state. Hannah Arendt titled chapter 5 of her book *Imperialism*, dedicated to the problem of refugees, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man." This formulation—which inextricably links the fates of the rights of man and the modern national state, such that the end of the latter necessarily implies the obsolescence of the former—should be taken seriously. The paradox here is that precisely the figure that should have incarnated the rights of man *par excellence*, the refugee, constitutes instead the radical crisis of this concept. "The concept of the Rights of man," Arendt writes, "based on the supposed existence of a human being as such, collapsed in ruins as soon as those who professed it found themselves for the first time before men who had truly lost every other specific quality and connection except for the mere fact of being humans." In the nation-state system, the so-called sacred and inalienable rights of man prove to be completely unprotected at the very moment it is no longer possible to characterize them as rights of the citizens of a state. This is implicit, if one thinks about it, in the ambiguity of the very title of the Declaration of 1789, *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, in which it is unclear whether the two terms name two realities, or whether instead they form a hendiadys, in which the second term is, in reality, already contained in the first.

That there is no autonomous space within the political order of the nation-state for something like the pure man in himself is evident at least in the fact that, even in the best of cases, the status of the refugee is always considered a temporary condition that should lead either to naturalization or to repatriation. A permanent status of man in himself is inconceivable for the law of the nation-state.

4. It is time to stop looking at the Declarations of Rights from 1789 to the present as if they were proclamations of eternal, metajuridical values that bind legislators to respect them, and to consider them instead according to their real function in the modern state. In fact, the Rights of Man represent above all the original figure of the inscription of bare natural life in the legal-political order of the nation-state. That bare life (the human creature) which in the *ancien régime* belonged to God, and in the classical world was clearly distinct (as *zoe*) from political life (*bios*), now takes center stage in the state's concerns and becomes, so to speak, its terrestrial foundation. Nation-state means a state that makes nativity or birth (that is, of the bare human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty. This is the (not even very obscure) sense of the first three articles of the Declaration of 1789: only because it wrote the native element into the core of any political association (arts. 1 and 2) could it firmly tie (in

art. 3) the principle of sovereignty to the nation (in accordance with its etymon, *natio* originally meant simply "birth"). The fiction implicit here is that *birth* immediately becomes *nation*, such that there can be no distinction between the two moments. Rights, that is, are attributable to *man* only in the degree to which he is the immediately vanishing presupposition (indeed, he must never appear simply as man) of the *citizen*.

5. If in the system of the nation-state the refugee represents such a disquieting element, it is above all because by breaking up the identity between man and citizen, between nativity and nationality, the refugee throws into crisis the original fiction of sovereignty. Single exceptions to this principle have always existed, of course; the novelty of our era, which threatens the very foundations of the nation-state, is that growing portions of humanity can no longer be represented within it. For this reason—that is, inasmuch as the refugee unhinges the old trinity of state/nation/territory—this apparently marginal figure deserves rather to be considered the central figure of our political history. It would be well not to forget that the first camps in Europe were built as places to control refugees, and that the progression—internment camps, concentration camps, extermination camps—represents a perfectly real filiation. One of the few rules the Nazis faithfully observed in the course of the "final solution" was that only after the Jews and gypsies were completely denationalized (even of that second-class citizenship that belonged to them after the Nuremberg laws) could they be sent to the extermination camps. When the rights of man are no longer the rights of the citizen, then he is truly *sacred*, in the sense that this term had in archaic Roman law: destined to die.

6. It is necessary resolutely to separate the concept of the refugee from that of the "Rights of man," and to cease considering the right of asylum (which in any case is being drastically restricted in the legislation of the European states) as the conceptual category in which the phenomenon should be impressed (a glance at the recent *Tesi sul diritto d'asilo* by A. Heller shows that today this can lead only to nauseating confusion). The refugee should be considered for what he is, that is, nothing less than a border concept that radically calls into question the principles of the nation-state and, at the same time, helps clear the field for a no-longer-delayable renewal of categories.

In the meantime, the phenomenon of so-called illegal immigration into the countries of the European Community has assumed (and will increasingly assume in coming years, with a foreseen 20 million immigrants from the countries of central Europe) features and proportions such as to fully justify this revolution in perspective. What the industrialized states are faced with today is a *permanently resident mass of noncitizens*, who neither can be nor want to be naturalized or repatriated. Often these noncitizens have a nationality of origin, but inasmuch as they prefer not to make use of their state's protection they are, like refugees, "stateless *de facto*." For these noncitizen residents, T. Hammar created the neologism *denizens*, which has the merit of

showing that the concept *citizen* is no longer adequate to describe the socio-political reality of modern states. On the other hand, citizens of the advanced industrialized states (both in the United States and in Europe) manifest, by their growing desertion of the codified instances of political participation, an evident tendency to transform themselves into *denizens*, into conformity with the well-known principle that substantial assimilation in the presence of formal differences exasperates hatred and intolerance, xenophobic reactions and defensive mobilizations will increase.

7. Before the extermination camps are reopened in Europe (which is already starting to happen), nation-states must find the courage to call into question the very principle of the inscription of nativity and the trinity of state/nation/territory which is based on it. It is sufficient here to suggest one possible direction. As is well known, one of the options considered for the problem of Jerusalem is that it become the capital, contemporaneously and without territorial divisions, of two different states. The paradoxical condition of reciprocal extraterritoriality (or, better, aterritoriality) that this would imply could be generalized as a model of new international relations. Instead of two national states separated by uncertain and threatening boundaries, one could imagine two political communities dwelling in the same region and in exodus one into the other, divided from each other by a series of reciprocal extraterritorialities, in which the guiding concept would no longer be the *ius* of the citizen, but rather the *refugium* of the individual. In a similar sense, we could look to Europe not as an impossible "Europe of nations," whose catastrophic results can already be perceived in the short term, but as an aterritorial or extraterritorial space in which all the residents of the European states (citizens and noncitizens) would be in a position of exodus or refuge, and the status of European would mean the citizen's being-in-exodus (obviously also immobile). The European space would thus represent an unbridgeable gap between birth and nation, in which the old concept of people (which, as is well known, is always a minority) could again find a political sense by decisively opposing the concept of nation (which until now has unduly usurped it).

This space would not coincide with any homogeneous national territory, nor with their *topographical* sum, but would act on these territories, making holes in them and dividing them *topologically* like in a Leiden jar or in a Möbius strip, where exterior and interior are indeterminate. In this new space, the European cities, entering into a relationship of reciprocal extraterritoriality, would rediscover their ancient vocation as cities of the world.

Today, in a sort of no-man's-land between Lebanon and Israel, there are four hundred and twenty-five Palestinians who were expelled by the state of Israel. According to Hannah Arendt's suggestion, these men constitute "the *avant-garde* of their people." But this does not necessarily or only mean that they might form the original nucleus of a future national state, which would probably resolve the Palestinian problem just as inadequately as Israel has

resolved the Jewish question. Rather, the no-man's-land where they have found refuge has retroacted on the territory of the state of Israel, making holes in it and altering it in such a way that the image of that snow-covered hill has become more an internal part of that territory than any other region of Heretz Israel. It is only in a land where the spaces of states will have been perforated and topologically deformed, and the citizen will have learned to acknowledge the refugee that he himself is, that man's political survival today is imaginable.

*Translated by Michael Rocke*

Hannah Arendt, We Refugees in Marc Robison  
Altogether Elsewhere. Writers on Exile,  
Faber and Faber, 1994 p. 110—119

# We Refugees

*Hannah Arendt*

IN THE FIRST PLACE, we don't like to be called "refugees." We ourselves call each other "newcomers" or "immigrants." Our newspapers are papers for "Americans of German language"; and, as far as I know, there is not and never was any club founded by Hitler-persecuted people whose name indicated that its members were refugees.

A refugee used to be a person driven to seek refuge because of some act committed or some political opinion held. Well, it is true we have had to seek refuge; but we committed no acts and most of us never dreamt of having any radical opinion. With us the meaning of the term "refugee" has changed. Now "refugees" are those of us who have been so unfortunate as to arrive in a new country without means and have to be helped by Refugee Committees.

Before this war broke out we were even more sensitive about being called refugees. We did our best to prove to other people that we were just ordinary immigrants. We declared that we had departed of our own free will to countries of our choice, and we denied that our situation had anything to do with "so-called Jewish problems." Yes, we were "immigrants" or "newcomers" who had left our country because, one fine day, it no longer suited us to stay, or for purely economic reasons. We wanted to rebuild our lives, that was all. In order to rebuild one's life one has to be strong and an optimist. So we are very optimistic.

Our optimism, indeed, is admirable, even if we say so ourselves. The story of our struggle has finally become known. We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings. We left our relatives in the Polish ghettos and our best friends have been killed in concentration camps, and that means the rupture of our private lives.

Nevertheless, as soon as we were saved—and most of us had to be saved several times—we started our new lives and tried to follow as closely as possible all the good advice our saviors passed on to us. We were told to forget; and we forgot quicker than anybody ever could imagine. In a

friendly way we were reminded that the new country would become a new home; and after four weeks in France or six weeks in America, we pretended to be Frenchmen or Americans. The more optimistic among us would even add that their whole former life had been passed in a kind of unconscious exile and only their new country now taught them what a home really looks like. It is true we sometimes raise objections when we are told to forget about our former work; and our former ideals are usually hard to throw over if our social standard is at stake. With the language, however, we find no difficulties: after a single year optimists are convinced they speak English as well as their mother tongue; and after two years they swear solemnly that they speak English better than any other language—their German is a language they hardly remember.

In order to forget more efficiently we rather avoid any allusion to concentration or internment camps we experienced in nearly all European countries—it might be interpreted as pessimism or lack of confidence in the new homeland. Besides, how often have we been told that nobody likes to listen to all that; hell is no longer a religious belief or a fantasy, but something as real as houses and stones and trees. Apparently nobody wants to know that contemporary history has created a new kind of human beings—the kind that are put in concentration camps by their foes and in internment camps by their friends.

Even among ourselves we don't speak about this past. Instead, we have found our own way of mastering an uncertain future. Since everybody plans and wishes and hopes, so do we. Apart from these general human attitudes, however, we try to clear up the future more scientifically. After so much bad luck we want a course as sure as a gun. Therefore, we leave the earth with all its uncertainties behind and we cast our eyes up to the sky. The stars tell us—rather than the newspapers—when Hitler will be defeated and when we shall become American citizens. We think the stars more reliable advisers than all our friends; we learn from the stars when we should have lunch with our benefactors and on what day we have the best chances of filling out one of these countless questionnaires which accompany our present lives. Sometimes we don't rely even on the stars but rather on the lines of our hand or the signs of our handwriting. Thus we learn less about political events but more about our own dear selves, even though somehow psychoanalysis has gone out of fashion. Those happier times are past when bored ladies and gentlemen of high society conversed about the genial misdemeanors of their early childhood. They don't want ghost-stories any more; it is real experiences that make their flesh creep. There is no longer any need of bewitching the past; it is spellbound

enough in reality. Thus, in spite of our outspoken optimism, we use all sorts of magical tricks to conjure up the spirits of the future.

I don't know which memories and which thoughts nightly dwell in our dreams. I dare not ask for information, since I, too, had rather be an optimist. But sometimes I imagine that at least nightly we think of our dead or we remember the poems we once loved. I could even understand how our friends of the West coast, during the curfew, should have had such curious notions as to believe that we are not only "prospective citizens" but present "enemy aliens." In daylight, of course, we become only "technically" enemy aliens—all refugees know this. But when technical reasons prevented you from leaving your home during the dark hours, it certainly was not easy to avoid some dark speculations about the relation between technicality and reality.

No, there is something wrong with our optimism. There are those odd optimists among us who, having made a lot of optimistic speeches, go home and turn on the gas or make use of a skyscraper in quite an unexpected way. They seem to prove that our proclaimed cheerfulness is based on a dangerous readiness for death. Brought up in the conviction that life is the highest good and death the greatest dismay, we became witnesses and victims of worse terrors than death—without having been able to discover a higher ideal than life. Thus, although death lost its horror for us, we became neither willing nor capable to risk our lives for a cause. Instead of fighting—or thinking about how to become able to fight back—refugees have got used to wishing death to friends or relatives; if somebody dies, we cheerfully imagine all the trouble he has been saved. Finally many of us end by wishing that we, too, could be saved some trouble, and act accordingly.

Since 1938—since Hitler's invasion of Austria—we have seen how quickly eloquent optimism could change to speechless pessimism. As time went on, we got worse—even more optimistic and even more inclined to suicide. Austrian Jews under Schuschnigg were such a cheerful people—all impartial observers admired them. It was quite wonderful how deeply convinced they were that nothing could happen to them. But when German troops invaded the country and Gentile neighbors started riots at Jewish homes, Austrian Jews began to commit suicide.

Unlike other suicides, our friends leave no explanation of their deed, no indictment, no charge against a world that had forced a desperate man to talk and to behave cheerfully to his very last day. Letters left by them are conventional, meaningless documents. Thus, funeral orations we make at

their open graves are brief, embarrassed and very hopeful. Nobody cares about motives, they seem to be clear to all of us.

I speak of unpopular facts; and it makes things worse that in order to prove my point I do not even dispose of the sole arguments which impress modern people—figures. Even those Jews who furiously deny the existence of the Jewish people give us a fair chance of survival as far as figures are concerned—how else could they prove that only a few Jews are criminals and that many Jews are being killed as good patriots in wartime? Through their effort to save the statistical life of the Jewish people we know that Jews had the lowest suicide rate among all civilized nations. I am quite sure those figures are no longer correct, but I cannot prove it with new figures, though I can certainly with new experiences. This might be sufficient for those skeptical souls who never were quite convinced that the measure of one's skull gives the exact idea of its content, or that statistics of crime show the exact level of national ethics. Anyhow, wherever European Jews are living today, they no longer behave according to statistical laws. Suicides occur not only among the panic-stricken people in Berlin and Vienna, in Bucharest or Paris, but in New York and Los Angeles, in Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

On the other hand, there has been little reported about suicides in the ghettos and concentration camps themselves. True, we had very few reports at all from Poland, but we have been fairly well informed about German and French concentration camps.

At the camp of Gurs, for instance, where I had the opportunity of spending some time, I heard only once about suicide, and that was the suggestion of a collective action, apparently a kind of protest in order to vex the French. When some of us remarked that we had been shipped there "*pour crever*" in any case, the general mood turned suddenly into a violent courage of life. The general opinion held that one had to be abnormally asocial and unconcerned about general events if one was still able to interpret the whole accident as personal and individual bad luck and, accordingly, ended one's life personally and individually. But the same people, as soon as they returned to their own individual lives, being faced with seemingly individual problems, changed once more to this insane optimism which is next door to despair.

We are the first non-religious Jews persecuted—and we are the first ones who, not only *in extremis*, answer with suicide. Perhaps the philosophers are right who teach that suicide is the last and supreme guarantee of human freedom: not being free to create our lives or the world in which we

live, we nevertheless are free to throw life away and to leave the world. Pious Jews, certainly, cannot realize this negative liberty; they perceive murder in suicide, that is, destruction of what man never is able to make, interference with the rights of the Creator. *Adonai nathan veadonai lakach* ("The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away"); and they would add: *baruch shem adonai* ("blessed be the name of the Lord"). For them suicide, like murder, means a blasphemous attack on creation as a whole. The man who kills himself asserts that life is not worth living and the world not worth sheltering him.

Yet our suicides are no mad rebels who hurl defiance at life and the world, who try to kill in themselves the whole universe. Theirs is a quiet and modest way of vanishing; they seem to apologize for the violent solution they have found for their personal problems. In their opinion, generally, political events had nothing to do with their individual fate; in good or bad times they would believe solely in their personality. Now they find some mysterious shortcomings in themselves which prevent them from getting along. Having felt entitled from their earliest childhood to a certain social standard, they are failures in their own eyes if this standard cannot be kept any longer. Their optimism is the vain attempt to keep head above water. Behind this front of cheerfulness, they constantly struggle with despair of themselves. Finally, they die of a kind of selfishness.

If we are saved we feel humiliated, and if we are helped we feel degraded. We fight like madmen for private existences with individual destinies, since we are afraid of becoming part of that miserable lot of *schnorrers* whom we, many of us former philanthropists, remember only too well. Just as once we failed to understand that the so-called *schnorrer* was a symbol of Jewish destiny and not a *shlemilbl*, so today we don't feel entitled to Jewish solidarity; we cannot realize that we by ourselves are not so much concerned as the whole Jewish people. Sometimes this lack of comprehension has been strongly supported by our protectors. Thus, I remember a director of a great charity concern in Paris who, whenever he received the card of a German-Jewish intellectual with the inevitable "Dr." on it, used to exclaim at the top of his voice, "Herr Doktor, Herr Doktor, Herr Schnorrer, Herr Schnorrer!"

The conclusion we drew from such unpleasant experiences was simple enough. To be a doctor of philosophy no longer satisfied us; and we learnt that in order to build a new life, one has first to improve on the old one. A nice little fairy-tale has been invented to describe our behavior; a forlorn émigré dachshund, in his grief, begins to speak: "Once, when I was a St. Bernard . . ."

Our new friends, rather overwhelmed by so many stars and famous men, hardly understand that at the basis of all our descriptions of past splendors lies one human truth: once we were somebodies about whom people cared, we were loved by friends, and even known by landlords as paying our rent regularly. Once we could buy our food and ride in the subway without being told we were undesirable. We have become a little hysterical since newspapermen started detecting us and telling us publicly to stop being disagreeable when shopping for milk and bread. We wonder how it can be done; we already are so damnably careful in every moment of our daily lives to avoid anybody guessing who we are, what kind of passport we have, where our birth certificates were filled out—and that Hitler didn't like us. We try the best we can to fit into a world where you have to be sort of politically minded when you buy your food.

Under such circumstances, St. Bernard grows bigger and bigger. I never can forget that young man who, when expected to accept a certain kind of work, sighed out, "You don't know to whom you speak; I was Section-manager in Karstadt's [A great department store in Berlin]." But there is also the deep despair of that middle-aged man who, going through countless shifts of different committees in order to be saved, finally exclaimed, "And nobody here knows who I am!" Since nobody would treat him as a dignified human being, he began sending cables to great personalities and his big relations. He learnt quickly that in this mad world it is much easier to be accepted as a "great man" than as a human being.

The less we are free to decide who we are or to live as we like, the more we try to put up a front, to hide the facts, and to play roles. We were expelled from Germany because we were Jews. But having hardly crossed the French borderline, we were changed into "boches." We were even told that we had to accept this designation if we really were against Hitler's racial theories. During seven years we played the ridiculous role of trying to be Frenchmen—at least, prospective citizens; but at the beginning of the war we were interned as "boches" all the same. In the meantime, however, most of us had indeed become such loyal Frenchmen that we could not even criticize a French governmental order; thus we declared it was all right to be interned. We were the first "*prisonniers volontaires*" history has ever seen. After the Germans invaded the country, the French Government had only to change the name of the firm; having been jailed because we were Germans, we were not freed because we were Jews.

It is the same story all over the world, repeated again and again. In Europe the Nazis confiscated our property; but in Brazil we have to pay

30% of our wealth, like the most loyal member of the *Bund der Auslandsdeutschen*. In Paris we could not leave our homes after eight o'clock because we were Jews; but in Los Angeles we are restricted because we are "enemy aliens." Our identity is changed so frequently that nobody can find out who we actually are.

Unfortunately, things don't look any better when we meet with Jews. French Jewry was absolutely convinced that all Jews coming from beyond the Rhine were what they called *Polaks*—what German Jewry called *Ostjuden*. But those Jews who really came from eastern Europe could not agree with their French brethren and called us *Jaeckes*. The sons of these *Jaecke*-haters—the second generation born in France and already duly assimilated—shared the opinion of the French Jewish upper classes. Thus, in the very same family, you could be called a *Jaecke* by the father and a *Polak* by the son.

Since the outbreak of the war and the catastrophe that has befallen European Jewry, the mere fact of being a refugee has prevented our mingling with native Jewish society, some exceptions only proving the rule. These unwritten social laws, though never publicly admitted, have the great force of public opinion. And such a silent opinion and practice is more important for our daily lives than all official proclamations of hospitality and good will.

Man is a social animal and life is not easy for him when social ties are cut off. Moral standards are much easier kept in the texture of a society. Very few individuals have the strength to conserve their own integrity if their social, political and legal status is completely confused. Lacking the courage to fight for a change of our social and legal status, we have decided instead, so many of us, to try a change of identity. And this curious behavior makes matters much worse. The confusion in which we live is partly our own work.

Some day somebody will write the true story of this Jewish emigration from Germany; and he will have to start with a description of that Mr. Cohn from Berlin who had always been a 150% German, a German super-patriot. In 1933 that Mr. Cohn found refuge in Prague and very quickly became a convinced Czech patriot—as true and as loyal a Czech patriot as he had been a German one. Time went on and about 1937 the Czech Government, already under some Nazi pressure, began to expel its Jewish refugees, disregarding the fact that they felt so strongly as prospective Czech citizens. Our Mr. Cohn then went to Vienna; to adjust oneself there a definite Austrian patriotism was required. The German invasion forced Mr. Cohn out of that country. He arrived in Paris at a bad moment

and he never did receive a regular residence-permit. Having already acquired a great skill in wishful thinking, he refused to take mere administrative measures seriously, convinced that he would spend his future life in France. Therefore, he prepared his adjustment to the French nation by identifying himself with "our" ancestor Vercingetorix. I think I had better not dilate on the further adventures of Mr. Cohn. As long as Mr. Cohn can't make up his mind to be what he actually is, a Jew, nobody can foretell all the mad changes he will still have to go through.

A man who wants to lose his self discovers, indeed, the possibilities of human existence, which are infinite, as infinite as is creation. But the recovering of a new personality is as difficult—and as hopeless—as a new creation of the world. Whatever we do, whatever we pretend to be, we reveal nothing but our insane desire to be changed, not to be Jews. All our activities are directed to attain this aim: we don't want to be refugees, since we don't want to be Jews; we pretend to be English-speaking people, since German-speaking immigrants of recent years are marked as Jews; we don't call ourselves stateless, since the majority of stateless people in the world are Jews; we are willing to become loyal Hottentots, only to hide the fact that we are Jews. We don't succeed and we can't succeed; under the cover of our "optimism" you can easily detect the hopeless sadness of assimilationists.

With us from Germany the word assimilation received a "deep" philosophical meaning. You can hardly realize how serious we were about it. Assimilation did not mean the necessary adjustment to the country where we happened to be born and to the people whose language we happened to speak. We adjust in principle to everything and everybody. This attitude became quite clear to me once by the words of one of my compatriots who, apparently, knew how to express his feelings. Having just arrived in France, he founded one of these societies of adjustment in which German Jews asserted to each other that they were already Frenchmen. In his first speech he said: "We have been good Germans in Germany and therefore we shall be good Frenchmen in France." The public applauded enthusiastically and nobody laughed; we were happy to have learnt how to prove our loyalty.

If patriotism were a matter of routine or practice, we should be the most patriotic people in the world. Let us go back to our Mr. Cohn; he certainly has beaten all records. He is that ideal immigrant who always, and in every country into which a terrible fate has driven him, promptly sees and loves the native mountains. But since patriotism is not yet believed to be a matter of practice, it is hard to convince people of the sincerity of our repeated transformations. This struggle makes our own society so intoler-

ant; we demand full affirmation without our own group because we are not in the position to obtain it from the natives. The natives, confronted with such strange beings as we are, become suspicious; from their point of view, as a rule, only a loyalty to our old countries is understandable. That makes life very bitter for us. We might overcome this suspicion if we would explain that, being Jews, our patriotism in our original countries had rather a peculiar aspect. Though it was indeed sincere and deep-rooted. We wrote big volumes to prove it; paid an entire bureaucracy to explore its antiquity and to explain it statistically. We had scholars write philosophical dissertations on the predestined harmony between Jews and Frenchmen, Jews and Germans, Jews and Hungarians, Jews and . . . Our so frequently suspected loyalty of today has a long history. It is the history of a hundred and fifty years of assimilated Jewry who performed an unprecedented feat: though proving all the time their non-Jewishness, they succeeded in remaining Jews all the same.

The desperate confusion of these Ulysses-wanderers who, unlike their great prototype, don't know who they are is easily explained by their perfect mania for refusing to keep their identity. This mania is much older than the last ten years which revealed the profound absurdity of our existence. We are like people with a fixed idea who can't help trying continually to disguise an imaginary stigma. Thus we are enthusiastically fond of every new possibility which, being new, seems able to work miracles. We are fascinated by every new nationality in the same way as a woman of tidy size is delighted with every new dress which promises to give her the desired waistline. But she likes the new dress only as long as she believes in its miraculous qualities, and she will throw it away as soon as she discovers that it does not change her stature—or, for that matter, her status.

One may be surprised that the apparent uselessness of all our odd disguises has not yet been able to discourage us. If it is true that men seldom learn from history, it is also true that they may learn from personal experiences which, as in our case, are repeated time and again. But before you cast the first stone at us, remember that being a Jew does not give any legal status in this world. If we should start telling the truth that we are nothing but Jews, it would mean that we expose ourselves to the fate of human beings who, unprotected by any specific law or political convention, are nothing but human beings. I can hardly imagine an attitude more dangerous, since we actually live in a world in which human beings as such have ceased to exist for quite a while; since society has discovered discrimination as the great social weapon by which one may kill men without any bloodshed; since passports or birth certificates, and sometimes even income tax

receipts, are no longer formal papers but matters of social distinction. It is true that most of us depend entirely upon social standards; we lose confidence in ourselves if society does not approve us; we are—and always were—ready to pay any price in order to be accepted by society. But it is equally true that the very few among us who have tried to get along without all these tricks and jokes of adjustment and assimilation have paid a much higher price than they could afford: they jeopardized the few chances even outlaws are given in a topsy-turvy world.

The attitude of these few whom, following Bernard Lazare, one may call "conscious pariahs," can as little be explained by recent events alone as the attitude of our Mr. Cohn who tried by every means to become an upstart. Both are sons of the nineteenth century which, not knowing legal or political outlaws, knew only too well social pariahs and their counterpart, social parvenus. Modern Jewish history, having started with court Jews and continuing with Jewish millionaires and philanthropists, is apt to forget about this other trend of Jewish tradition—the tradition of Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, Sholom Aleichem, of Bernard Lazare, Franz Kafka or even Charlie Chaplin. It is the tradition of a minority of Jews who have not wanted to become upstarts, who preferred the status of "conscious pariah." All vaunted Jewish qualities—the "Jewish heart," humanity, humor, disinterested intelligence—are pariah qualities. All Jewish shortcomings—tactlessness, political stupidity, inferiority complexes and money-grubbing—are characteristic of upstarts. There have always been Jews who did not think it worth while to change their humane attitude and their natural insight into reality for the narrowness of caste spirit or the essential unreality of financial transactions.

History has forced the status of outlaws upon both, upon pariahs and parvenus alike. The latter have not yet accepted the great wisdom of Balzac's "*On ne parvient pas deux fois*"; thus they don't understand the wild dreams of the former and feel humiliated in sharing their fate. Those few refugees who insist upon telling the truth, even to the point of "indecency," get in exchange for their unpopularity one priceless advantage: history is no longer a closed book to them and politics is no longer the privilege of Gentiles. They know that the outlawing of the Jewish people in Europe has been followed closely by the outlawing of most European nations. Refugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of their peoples—if they keep their identity. For the first time Jewish history is not separate but tied up with that of all other nations. The comity of European peoples went to pieces when, and because, it allowed its weakest member to be excluded and persecuted.

R. 120

# REAL FICTIONS

Foster, Hal . Artforum international ; New York 55.8 (Apr 2017): 166,169-170,173-174,236,10.

[Collegamento al documento ProQuest](#)

## ABSTRACT

"Art is what makes life more interesting than art," the actor declaims (perhaps on behalf of the artist) in Event for a Stage.<sup>11</sup> These declarations are not witticisms à la Oscar Wilde that delight in paradox and advocate style so much as they are proposals about how artifice, the utopian glimmer of fiction, can be placed in the service of the real. Might the desire to open up alternative futures be, in part, a response to the dominance of financial futures—that is, to the reality that, in a world governed by finance capitalism, present time is always mortgaged to a time to come (a time that never actually arrives)?<sup>23</sup> Second, what relation do the real fictions reviewed here have to "alternative facts," and might the former be deployed to challenge the latter in a way that avoids a simple retrenchment to a positivistic framing of the real? ?

## TESTO COMPLETO

### Headnote

#### HAL FOSTER ON ALTERNATIVES TO ALTERNATIVE FACTS

1. DESPITE RUMORS OF ITS DISAPPEARANCE, the real remains with us. The labor of its production is "obstinate," Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt argue; it persists in the overlooked furniture of our everyday lives. The real is as intractable as history, Fredric Jameson adds; neither can be transcended. If these formulations seem right, then the question of the real is not a matter of its presence but of its position- where it is located, how, by whom, and for what reasons. One way to come to terms with some criticism, art, and literature is through these framings.<sup>1</sup>
2. We say that modern critique took its bearings from Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, but what did these thinkers have in common? Little more than a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (as Paul Ricoeur termed it), the operative assumption that the real is hidden or buried and the critic must hunt it out or dig it up.<sup>2</sup> Of course, for Marx the unacknowledged truth of history is class struggle; that is the occluded narrative that must be extracted from all other accounts. For Freud, the unconscious reality of subjective life is psychic conflict; such is the latent content that must be teased from the manifest confusions of our dreams, symptoms, and slip-ups. And for Nietzsche, the unspoken force behind any system of thought is a will to power, which is to be challenged or celebrated as one sees fit. The Frankfurt School drew on all three approaches, and a key instance of its caustic critique remains the assessment of Neue Sachlichkeit photography delivered by Brecht by way of Benjamin: "A photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us next to nothing about these institutions," Brecht remarked, with the steel manufacturer and the electric utility in mind. "The reification of human relations-the factory, say- means that they are no longer explicit. So something must in fact be built up, something artificial, posed." This statement captures the characteristic move of ideology critique: to expose the real behind the representations that conceal it or otherwise shore it up. As Brecht indicated, one way to attempt this exposé in art is via an image or text (or, from John Heartfield to Barbara Kruger, a combination of the two) that is "built up," montaged.
3. A late epitome of ideology critique is *Mythologies* (1957), in which, with a mix of old Brechtian estrangement and new structuralist decoding, Roland Barthes read various manifestations of middlebrow culture (e.g., the "Family of Man" exhibition staged by Edward Steichen in 1955, the Blue Guide travel books) as so many class-bound myths

that present specific beliefs as general truths. *Mythologies* was a first manual of critical suspicion for many artists and critics; its influence was especially strong in Conceptual and feminist practices that employed image appropriation (e.g., those of Victor Bürgin and Sherrie Levine). However, in the wake of 1968, Barthes had second thoughts: "Any student can and does denounce the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois character of such and such a form," he wrote in 1971. "It is no longer the myths which need to be unmasked (the doxa now takes care of that), it is the sign itself which must be shaken." What could be more radical than this quasi-Maoist call for a "semioclasm" that passed beyond demystification to attack representation as such? The signs that stitch the real together were to be not merely exposed but utterly torn asunder.

4. In the end, however, the real was only repositioned: No longer hidden or buried, it was now thought to lie, overlooked but in plain sight, on the surface of things. One signal of this shift, soon to be associated with poststructuralist theory, was another Barthes essay, "*L'effet de réel*" (*The Reality Effect*, 1968), which considered the function of the detail in nineteenth-century narrative, both fictional and historical (his test cases were Flaubert and Michelet, respectively).<sup>5</sup> In such narratives, Barthes argued, everything is expected to mean; even incidental details that seem not to signify do so nonetheless, for what they thus signify is /«significance, and the apparent meaninglessness of the mere facts of the contingent world helps to clinch the realist evocation of the real. In this account, nothing escapes the "empire of signs," and so it was but a short step to see realism in toto as a system of conventions, as Barthes did in *S/Z* (1970), his painstaking analysis of the 1830 short story "Sarrasine." There he demonstrated, line by line, how Balzac referred "not from a language to a referent but from one code to another"—that is, how the narrative consisted "not in copying the real but in copying a (depicted) copy of the real." "This is why realism cannot be designated a 'copier,'" Barthes concluded, "but rather a 'pasticheur' (through secondary mimesis, it copies what is already a copy)."<sup>6</sup> A decade later this figure of the pasticheur became the dominant avatar of the postmodernist artist, in the guise of both the neo-expressionist painter who mixed historical and pop motifs and the critical appropriationist who held up media stereotypes for our scrutiny. Semiotically speaking, these ideological opponents played on the same team.

5. If Barthes contributed to the first two framings of the real, he exemplified yet a third. Here the real was still attached to the detail that resists meaning, but it was now located in the subject as much as in the object. This detail is the famous *punctum* Barthes proposed in *Camera Lucida* (1980), the inadvertent point in a particular photograph that pricks the unconscious of the viewer: "It is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."<sup>7</sup> Inflected by Lacan, this third positioning of the real, which we might call *traumatophilie*, differs from the first two in key ways. In the ideology-critical framing, the critic exposes the real, whereas here the real exposes the subject; and in the poststructuralist framing, the subject is displaced, and the real subsumed, by conventions and codes, whereas here the subject is called back as witness to a real now understood as traumatic.<sup>8</sup> What could be more real than a real that resists all symbolization? Gradually, however, it became clear that this real could be codified, too; in fact, it could count as a realism of its own. This was the case with abject art and fiction in the 1990s, exemplified in the work of Mike Kelley and Dennis Cooper, once their tropes of bodily disfiguration and psychic damage were established.

6. In one way or another, all the aforementioned framings of the real rejected the naive notion that the realist work is a mirror of the world. Yet a reflectionist assumption sneaks back in when we link cultural outlooks too directly to economic processes. Nonetheless, we might hazard a few connections between the two registers here, if only to underscore that they do in fact exist. Jameson saw the transition to postmodernism in terms of a crack-up of the sign under advanced capitalism. In the modernist epoch, he argued, "reification 'liberated' the Sign from its referent," as evidenced in the abstraction that pervaded its arts. Yet this "dissolution" only deepened in the postmodernist era: Now internal to the sign, reification worked to liberate "the Signifier from the Signified, or from meaning proper."<sup>9</sup> Here our second framing of the real, the real as a textual effect, was suddenly repositioned, for such semioclasm was now taken to do the cultural work of a capitalist order that thrives on "floating signifiers." In part, the third framing of the real—the real as traumatic affect—stemmed from a recognition that the postmodernist crack-up of the sign was not as resistant to advanced capitalism as it purported to be, that it might even be

structurally consonant with that order. Of course, other forces were also at work in this shift from the textual to the traumatic—the aids crisis, systemic poverty, racism, sexism, a broken welfare state, a wounded body politic.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, to some degree, "the body in pain" emerged as a protest against the empire of signs.

7. The past decade has seen yet another turn in the framing of the real, one that bespeaks a frustration with the three positionings that preceded it. First, ideology critique was already under attack on account of the authority that it appeared to arrogate. Like most poststructuralist theory, much postmodernist art had questioned such authority, but this challenge was soon understood to erode the very ability to claim a truth or to posit a reality at all, and so it came to be questioned as a species of nihilism. (The critique of representation, central to both poststructuralism and postmodernism, was also tainted when the Right later appropriated it for its own ends, as in the assertion that global warming is a "mere construction.") Last, the traumatophilic framing of the real brought authority back into play, in the strong guise of the subject as witness (even as survivor), yet this development came with a problem of its own—for how is such authority to be questioned in turn? Bruno Latour emerged as a prominent skeptic of all three framings of the real, especially with regard to the negativity that each appeared to advance in its own way. Against this destructive critic, he offered his own benevolent figure:

The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naive believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather. The critic is not the one who alternates haphazardly between antifetishism and positivism like the drunk iconoclast drawn by Goya, but the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in need of great care and caution.<sup>11</sup>

8. This shift, with the real now viewed as a fragile construction to tend with care and caution, is evident in recent documentary practice, a category that was often a bad object for both ideology critique and postmodernist art (not to mention poststructuralist theory). Brecht can represent the former position—again, "a photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us next to nothing about these institutions"—while Martha Rosler can stand in for the latter with her framing of documentary photography as an "inadequate descriptive system." Today, however, this critique of the document is largely assimilated, and many artists have passed from a posture of deconstruction to one of reconstruction—that is, to the use of artifice to rehabilitate the documentary mode as an effective critical system, if not an adequate descriptive one. (Roughly speaking, this is the epistemological posture of Harun Farocki, Hito Steyerl, and Trevor Paglen, among others.) In large part, this shift was a response to the increased control by corporations and governments, through satellite imaging and information mining, of what is given to us as the real in the first place—what can be represented, known, disputed, proved—at all scales, from the individual pixel to the vast agglomerations of big data. With such control, events that are criminal or catastrophic (secret wars, genocidal campaigns, territorial occupations, environmental disasters, refugee abuses, detention centers, drone strikes, and so on) can be partially or totally blocked from view.<sup>12</sup> It becomes imperative, then, to reconstruct these events as cogently as possible by means of media both new and old (some of which were questioned in the initial critique of the documentary). Eyal Weizman has termed this modeling of the real "forensic architecture," and he points to a turn from a politics of the witness, based on "individual testimony" and aimed at "empathy with victims" (which corresponds to our traumatophilic framing of the real), to a politics of human rights advocacy undertaken as "a process of materialization and mediatization."<sup>13</sup> Such forensic practice salvages, assembles, and sequences fragmentary representations in order both to image and to narrate disputed events; these scripts can then be offered as evidence in courts of law as well as in courts of opinion. (As Latour speaks of "arenas," so Weizman speaks of "forums," which can include art institutions, too, and he reminds us that forensis is Latin for "pertaining to the forum.") At first glance, this turn might be interpreted as neo-Brechtian ("something must in fact be built up, something artificial, posed"), but the relevant work here (again, Farocki, Steyerl, Paglen, et al.) is concerned less with exposing a given reality behind representation than with reconstructing an occluded reality, or with pointing to an absented one, by means of representation.<sup>14</sup>

9. This epistemological recalibration is also active in recent literature. The fiction in question does not express a "reality hunger," as proclaimed by David Shields—that is, it does not conscript real experience to reanimate novel

writing in an attempt to overcome the old binary of life versus art. Rather, it too deploys great artifice, not to demystify or to disrupt the real but to make the real real again, which is to say, effective again, felt again, as such. Consider the 2005 novel *Remainder* by Tom McCarthy. The unnamed narrator is struck by an unknown object fallen from the sky, and receives a large settlement from an insurance company as a consequence. He then spends this vast sum on reenactors, whom he hires to perform, repeatedly, his fragmentary memories of scenes that seem relevant to the event. Affectively blocked by his trauma, he stages these episodes to experience them as if for the first time, and as his desperation grows, his enactments become ever more violent. On the one hand, *Remainder* circles around the real as a traumatic remainder; in Lacanian terms, it narrates a "missed encounter" with the real that, because it is missed, can only be repeated.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the repetition of the scenes is dedicated to realize them, not to simulate them, much less to derealize them. The 2015 film adaptation of *Remainder* captures this repetition-compulsion perfectly; its director, the artist Omer Fast, explores this mixed framing of the real, which oscillates between the traumatophilie and the reconstructive, in his other work as well.<sup>16</sup>

10. Thomas Demand has also advanced this mixed positioning of the real. As is well known, he builds his photographs from models based on found images-news sources, postcards, and the like-in a way that complicates the discursive opposition between indexical and constructed representations. Demand treats the imagistic mediation of the world as given, and he assumes that we do as well; here, too, the aim is not to demystify or deconstruct the real but to activate it. Consider a familiar work, *Bathroom*, 1997, which shows an oblique view of a porcelain tub set in blue tile. In 1987, the premier of the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, Uwe Barschel, was found dead in a hotel bath like this one; in fact, Demand based his image on the tabloid photo taken by the journalist who discovered the body. A rising star in the Christian Democratic party, Barschel was involved in a secret investigation of a political opponent, and the cause of his death-originally ruled a suicide-remains undetermined. This information alters our response to the image: Suddenly, the open door, the rumpled curtain, the creased mat, and the undrained bathwater read as possible signs of foul play. Yet *Bathroom* is also true to the utter banality of its source. "What is decisive," Demand has remarked, "are the blurred traces left in the media by [the] incidents [that they relay]." On the one hand, this blurring produces a distraction in us, "a very diffuse sense of dullness"; on the other, it allows these traces of incidents to "lodge in the memory," one that Demand regards as collective as well as individual. Such are the blurred traces of the real that he is able to evoke in the blunted details of his photographs. Here, contra Barthes, the punctum is not inadvertent: It must be constructed (again, "built up") if the real is to be made effective as such.<sup>17</sup>

11. Repetition takes on a new valence in this epistemological recalibration. From Pop paintings to Pictures photographs, serial images typically evinced a world of spectacle become simulacral, where representations appear to float free, through repetition, from referents and signifieds alike. This view changed with the traumatophilie framing; there repetition was rededicated to the real, now understood in a Lacanian sense. Lately, however, a further shift has occurred in fiction and art: Repetition is not on the side of simulation, but neither does it circle around a traumatic past. Rather, its purpose is to produce an interruption, a crack or a gap, that might allow a different reality to be glimpsed. Consider *10:04* (2014) by Ben Lerner, who places his novel under the epigraphic sign of Benjamin: "The Hassidim tell a story about the world to come that says everything will be just as it is.... Everything will be as it is now, just a little different."<sup>18</sup> The narrator, who is Lerner but just a little different, replays episodes from his life in this way, too, as "a little changed, a little charged," charged as real through repetition-or, perhaps better, through coincidence.<sup>19</sup> Intermittently, as the narrator does this, he also reflects on how such coincidence can be transformative. For example, of the partially transparent hand of an otherwise embodied saint in a nineteenth-century painting by Jules Bastien-Lepage, he remarks, "It's as if the tension between the metaphysical and physical worlds, between two orders of temporality, produces a glitch in the pictorial matrix."<sup>20</sup> Yet his exemplum of these folds in space-time is Christian Marclay's *The Clock*, 2010, a digital video that proceeds through twenty-four hours of film clips, each keyed to a precise moment, which is almost always registered on the face of a timepiece depicted in the found footage. Lerner takes the title of his novel from

the clip that represents 10:04 pm, the moment at which lightning strikes the clock tower in Back to the Future (1985). The narrator draws his own lesson here:

I'd heard The Clock described as the ultimate collapse of fictional time into real time, a word designed to obliterate the distance between art and life, fantasy and reality. But... that distance hadn't been collapsed for me at all; while the duration of a real minute and The Clock's minute were mathematically indistinguishable, they were nevertheless minutes from different worlds.... I felt acutely how many different days could be built out of a day, felt more possibility than determinism, the utopian glimmer of fiction.<sup>21</sup>

12. Tacita Dean also produces a glitch in the matrix in her film Event for a Stage (2015). A man paces a stage as people wander into an auditorium; we surmise that he is an actor and they are an audience. He speaks of a great storm; his lines, from *The Tempest*, cue us that illusion will be one subject of this event. Yet the film lays bare not only its setting but also its production: There are abrupt shifts from one camera to another (which the actor calls out), as well as from one staging to another. (Dean constructed her film from four performances, each marked by different costumes and hairstyles.) Sometimes, too, the actor interacts with an audience member who prompts him with notes (it is Dean); at other times he leaves the stage altogether. At such moments, the fourth wall (which the actor calls "a membrane") is not broken so much as stretched: Life does not intrude on art so much as art expands to comprehend actions, thoughts, and feelings that lie beyond the usual ambit of theater. These moments include confusions that seem genuine ("I don't know what this is," the actor proclaims at one point), as well as statements that sound autobiographical (the line between the lived and the performed is blurred too). The actor tells us about the dementia of his mother (she repeats things) and the "unconventional relationship" of his father with "characters in a TV series," but then we realize that the actor shares in mental uncertainties and unconventional relationships, and that we do too (especially in our viewing of Event). Here, again, life does not break into art, nor does all the world become a stage; rather, the imbrication of the two is explored as a condition that is as common as it is complex. If, near its beginning, *Event for a Stage* quotes *The Tempest*, toward the end it cites "On the Marionette Theater" (1810), the great Heinrich von Kleist story that ponders the equal and opposite "grace" achieved by God and marionettes, the former through total consciousness, the latter through its utter lack. What is his relation to self-awareness? Dean asks the actor. Does he ever experience stage fright? Can he ever forget the gaze of the audience on him? He responds ambiguously that, like all actors, he becomes real only through a "great text," but that, like "good parents," good actors can provide a space-time for make-believe that is actual.

13. "The lie described my life better than the truth," the narrator says (or imagines he says) in 10:04. "Art is what makes life more interesting than art," the actor declaims (perhaps on behalf of the artist) in *Event for a Stage*.<sup>11</sup> These declarations are not witticisms à la Oscar Wilde that delight in paradox and advocate style so much as they are proposals about how artifice, the utopian glimmer of fiction, can be placed in the service of the real. Two questions linger, however. First, what prepares this latest shift in the framing of the real? Might the desire to open up alternative futures be, in part, a response to the dominance of financial futures- that is, to the reality that, in a world governed by finance capitalism, present time is always mortgaged to a time to come (a time that never actually arrives)?<sup>23</sup> Second, what relation do the real fictions reviewed here have to "alternative facts," and might the former be deployed to challenge the latter in a way that avoids a simple retrenchment to a positivistic framing of the real?

R. 126

◆◆◆ III ◆◆◆  
TOTALITARIANISM

Normal men do not know that everything is  
possible.

—*David Rousset*

them.<sup>124</sup> The reason why the totalitarian regimes can get so far toward realizing a fictitious, topsy-turvy world is that the outside nontotalitarian world, which always comprises a great part of the population of the totalitarian country itself, indulges also in wishful thinking and shirks reality in the face of real insanity just as much as the masses do in the face of the normal world. This common-sense disinclination to believe the monstrous is constantly strengthened by the totalitarian ruler himself, who makes sure that no reliable statistics, no controllable facts and figures are ever published, so that there are only subjective, uncontrollable, and unreliable reports about the places of the living dead.

Because of this policy, the results of the totalitarian experiment are only partially known. Although we have enough reports from concentration camps to assess the possibilities of total domination and to catch a glimpse into the abyss of the "possible," we do not know the extent of character transformation under a totalitarian regime. We know even less how many of the normal people around us would be willing to accept the totalitarian way of life—that is, to pay the price of a considerably shorter life for the assured fulfillment of all their career dreams. It is easy to realize the extent to which totalitarian propaganda and even some totalitarian institutions answer the needs of the new homeless masses, but it is almost impossible to know how many of them, if they are further exposed to a constant threat of unemployment, will gladly acquiesce to a "population policy" that consists of regular elimination of surplus people, and how many, once they have fully grasped their growing incapacity to bear the burdens of modern life, will gladly conform to a system that, together with spontaneity, eliminates responsibility.

In other words, while we know the operation and the specific function of the totalitarian secret police, we do not know how well or to what an extent the "secret" of this secret society corresponds to the secret desires and the secret complicities of the masses in our time.

124. The Nazis were well aware of the protective wall of incredulity which surrounded their enterprise. A secret report to Rosenberg about the massacre of 5,000 Jews in 1943 states explicitly: "Imagine only that these occurrences would become known to the other side and exploited by them. Most likely such propaganda would have no effect only because people who hear and read about it simply would not be ready to believe it" (*Nazi Conspiracy*, I, 100).

### *Total Domination*

The concentration and extermination camps of totalitarian regimes serve as the laboratories in which the fundamental belief of totalitarianism that everything is possible is being verified. Compared with this, all other experiments are secondary in importance—including those in the field of medicine whose horrors are recorded in detail in the trials against the physicians of the Third Reich—although it is characteristic that these laboratories were used for experiments of every kind.

Total domination, which strives to organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all of humanity were just one individual, is possible only if each and every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions, so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any other. The problem is to fabricate something that does not exist, namely, a kind of human species resembling other animal species whose only "freedom" would consist in "preserving the species."<sup>125</sup> Totalitarian domination attempts to achieve this goal both through ideological indoctrination of the elite formations and through absolute terror in the camps; and the atrocities for which the elite formations are ruthlessly used become, as it were, the practical application of the ideological indoctrination—the testing ground in which the latter must prove itself—while the appalling spectacle of the camps themselves is supposed to furnish the "theoretical" verification of the ideology.

The camps are meant not only to exterminate people and degrade human beings, but also serve the ghastly experiment of eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing, into something that even animals are not; for Pavlov's dog, which, as we know, was trained to eat not when it was hungry but when a bell rang, was a perverted animal.

Under normal circumstances this can never be accomplished, because spontaneity can never be entirely eliminated insofar as it is connected not

<sup>125</sup>. In the *Tischgespräche*, Hitler mentions several times that he "[strives] for a condition in which each individual knows that he lives and dies for the preservation of his species" (p. 349). See also p. 347: "A fly lays millions of eggs, all of which perish. But the flies remain."

only with human freedom but with life itself, in the sense of simply keeping alive. It is only in the concentration camps that such an experiment is at all possible, and therefore they are not only "*la société la plus totalitaire encore réalisée*" (David Rousset) but the guiding social ideal of total domination in general. Just as the stability of the totalitarian regime depends on the isolation of the fictitious world of the movement from the outside world, so the experiment of total domination in the concentration camps depends on sealing off the latter against the world of all others, the world of the living in general, even against the outside world of a country under totalitarian rule. This isolation explains the peculiar unreality and lack of credibility that characterize all reports from the concentration camps and constitute one of the main difficulties for the true understanding of totalitarian domination, which stands or falls with the existence of these concentration and extermination camps; for, unlikely as it may sound, these camps are the true central institution of totalitarian organizational power.

There are numerous reports by survivors.<sup>126</sup> The more authentic they are, the less they attempt to communicate things that evade human understanding and human experience—sufferings, that is, that transform men into "uncomplaining animals."<sup>127</sup> None of these reports inspires those passions of outrage and sympathy through which men have always been mobilized for justice. On the contrary, anyone speaking or writing about concentration camps is still regarded as suspect; and if the speaker has resolutely returned to the world of the living, he himself is often assailed by doubts with regard to his own truthfulness, as though he had mistaken a nightmare for reality.<sup>128</sup>

126. The best reports on Nazi concentration camps are David Rousset, *Les Jours de Notre Mort*, Paris, 1947; Eugen Kogon, *op. cit.*; Bruno Bettelheim, "On Dachau and Buchenwald" (from May, 1938, to April, 1939), in *Nazi Conspiracy*, VII, 824 ff. For Soviet concentration camps, see the excellent collection of reports by Polish survivors published under the title *The Dark Side of the Moon*; also David J. Dallin, *op. cit.*, though his reports are sometimes less convincing because they come from "prominent" personalities who are intent on drawing up manifestos and indictments.

127. *The Dark Side of the Moon*; the introduction also stresses this peculiar lack of communication: "They record but do not communicate."

128. See especially Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.* "It seemed as if I had become convinced that these horrible and degrading experiences somehow did not happen to 'me' as subject but to 'me' as an object. This experience was corroborated by the statements of other prisoners. . . . It was as if I watched things happening in which I only vaguely participated. . . . 'This cannot be true, such things just do not happen.' . . . The prisoners had to convince themselves that this was real, was really happening and not just a nightmare. They were never wholly successful."

This doubt of people concerning themselves and the reality of their own experience only reveals what the Nazis always knew: that men determined to commit crimes will find it expedient to organize them on the vastest, most improbable scale. Not only because this renders all punishments provided by the legal system inadequate and absurd; but because the very immensity of the crimes guarantees that the murderers who proclaim their innocence with all manner of lies will be more readily believed than the victims who tell the truth. The Nazis did not even consider it necessary to keep this discovery to themselves. Hitler circulated millions of copies of his book in which he stated that to be successful, a lie must be enormous—which did not prevent people from believing him as, similarly, the Nazis' proclamations, repeated *ad nauseam*, that the Jews would be exterminated like bed-bugs (*i.e.*, with poison gas) prevented anybody from *not* believing them.

There is a great temptation to explain away the intrinsically incredible by means of liberal rationalizations. In each one of us there lurks such a liberal, wheedling us with the voice of common sense. The road to totalitarian domination leads through many intermediate stages for which we can find numerous analogies and precedents. The extraordinarily bloody terror during the initial stage of totalitarian rule serves indeed the exclusive purpose of defeating the opponent and rendering all further opposition impossible; but total terror is launched only after this initial stage has been overcome and the regime no longer has anything to fear from the opposition. In this context it has been frequently remarked that in such a case the means have become the end, but this is after all only an admission, in paradoxical disguise, that the category "the end justifies the means" no longer applies, that terror has lost its "purpose," that it is no longer the means to frighten people. Nor does the explanation suffice that the revolution, as in the case of the French Revolution, was devouring its own children, for the terror continues even after everybody who might be described as a child of the revolution in one capacity or another—the Russian factions, the power centers of party, the army, the

---

See also Rousset, *op. cit.*, p. 213. ". . . Those who haven't seen it with their own eyes can't believe it. Did you yourself, before you came here, take the rumors about the gas chambers seriously?"

"No, I said.

". . . You see? Well, they're all like you. The lot of them in Paris, London, New York, even at Birkenau, right outside the crematoriums . . . still incredulous, five minutes before they were sent down into the cellar of the crematorium . . ."

bureaucracy—has long since been devoured. Many things that nowadays have become the specialty of totalitarian government are only too well known from the study of history. There have almost always been wars of aggression; the massacre of hostile populations after a victory went unchecked until the Romans mitigated it by introducing the *parcere subjectis*; through centuries the extermination of native peoples went hand in hand with the colonization of the Americas, Australia, and Africa; slavery is one of the oldest institutions of mankind and all empires of antiquity were based on the labor of state-owned slaves who erected their public buildings. Not even concentration camps are an invention of totalitarian movements. They emerge for the first time during the Boer War, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and continued to be used in South Africa as well as India for "undesirable elements"; here, too, we first find the term "protective custody" which was later adopted by the Third Reich. These camps correspond in many respects to the concentration camps at the beginning of totalitarian rule; they were used for "suspects" whose offenses could not be proved and who could not be sentenced by ordinary process of law. All this clearly points to totalitarian methods of domination; all these are elements they utilize, develop, and crystallize on the basis of the nihilistic principle that "everything is permitted," which they inherited and already take for granted. But wherever these new forms of domination assume their authentically totalitarian structure they transcend this principle, which is still tied to the utilitarian motives and self-interest of the rulers, and try their hand in a realm that up to now has been completely unknown to us: the realm where "everything is possible." And, characteristically enough, this is precisely the realm that cannot be limited by either utilitarian motives or self-interest, regardless of the latter's content.

What runs counter to common sense is not the nihilistic principle that "everything is permitted," which was already contained in the nineteenth-century utilitarian conception of common sense. What common sense and "normal people" refuse to believe is that everything is possible.<sup>129</sup> We attempt to understand elements in present or recollected experience that simply surpass our powers of understanding. We attempt to classify as criminal a thing which, as we all feel, no such category was ever intended to cover. What meaning has the concept of murder when we are confronted with

<sup>129</sup>. The first to understand this was Rousset in his *Univers Concentrationnaire*, 1947.

the mass production of corpses? We attempt to understand the behavior of concentration-camp inmates and SS-men psychologically, when the very thing that must be realized is that the psyche *can* be destroyed even without the destruction of the physical man; that, indeed, psyche, character, and individuality seem under certain circumstances to express themselves only through the rapidity or slowness with which they disintegrate.<sup>130</sup> The end result in any case is inanimate men, *i.e.*, men who can no longer be psychologically understood, whose return to the psychologically or otherwise intelligibly human world closely resembles the resurrection of Lazarus. All statements of common sense, whether of a psychological or sociological nature, serve only to encourage those who think it "superficial" to "dwell on horrors."<sup>131</sup>

If it is true that the concentration camps are the most consequential institution of totalitarian rule, "dwelling on horrors" would seem to be indispensable for the understanding of totalitarianism. But the recollection can no more do this than can the uncommunicative eyewitness report. In both these genres there is an inherent tendency to run away from the experience; instinctively or rationally, both types of writer are so much aware of the terrible abyss that separates the world of the living from that of the living dead that they cannot supply anything more than a series of remembered occurrences that must seem just as incredible to those who relate them as to their audience. Only the fearful imagination of those who have been aroused by such reports but have not actually been smitten in their own flesh, of those who are consequently free from the bestial, desperate terror which, when confronted by real, present horror, inexorably paralyzes everything that is not mere reaction, can afford to keep thinking about horrors. Such thoughts are useful only for the perception of political contexts and the mobilization of political passions. A change of personality of any sort whatever can no more be induced by thinking about horrors than by the real experience of horror. The reduction of a man to a bundle of reactions separates him as radically as mental disease from everything within him that is personality or character. When, like Lazarus, he rises from the dead, he finds his personality or character unchanged, just as he had left it.

Just as the horror, or the dwelling on it, cannot affect a change of charac-

130. Rousset, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

131. See Georges Bataille in *Critique*, January, 1948, p. 72.

ter in him, cannot make men better or worse, thus it cannot become the basis of a political community or party in a narrower sense. The attempts to build up a European elite with a program of intra-European understanding based on the common European experience of the concentration camps have foundered in much the same manner as the attempts following the first World War to draw political conclusions from the international experience of the front generation. In both cases it turned out that the experiences themselves can communicate no more than nihilistic banalities.<sup>132</sup> Political consequences such as postwar pacifism, for example, derived from the general fear of war, not from the experiences in war. Instead of producing a pacifism devoid of reality, the insight into the structure of modern wars, guided and mobilized by fear, might have led to the realization that the only standard for a necessary war is the fight against conditions under which people no longer wish to live—and our experiences with the tormenting hell of the totalitarian camps have enlightened us only too well about the possibility of such conditions.<sup>133</sup> Thus the fear of concentration camps and the resulting insight into the nature of total domination might serve to invalidate all obsolete political differentiations from right to left and to introduce beside and above them the politically most important yardstick for judging events in our time, namely: whether they serve totalitarian domination or not.

In any event, the fearful imagination has the great advantage to dissolve the sophistic-dialectical interpretations of politics which are all based on the superstition that something good might result from evil. Such dialectical acrobatics had at least a semblance of justification so long as the worst that man could inflict upon man was murder. But, as we know today, murder is only a limited evil. The murderer who kills a man—a man who has to die anyway—still moves within the realm of life and death familiar to us; both have indeed a necessary connection on which the dialectic is founded, even if it is not always conscious of it. The murderer leaves a corpse behind and does not pretend that his victim has never existed; if he wipes out any traces, they are

132. Rousset's book contains many such "insights" into human "nature," based chiefly on the observation that after a while the mentality of the inmates is scarcely distinguishable from that of the camp guards.

133. In order to avoid misunderstandings it may be appropriate to add that with the invention of the hydrogen bomb the whole war question has undergone another decisive change. A discussion of this question is of course beyond the theme of this book.

those of his own identity, and not the memory and grief of the persons who loved his victim; he destroys a life, but he does not destroy the fact of existence itself.

The Nazis, with the precision peculiar to them, used to register their operations in the concentration camps under the heading "under cover of the night (*Nacht und Nebel*)."<sup>1</sup> The radicalism of measures to treat people as if they had never existed and to make them disappear in the literal sense of the word is frequently not apparent at first glance, because both the German and the Russian system are not uniform but consist of a series of categories in which people are treated very differently. In the case of Germany, these different categories used to exist in the same camp, but without coming into contact with each other; frequently, the isolation between the categories was even stricter than the isolation from the outside world. Thus, out of racial considerations, Scandinavian nationals during the war were quite differently treated by the Germans than the members of other peoples, although the former were outspoken enemies of the Nazis. The latter in turn were divided into those whose "extermination" was immediately on the agenda, as in the case of the Jews; or could be expected in the predictable future, as in the case of the Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians; and into those who were not yet covered by instructions about such an over-all "final solution," as in the case of the French and Belgians. In Russia, on the other hand, we must distinguish three more or less independent systems. First, there are the authentic forced-labor groups that live in relative freedom and are sentenced for limited periods. Secondly, there are the concentration camps in which the human material is ruthlessly exploited and the mortality rate is extremely high, but which are essentially organized for labor purposes. And, thirdly, there are the annihilation camps in which the inmates are systematically wiped out through starvation and neglect.

The real horror of the concentration and extermination camps lies in the fact that the inmates, even if they happen to keep alive, are more effectively cut off from the world of the living than if they had died, because terror enforces oblivion. Here, murder is as impersonal as the squashing of a gnat. Someone may die as the result of systematic torture or starvation, or because the camp is overcrowded and superfluous human material must be liquidated. Conversely, it may happen that due to a shortage of new human shipments the danger arises that the camps become depopulated and that the

order is now given to reduce the death rate at any price.<sup>134</sup> David Rousset called his report on the period in a German concentration camp "*Les Jours de Notre Mort*," and it is indeed as if there were a possibility to give permanence to the process of dying itself and to enforce a condition in which both death and life are obstructed equally effectively.

It is the appearance of some radical evil, previously unknown to us, that puts an end to the notion of developments and transformations of qualities. Here, there are neither political nor historical nor simply moral standards but, at the most, the realization that something seems to be involved in modern politics that actually should never be involved in politics as we used to understand it, namely all or nothing—all, and that is an undetermined infinity of forms of human living-together, or nothing, for a victory of the concentration-camp system would mean the same inexorable doom for human beings as the use of the hydrogen bomb would mean the doom of the human race.

There are no parallels to the life in the concentration camps. Its horror can never be fully embraced by the imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death. It can never be fully reported for the very reason that the survivor returns to the world of the living, which makes it impossible for him to believe fully in his own past experiences. It is as though he had a story to tell of another planet, for the status of the inmates in the world of the living, where nobody is supposed to know if they are alive or dead, is such that it is as though they had never been born. Therefore all parallels create confusion and distract attention from what is essential. Forced labor in prisons and penal colonies, banishment, slavery, all seem for a moment to offer helpful comparisons, but on closer examination lead nowhere.

Forced labor as a punishment is limited as to time and intensity. The convict retains his rights over his body; he is not absolutely tortured and he is not absolutely dominated. Banishment banishes only from one part of the world to another part of the world, also inhabited by human beings; it does not exclude from the human world altogether. Throughout history slavery has

<sup>134</sup>. This happened in Germany toward the end of 1942, whereupon Himmler served notice to all camp commandants "to reduce the death rate at all costs." For it had turned out that of the 136,000 new arrivals, 70,000 were already dead on reaching the camp or died immediately thereafter. See *Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, Annex II.—Later reports from Soviet Russian camps unanimously confirm that after 1949—that is, when Stalin was still alive—the death rate in the concentration camps, which previously had

been an institution within a social order; slaves were not, like concentration-camp inmates, withdrawn from the sight and hence the protection of their fellow-men; as instruments of labor they had a definite price and as property a definite value. The concentration-camp inmate has no price, because he can always be replaced; nobody knows to whom he belongs, because he is never seen. From the point of view of normal society he is absolutely superfluous, although in times of acute labor shortage, as in Russia and in Germany during the war, he is used for work.

The concentration camp as an institution was not established for the sake of any possible labor yield; the only permanent economic function of the camps has been the financing of their own supervisory apparatus; thus from the economic point of view the concentration camps exist mostly for their own sake. Any work that has been performed could have been done much better and more cheaply under different conditions.<sup>13</sup> Especially Russia, whose concentration camps are mostly described as forced-labor camps because Soviet bureaucracy has chosen to dignify them with this name, reveals most clearly that forced labor is not the primary issue; forced labor is the normal condition of all Russian workers, who have no freedom of movement and can be arbitrarily drafted for work to any place at any time. The incredibility of the horrors is closely bound up with their economic uselessness. The Nazis carried this uselessness to the point of open anti-utility when in the midst of the war, despite the shortage of building material and rolling stock, they set up enormous, costly extermination factories and transported

---

reached up to 60 per cent of the inmates, was systematically lowered, presumably due to a general and acute labor shortage in the Soviet Union. This improvement in living conditions should not be confused with the crisis of the regime after Stalin's death which, characteristically enough, first made itself felt in the concentration camps. Cf. Wilhelm Starlinger, *Grenzen der Sowjetmacht*, Würzburg, 1955, 135. See Kogon, *op. cit.*, p. 58: "A large part of the work exacted in the concentration camps was useless, either it was superfluous or it was so miserably planned that it had to be done over two or three times." Also Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 831-832: "New prisoners particularly were forced to perform nonsensical tasks. . . . They felt debased . . . and preferred even harder work when it produced something useful. . ." Even Dallin, who has built his whole book on the thesis that the purpose of Russian camps is to provide cheap labor, is forced to admit the inefficiency of camp labor, *op. cit.*, p. 105.—The current theories about the Russian camp system as an economic measure for providing a cheap labor supply would stand clearly refuted if recent reports on mass amnesties and the abolition of concentration camps should prove to be true. For if the camps had served an important economic purpose, the regime certainly could not have afforded their rapid liquidation without grave consequences for the whole economic system.

millions of people back and forth.<sup>136</sup> In the eyes of a strictly utilitarian world the obvious contradiction between these acts and military expediency gave the whole enterprise an air of mad unreality.

This atmosphere of madness and unreality, created by an apparent lack of purpose, is the real iron curtain which hides all forms of concentration camps from the eyes of the world. Seen from outside, they and the things that happen in them can be described only in images drawn from a life after death, that is, a life removed from earthly purposes. Concentration camps can very aptly be divided into three types corresponding to three basic Western conceptions of a life after death: Hades, Purgatory, and Hell. To Hades correspond those relatively mild forms, once popular even in nontotalitarian countries, for getting undesirable elements of all sorts—refugees, stateless persons, the asocial, and the unemployed—out of the way; as DP camps, which are nothing other than camps for persons who have become superfluous and bothersome, they have survived the war. Purgatory is represented by the Soviet Union's labor camps, where neglect is combined with chaotic forced labor. Hell in the most literal sense was embodied by those types of camp perfected by the Nazis, in which the whole of life was thoroughly and systematically organized with a view to the greatest possible torment.

All three types have one thing in common: the human masses sealed off in them are treated as if they no longer existed, as if what happened to them were no longer of any interest to anybody, as if they were already dead and some evil spirit gone mad were amusing himself by stopping them for a while between life and death before admitting them to eternal peace.

It is not so much the barbed wire as the skillfully manufactured unreality of those whom it fences in that provokes such enormous cruelties and ultimately makes extermination look like a perfectly normal measure. Everything that was done in the camps is known to us from the world of perverse, malignant fantasies. The difficult thing to understand is that, like such fantasies, these gruesome crimes took place in a phantom world, which, however, has materialized, as it were, into a world which is complete with all sensual data of reality but lacks that structure of consequence and responsi-

136. Apart from the millions of people whom the Nazis transported to the extermination camps, they constantly attempted new colonization plans—transported Germans from Germany or the occupied territories to the East for colonization purposes. This was of course a serious handicap for military actions and economic exploitation. For the numerous discussions on these subjects and the constant conflict

bility without which reality remains for us a mass of incomprehensible data. The result is that a place has been established where men can be tortured and slaughtered, and yet neither the tormentors nor the tormented, and least of all the outsider, can be aware that what is happening is anything more than a cruel game or an absurd dream.<sup>137</sup>

The films which the Allies circulated in Germany and elsewhere after the war showed clearly that this atmosphere of insanity and unreality is not dispelled by pure reportage. To the unprejudiced observer these pictures are just about as convincing as snapshots of mysterious substances taken at spiritualist séances.<sup>138</sup> Common sense reacted to the horrors of Buchenwald and Auschwitz with the plausible argument: "What crime must these people have committed that such things were done to them!"; or, in Germany and Austria, in the midst of starvation, overpopulation, and general hatred: "Too bad that they've stopped gassing the Jews"; and everywhere with the skeptical shrug that greets ineffectual propaganda.

If the propaganda of truth fails to convince the average person because it is too monstrous, it is positively dangerous to those who know from their own imaginings what they themselves are capable of doing and who are therefore perfectly willing to believe in the reality of what they have seen. Suddenly it becomes evident that things which for thousands of years the human imagination had banished to a realm beyond human competence can be manufactured right here on earth, that Hell and Purgatory, and even a shadow of their perpetual duration, can be established by the most modern methods of destruction and therapy. To these people (and they are more numerous in any large city than we like to admit) the totalitarian hell proves only that the power of man is greater than they ever dared to think, and that man can realize hellish fantasies without making the sky fall or the earth open.

---

between the Nazi civilian hierarchy in the Eastern occupied territories and the SS hierarchy see especially Vol. XXIX of *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, Nuremberg, 1947.

137. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, notes that the guards in the camps embraced an attitude toward the atmosphere of unreality similar to that of the prisoners themselves.

138. It is of some importance to realize that all pictures of concentration camps are misleading insofar as they show the camps in their last stages, at the moment the Allied troops marched in. There were no death camps in Germany proper, and at that point all extermination equipment had already been dismantled. On the other hand, what provoked the outrage of the Allies most and what gives the films their special horror—namely, the sight of the human skeletons—was not at all typical for the German concentration camps; extermination was handled systematically by gas, not by starvation. The condition of the camps was a result of the war events during the final months: Himmler had ordered the evacuation

These analogies, repeated in many reports from the world of the dying,<sup>139</sup> seem to express more than a desperate attempt at saying what is outside the realm of human speech. Nothing perhaps distinguishes modern masses as radically from those of previous centuries as the loss of faith in a Last Judgment: the worst have lost their fear and the best have lost their hope. Unable as yet to live without fear and hope, these masses are attracted by every effort which seems to promise a man-made fabrication of the Paradise they had longed for and of the Hell they had feared. Just as the popularized features of Marx's classless society have a queer resemblance to the Messianic Age, so the reality of concentration camps resembles nothing so much as medieval pictures of Hell.

The one thing that cannot be reproduced is what made the traditional conceptions of Hell tolerable to man: the Last Judgment, the idea of an absolute standard of justice combined with the infinite possibility of grace. For in the human estimation there is no crime and no sin commensurable with the everlasting torments of Hell. Hence the discomfiture of common sense, which asks: What crime must these people have committed in order to suffer so inhumanly? Hence also the absolute innocence of the victims: no man ever deserved this. Hence finally the grotesque haphazardness with which concentration-camp victims were chosen in the perfected terror state: such "punishment" can, with equal justice and injustice, be inflicted on anyone.

In comparison with the insane end-result—concentration-camp society—the process by which men are prepared for this end, and the methods by which individuals are adapted to these conditions, are transparent and logical. The insane mass manufacture of corpses is preceded by the historically and politically intelligible preparation of living corpses. The impetus and, what is more important, the silent consent to such unprecedented conditions are the products of those events which in a period of political disintegration suddenly and unexpectedly made hundreds of thousands of human beings homeless, stateless, outlawed, and unwanted, while millions of human beings were made economically superfluous and socially burdensome by unemployment. This in turn could only happen because the Rights of Man,

of all extermination camps in the East, the German camps were consequently vastly overcrowded, and he was no longer in a position to assure the food supply in Germany.

139. That life in a concentration camp was simply a dragged-out process of dying is stressed by Rousset, *op. cit., passim.*

which had never been philosophically established but merely formulated, which had never been politically secured but merely proclaimed, have, in their traditional form, lost all validity.

The first essential step on the road to total domination is to kill the juridical person in man. This was done, on the one hand, by putting certain categories of people outside the protection of the law and forcing at the same time, through the instrument of denationalization, the nontotalitarian world into recognition of lawlessness; it was done, on the other, by placing the concentration camp outside the normal penal system, and by selecting its inmates outside the normal judicial procedure in which a definite crime entails a predictable penalty. Thus criminals, who for other reasons are an essential element in concentration-camp society, are ordinarily sent to a camp only on completion of their prison sentence. Under all circumstances totalitarian domination sees to it that the categories gathered in the camps—Jews, carriers of diseases, representatives of dying classes—have already lost their capacity for both normal or criminal action. Propagandistically this means that the “protective custody” is handled as a “preventive police measure,”<sup>140</sup> that is, a measure that deprives people of the ability to act. Deviations from this rule in Russia must be attributed to the catastrophic shortage of prisons and to a desire, so far unrealized, to transform the whole penal system into a system of concentration camps.<sup>141</sup>

The inclusion of criminals is necessary in order to make plausible the propagandistic claim of the movement that the institution exists for asocial elements.<sup>142</sup> Criminals do not properly belong in the concentration camps, if only because it is harder to kill the juridical person in a man who is guilty of some crime than in a totally innocent person. If they constitute a permanent category among the inmates, it is a concession of the totalitarian state to the

<sup>140</sup> Maunz, *op. cit.*, p. 50, insists that criminals should never be sent to the camps for the time of their regular sentences.

<sup>141</sup> The shortage of prison space in Russia has been such that in the year 1925–1926, only 36 per cent of all court sentences could be carried out. See Dallin, *op. cit.*, p. 158 ff.

<sup>142</sup> “Gestapo and SS have always attached great importance to mixing the categories of inmates in the camps. In no camp have the inmates belonged exclusively to one category” (Kogon, *op. cit.*, p. 19).

In Russia, it has also been customary from the beginning to mix political prisoners and criminals. During the first ten years of Soviet power, the Left political groups enjoyed certain privileges; only with the full development of the totalitarian character of the regime “after the end of the twenties, the politicals were even officially treated as inferior to the common criminals” (Dallin, *op. cit.*, p. 177 ff.).

prejudices of society, which can in this way most readily be accustomed to the existence of the camps. In order, on the other hand, to keep the camp system itself intact, it is essential as long as there is a penal system in the country that criminals should be sent to the camps only on completion of their sentence, that is when they are actually entitled to their freedom. Under no circumstances must the concentration camp become a calculable punishment for definite offenses.

The amalgamation of criminals with all other categories has moreover the advantage of making it shockingly evident to all other arrivals that they have landed on the lowest level of society. It soon turns out, to be sure, that they have every reason to envy the lowest thief and murderer; but meanwhile the lowest level is a good beginning. Moreover it is an effective means of camouflage: this happens only to criminals and nothing worse is happening than what deservedly happens to criminals.

The criminals everywhere constitute the aristocracy of the camps. (In Germany, during the war, they were replaced in the leadership by the Communists, because not even a minimum of rational work could be performed under the chaotic conditions created by a criminal administration. This was merely a temporary transformation of concentration camps into forced-labor camps, a thoroughly atypical phenomenon of limited duration.<sup>143</sup>) What places the criminals in the leadership is not so much the affinity between supervisory personnel and criminal elements—in the Soviet Union apparently the supervisors are not, like the SS, a special elite trained to commit crimes<sup>144</sup>—as the fact that only criminals have been sent to the camp in connection with some definite activity. They at least know why they are in a concentration camp and therefore have kept a remnant of their juridical person. For the politicals this is only subjectively true; their actions, insofar as they were actions and not mere opinions or someone else's vague suspicions, or accidental membership in a politically disapproved group, are as a rule

143. Rousset's book suffers from his overestimation of the influence of the German Communists, who dominated the internal administration of Buchenwald during the war.

144. See for instance the testimony of Mrs. Buber-Neumann (former wife of the German Communist Heinz Neumann), who survived Soviet and German concentration camps: "The Russians never . . . evinced the sadistic streak of the Nazis. . . . Our Russian guards were decent men and not sadists, but they faithfully fulfilled the requirements of the inhuman system" (*Under Two Dictators*).

not covered by the normal legal system of the country and not juridically defined.<sup>145</sup>

To the amalgam of politicals and criminals with which concentration camps in Russia and Germany started out, was added at an early date a third element which was soon to constitute the majority of all concentration-camp inmates. This largest group has consisted ever since of people who had done nothing whatsoever that, either in their own consciousness or the consciousness of their tormenters, had any rational connection with their arrest. In Germany, after 1938, this element was represented by masses of Jews, in Russia by any groups which, for any reason having nothing to do with their actions, had incurred the disfavor of the authorities. These groups, innocent in every sense, are the most suitable for thorough experimentation in disfranchisement and destruction of the juridical person, and therefore they are both qualitatively and quantitatively the most essential category of the camp population. This principle was most fully realized in the gas chambers which, if only because of their enormous capacity, could not be intended for individual cases but only for people in general. In this connection, the following dialogue sums up the situation of the individual: "For what purpose, may I ask, do the gas chambers exist?"—"For what purpose were you born?"<sup>146</sup> It is this third group of the totally innocent who in every case fare the worst in the camps. Criminals and politicals are assimilated to this category; thus deprived of the protective distinction that comes of their having done something, they are utterly exposed to the arbitrary. The ultimate goal, partly achieved in the Soviet Union and clearly indicated in the last phases of Nazi terror, is to have the whole camp population composed of this category of innocent people.

Contrasting with the complete haphazardness with which the inmates are selected are the categories, meaningless in themselves but useful from the standpoint of organization, into which they are usually divided on their arrival. In the German camps there were criminals, politicals, asocial elements, religious offenders, and Jews, all distinguished by insignia. When the

145. Bruno Bettelheim, "Behavior in Extreme Situations," in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 4, 1943, describes the self-esteem of the criminals and the political prisoners as compared with those who have not done anything. The latter "were least able to withstand the initial shock," the first to disintegrate. Bettelheim blames this on their middle-class origin.

146. Rousset, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

French set up concentration camps after the Spanish Civil War, they immediately introduced the typical totalitarian amalgam of politicals with criminals and the innocent (in this case the stateless), and despite their inexperience proved remarkably inventive in creating meaningless categories of inmates.<sup>147</sup> Originally devised in order to prevent any growth of solidarity among the inmates, this technique proved particularly valuable because no one could know whether his own category was better or worse than someone else's. In Germany this eternally shifting though pedantically organized edifice was given an appearance of solidity by the fact that under any and all circumstances the Jews were the lowest category. The gruesome and grotesque part of it was that the inmates identified themselves with these categories, as though they represented a last authentic remnant of their juridical person. Even if we disregard all other circumstances, it is no wonder that a Communist of 1933 should have come out of the camps more Communistic than he went in, a Jew more Jewish, and, in France, the wife of a Foreign Legionary more convinced of the value of the Foreign Legion; it would seem as though these categories promised some last shred of predictable treatment, as though they embodied some last and hence most fundamental juridical identity.

While the classification of inmates by categories is only a tactical, organizational measure, the arbitrary selection of victims indicates the essential principle of the institution. If the concentration camps had been dependent on the existence of political adversaries, they would scarcely have survived the first years of the totalitarian regimes. One only has to take a look at the number of inmates at Buchenwald in the years after 1936 in order to understand how absolutely necessary the element of the innocent was for the continued existence of the camps. "The camps would have died out if in making its arrests the Gestapo had considered only the principle of opposition,"<sup>148</sup> and toward the end of 1937 Buchenwald, with less than 1,000 inmates, was close to dying out until the November pogroms brought more than 20,000 new arrivals.<sup>149</sup> In Germany, this element of the innocent was furnished in vast numbers by the Jews after 1938; in Russia, it consisted of random groups of the population which for some reason entirely unconnected with their

147. For conditions in French concentration camps, see Arthur Koestler, *Scum of the Earth*, 1941.

148. Kogon, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

149. See *Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 800 ff.

actions had fallen into disgrace.<sup>150</sup> But if in Germany the really totalitarian type of concentration camp with its enormous majority of completely "innocent" inmates was not established until 1938, in Russia it goes back to the early thirties, since up to 1930 the majority of the concentration-camp population still consisted of criminals, counterrevolutionaries and "politicals" (meaning, in this case, members of deviationist factions). Since then there have been so many innocent people in the camps that it is difficult to classify them—persons who had some sort of contact with a foreign country, Russians of Polish origin (particularly in the years 1936 to 1938), peasants whose villages for some economic reason were liquidated, deported nationalities, demobilized soldiers of the Red Army who happened to belong to regiments that stayed too long abroad as occupation forces or had become prisoners of war in Germany, etc. But the existence of a political opposition is for a concentration-camp system only a pretext, and the purpose of the system is not achieved even when, under the most monstrous terror, the population becomes more or less voluntarily co-ordinated, i.e., relinquishes its political rights. The aim of an arbitrary system is to destroy the civil rights of the whole population, who ultimately become just as outlawed in their own country as the stateless and homeless. The destruction of a man's rights, the killing of the juridical person in him, is a prerequisite for dominating him entirely. And this applies not only to special categories such as criminals, political opponents, Jews, homosexuals, on whom the early experiments were made, but to every inhabitant of a totalitarian state. Free consent is as much an obstacle to total domination as free opposition.<sup>151</sup> The arbitrary arrest which chooses among innocent people destroys the validity of free consent, just as torture—as distinguished from death—destroys the possibility of opposition.

<sup>150</sup>. Beck and Godin, *op. cit.*, state explicitly that "opponents constituted only a relatively small proportion of the [Russian] prison population" (p. 87), and that there was no connection whatever between "a man's imprisonment and any offense" (p. 95).

<sup>151</sup>. Bruno Bettelheim, "On Dachau and Buchenwald," when discussing the fact that most prisoners "made their peace with the values of the Gestapo," emphasizes that "this was not the result of propaganda . . . the Gestapo insisted that it would prevent them from expressing their feelings anyway" (pp. 834-835).

Himmler explicitly prohibited propaganda of any kind in the camps. "Education consists of discipline, never of any kind of instruction on an ideological basis." "On Organization and Obligation of the SS and the Police," in *National-politischer Lehrgang der Wehrmacht*, 1937. Quoted from *Na*zi Conspiracy**, IV, 616 ff.

Any, even the most tyrannical, restriction of this arbitrary persecution to certain opinions of a religious or political nature, to certain modes of intellectual or erotic social behavior, to certain freshly invented "crimes," would render the camps superfluous, because in the long run no attitude and no opinion can withstand the threat of so much horror; and above all it would make for a new system of justice, which, given any stability at all, could not fail to produce a new juridical person in man, that would elude the totalitarian domination. The so-called "*Volksnutzen*" of the Nazis, constantly fluctuating (because what is useful today can be injurious tomorrow) and the eternally shifting party line of the Soviet Union which, being retroactive, almost daily makes new groups of people available for the concentration camps, are the only guarantee for the continued existence of the concentration camps, and hence for the continued total disfranchisement of man.

The next decisive step in the preparation of living corpses is the murder of the moral person in man. This is done in the main by making martyrdom, for the first time in history, impossible: "How many people here still believe that a protest has even historic importance? This skepticism is the real masterpiece of the SS. Their great accomplishment. They have corrupted all human solidarity. Here the night has fallen on the future. When no witnesses are left, there can be no testimony. To demonstrate when death can no longer be postponed is an attempt to give death a meaning, to act beyond one's own death. In order to be successful, a gesture must have social meaning. There are hundreds of thousands of us here, all living in absolute solitude. That is why we are subdued no matter what happens."<sup>152</sup>

The camps and the murder of political adversaries are only part of organized oblivion that not only embraces carriers of public opinion such as the spoken and the written word, but extends even to the families and friends of the victim. Grief and remembrance are forbidden. In the Soviet Union a woman will sue for divorce immediately after her husband's arrest in order to save the lives of her children; if her husband chances to come back, she will indignantly turn him out of the house.<sup>153</sup> The Western world has hitherto, even in its darkest periods, granted the slain enemy the right to be remembered as a self-evident acknowledgment of the fact that we are all men

<sup>152</sup>. Rousset, *op. cit.*, p. 464.

<sup>153</sup>. See the report of Sergei Malakhov in Dallin, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 ff.

(and *only* men). It is only because even Achilles set out for Hector's funeral, only because the most despotic governments honored the slain enemy, only because the Romans allowed the Christians to write their martyrologies, only because the Church kept its heretics alive in the memory of men, that all was not lost and never could be lost. The concentration camps, by making death itself anonymous (making it impossible to find out whether a prisoner is dead or alive) robbed death of its meaning as the end of a fulfilled life. In a sense they took away the individual's own death, proving that henceforth nothing belonged to him and he belonged to no one. His death merely set a seal on the fact that he had never really existed.

This attack on the moral person might still have been opposed by man's conscience which tells him that it is better to die a victim than to live as a bureaucrat of murder. Totalitarian terror achieved its most terrible triumph when it succeeded in cutting the moral person off from the individualist escape and in making the decisions of conscience absolutely questionable and equivocal. When a man is faced with the alternative of betraying and thus murdering his friends or of sending his wife and children, for whom he is in every sense responsible, to their deaths; when even suicide would mean the immediate murder of his own family—how is he to decide? The alternative is no longer between good and evil, but between murder and murder. Who could solve the moral dilemma of the Greek mother who was allowed by the Nazis to choose which of her three children should be killed?<sup>154</sup>

Through the creation of conditions under which conscience ceases to be adequate and to do good becomes utterly impossible, the consciously organized complicity of all men in the crimes of totalitarian regimes is extended to the victims and thus made really total. The SS implicated concentration-camp inmates—criminals, politicals, Jews—in their crimes by making them responsible for a large part of the administration, thus confronting them with the hopeless dilemma whether to send their friends to their deaths, or to help murder other men who happened to be strangers, and forcing them, in any event, to behave like murderers.<sup>155</sup> The point is not only that hatred is diverted from those who are guilty (the *capos* were more hated than the SS),

154. See Albert Camus in *Twice A Year*, 1947.

155. Rousset's book, *op. cit.*, consists largely of discussions of this dilemma by prisoners.

but that the distinguishing line between persecutor and persecuted, between the murderer and his victim, is constantly blurred.<sup>156</sup>

Once the moral person has been killed, the one thing that still prevents men from being made into living corpses is the differentiation of the individual, his unique identity. In a sterile form such individuality can be preserved through a persistent stoicism, and it is certain that many men under totalitarian rule have taken and are each day still taking refuge in this absolute isolation of a personality without rights or conscience. There is no doubt that this part of the human person, precisely because it depends so essentially on nature and on forces that cannot be controlled by the will, is the hardest to destroy (and when destroyed is most easily repaired).<sup>157</sup>

The methods of dealing with this uniqueness of the human person are numerous and we shall not attempt to list them. They begin with the monstrous conditions in the transports to the camps, when hundreds of human beings are packed into a cattle-car stark naked, glued to each other, and shunted back and forth over the countryside for days on end; they continue upon arrival at the camp, the well-organized shock of the first hours, the shaving of the head, the grotesque camp clothing; and they end in the utterly unimaginable tortures so gauged as not to kill the body, at any event not quickly. The aim of all these methods, in any case, is to manipulate the human body—with its infinite possibilities of suffering—in such a way as to make it destroy the human person as inexorably as do certain mental diseases of organic origin.

It is here that the utter lunacy of the entire process becomes most apparent. Torture, to be sure, is an essential feature of the whole totalitarian police and judiciary apparatus; it is used every day to make people talk. This type of torture, since it pursues a definite, rational aim, has certain limitations: either the prisoner talks within a certain time, or he is killed. To this rationally conducted torture another, irrational, sadistic type was added in the first Nazi concentration camps and in the cellars of the Gestapo. Carried on for the

156. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, describes the process by which the guards as well as the prisoners became "conditioned" to the life in the camp and were afraid of returning to the outer world.

Rousset, therefore, is right when he insists that the truth is that "victim and executioner are alike ignoble; the lesson of the camps is the brotherhood of abjection" (p. 588).

157. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, describes how "the main concern of the new prisoners seemed to be to remain intact as a personality" while the problem of the old prisoners was "how to live as well as possible within the camp."

most part by the SA, it pursued no aims and was not systematic, but depended on the initiative of largely abnormal elements. The mortality was so high that only a few concentration-camp inmates of 1933 survived these first years. This type of torture seemed to be not so much a calculated political institution as a concession of the regime to its criminal and abnormal elements, who were thus rewarded for services rendered. Behind the blind bestiality of the SA, there often lay a deep hatred and resentment against all those who were socially, intellectually, or physically better off than themselves, and who now, as if in fulfillment of their wildest dreams, were in their power. This resentment, which never died out entirely in the camps, strikes us as a last remnant of humanly understandable feeling.<sup>158</sup>

The real horror began, however, when the SS took over the administration of the camps. The old spontaneous bestiality gave way to an absolutely cold and systematic destruction of human bodies, calculated to destroy human dignity; death was avoided or postponed indefinitely. The camps were no longer amusement parks for beasts in human form, that is, for men who really belonged in mental institutions and prisons; the reverse became true: they were turned into "drill grounds," on which perfectly normal men were trained to be full-fledged members of the SS.<sup>159</sup>

The killing of man's individuality, of the uniqueness shaped in equal parts

158. Rousset, *op. cit.*, p. 390, reports an SS-man haranguing a professor as follows: "You used to be a professor. Well, you're no professor now. You're no big shot any more. You're nothing but a little runt now. Just as little as you can be. I'm the big fellow now."

159. Kogon, *op. cit.*, p. 6, speaks of the possibility that the camps will be maintained as training and experimental grounds for the SS. He also gives a good report on the difference between the early camps administered by the SA and the later ones under the SS. "None of these first camps had more than a thousand inmates.... Life in them beggared all description. The accounts of the few old prisoners who survived those years agree that there was scarcely any form of sadistic perversion that was not practiced by the SA men. But they were all acts of individual bestiality, there was still no fully organized cold system, embracing masses of men. This was the accomplishment of the SS" (p. 7).

This new mechanized system eased the feeling of responsibility as much as was humanly possible. When, for instance, the order came to kill every day several hundred Russian prisoners, the slaughter was performed by shooting through a hole without seeing the victim. (See Ernest Feder, "Essai sur la Psychologie de la Terreur," in *Synthèses*, Brussels, 1946.) On the other hand, perversion was artificially produced in otherwise normal men. Rousset reports the following from a SS guard: "Usually I keep on hitting until I ejaculate. I have a wife and three children in Breslau. I used to be perfectly normal. That's what they've made of me. Now when they give me a pass out of here, I don't go home. I don't dare look my wife in the face" (p. 273).—The documents from the Hitler era contain numerous testimonials for the average normality of those entrusted with carrying out Hitler's program of extermination. A good collection is found in Léon Poliakov's "The Weapon of Antisemitism," published by UNESCO in *The*

by nature, will, and destiny, which has become so self-evident a premise for all human relations that even identical twins inspire a certain uneasiness, creates a horror that vastly overshadows the outrage of the juridical-political person and the despair of the moral person. It is this horror that gives rise to the nihilistic generalizations which maintain plausibly enough that essentially all men alike are beasts.<sup>160</sup> Actually the experience of the concentration camps does show that human beings can be transformed into specimens of the human animal, and that man's "nature" is only "human" insofar as it opens up to man the possibility of becoming something highly unnatural, that is, a man.

After murder of the moral person and annihilation of the juridical person, the destruction of the individuality is almost always successful. Conceivably some laws of mass psychology may be found to explain why millions of human beings allowed themselves to be marched unresistingly into the gas chambers, although these laws would explain nothing else but the destruction of individuality. It is more significant that those individually condemned to death very seldom attempted to take one of their executioners with them, that there were scarcely any serious revolts, and that even in the moment of liberation there were very few spontaneous massacres of SS men. For to destroy individuality is to destroy spontaneity, man's power to begin something new out of his own resources, something that cannot be explained on the basis of reactions to environment and events.<sup>161</sup> Nothing then remains but ghastly marionettes with human faces, which all behave like the dog in

*Third Reich*, London, 1955. Most of the men in the units used for these purposes were not volunteers but had been drafted from the ordinary police for these special assignments. But even trained SS-men found this kind of duty worse than front-line fighting. In his report of a mass execution by the SS, an eyewitness gives high praise to this troop which had been so "idealistic" that it was able to bear "the entire extermination without the help of liquor."

That one wanted to eliminate all personal motives and passions during the "exterminations" and hence keep the cruelties to a minimum is revealed by the fact that a group of doctors and engineers entrusted with handling the gas installations were making constant improvements that were not only designed to raise the productive capacity of the corpse factories but also to accelerate and ease the agony of death.

160. This is very prominent in Rousset's work: "The social conditions of life in the camps have transformed the great mass of inmates, both the Germans and the deportees, regardless of their previous social position and education . . . into a degenerate rabble, entirely submissive to the primitive reflexes of the animal instinct" (p. 183).

161. In this context also belongs the astonishing rarity of suicides in the camps. Suicide occurred far more often before arrest and deportation than in the camp itself, which is of course partly explained by

Pavlov's experiments, which all react with perfect reliability even when going to their own death, and which do nothing but react. This is the real triumph of the system: "The triumph of the SS demands that the tortured victim allow himself to be led to the noose without protesting, that he renounce and abandon himself to the point of ceasing to affirm his identity. And it is not for nothing. It is not gratuitously, out of sheer sadism, that the SS men desire his defeat. They know that the system which succeeds in destroying its victim before he mounts the scaffold . . . is incomparably the best for keeping a whole people in slavery. In submission. Nothing is more terrible than these processions of human beings going like dummies to their death. The man who sees this says to himself: 'For them to be thus reduced, what power must be concealed in the hands of the masters,' and he turns away, full of bitterness but defeated."<sup>162</sup>

If we take totalitarian aspirations seriously and refuse to be misled by the common-sense assertion that they are utopian and unrealizable, it develops that the society of the dying established in the camps is the only form of society in which it is possible to dominate man entirely. Those who aspire to total domination must liquidate all spontaneity, such as the mere existence of individuality will always engender, and track it down in its most private forms, regardless of how unpolitical and harmless these may seem. Pavlov's dog, the human specimen reduced to the most elementary reactions, the bundle of reactions that can always be liquidated and replaced by other bundles of reactions that behave in exactly the same way, is the model "citizen" of a totalitarian state; and such a citizen can be produced only imperfectly outside of the camps.

The uselessness of the camps, their cynically admitted anti-utility, is only apparent. In reality they are more essential to the preservation of the regime's power than any of its other institutions. Without concentration camps, without the undefined fear they inspire and the very well-defined training they offer in totalitarian domination, which can nowhere else be fully tested with

---

the fact that every attempt was made to prevent suicides which are, after all, spontaneous acts. From the statistical material for Buchenwald (*Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 800 ff.) it is evident that scarcely more than one-half per cent of the deaths could be traced to suicide, that frequently there were only two suicides per year, although in the same year the total number of deaths reached 3,516. The reports from Russian camps mention the same phenomenon. Cf., for instance, Starlinger, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

162. Rousset, *op. cit.*, p. 525.

all of its most radical possibilities, a totalitarian state can neither inspire its nuclear troops with fanaticism nor maintain a whole people in complete apathy. The dominating and the dominated would only too quickly sink back into the "old bourgeois routine"; after early "excesses," they would succumb to everyday life with its human laws; in short, they would develop in the direction which all observers counseled by common sense were so prone to predict. The tragic fallacy of all these prophecies, originating in a world that was still safe, was to suppose that there was such a thing as one human nature established for all time, to identify this human nature with history, and thus to declare that the idea of total domination was not only inhuman but also unrealistic. Meanwhile we have learned that the power of man is so great that he really can be what he wishes to be.

It is in the very nature of totalitarian regimes to demand unlimited power. Such power can only be secured if literally all men, without a single exception, are reliably dominated in every aspect of their life. In the realm of foreign affairs new neutral territories must constantly be subjugated, while at home ever-new human groups must be mastered in expanding concentration camps, or, when circumstances require, liquidated to make room for others. The question of opposition is unimportant both in foreign and domestic affairs. Any neutrality, indeed any spontaneously given friendship, is from the standpoint of totalitarian domination just as dangerous as open hostility, precisely because spontaneity as such, with its incalculability, is the greatest of all obstacles to total domination over man. The Communists of non-Communist countries, who fled or were called to Moscow, learned by bitter experience that they constituted a menace to the Soviet Union. Convinced Communists are in this sense, which alone has any reality today, just as ridiculous and just as menacing to the regime in Russia, as, for example, the convinced Nazis of the Röhm faction were to the Nazis.

What makes conviction and opinion of any sort so ridiculous and dangerous under totalitarian conditions is that totalitarian regimes take the greatest pride in having no need of them, or of any human help of any kind. Men, insofar as they are more than animal reaction and fulfillment of functions, are entirely superfluous to totalitarian regimes. Totalitarianism strives not toward despotic rule over men, but toward a system in which men are superfluous. Total power can be achieved and safeguarded only in a world of conditioned reflexes, of marionettes without the slightest trace of spontaneity.

Precisely because man's resources are so great, he can be fully dominated only when he becomes a specimen of the animal-species man.

Therefore character is a threat and even the most unjust legal rules are an obstacle; but individuality, anything indeed that distinguishes one man from another, is intolerable. As long as all men have not been made equally superfluous—and this has been accomplished only in concentration camps—the ideal of totalitarian domination has not been achieved. Totalitarian states strive constantly, though never with complete success, to establish the superfluity of man—by the arbitrary selection of various groups for concentration camps, by constant purges of the ruling apparatus, by mass liquidations. Common sense protests desperately that the masses are submissive and that all this gigantic apparatus of terror is therefore superfluous; if they were capable of telling the truth, the totalitarian rulers would reply: The apparatus seems superfluous to you only because it serves to make men superfluous.

The totalitarian attempt to make men superfluous reflects the experience of modern masses of their superfluity on an overcrowded earth. The world of the dying, in which men are taught they are superfluous through a way of life in which punishment is meted out without connection with crime, in which exploitation is practiced without profit, and where work is performed without product, is a place where senselessness is daily produced anew. Yet, within the framework of the totalitarian ideology, nothing could be more sensible and logical; if the inmates are vermin, it is logical that they should be killed by poison gas; if they are degenerate, they should not be allowed to contaminate the population; if they have "slave-like souls" (Himmler), no one should waste his time trying to re-educate them. Seen through the eyes of the ideology, the trouble with the camps is almost that they make too much sense, that the execution of the doctrine is too consistent.

While the totalitarian regimes are thus resolutely and cynically emptying the world of the only thing that makes sense to the utilitarian expectations of common sense, they impose upon it at the same time a kind of supersense which the ideologies actually always meant when they pretended to have found the key to history or the solution to the riddles of the universe. Over and above the senselessness of totalitarian society is enthroned the ridiculous supersense of its ideological superstition. Ideologies are harmless, uncritical, and arbitrary opinions only as long as they are not believed in seriously.

Once their claim to total validity is taken literally they become the nuclei of logical systems in which, as in the systems of paranoiacs, everything follows comprehensibly and even compulsorily once the first premise is accepted. The insanity of such systems lies not only in their first premise but in the very logicality with which they are constructed. The curious logicality of all isms, their simple-minded trust in the salvation value of stubborn devotion without regard for specific, varying factors, already harbors the first germs of totalitarian contempt for reality and factuality.

Common sense trained in utilitarian thinking is helpless against this ideological supersense, since totalitarian regimes establish a functioning world of no-sense. The ideological contempt for factuality still contained the proud assumption of human mastery over the world; it is, after all, contempt for reality which makes possible changing the world, the erection of the human artifice. What destroys the element of pride in the totalitarian contempt for reality (and thereby distinguishes it radically from revolutionary theories and attitudes) is the supersense which gives the contempt for reality its cogency, logicality, and consistency. What makes a truly totalitarian device out of the Bolshevik claim that the present Russian system is superior to all others is the fact that the totalitarian ruler draws from this claim the logically impeccable conclusion that without this system people never could have built such a wonderful thing as, let us say, a subway; from this, he again draws the logical conclusion that anyone who knows of the existence of the Paris subway is a suspect because he may cause people to doubt that one can do things only in the Bolshevik way. This leads to the final conclusion that in order to remain a loyal Bolshevik, you have to destroy the Paris subway. Nothing matters but consistency.

With these new structures, built on the strength of supersense and driven by the motor of logicality, we are indeed at the end of the bourgeois era of profits and power, as well as at the end of imperialism and expansion. The aggressiveness of totalitarianism springs not from lust for power, and if it feverishly seeks to expand, it does so neither for expansion's sake nor for profit, but only for ideological reasons: to make the world consistent, to prove that its respective supersense has been right.

It is chiefly for the sake of this supersense, for the sake of complete consistency, that it is necessary for totalitarianism to destroy every trace of what we commonly call human dignity. For respect for human dignity implies the

recognition of my fellow-men or our fellow-nations as subjects, as builders of worlds or cobuilders of a common world. No ideology which aims at the explanation of all historical events of the past and at mapping out the course of all events of the future can bear the unpredictability which springs from the fact that men are creative, that they can bring forward something so new that nobody ever foresaw it.

What totalitarian ideologies therefore aim at is not the transformation of the outside world or the revolutionizing transmutation of society, but the transformation of human nature itself. The concentration camps are the laboratories where changes in human nature are tested, and their shamefulness therefore is not just the business of their inmates and those who run them according to strictly "scientific" standards; it is the concern of all men. Suffering, of which there has been always too much on earth, is not the issue, nor is the number of victims. Human nature as such is at stake, and even though it seems that these experiments succeed not in changing man but only in destroying him, by creating a society in which the nihilistic banality of *homo homini lupus* is consistently realized, one should bear in mind the necessary limitations to an experiment which requires global control in order to show conclusive results.

Until now the totalitarian belief that everything is possible seems to have proved only that everything can be destroyed. Yet, in their effort to prove that everything is possible, totalitarian regimes have discovered without knowing it that there are crimes which men can neither punish nor forgive. When the impossible was made possible it became the unpunishable, unforgivable absolute evil which could no longer be understood and explained by the evil motives of self-interest, greed, covetousness, resentment, lust for power, and cowardice; and which therefore anger could not revenge, love could not endure, friendship could not forgive. Just as the victims in the death factories or the holes of oblivion are no longer "human" in the eyes of their executioners, so this newest species of criminals is beyond the pale even of solidarity in human sinfulness.

It is inherent in our entire philosophical tradition that we cannot conceive of a "radical evil," and this is true both for Christian theology, which conceded even to the Devil himself a celestial origin, as well as for Kant, the only philosopher who, in the word */radical Böse/* he coined for it, at least must have suspected the existence of this evil even though he immediately

rationalized it in the concept of a "perverted ill will" that could be explained by comprehensible motives. Therefore, we actually have nothing to fall back on in order to understand a phenomenon that nevertheless confronts us with its overpowering reality and breaks down all standards we know. There is only one thing that seems to be discernible: we may say that radical evil has emerged in connection with a system in which all men have become equally superfluous. The manipulators of this system believe in their own superfluousness as much as in that of all others, and the totalitarian murderers are all the more dangerous because they do not care if they themselves are alive or dead, if they ever lived or never were born. The danger of the corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms. Political, social, and economic events everywhere are in a silent conspiracy with totalitarian instruments devised for making men superfluous. The implied temptation is well understood by the utilitarian common sense of the masses, who in most countries are too desperate to retain much fear of death. The Nazis and the Bolsheviks can be sure that their factories of annihilation which demonstrate the swiftest solution to the problem of overpopulation, of economically superfluous and socially rootless human masses, are as much of an attraction as a warning. Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man.



R. 158

## 'Gomorrah'

By ROBERTO SAVIANO NOV. 14, 2007

The container swayed as the crane hoisted it onto the ship. The spreader, which hooks the container to the crane, was unable to control its movement, so it seemed to float in the air. The hatches, which had been improperly closed, suddenly sprang open, and dozens of bodies started raining down. They looked like mannequins. But when they hit the ground, their heads split open, as if their skulls were real. And they were. Men, women, even a few children, came tumbling out of the container. All dead. Frozen, stacked one on top of another, packed like sardines. These were the Chinese who never die. The eternal ones, who trade identity papers among themselves. So that is where they'd ended up, the bodies that in the wildest fantasies might have been cooked in Chinese restaurants, buried in fields beside factories, or tossed into the mouth of Vesuvius. Here they were. Spilling from the container by the dozen, their names scribbled on tags and tied with string around their necks. They'd all put aside money so they could be buried in China, back in their hometowns, a percentage withheld from their salaries to guarantee their return voyage once they were dead. A space in a container and a hole in some strip of Chinese soil. The port crane operator covered his face with his hands as he told me about it, eying me through his fingers. As if the mask of his hands might give him the courage to speak. He'd seen the bodies but, there'd been no need to sound the alarm. He merely lowered the container to the ground, and dozens of people appeared out of nowhere to put everyone back inside and hose down the remains. That's how it went. He still couldn't believe it and hoped he was hallucinating, due to too much overtime. Then he closed his fingers, completely covering his eyes. He kept on whimpering, but I couldn't understand what he was saying.

Everything that exists passes through here. Through the port of Naples. There's not a product, fabric, piece of plastic, toy, hammer, shoe, screwdriver, bolt, video game, jacket, pair of pants, drill, or watch that doesn't come through the port. The port of Naples is an open wound. The end point for the interminable voyage that merchandise makes. Ships enter the gulf and come to the dock like babies to the breast, except that they're here to be milked, not fed. The port of Naples is the hole in the earth out of which what's made in China comes. The Far East, as reporters still like to call it. Far. Extremely far. Practically unimaginable. Closing my eyes, I see kimonos, Marco Polo's beard, Bruce Lee kicking in midair. But in fact this East is more closely linked to the port of Naples than to any other place. There's nothing far about the East here. It should be called the extremely near East, the least East. Everything made in China is poured out here. Like a bucket of water dumped into a hole in the sand. The water eats the sand, and the hole gets bigger and deeper. The port of Naples handles 20 percent of the value of Italian textile imports from China, but more than 70 percent of the quantity. It's a bizarre thing, hard to understand, yet merchandise possesses a rare magic: it manages both to be and not to be, to arrive without ever reaching its destination, to cost the customer a great deal despite its poor quality, and to have little tax value in spite of being worth a huge amount. Textiles fall under quite a few product classifications, and a mere stroke of the pen on the shipping manifest can radically lower price and VAT. In the silence of the port's black hole, the molecular structure of merchandise seems to break down, only to recompose once it gets beyond the perimeter of the coast. Goods have to leave the port immediately. Everything happens so quickly that they disappear in the process, evaporate as if they'd never existed. As if nothing had happened, as if it had all been simply an act. An imaginary voyage, a false landing, a phantom ship, evanescent cargo. Goods need to arrive in the buyer's hands without leaving any trace to mark their route, they have to reach their warehouse quickly, right away, before time can even begin — time that might allow for an inspection. Hundreds of pounds of merchandise move as if they were a package hand-delivered by the mailman. In the port of Naples — 330 acres spread out along seven miles of coastline — time undergoes unique expansions and contractions. Things that take an hour elsewhere seem to happen here in less than a minute. Here the proverbial slowness that makes the Neapolitan's every move molasses-like is quashed, confuted, negated. The ruthless swiftness of Chinese merchandise overruns the temporal dimension of customs inspections, killing time itself. A massacre of minutes, a slaughter of seconds stolen from the records, chased by trucks, hurried along by cranes, helped by forklifts that disembowelled the containers.

COSCO, the largest Chinese state-owned shipping company, with the world's third-largest fleet, operates in the port of Naples in consort with MSC, a Geneva-based company that owns the world's second-largest commercial fleet. The Swiss and Chinese decided to pool together and invest heavily in Naples, where they manage the largest cargo terminal. With over 3,000 feet of pier, nearly a million and a half square feet of terminals, and more than 300,000 square feet of outdoor space at their disposal, they absorb almost all the traffic in transit for Europe. You have to reconfigure your imagination to try to understand the port of Naples as the bottom rung of the ladder of Chinese production. The biblical image seems appropriate: the eye of the needle is the port, and the camel that has to pass through it are the ships. Enormous vessels line up single file out in the gulf and await their turn amid the confusion of pitching sterns and colliding bows; rumbling with heaving iron, the sheet metal and screws slowly penetrate the tiny Neapolitan opening. It is as if the anus of the sea were opening out, causing great pain to the sphincter muscles.

But no. It's not like that. There's no apparent confusion. The ships all come and go in orderly fashion, or at least that's how it looks from dry land. Yet 150,000 containers pass through here every year. Whole cities of merchandise get built on the quays, only to be hauled away. A port is measured by its speed, and every bureaucratic sluggishness, every meticulous inspection, transforms the cheetah of transport into a slow and lumbering sloth.

I always get lost on the pier. Bausan pier is like something made out of LEGO blocks. An immense construction that seems not so much to occupy space as to invent it. One corner looks like it's covered with wasps' nests. An entire wall of bastard beehives: thousands of electrical outlets that feed the "refeers," or refrigerator containers. All the TV dinners and fish sticks in the world are crammed into these icy containers. At Bausan pier I feel as if I'm seeing the port of entry for all the merchandise that mankind produces, where it spends its last night before being sold. It's like contemplating the origins of the world. The clothes young Parisians will wear for a month, the fish sticks that Brescians will eat for a year, the watches Catalans will adorn their wrists with, and the silk for every English dress for an entire season — all pass through here in a few hours. It would be interesting to read somewhere not just where goods are manufactured, but the route they take to land in the hands of the buyer. Products have multiple, hybrid, and illegitimate citizenship. Half-born in the middle of China, they're finished on the outskirts of some Slavic city, brought to perfection in northeastern Italy, packaged in Puglia or north of Tirana in Albania, and finally end up in a warehouse somewhere in Europe. No human being could ever have the rights of mobility that merchandise has. Every fragment of the journey, with its accidental and official routes, finds its fixed point in Naples. When the enormous container ships first enter the gulf and slowly approach the pier, they seem like lumbering mammoths of sheet metal and chains, the rusted sutures on their sides oozing water; but when they berth, they become nimble creatures. You'd expect these ships to carry a sizable crew, but instead they disgorge handfuls of little men who seem incapable of taming these brutes on the open ocean.

The first time I saw a Chinese vessel dock, I felt as if I were looking at the production of the whole world. I was unable to count the containers, to quantify them. I couldn't keep track of them all. It might seem absurd not to be able to put a number on things, but I kept losing count, the figures were too big and got mixed up in my head.

These days the merchandise unloaded in Naples is almost exclusively Chinese — 1.6 million tons annually. Registered merchandise, that is. At least another million tons pass through without leaving a trace. According to the Italian Customs Agency, 60 percent of the goods arriving in Naples escape official customs inspection, 20 percent of the bills of entry go unchecked, and fifty thousand shipments are contraband, 99 percent of them from China — all for an estimated 200 million euros in evaded taxes each semester. The containers that

need to disappear before being inspected are in the first row. Every container is duly numbered, but the numbers on many of them are identical. So one inspected container baptizes all the illegal ones with the same number. What gets unloaded on Monday can be for sale in Modena or Genoa or in the shop windows of Bonn or Munich by Thursday. Lots of merchandise on the Italian market is supposedly only in transit, but the magic of customs makes transit stationary. The grammar of merchandise has one syntax for documents and another for commerce. In April 2005, the Antifraud unit of Italian Customs, which had by chance launched four separate operations nearly simultaneously, sequestered 24,000 pairs of jeans intended for the French market; 51,000 items from Bangladesh labeled "Made in Italy"; 450,000 figurines, puppets, Barbies, and Spider-men; and another 46,000 plastic toys — for a total value of approximately 36 million euros. Just a small serving of the economy that was making its way through the port of Naples in a few hours. And from the port to the world. On it goes, all day, every day. These slices of the economy are becoming a staple diet.

The port is detached from the city. An infected appendix, never quite degenerating into peritonitis, always there in the abdomen of the coastline. A desert hemmed in by water and earth, but which seems to belong to neither land nor sea. A grounded amphibian, a marine metamorphosis. A new formation created from the dirt, garbage, and odds and ends that the tide has carried ashore over the years. Ships empty their latrines and clean their holds, dripping yellow foam into the water; motorboats and yachts, their engines belching, tidy up by tossing everything into the garbage can that is the sea. The soggy mass forms a hard crust all along the coastline. The sun kindles the mirage of water, but the surface of the sea gleams like trash bags. Black ones. The gulf looks percolated, a giant tub of sludge. The wharf with its thousands of multicolored containers seems an uncrossable border: Naples is encircled by walls of merchandise. But the walls don't defend the city; on the contrary, it's the city that defends the walls. Yet there are no armies of longshoremen, no romantic rifraff at the port. One imagines it full of communion, men coming and going, scars and incomprehensible languages, a frenzy of people. Instead, the silence of a mechanized factory reigns. There doesn't seem to be anyone around anymore, and the containers, ships, and trucks seem animated by perpetual motion. A silent swiftness.

Excerpted from *Gomorrah* by Roberto Saviano. Copyright © 2007 by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milan. Translation copyright © 2007 by Virginia Jewiss. Published in November 2007 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC. All rights reserved.

R. 160

## **Illicit Networks: Mafia States, Nonstate Actors**

Roundtable in New York, NY

April 27, 2012

*This workshop was made possible by Google Ideas and the generous support of the Robina Foundation for the Council on Foreign Relations' (CFR) International Institutions and Global Governance program.*

Rapporteur: Emma Welch, IIGG Research Associate

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, reduced trade barriers and technological innovations led to an unprecedented expansion of transnational organized crime in size, scope, and influence. The proliferation of illicit networks has exacted enormous economic and human costs. Although data is murky, transnational crime is estimated to account for over 3 percent of global gross domestic product. As crime has flourished, law enforcement has failed to keep pace.

The conventional narrative is of the victimized state exploited by sophisticated, ruthless, and technologically savvy nonstate actors. Reality, however, is not so straightforward. Criminal organizations are inherently attracted to states or regions where there are market opportunities, governance is limited, institutions are weak, corruption is pervasive, and rule of law is absent or limited in scope. But illicit networks have also been harnessed by elements of the state—such as institutions, officials, or elites—to advance their own interests and reap profits. In some extreme cases, there is no daylight between the state and organized crime. If left unchecked, this political-criminal nexus poses a serious and destabilizing threat to international security, as illicit networks operate with near-impunity under the sponsorship and legal protection of the state.

To understand the nexus between states and organized crime, and to explore new ways to harness and leverage technology to map, expose, and disrupt illicit networks, Google Ideas and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) have launched the Illicit Networks Roundtable Series. The second roundtable in the series, “Illicit Networks: Mafia States, Nonstate Actors,” took place on April 27, 2012, at the Google office in New York. The meeting convened fifteen experts across the field of transnational organized crime. The initiative will culminate in a July 2012 summit, “Illicit Networks: Forces in Opposition,” convened by Google Ideas, which will assess the potential of technology to address and combat the most egregious forms of transnational crime.

**International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Emma Welch, Illicit Networks: Mafia States, NonState Actors, New York, 2012**

The discussion began by breaking down the terminology used to describe the variable relationship between states and nonstate actors. The concept of a ‘mafia state’ is used to describe collusion between states and criminal groups. Under this definition, the state refers to government institutions and officials involved in a range of criminal activities, from drug, arms, and human trafficking to money laundering. In such states, executive bodies, legislatures, intelligence services, central banks, police and military forces, or courts may be involved in illicit activities. Many countries such as North Korea, Guinea-Bissau, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Myanmar rely heavily on profits from crime, “blurring the conceptual line” between the licit and illicit worlds.

There was broad agreement, however, that the term “mafia states” could also be misleading and oversimplified, since it does not reflect the broad spectrum of criminal-state relationships, or “ecologies,” that exist in the real world. For instance, one can distinguish among weak and failing states that are inherently susceptible to organized criminal organizations; states that (like “swiss cheese”) have pockets of integrity and holes of criminality; and states that have become fully functioning criminal enterprises.

At the same time, some analysts argued that the supposedly “new” threat of mafia states lacks historical perspective, since states have long been engaged in, or complicit with, illicit activity. For centuries, states engaged in smuggling to evade taxes and tariffs, which made up the bulk of transnational crime at the time, although other forms thrived as well. Charles Dickens, for example, famously complained that American publishers were stealing and selling his books, because British copyright laws did not extend beyond national borders. And no contemporary criminal organization rivals the power, influence, and global reach of the British East India Company, which monopolized the global opium trade in the nineteenth century.

Seeking a consensual definition of a mafia state, some experts advocated distinguishing between two general categories—criminalized states and captured states—on the basis of causality. Criminalized states have institutionalized, state-sponsored criminal networks, which are either actively or passively supported by the highest levels of leadership. At the other end of the spectrum, captured states are coopted or directly challenged by criminal organizations that largely function outside of state auspices. Although there are overlaps in terms of illicit activities, tactics, and networks, criminalized and captured states differ dramatically in their operational and transactional relationship with criminal elements.

According to experts, the two quintessential examples of contemporary criminalized and captured states are North Korea and Somalia, respectively. The North Korean government is directly involved in myriad forms of illicit trade, largely to evade economic sanctions imposed by the international community. Its criminal operations became so notorious that U.S. officials nicknamed North Korea the “Soprano state.” Somalia, meanwhile, in the absence of any legitimate governing authority, has been overrun by pirates and other criminals (as well as by Islamic militants that claim allegiance to al-Qaeda).

However, the vast majority of states are neither wholly criminalized nor captured; instead, they fall somewhere in between the two extremes of the spectrum. Political patronage and bribery, for

instance, are routine in many developing countries. Governments also hire nonstate actors to carry out unsavory operations, such as the recent plot hatched by the Iranian government to assassinate a Saudi Arabian ambassador, Adel al-Jubeir, by hiring Mexican drug traffickers. But illicit activity is not confined solely to weak or rogue states. In China, the production and shipment of counterfeit and pirated commodities is not only a hugely profitable industry, but also employs millions of local workers. And several high-ranking officials in Venezuela, including the minister of defense, are officially labeled as “drug kingpins” by the U.S. government.

In addition, emerging democracies, which have relatively weak institutions and rule of law, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by criminal groups. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent economic liberalization, for example, fledgling successor governments were unable to cope with or manage the massive influx of capital and trade. Pell-mell privatization, unregulated financial liberalization, and weak rule of law opened up vast new opportunities for alliances between corrupt officials and criminal organizations that persist to this day.

Efforts to understand and combat transnational crime must take into account the interaction between the unique ecologies of states and illicit networks. Nonstate actors seek to exploit “soft spots” or “dangerous spaces,” such as geographical, functional, social, economic, and legal gaps. At the same time, the strengths and weaknesses of the state greatly impact the form, function, and strategy of its illicit counterpart. Some criminal organizations need territory and state collusion, such as the large-scale opium trade operating out of Afghanistan, whereas others require minimum levels of security and economic development, such as racketeering in Russia. Some groups operate exclusively in local markets, while others forge strategic alliances across borders. Identifying and mapping the ecologies of illicit networks are a critical precondition to formulating effective law enforcement and other policy responses.

Furthermore, there are great disparities among states’ criminal justice systems and their enforcement capabilities, as well as in what is considered legal and illegal. Many countries do not have laws criminalizing human trafficking, for instance, and, in those that do, definitions of the crime vary widely. In countries such as Guatemala with an impunity rate of 98 percent, criminals are likely to never see the inside of a jail cell.

Another conceptual framework divides states into three categories based on their position in the pipeline of illicit networks: home, market, and transshipment. Home states produce, cultivate, or collect the illicit commodities; market states sell them; and transshipment states serve as the critical links between the production and consumption. However, states often serve more than one role, particularly when the government is a complicit partner or unable to stem the illicit flows. These distribution channels and strategic chokepoints are relatively similar across illicit markets. For example, the main drug trafficking routes that carry cocaine and migrants northward into the United States also serve as pipelines for illegal arms moving south. Similar to licit commodities, illicit networks are based on supply and demand, and will follow the path of least resistance to increase flows and maximize profits.

Moreover, some experts contend that the increase in illicit trade is partly self-inflicted. The establishment of global prohibition regimes covering a wider array of activities, particularly over the

past several decades, dramatically increased the number of illicit commodities such as pharmaceutical drugs, counterfeit products, and trafficking of endangered species, which were all previously unregulated. Technology also opened up new product pipelines and portals for transnational crime, such as pirated DVDs and cybercrime. As the booming international narcotics trade demonstrates, prohibition regimes can create enormous incentives for criminal actors, by increasing prices—and thus the profits generated from—black market trade in illegal commodities.

State involvement in transnational crime amplifies law enforcement challenges for several reasons. First, states are sovereign entities, and are thus afforded a degree of protection and noninterference in internal affairs. State officials, for example, are granted diplomatic immunity, and are virtually immune from arrest and prosecution. Second, the activities of the state apparatus are very difficult—and in some cases impossible—to monitor externally. Thanks to the explicit or implicit protection of states, criminal groups are able to operate in a more stable and secure environment, and amplify their powers in ways that might not otherwise be possible without state alliances or assistance. In both Africa and Latin America, for instance, corrupt officials often sell travel documents, such as passports and shipping registries, to ease the passage of illicit networks. Charles Taylor's Liberia offers one of the clearest historical examples of such collusion.

There are few existing multilateral diplomatic, law enforcement, and other legal tools to counter the threat of mafia states. The strongest international treaty, the United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Crime, primarily addresses nonstate actors, and relies on national institutions and agencies to comply with and implement the recommended policies. Obviously, these approaches are undercut when the states themselves are involved in illicit activities. However, recent success in combating piracy off the coast of Somalia shows that a simple policing regime is capable of delivering results, particularly when it involves cooperation with the private sector (in this case major shipping companies). But experts caution that successes in law enforcement cooperation are often difficult to sustain. Criminal networks adapt and shift networks in response to enhanced policing and enforcement; for example, the crackdown on drug trafficking in Colombia displaced, rather than eliminated, the problem, as witnessed by spikes in coca production in Peru and Bolivia as well as drug-related violence in Guatemala and Honduras.

Despite efforts to better understand the role of states in illicit networks, progress is impeded by critical information gaps. Illicit networks, rooted in secrecy and evasion, are inherently difficult to track, quantify, and measure. Official statistics from international institutions and organizations are often based on estimates provided by states, which often have a stake in the outcome—whether it is to increase financial assistance or obscure the depth of the problem (or official involvement). In addition, there is no single institution or organization that collects, houses, and monitors data on illicit networks, as well as facilitates information sharing. Without solid data, anticrime initiatives are shooting in the dark.

In order to promote a clearer understanding of illicit networks, technology should be leveraged to identify strategic chokepoints, map patterns of economic growth and illicit flows, and follow the money. An online platform where data could be organized, visualized, and made available on the public domain would raise awareness, enhance transparency, and foster greater accountability. Furthermore, user-generated content, compiled through cell phones and the Internet, is an untapped

and potentially explosive resource. Recent initiatives such as I Paid a Bribe, an online portal where citizens report incidences of bribery, are promising models that could be expanded to the international stage. However, such a platform would have to walk a fine line to avoid labels of “hacktivism.” The whistleblowing organization WikiLeaks exposed and published records of government misconduct, but also received sharp backlash and condemnation. In addition, the use of social media and crowdsourcing to expose illicit activity can sometimes expose participants to retaliation by powerful criminal actors, as has occurred in Mexico in gruesome fashion in recent months.

One promising approach to international cooperation against mafia states, as author Moisés Naím suggests, would be to mobilize “coalitions of the honest” (or “white lists”) among countries that fulfill certain standards of conduct and behavior, much as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) helped to create new norms for anti-money laundering and force greater transparency of offshore financial havens. By setting high standards, such ad hoc coalitions could name and shame noncooperative jurisdictions and work toward a more integrated, cohesive, and coordinated approach to combating transnational crime.

Based on the discussion, the group arrived at three main conclusions. First, when it comes to the illicit, the traditional dichotomy between states and nonstate actors is no longer applicable, and is in fact counterproductive to anticrime efforts. Second, states and illicit networks have a complex and variable relationship that defies the current piecemeal, cookie-cutter approach to combating transnational crime. Last, in order to craft more effective policies, and to better understand the role of the state in illicit networks, innovative frameworks, platforms, and processes for data collection and information sharing must be established.

**International Institutions and Global Governance  
Program, Emma Welch, Illicit Networks: Mafia  
States, NonState Actors, New York, 2012**

# The transformations of the sicilian mafia under postfordism

Vincenzo Scalia- Anglia Ruskin University

## From the octopus to the spider's web: the transformations of the sicilian mafia under postfordism

*To my father, a Sicilian who told his son about the mafia*

### Introduction

The fall of the Berlin wall marked a watershed for organised crime. New criminal groups, such as those groups from Russia, broke out onto the stage. New routes for illegal traffic, as well as new markets (nuclear weapons, human beings and organs) were created. New patterns of organisations took shape, more suited to the opportunities provided by globalisation.

The Italian criminal organisations, in particular the most famous of them, the Sicilian mafia, or Cosa Nostra (CN), were deeply affected by these changes. The current idea is that CN is undergoing a deep crisis (DIA, I semester 2008). Firstly, the arrests and the frequent cases of pentiti (turncoats) would have weakened its organisational fabric (DIA, II semester 2008), by dissolving the once-centralised organisation relying on the Cupola (Dome), or the executive body of CN and thus making room for a new, smaller, weaker local organisation. Secondly, both the attention of the media towards the mafia and the reaction of civil society would have caused a loss of criminal hegemony of the territory that CN once held firmly (La Spina, 2005). Thirdly, the attention of Italian public opinion in these later years has focused mainly both on the Neapolitan camorra and on the Calabrian 'ndrangheta, which, as well as their Apulian criminal fellows of the Sacra Corona Unita (Massari, 1995; Becucci-Massari, 2001), would control the new international routes of drugs, human trafficking, weapon smuggling, and toxic waste dumping. Finally, the implementation of anti-mafia policies by the Italian government, mainly those focused on the confiscation by the State of the private properties of the Mafiosi, would make it difficult for Sicilian organised crime to run its business. Such an analysis is purported both by such institutional sources as the Parliamentary Commission on the Mafia (2008) and by such popular fictions as Gomorrah (2006) by the Neapolitan writer Roberto Saviano. It is also endorsed by the frequent police raids, which recently gave way to the arrests of some of the most prominent figure of the organisation, like Bernardo Binnu Provenzano and Salvatore Lo Piccolo. CN would be still a danger for Italian and Sicilian society, but it would have been ousted by other Italian mobs (DIA, II semester 2008).

This article rejects this view, and will try to demonstrate that, despite the fact that CN is no longer a leading organisation in many illegal markets, its force remain the same. My view is that the idea of a decline by CN is more related to the narrow-ranged theories used to interpret the phenomenon of Mafia, than to reality. In particular I will show how the most popular academic views are restricted either to the mere economic domain (Gambetta, 1993), or to the idea that mafia belongs to an archaic world, wherein primeval rituals and behaviours prevail, meaning that CN is a backward group (Paoli, 2000). Using the works of Umberto Santino (2006) and its paradigm of complexity and by the ideas put forward by Vincenzo Ruggiero (1996) about the dirty economies as the standpoints for a new theoretical approach, I will argue that CN must be analysed under the lens of Postfordism.

I will argue that CN must be interpreted as an organisation which has been active mainly in different domains, such as the economic, the political and financial, since its birth at the beginning of the 19th century. I will thus evidence how CN is a multi-faceted actor, strongly influencing culture and society. The changes it has undergone recently must be related to the Postfordist (Amin, 1994) transformations Western affecting societies since mid 1970s. As a Post-fordist organisation, CN has a more flexible structure, with less members (downsizing), and operates in a wide network wherein people who are not in its ranks are involved, in particular politicians, businessmen and State officers (Policemen, Civil Servants). I will show that CN has withdrawn from more risky businesses but its links to the territory are the basis for either a national or an international role, related to its political and cultural force that remains strong in Sicily. I will demonstrate that the accumulation of political, economic and financial power and knowledge were used to operate in activities other than the illegal ones. I will not argue that the latter ones no longer account among CN interests, but rather that their role has come to be increasingly marginal. I will by this token offer an alternative interpretation of the mafia. For this purpose, I will also use some interviews I conducted in Palermo.

### Between industry and brotherhood: the short-range theories

There has always been massive disagreement between academics when the nature of CN was to be defined. This is for different reasons. Firstly, the existence of a criminal organisation was doubtful until the 30th of January 1992. In that date, the Italian Supreme Judicial Court (Corte di Cassazione) confirmed the sentence issued by the Court of Palermo at the end of the big trial against the mafia that followed the enquiry of judges Falcone and Borsellino and relied on the confessions of the former boss Tommaso Buscetta (AA.VV.1991). It was finally ascertained that there existed a criminal organisation, hierarchically organised, and actively involved in the pursuit of power and profit through the use of illegal means. This belated assertion is a consequence of the strong political influence CN has wielded over the Italian political balance of power since the country became independent (1860). Other authors, such as Leopoldo Franchetti (1876, 1995), had already tried to stress the existence of the organisation, but their analysis was instrumentally neglected for more than a century.

Secondly, the uncertainty about the existence of a criminal organisation in Sicily, gave way to two different kinds of interpretations: the first one could be called nativist, and it relates to the explanation that Sicilian ruling classes gave of the phenomenon, both to justify the homicides and to hide the mafia from Italian public opinion. This interpretation (Santino,

1995), insisted on the mafia as the attitude of Sicilian people to put family, honour and friendship first, so that they did not develop civic virtues and tended, because of their Mediterranean genes, to over-react when conflicts broke out. Many Sicilian prominent intellectuals, such as Luigi Pirandello, Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana, shared this view. The second interpretation, that we could call colonialist, groups all the interpretations of Sicilian history and society elaborated by non-Sicilian intellectuals. Their views, as different as they could be, share the idea that Sicilians are a backward population, devoid of any civic virtue, which indulge either in the creation of rebel organisations (Hobsbawm, 1962) or of private groups defending their own honour (Hess, 1982). Only Anton Blok (1971) gave an original interpretation of the mafia when he portrayed the Mafioso as a mediator between the local and the national community. The mistake he made consisted of his focusing on the mafia man as a single person, as at the time when the book was published it was not certain that a criminal organisation existed.

After 1992, most of the academics did not take the chance they had, so that the new theories that developed integrated the new knowledge about the mafia both with the colonialist and nativist approach. This is the case of Diego Gambetta (1992), whose work on the Sicilian mafia is considered to be influential by many authors, though it has indeed many flaws. Gambetta took advantage of the scientific vacuum about the mafia as an organisation, to propose a theory of organised crime mostly inspired by his rational choice background. Gambetta considers the mafia as an industry of private protection, whose birth and development should be related both to the lack of trust characterising Sicilian society and to the backward economic conditions of the island, which had never known the development of a real market economy. The need for private protection, according to Gambetta, derives from the lack of trust which has been affecting Sicilian society since the sixteenth century. This analysis, as fascinating as it has been for many academics, proves to be unsubstantial at the end of the day. Firstly because it draws on the stereotyped representations of Sicily, which is portrayed as a backward, underdeveloped and immobile society. This is just not the case, as market economy had developed in the island since the end of the eighteenth century, and mafia developed in relation to the growth of capitalist transformations of Sicilian agriculture (Santino, 2000). These changes gave rise to manifold social and political movement who fought and lost their battle against the mafia from the end of the nineteenth century to early 1950s. Secondly, as Gambetta focuses on protection, he forgets that mafia mostly protects by itself (Catanzaro, 1987), as it is the Mafiosi who threaten ordinary citizens and extort entrepreneurs. By this token, protection, is not a mere product of the demand-supply cycle, but rather the consequence of the authoritarian and threatening power the Mafiosi wield over Sicily. Thirdly, as the many judicial enquiries prove, CN has acted as a crucial actor of Sicilian economy, both in its agricultural stage, and in its industrial and financial transformation, so that some scholars pointed at an entrepreneurial mafia in early 1980s (Arlacchi, 1982). Fourthly, if we consider protection as the core activity of CN, we remain entangled in an economy-centred analysis, thus neglecting all the other important aspect of the mafia hegemony, which also encompass politics and social relations. Finally, a monistic interpretation of the mafia, also relying on the assumption that it thrives on an immobile society, is flawed in as much as it ignores or misunderstands the dynamic aspects of CN, whose structure, members, aims, power, interests and value have survived across different changes occurring in the society, culture and politics.

On the trail of the interpretation of Gambetta, other authors (Varese, 2001) have used the concept of private protection to describe the rise of other criminal organisations in the domain of global criminal markets, taken for granted that the Sicilian mafia has lost his prominence as the main criminal organisation of the world. Although it is hardly possible to deny that globalisation has also affected organised crime, I have doubts that the latter can be portrayed as a uniform phenomenon, following the same trends and developing the same characteristics apart from the social and economic context wherein it grew. For example, if we compare the Sicilian CN to the USA one, we find remarkable differences that can be traced back to the spatial and temporal environment wherein the two different organisations develop. As Alan A. Block (1983; 2003) correctly argues, when we deal with organised crime we must address it as a fluid, changing and multifaceted reality. Schemes, as useful as they can be for social scientists, must be flexible and wide-ranging.

Letizia Paoli (2000; 2005) tries to give an alternative view of the Sicilian mafia, as she prefers to emphasise the cultural aspects underpinning its existence and reproduction. Paoli adopts the Weberian concept of status contract to analyse both the Sicilian and the Calabrian organised crime as brotherhoods whose members are tied together by the rituals and the secret, which provide them with a peculiar and exclusive identity. As both the mafia and 'ndrangheta members give importance to status, this shows they belong to a primeval and backward culture which is a product of the underdevelopment of Southern Italy. Status-oriented bonds yet tend to be overrun by modernisation and its stress on the individual as the main actor of contemporary society. As a consequence of this transformation, both the mafia and the 'ndrangheta are bound to face an irreversible decline, and more modern criminal organisations will take over.

Paoli shows to have drawn on what we called the nativist interpretations of the mafia, as she connects status to the social and cultural peculiarity of the Sicilian and Calabrian context. Also this interpretation of the mafia is in our opinion weak and unapt to both understand and analyse the mafia. Firstly, because Paoli makes a mistake similar to Gambetta when deciding to single out culture as the peculiar essence of the mafia. The sharing of this essentialist approach by social scientists, as well as being an obstacle to the understanding of the complexity of a phenomenon, also derives from the mistaken attempt to adapt reality to theories. What Gambetta did with the rational choice, Paoli does with her Weberian approach. A more accurate analysis of Sicilian and Calabrian organised crime, suggests how instrumental the values to the Mafiosi are. For example, judicial enquiries prove that killings of children, betrayal of friends and relatives are common among the members of organisations who claim to have family and friendship as their capital values. Secondly, Paoli makes an even bigger mistake when she insists on the primeval aspect of the mafia identity, which makes her doubt about the survival of the two organisations after the fast changes brought about by modernity. Nowadays 'Ndrangheta is considered as an organisation on the rise (Carlucci-Caruso, 2009), and CN, as we will see in the next paragraphs, has proven to be capable of both intercepting and using modernity for its own purposes. Finally, both Gambetta and Paoli commit a decisive mistake: they isolate CN from "legal" society, politics and economy in order to focus on its nature as a criminal organisation. By doing this, it is consequential to think that the Sicilian mafia is declining, as its relational skills are neglected and an emphasis is posed over a criminal hard-core which, as well as being often out of focus (such as in the case of private protection) proves to be reductive if we want to see the complexity of mafia.

The third group of advocates of the decline of CN come from the institutional sources, such as the Direzione Investigativa Antimafia (DIA; [www.mininterno.it/dia](http://www.mininterno.it/dia)), an investigation task force set up by the Italian Ministry of the Interior in 1992 under the pressures made by the judge Giovanni Falcone. The analysis of DIA is accurate to the extent that they reflect the repressive work of the Police on the territory: the number of arrests, reports and violent crimes occurring every year in the regions of Southern Italy wherein criminal organisations are based. An important as these figures might be, they are insufficient to understand the mafia because they neglect all those crimes which would require deeper enquiries, such as money laundering, loansharking, the perception of mafia by the local population and the network of relationships linking the mafia to politics. Judicial enquiries, but also a more accurate observation of territorial dynamics are absent from the DIA analyses.

All these academic and institutional interpretations of the mafia are insufficient or even inadequate toolkits to describe and analyse the mafia, let alone to understand its transformations, either because they focus on just one aspect of Sicilian organised crime, or because they just look at the latter with a wrong perspective. What we need is hence a different theoretical and methodological approach, allowing both to describe mafia as a complex social phenomenon and to achieve an articulated

## A way out: paradigm of complexity, dirty economies and Post Fordism

Two interpretations of organised crime and of mafia in particular, seem to be particularly fit to readdress our topic. The first is the paradigm of complexity, worked out by the Sicilian sociologist and anti-mafia activist Umberto Santino (1995; p.131). He defines mafia as a cluster of criminal organisations, the most important of which, though not the only one, is CN. Such organisations operate within a wide and articulate relational context, shaping a system of violence and illegality aimed at accumulating capital and gaining power, through the use of a cultural code and the enjoyment of social consent. The approach of Santino is more wide ranged, both because it encloses the political and cultural dimensions other authors neglect, and because he refers to the relational dimensions, such as that of social context, thus not making the mistake of isolating CN from the rest of reality.

The Sicilian mafia, as historians have proved (Cancila, 1989, Lupo, 1995), developed as an informal structure of political and economic management of big estates (*latifondo*) belonging to absentee landlords. It evolved later into an "industry of violence" owned by middle class members (Franchetti, 1876, 1995), which proved to play a capital role in the passage of Sicily from the Bourbon monarchy to the Italian state. As episodes such as the Notarbartolo affair prove (Lupo, 1995; Dickie, 2005), CN could embed into the Sicilian and Italian society thanks both to its political connection and to its entrepreneurial role as Sicily grew to be an important corn-exporting area (Santino, 2000).

At the same time, the political and economic hegemony of the mafia, made it possible for the organisation to interact with the local society (Chubb, 1982; J. and P. Schneider, 1989), and to manipulate such typical Sicilian values as friendship, honour and respect to consolidate its power. Had it been isolated from the social and cultural network, or devoid of any political and economic support of the so-called "mafiosa bourgeoisie" (Mineo, 1955), CN would have remained a local mob. The argument put forward by Vincenzo Ruggiero (1996) proves by this token to be correct when underscoring how "dirty economies" are not isolated from the rest of society, both because their organisation reproduces that of legal enterprises and because the borders between legal and illegal markets are quite blurred. Ruggiero provides us with the second toolkit to analyse the complexity of mafia. As economics-oriented as his theory can be, it is yet grounded on a relational approach that keeps the social context into account, rather than isolating organised crime from the official and legal society.

The analyses of Santino and Ruggiero, are the basis for a new focus on CN. My view is that it is possible to merge the paradigmatic approaches set forth by these two authors to develop the concept of Postfordist mafia. If the Sicilian mafia is part of a wider economic, political, and cultural context, wherein the borders between legal and illegal are uncertain, then CN is not in crisis, but rather followed the wider social transformations of the last 30 years to evolve into a post-fordist organisation. I am not using this concept to theorise that since contemporary society is characterised by post-fordism, therefore also CN followed this path. It would be too naïve a statement, as well as devoid of any empirical basis. My point is rather that post-fordism, as different authors have demonstrated (Harvey, 1992, Amin, 1994), in reshaping the relations of production of contemporary capitalism, has deeply influenced society. Flexible accumulation, network structures, the emphasis on relational aspects rather than on the instrumental ones, the outsourcing of economic activities and the downsizing of the personnel, as key instrument to understand contemporary social relations, prove to be a suitable toolkit also to understand the transformations of the Sicilian mafia.

It could be argued that the use of an economic category, at the end of the day, might engender a new interpretation of the mafia as an enterprise, thus making useless the effort we have been trying to make up to now, to reject one-sided approaches. It is not like this, because the entrepreneurial view put forward in particular by Gambetta relies on a rational-choice oriented approach, whereas I am proposing to adopt an analytical viewpoint based on relations of production who affect society as a whole (Harvey, 1992; Jameson, 1978). As Negri (2001) argued on the trails of Karl Marx's *Grundrisse*(1998), post-fordism is based on the general intellect of society, or the accumulation of social knowledge, cooperation and practices which are "put at work" to ensure profits and power. In the next paragraphs, I will demonstrate how post-fordism reflects the transformations of the Sicilian mafia with respect to structure, politics and economy.

### Octopus or network? CN after the Cupola

The popular culture fuelled by the media tends to represent the mafia as an octopus, whose big head and tentacles hold a firm grasp over Sicily and Italy. Tommaso Buscetta (Biagi, 1987), when it was revealed that CN consisted of a hierarchical structure with an executive branch and manifold peripheral articulations, had endorsed this view, whose influence goes far behind public opinion. The arrests of such mafia leaders as Totò Riina, Binnu Provenzano and Salvatore Lo Piccolo, allowed journalists, scholars, policemen and politicians to speak of a beheaded Octopus, getting weaker and weaker day by day (DIA, I semester 2008). A hierarchical structure, deprived of its summit, is hardly supposed to be as efficient as it was before these arrests.

If one looks back at the historical transformations CN underwent during its history, it will come to the fore that its organisation pattern has been dynamic, adapting the structure to the social changes occurring from the origins of the organisation, in early nineteenth century, until the present day. On the one hand, CN has always had a permanent, hierarchical configuration, ranging from the ordinary Mafiosi, or soldato (soldier) to the capomandamento (county-chief) ruling over a plurality of "families" located on the territory. On the other hand, the executive committee or cupola it is just a recent creation (Biagi, 1987; Calderone, 1988), dating back to 1970's to govern the conflicts rising around the growing opportunities for business and profits both in the drug and in the construction sectors. The collegial structure of the cupola, in early 1980s, would have evolved into a de facto dictatorship of the Corleonesi led by Totò Riina.

From the 1990's onwards, other significant organisational changes occur. The arrests of the Riina and Provenzano, the growing number of turncoats, the rising of other criminal organisations, pave the way for radical changes in the articulation of CN. The recent enquiries Gotha and Grande Mandamento ([www.bernardoprovenzano.net](http://www.bernardoprovenzano.net)) show how the attempts to reconstruct the cupola carried out by the Palermo-based groups are indeed counterbalanced by a growing tendency towards a decentralised organisation, wherein charismatic young bosses of such as Matteo Messina Denaro, Gianni Nicchi and Mimmo Raccuglia are increasingly respected, but are far from acting as legitimised leaders of CN. A network of alliances, economic partnerships and political collaboration is still on, but a centralised direction no longer exists. These two enquiries show that the recruitment of new members is lower than in the past (downsizing), and that street activities such as extortions, are carried out by young mobs who are not Mafiosi, but whose activities are controlled by the mafia. An old retired lower rank mafia man stated:

"I am off. I spent twenty years in jail, I came back to my district and found out that things have changed. The youngest just want to make money, they ignore respect. And there is nothing one can do about it, if those who set the rules endorse it. OK, if they are arrested they won't tell much because they don't know, but we are also running the risk of losing respect. I don't want to hang out with this can't l'mannara (meaning 'cattle dogs', a Palermitan insult)."

The changing of long-term rules seems to worry both the Mafiosi and their relational network, but they are at the same time

"I had never paid the" pizzo"(extortion money) in 50 years, thanks to my two Mafiosi brothers. Everybody knew who I was. Then, last week, two oldmen I have known for a long time came to me and said: we are sorry, mr C., we remember who you belong to, but guys just don't care, because they don't know and don't want to know. We just can offer you a little discount. Times change...yes, they do, unfortunately."

Younger generations of racket boys work independently. The mafia supervises them, receives the money they collect, but cannot help breaking the old traditions. Independent mobs have a cost, but this is the price to pay for the survival of the organisation. Rackets were once managed by mafia members only, but both the repressive action by the police and judges, and the growing attention of public opinion to this activity, have made CN change its organisational strategy, which involves the outsourcing of racket activities. In this way, the arrested will not be member of the mafia, and will not know enough of the organisation, its, structure, its business. Moreover, a downsizing of the membership, restricting to just a few and trustworthy members the knowledge of strategies and aims, also lowers the risk of turncoats.

The structural transformations of CN also result in the creation of different networks. As new criminal Italian and international groups grow, it is no longer possible to operate in such profitable illegal markets as drug trafficking, as an hegemonic organisation. For this reason, such Mafiosi as Messina Denaro and Laudani (DIA, II semester 2008), operate in partnership with camorra and ndrangheta, thus also lowering the risks of the enforcement of repression by the police and judges. The networks between the mafia and the legal world, such as politics and economics, are even more important, as the survival of CN depends precisely on the existence of these relationships.

Some leading historians (Renda, 1997), for instance, have analysed the role of mafia during the Fascist regime, as they strove to understand the reasons why, in spite of the ruthless repression Mussolini exercised over the organisation through the command of Cesare Mori, CN reappeared stronger than ever after the collapse of Fascism. The reason is that, as efficacious and harsh as repression can be, it will prove to be useless to the extent that it does not destroy the network of economic and political relationships which support and legitimise the existence of CN. In 1945 it was the persistence of absentee landlords, political patrons and exportation entrepreneurs, or the Mafioso bourgeoisie to embed CN in a network of mutual protection, exchange and partnership. Nowadays the Sicilian mafia is far from declining because it is enshrined in a powerful political and financial network whose influence reaches far beyond Sicily. The enquiry about the relationship between Berlusconi and CN through his manager Marcello Dell'Utri ([www.repubblica.it](http://www.repubblica.it), 2005) shows how it is not necessary to be a member of the mafia, but rather to develop an active and long lasting collaboration with the latter for the mafioso entrepreneurship and politics to develop and thrive. Giovanni Falcone (1989) called this network between mafia and elites as terzo livello. It was for this reason that the crime di concorso esterno in associazione mafiosa (external cooperation with the mafia) was created by the Italian legislators. It is not necessary either to swear an oath of allegiance or to kill someone to be part of the Mafioso block of power. The creation and development of partnerships suffices. In a global, postfordist society, the network is designed to be as lean, flexible and pervasive as possible, in order to exploit the opportunities provided by the new social pattern. CN seems to have learned the lesson well, as its organisation ranges from a local to a global context, also including pre-modern elements, such as the oath of allegiance and the pizzini Provenzano used to communicate with more sophisticated relationships and instruments.

Another enquiry, concerning the relationship between the former governor of Sicily, Salvatore Cuffaro, and some prominent mafia members follows the same patterns. I will analyse these enquiries more accurately in the following paragraphs, in which I will also analyse the economics and politics of postfordist CN. It is by now clear that the 'Octopus', if it existed at all, has given way to a network-like structure.

#### The economic network of Cosa Nostra

Economy is a crucial aspect in the existence of CN, though not the only one. In order to understand the relationship between the mafia and the economic sphere, it is necessary to unwind an articulate analytical approach, by which on the one hand it can be possible to see the transformation of the Mafioso economic activities and interests, on the other hand it becomes possible to expose the blurring borders between legal and illegal activities.

Under the first aspect, it is necessary to emphasise that CN did not start as an organisation involved in illegal markets. Unlike other criminal organisations, such as the camorra (Sales, 1987; Barbagallo, 1993) the Sicilian mafia was born, and developed as, an informal structure delegated by the absentee noblemen to run the agricultural economy based on the cultivation of big estates (Renda, 1997). At the same time, the military force, the control of the territory and the social consent the organisation enjoyed within the Sicilian context, facilitated the promotion of illegal business, such as receiving illegal goods, robbing, theft, homicide, and extortion. The connection with the legal world was never severed, resulting both in the running of legal business such as trade and industry, and in the development of strong political connections with politics, economy and finance. The homicide of the MP and former chief executive of the Bank of Sicily Emanuele Notarbartolo in 1893, and the role MP Raffaele Palizzolo played in the affair, tells us of a crime syndicate whose reach has gone far beyond the underworld to enter the white collar domain.

After World War II, CN moved to the city, organising the construction business that led to the "sack of Palermo", managing to control the flow of public expenditure through political patronage and, for the first time in its history, massively investing into a profitable illegal business such as drug trafficking. This flexible, dynamic and multi-layered entrepreneurship set the basis for the development of a "Mafioso enterprise" (Santino-La Fiura, 1989) which, taking advantages of the banking autonomy Sicily enjoyed because of its semi-independent status, entered the international financial circuits, also thanks to the work of such bankers as Michele Sindona (Stajano, 1990), and had its way to promote the birth and development of such modern enterprises as Italian private televisions (Travaglio, 2004) which were soon to wield a prominent influence over Italian politics. The financial role of CN it is still prominent, mainly developed through the international network developed by the Sicilian born businessman Vito Palazzolo, who cannot be arrested and tried because he took Namibian citizenship. The judges of Palermo, yet, keep insisting that the "financial mafia" is the most dangerous nowadays (*la Repubblica*, 2008).

The second aspect, related to the border between legal and illegal activities, can now be developed more easily, in relationship with my proposed analytical frame of postfordism. As far as illegal markets are concerned, it is by now evident that CN has lost its prominent role in drugs, both because the judicial repression of the early 1990s and because of the rise of new criminal organisations. The consequence of this is not that the mafia is retiring from the drug market. Firstly, as the Old Bridge enquiry proves (*la Repubblica*, 2008), the new leading figures of CN have been trying to re-establish international connections with the USA branch of CN, and also they still rely on strong international links in Venezuela and Canada, where the Caruana and Cuntrera mafia groups are still operating in a prominent position. Secondly, because the already cited reports both by the DIA and by the Antimafia Parliamentary Committees (2006; 2008), describe CN as being still active in drug dealing, though in partnerships with other criminal organisations, mainly the camorra and the ndrangheta. On the basis of this information, we can assume that the Sicilian mafia has changed its working pattern in the most profitable illegal market. Both repression and competition provoked the end of 1957 agreement between the Sicilian and the American mafia, which gave CN the national and European monopoly over the drug market. But since drugs are still a profitable market, the Sicilian mafia has developed a postfordist strategy of partnership and networking. Being no more possible to act as a monopolist actor, joint ventures with other groups are signed, thus ensuring a lesser risk, as repression can destroy a piece of the network but not the whole

structure and the persistence of business. Moreover, the absence of an executive committee makes it difficult for the enforcers to implement as an efficacious repressive action as it had been between the 1980's and 1990's. Enquirers at the moment have evidence concerning the activities of groups from Trapani and Catania in the drug market, but it might be possible that also other "families" share the business.

The blurring of boundaries between legal and illegal activities, and their postfordist characteristics can be traced also in other sectors, such as money laundering and loansharking, as well as in extortion. Traditionally these activities consisted of the active involvement of mafia members, who became the owners of a legal business, or loaned personally money and extorted to claim the territorial lordship of their family. Both repression and the growth of the anti-mafia movement have made CN change its strategy, thus producing a new way to run business (La Spina, 2005b). As far as money laundering is concerned, the Mafiosi cannot appear anymore as the owner of legal business, because of the anti-mafia laws requiring a clean criminal record for an entrepreneur to start its business. The mafia has chosen to adopt another means, like that of creating partnerships with persons without a criminal record who officially act as the owner of the business, but who are indeed laundering the money of CN. A Palermo tradesman, in telling the story of a wholesale shoe shopkeeper, says:

"Do you remember Mr G? 10 years ago it seemed like he was on the verge of bankruptcy, and there was much concern about his shops closing down and more than 150 workers left unemployed. Now he is on track again, and his shops are thriving more and more. How would you explain this?"

The view of the tradesman is also endorsed by a policeman:

"Palermo relies on the mafia money. Take them away, and the economy will run more wrecked than it is now [...]. So one day a guy turns up and tells them: I know you are having problems, but if you want to do business with me, problems will be over at once. How could you refuse such an offer? Bankruptcy would mean the end of your activity, as well as a loss of status. You can't run this risks, too many people, too many things besides economy are involved."

Similar strategies are adopted in loansharking, an activity wherein CN has chosen to avoid the risks of losing the monies lent by taking over the activities, and also in the sector of public contracts, as well as in new emerging business such as the building of shopping malls and the creation of call centres. A prominent member of the Chamber of Commerce of Palermo says in this respect:

"Sure the mafia is active, but how can you prove it? [...] Now you need to be more intuitive, so you might wonder why there are so many call centres and shopping malls being built in Palermo, but especially you have to wonder why the contractor fragments its job into many subcontracts to be given to many small local sub-contractors, or you should wonder why these new activities are built in certain areas[...]."

These interviews tell us how CN has changed its modus operandi and developed new strategies. Like a postfordist corporation, the Sicilian mafia differentiates between a wide range of activities, either legal or illegal. It is in this way possible to face either a sudden crisis of a market, or a police raid. The organisational and economic risks are also avoided by operating in legal markets through the legal actors, who are just circulating the monies CN provided them with. The mafia, like a major corporation organising the production of small scale enterprises on the territory, provides the financial engine designed either to start on new businesses, such as shopping malls and call centres, or to keep under control such economic sectors as public contracts. In both cases, the economic fabric of Palermo (and of many parts of Sicily) is shaped by the entrepreneurial strategies CN puts forward and by the money coming from financial investments whose roots can be traced far away from Sicily. The enhancement of financial activities is also another aspect making the Mafioso enterprise similar to a postfordist corporation. And finally, CN is part of a wide network of both legal and illegal activities, and its relationships rank from the local shopkeeper who launders the mafia money, to the financial broker investing in international markets. We are facing different levels of connections and responsibilities, different kind of members and accomplices, whose core is still the parasitic, violent and arrogant power of the mafia. These being the transformations, it is no longer necessary for CN to seek out for the monopoly of illegal markets, as its wide ranged interests cover different sectors, all of which can ensure conspicuous profits to the organisation. Such organisational and economic changes, which also prove the flexibility of CN and its adaptability to the new global economy without losing the grasp of the local territory, are also reflected in the development of new political strategies.

#### The new politics of mafia

The relationships between politics and the Mafia have always been close-knit. It was the political protection and support provided by the Sicilian noblemen and politicians to allow CN to survive under cover for many years (Franchetti, cit.; Santino, 2002). On the other hand, the administration by the mafia of the estates belonging to noblemen through a de facto political and military control of the territory (Cancila, 1988) granted the social and political order in Sicily.

As controversial as the role CN played to help the Allied forces landing in Sicily in 1943 (Lupo, 2008; Santino, 2006), it is yet certain that many Mafiosi were appointed majors by the Allied forces (Casarrubea, 2002) and that the mafia took advantage of its fierce anticommunism to become a strong political subject within the Italian power network. The Cold War years tell us of a politically active CN, either supporting those political forces (mainly the Christian Democrats) which promote its interests, or by repressing all those social movements who would like to change the power balances on the island. Moreover, the mass patronage Judith Chubb (1982) analysed deeply, constituted a source of the Mafioso political hegemony over Sicily. The bosses intervened to make a decision over the allocation of the public funds the Italian government sent to Sicily (Tranfaglia, 1992), or acted on behalf of their protégés, who ranged from the unemployed youth to the entrepreneur who wanted to win a contract.

The fall of the Berlin wall produced important changes in the Mafioso political pattern. Though losing its importance as an anticommunist bulwark, CN still relies on its economic and structural force, as well as on its political and military control of Sicily, whose strategic importance at the centre of the Mediterranean sea is far from declining (Limes, 2009). Moreover, CN has long-lasting relationships with important branches of state apparatus, such as the Carabinieri and the Secret Services. The most recent judicial enquiries show how we are no longer facing an organic connection between mafia and politics, but rather a flexible power network within which different interests converge.

The first enquiry is locally based, and involves the former governor of Sicily, Salvatore Cuffaro, who was tried, sentenced, and forced to resign. The private health tycoon Michele Aiello, at the beginning of 2000's, based his business on conspicuous public funding provided by the Sicilian regional government. He was also a business partner with the leading mafia boss Filippo Graviano, a doctor himself. When the police decided to put a few bugs in the offices of Aiello and Graviano, a general of the informed Cuffaro of this. The governor decided to inform his tycoon friend, since he was aware of Aiello's dangerous relationships. As the enquiry went on, despite the bugs, it became evident that Cuffaro and most of his leading party colleagues were perfectly aware of the fact they were part of a Mafioso network, which they deemed natural ([www.repubblica.it](http://www.repubblica.it), 2008). Neither Cuffaro nor Aiello were members of CN, but the former had nothing to say about his friend and business partner being in such close relationship with a mafioso. Moreover, Cuffaro accepted and looked for the political support of the Graviano family. That was later to prove to be crucial in the regional elections. Cuffaro also knew that Aiello

bribed two leading Carabinieri – that is, members of one of the two Italian police forces – to obtain information about possible enquiries against him. Finally, also the two policemen considered their behaviour as part of their job. This case demonstrates how CN does not intervene in politics directly, either by organising a party or by using its military force. It has grown to become the focal point of a network of political relationships involving politicians, professionals, entrepreneurs and policemen, who run their business in the Mafioso way and seem not to feel any ethical scruples about it. They do not kill or extort, neither do they adopt primeval ritual. They just make business together.

The enquiry about the relationship between the manager and politician Marcello Dell'Utri and CN also shows the multifaceted character of this organisation, as well as its skills to develop a network of alliances and partnership encompassing individuals and groups having different backgrounds. This enquiry is important because it focuses on the relationships between mafia, politics and economy from the 1970's to the present time, that is in the period when the postfordist transformation took over. Dell'Utri, a Sicilian bank clerk, in the early 1970's was invited by his former university colleague Silvio Berlusconi to join the new Fininvest group. He accepted the offer, and turned into the powerful manager of key branches of the new group. Thanks to his long term relationships with such bosses as Gaetano Cinà and Vittorio Mangano, Dell'Utri ensured the Fininvest group both the protection against other criminal groups, and a lasting business partnership that is supposed to have influenced the development of the largest Italian communication group, as well as the birth of the leading centre-right party Forza Italia. The first degree sentence of the Palermo court (2005) declared Dell'Utri guilty of concorso esterno, like Cuffaro. Despite this sentence, Dell'Utri is still a Senator of the Italian Republic, standing out as one of the leaders of the discontented South of Italy who is about to create a pro-Sicily to contrast the growing force of the Northern League within the currently ruling centre-right coalition. Given the relationships of Dell'Utri, we can assume that CN is abandoning Berlusconi.

This two cases, albeit briefly analysed, show how the Sicilian mafia has developed grassroots and long-lasting political relationships that, unlike the camorra and the ndrangheta, allow CN to behave as a political actor capable of influencing national politics. The political network, like economy, ranges from the local politicians to the prominent members of political parties and state apparatus (police, secret services). The post- cold war context might have changed the nature of relationships, but not their density. CN chooses its own political partners from time to time, and embeds them into a wide-ranging network involving other powerful actors. Its crisis is not a political one.

### Conclusions

In this work I have offered an alternative view of the Sicilian mafia. I have argued that CN is not in crisis, both because it is everything but a backward organisation, and because it does not operate only in illegal markets, but also its activities are not restricted to economics. I tried to relate my thesis to practical examples, such as the judicial enquiries and the interviews I made. It would have been useful to have developed some aspects of this essay in more depth, but, for brevity's sake, it was necessary to summarise key points.

My concept of postfordist mafia can be a useful tool for social scientists, to the extent that they also decide to adopt a different and multifaceted approach to study such a complex social phenomenon. As postfordism relies on the existence of a network, this new conceptual tool will enable the scholars engaged in the study of mafia to analyse it through its connections both with the legal world and with economy, society and politics. If one keeps focusing either on culture or on economy, then the idea that the mafia is declining can follow, thus producing a mistaken understanding of the dynamics of CN. It would also be misleading to evaluate the trend of criminal organisations just by counting the numbers of crimes and arrests recorded by the official statistics, as in this way we fail to have a more accurate, deep and articulated analysis of organised crime. Postfordism therefore opens new conceptual and methodological chances for researching into organised crime. Under the former aspect, it will be possible to use the complexity of mafia as a social phenomenon as the starting point of any description and analysis of its crimes. Under the latter aspect, it must be pointed out that the empirical focus on complexity requires the adoption of a qualitative methodology, which must rely on the research on the field, in which the observation and interpretation of social phenomenon must prevail over the framing attitude.

If the mafia has adopted itself to postfordism, I think there are breaking consequences both for criminologists and for the enforcers. The former could get rid of the underworld analyses which keep the mafia in the ghetto of the illegal underworld. Their research and interpretation should focus more on the relationships with finance and politics. It would thus become possible for judges and policemen to enquire in a more efficient and efficacious way into the context of organised crime. Last but not least, the postfordist approach could give social scientists the chance to emphasise the growth and the development of the antimafia movement. Since 1980s, a network of antimafia associations, involving civil society, entrepreneurs and politicians have been active in Sicilian society. They operate in different domain, which range from the opposition to the pizzo to the antimafia communication and propaganda in schools and society. This is an important aspect to underscore, as it would finally show that Sicilian society has not accepted mafia passively.

### References

- AA.VV.(1991), *Mafia. L'atto d'accusa dei giudici di Palermo*, Editori Riuniti, Roma..  
Amin, Ash (1994), *Postfordism. A reader*, Blackwell, Oxford.  
Arlacchi, Pino (1982), *La mafia imprenditrice*, Il Mulino, Bologna.  
Barbagallo, Francesco (1993), *Il potere della camorra*, Einaudi, Torino.  
Becucci, Stefano, Massari, Monica (2001), *Mafie nostre, mafie loro*, Laterza, Bari.  
Biagi, Enzo (1987), *Il boss è solo*, Rizzoli, Milano.  
Block, Anton (2003), *East Side. West Side. Organising crime in New York*, Cardiff University Press, Cardiff, V ed.  
Blok, Anton (1971), *La mafia in un villaggio siciliano*, Il Mulino, Bologna.  
Calderone, Antonino (1988), *Gli uomini del disonore*, Rizzoli, Milano.  
Cancila, Orazio (1989), *Baroni e popolo nella Sicilia del grano*, Palumbo, Palermo.  
Carlucci, Davide, Caruso, Giuseppe (2009), *A Milano comanda la ndrangheta*, Ponte alle Grazie, Firenze.  
Casarubba, Giuseppe (2002), *La strage*, Franco Angeli, Milano.  
Catanzaro, Raimondo (1987), *Il delitto come impresa. Storia sociale della mafia*, Liviana, Padova.  
Chubb, J., *A tale of two cities. Patronage and political power in Southern Italy*, OUP, Oxford, 1982.  
Dickie, J., *Cosa Nostra. Storia della mafia siciliana*, Laterza, Bari, 2005.  
Falcone, Giovanni, Padovani, Marcella, *Cose di Cosa Nostra*, Rizzoli, Milano, 1992.  
Franchetti, Leopoldo, *Indagine sulla Sicilia*, Vallesi, Firenze, 1995 (I ed., 1876).  
Gambetta, D., *La mafia siciliana. Un'industria della protezione privata*, Einaudi, Torino, 1992.  
Harvey, D., *The condition of postmodernity*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992.  
Hobsbawm, E., *I ribelli*, Einaudi, Torino, 1962.  
Hess, H., *Mafia*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1982.  
La Spina, A., *Mafia, legalità debole e sviluppo del mezzogiorno*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2005.  
"The Sicilian Mafia", in Fijnaut, C., Paoli, L., *Organised Crime in Europe*, Norwell, 2005, pp. 156-193.  
Lupo, S., *Storia della mafia*, Donzelli, Roma, 1995.

- *Quando la mafia trovò l'America*, Einaudi, Torino, 2008.
- Marx, K.H., *Grundrisse. Lineamenti di critica dell'economia politica*, NIS, Firenze, 1998.
- Massari, M., *La sacra corona unita*, Laterza, Bari, 1995.
- Mineo, M., *Scritti sulla Sicilia*, Flaccovio, Palermo, 1955.
- Negri, A., Hardt, M., *Empire*, Transaction, New York, 2001.
- Paoli, L., *Fratelli di mafia*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2000.
- Renda, F., *Storia della mafia*, Sellerio, Palermo, 1997.
- Ruggiero, V., *Economie sporche*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 1996.
- Sales, I., *La camorra, le camorre*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1987.
- Santino, U., *La mafia interpreta*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 1995.
- *Storia del movimento antimafia*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 2000.
- *La mafia, le mafie*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2006.
- Santino, U., La Fiura, G., *L'impresa mafiosa*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 1989.
- Saviano, R., *Gomorra*, Mondadori, Milano, 2006.
- Schneider, J. And P., *The reversible rise of the mafia*, OUP, Oxford, 1989.
- Tranfaglia, Nicola, *La mafia come metodo*, Laterza, Bari, 1992.
- Travaglio, M., *L'odore dei soldi*, Rizzoli, Milano, 2004.
- Varese, F., *The Russian Mafia. Private protection in a new market economy*, OUP, Oxford, 2001.

#### INTERNET SITES

- <http://www.cameradeideputati.it/antimafia>
- <http://www.repubblica.it>
- <http://www.bernardoprovanzano.net>
- <http://www.centroimpastato.com>
- <http://www.ministerointerno.it>

# Index

p.3—17

Michel Foucault, ‘Right of Death and Power over Life,’ from *The History of Sexuality*, in P.Rabinow, editor, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984)

p. 19—20

New York Times Archives,  
Alan Cowell, June 10, 1993

p.23

Videomobile, 2018 Masbedo  
at Manifesta 12, 16.06—04.11.18  
Palermo, Italy

p.25—30

Franco Bifo Berardi and Veronica Bridi,  
1977 l’anno in cui il futuro incominciò,  
(Bologna, Fandango Editizioni)

p.33—55

Michel Focault, ‘Governmentality,’ in  
J.Faubion, ed. *Power: The Essential Works  
of Foucault, 1954—1984* Vol,3

p.57—71

Jacques Ranciére, *The Intervals of the Cinema* (Verso Books, 2014)

p. 73—83

Stefano Harney The New Rules of  
Algorithmic Institutions in Former West: Art  
and The Contemporary after 1989,  
(The MIT Press 2016)

p.85

Masbedo, Videomobile  
Manifesta 12, Palermo, Italy 2018

p.87—99

Silvia Federici Feminism and the Politcs of  
the Commons in Former West: Art and The  
Contemporary after 1989,  
(The MIT Press 2016)

p. 101—103

Richard O.Ulin An Analysis of the grades  
of italo-american anda yankee boys, The  
journal of experimental education, 1965

p.105—111

Giorgio Agamben, We Refugees,  
symposium, no.49 (Summer 1995)

p.112—122

Hannah Arendt, We Refugees in Marc  
Robison Altogether Elsewhere.  
Writers on Exile (Faber and Faber, 1994)

p.123—128  
Hal Foster, Real Fictions  
Artforum International, 2017

p. 129—159  
Hannah Arendt, The origins of  
totalitarianism, Hancourt, Orlando 195,

p.161  
Roberto Saviano, ‘Gomorrah’ in the New  
York Time Magazine, Nov, 14, 2007

p.163—167  
International Institutions and Global  
Governace Program, Emma Welch, Illicit  
Networks: Mafia States, NonState Actors,  
New York, 2012

p.169—175  
Vincenzo Scalia The transformations of the  
sicilian mafia under postfordism  
<http://www.centroimpastato.com>