Labor struggles today

A report on a recent civil disobedience action in Chicago

Laurie Rojas

ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2009, approximately 900 Chicagoans rallied on the sidewalks in front of the Park Hyatt Hotel near the Magnificent Mile. At the height of rush hour, about 200 members and community allies of UNITE HERE Local 1, Chicago's hospitality workers' union, arrived at the scene and blocked all four lanes of Chicago Avenue by sitting down in rows and linking their arms.

As the demonstrators chanted "Whose streets? Our streets!" among various other long-familiar slogans, organizers passed out fliers that read, "We work in hotels, airports, casinos, schools, restaurants and cafeterias. We are union members and allies. We will continue to fight to improve our lives and will not let global corporations use the economy as an excuse to push us backward." From this the fliers went on to single out the Civil Rights Movement as the inspiration for the day's civil disobedience action: "Today, we follow in the footsteps of Martin Luther King Jr. and others before us who have fought for a better future for themselves and their families." The rally's message, if not made clear by the flier, was written on the backs of the shirts of all those arrested. Under a long list of names of local employers, the shirts declared, "We are not afraid."

UNITE HERE Local 1's multi-year hotel contracts in Chicago had just expired on September 1. Representing more than 15,000 hotel, food service, and casino workers in Chicago and Northwest Indiana, including workers at the Congress Hotel Plaza in Chicago who have been on strike for years, the union is keenly aware that Chicago employers intend to use the recent economic crisis as an opportunity to cut their members' wages and benefits. The September 24th civil disobedience was conceived as a pre-emptive action against Chicago hoteliers. As a tactic, it applies pressure without actually threatening to strike, which Local 1 views as a measure of last resort.

UNITE HERE planned the Park Hyatt action carefully. Their representatives and lawyers notified the Chicago Police Department well in advance, so that they were present even before most of the union members arrived. Those who sat in the street had been prescreened to ensure that no one had a prior record of arrest, which could make for more severe penal consequences. The drama was so well orchestrated, in fact, that the action felt somewhat anti-climactic. The cops had even cleared the streets before the arrestees arrived. They were taken away in buses and released by 8:00 PM with a citation for obstructing traffic. After the offenders were released, UNITE HERE ally Carrie Graham commented, "The cops said we were the nicest people they had ever arrested." Graham added, "We just gave the tickets to the lawyers, I will probably never hear anything about it again."

Everything went according to plan, thanks in large part to the UNITE HERE training sessions a week earlier, which consisted of exercises and drills meant to prepare those who pledged to get arrested. A flier titled "Civil Disobedience Dos and Don'ts" was circulated, its rules exhorting protestors to "be composed and serious," "bring picture ID," and "signal a marshal in an emergency," while warning them not to "go limp," "carry weapons or even [a] pocket-knife," or "consume alcohol (or drugs) before the arrest." The point of these sessions was to make sure that, in the media exposure following the event, the union appears organized and disciplined, so that the focus remained on the demands of the workers. Although the president of Local 1 told the demonstrators "anything can happen" and "we do not know what the Chicago Police will do," the union took every reasonable measure to be as organized and prepared as possible.

Undoubtedly, the civil disobedience comes at a time when UNITE HERE needs to build up union morale. In 2004, UNITE, a union of garment workers in both manufacturing and laundry representing over 150,000 workers, merged with HERE, Hotel Entertainment and Restaurant Employees. The merger created a union with 440,000 members. It was a marriage of convenience, as UNITE's growth had stagnated despite access to substantial funding via the Amalgamated Bank, the only union-owned bank, whereas HERE's membership was expanding but lacked financial backing. The merger maintained two leaders, with Bruce Raynor from UNITE as president while John Wilhelm from HERE assumed control of the hospitality division. Despite the difference in titles, both leaders were meant to share equally all executive and budgetary responsibilities. But, disagreements over strategy and the allocation of funds led to tensions and, eventually, lawsuits. The lack of integration extended to the locals, some of which identified primarily with UNITE while others were loyal to HERE. Tensions came to a head in March, 2009, when Raynor, along with delegates from 15 affiliates representing roughly 100,000 workers, disassociated from UNITE HERE to establish a new union, Workers United, which then affiliated with the rival Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the nation's second largest union. Together with his following, Raynor took with him the Amalgamated Bank and $23 million of the strike fund, the legitimacy and legality of which is bitterly disputed. This, at a critical time for American labor. As Nic Mijares, a recent graduate from Columbia College, and now an organizer for UNITE HERE said during the training, "companies are using the economy to take benefits from us and it is not fair. We are fighting for the respect we deserve." When asked about what could go wrong with the civil disobedience action, Mijares responded, "people not understanding the message."

A week before the civil disobedience, the remainder of UNITE HERE announced its (re-)affiliation with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) during the closing ceremony of the 2009 AFL-CIO convention. Previously, UNITE HERE, along with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the SEIU, had broken with the AFL-CIO in 2005 to form a new federation, called Change to Win, which in the 2008 election mobilized thousands in support of presidential candidate Obama. Representing roughly 11 million members, the AFL-CIO will prove an important ally for UNITE HERE in its battle against SEIU and its president, Andy Stern. However, it is uncertain just how well UNITE HERE is poised to benefit from its affiliation with the AFL-CIO. Even more doubtful is whether the labor movement as a whole will emerge stronger from the recent strife.

Supposedly, this is labor's moment.[1] With Obama in the White House and a Democratic majority in Congress, hopes are high for the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) to protect and expand the right to organize. The entanglement of organized labor's

Unionized workers sit in front of the Park Hyatt Hotel on Chicago Avenue on September 24th, 2009.

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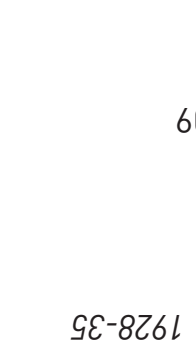

Statement of Purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The Platypus Review is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The Platypus Review hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–2,500 words, but longer pieces will also be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editorial@platypus1917.org*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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On drone music

Bret Schneider

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF DRONE MUSIC is not just aesthetically defined, but socially and historically located. The significance of this location is especially intriguing when concealed in a music legacy that aims exclusively at the pure presentation of sound, a music intent upon expelling all that is foreign to the aesthetic experience while underscoring a formal, perceptual physicality. As such, it is difficult to review an instance of drone music in isolation from either the widespread classification of the genre that increasingly defines the music listening experience or drone music's historically accumulated predilection for spatial sound masses over temporal themes. The difficulty is further compounded by the lack of a definitive denotation of the term "drone" itself, which has come to be used as a catch-all for everything that loosely resembles any of drone's preceding musical forms. Moreover, the motivations behind recent standardizations of drone music contrast sharply with the original impetus of its project, which in the 1960s aimed for the limits of listening.

The artificial grafting of a music *aesthetic* contextually relevant in the 1960s onto the current social situation results in a lapsed music production based on a nostalgia which can, at best, only accidentally evoke its original impulses and aspirations. Recent drone music does not stand alone in barely nudging along forms of music that are already standardized. It is a symptom of a larger cultural phenomenon of repeating established norms because society has not grasped its history (even as it obsesses over it). Drone music intends to take seriously its own history, but fails in its intent by fixating on preservation, as though it could provide a museum-like envelope of the past. Through its dream of solidarity and identification with the original ideals of the form, recent drone music preserves the aesthetics of its forebearers while also exposing ideologies behind the aesthetic forms more starkly. Early minimalist drone music utilized accepted music aesthetics by exploring tonal possibilities latent in preceding historical forms, but only in order to expand the possibilities of what could be considered music. What concerns drone music artists and their audiences are chiefly aesthetic considerations, and most of what we perceive to be new in recent drone music is actually latent in earlier forms. The question is why those possibilities are manifesting now.

Drone music is expressly inspired by one branch of minimalist music from the 1960s, epitomized by La Monte Young's ensemble, The Theater of Eternal Music, which included, among others, John Cale of the Velvet Underground, a considerable source of mainstream influence. The Theater of Eternal Music were the first to implement the exclusive use of long sustained tones that is so prevalent in much of today's music. But what is particularly fascinating about La Monte Young's music, listening to it forty years later, is not some sort of "ontological" or "eternal" condition of sound, nor its idealized timbral qualities, but rather its fleeting attempts at trying to capture those ideals materially, with the technology and techniques then available. Though it may not have been his intent at the time, Young was most successful not in preserving sound itself, but in capturing the Sisyphean task of trying to preserve sound. The now archaic sine waves in Young's record *Dream House* display their artifice in ways they may not have done forty years ago. Recent drone music artists are in some ways repeating Young's attempt to capture eternal dimensions of sound without regard for the fleeting nature of the physical and technical means they employ to do so. The result is that by certain techniques they gloss over the very means on which they depend, abandoning the attempt to alter the means themselves, and only exercising them. Baudelaire's formula of the modernist aesthetic—that it captures the still and eternal through the fleeting nature of industrialism—is evident in *Dream House*: Sine wave generators, now comically dated, jeopardize any romance of an eternal aesthetic, and instead point towards the tension between the hope for eternal sound and the material means by which those hopes might be realized.

Today, drone artists attempt to display the transient qualities emanating from delay, reverb, distortion, and other sonic effects, but this is not the primary issue at hand, critically speaking. The problem is that a lack of clarity as to the intent of such attempts translates, in effect, into a reanimation of drone music's initial romanticism, but in a more opaque and problematic form. The intentions of contemporary drone music remain unclear in ways La Monte Young's music was not, and most drone music criticism today does little to problematize the aesthetic impasse. An ideological fixation on the physical, formal characteristics of sound has overridden critical attention to the question of what can constitute music material—a question taken up by, for instance, the work of La Monte Young, John Cage, and the Fluxus artists. Ironically, this trend in criticism traces its origin to these very artists who explored the limits of the materiality of music.

When Frances Morgan, in *Frieze* magazine's May review of critically acclaimed Sunn O)))'s doom-drone album *Monoliths & Dimensions*, proclaims that Sunn O))) should focus on the timbral properties of the sound, as opposed to the self-referential social position of Sunn O))) within art history, the original intentions of minimalism are as misunderstood as they are preserved.[1] Morgan's advice seeks to replace one common theme, a historical situating, with another, the tonal dogma of minimal music. This misunderstands how both were necessary for La Monte Young, as his extremely original project would never have arisen were it not for an awareness of his own position within music history. In Young, the aesthetic and the historical character are intertwined completely. The timbral characteristics of Eternal Music's compositions are not the only dimensions of their art. The timbral, tonal, physical characteristics were only relevant insofar as they could actually combine to stretch the possibility for what music could be, in light of what it had been. Focusing solely on the timbral properties is an attempt to deflect attention away from the social conditions to which Young's aesthetic reacted. Sunn O))) is actually quite successful in heightening the discrepancies between material and romantic fantasy, but the reception in *Frieze* is more interested in the romance of the manifestation as such, not a reflection on why or how it manifests.

Music criticism in general has also failed to adequately grasp the *resurgent* character of contemporary drone minimalism, arguing instead that it has always existed, uninterrupted. This overlooks the question of what sets 1960s-style drone minimalism apart from its recent implementations. First, there is the obvious digression of music into an area motivated by technological and product-based advancement. An artist today who would perform a music composition like Young's *Piano Piece for David Tudor #1*, in which the pianist offers the piano a bale of hay to eat and a bucket of water to drink, is likely to be ignored in favor of a technologically advanced multi-channel set from artists like Ryoji Ikeda or Robert Henke, for example, or the romantically charged guitar compositions of Sunn O)))—a group, after all, that takes its name from a power amp. It is nearly impossible for musical experimentation to escape the net of new music templates and technologies and, judging from recent drone implementations, there is little desire to even try it. A renewed interest in drone music now, at precisely the point where music gear commodities swallow the maker, is curious, specifically because drone music does not need to rely on advanced technology—witness Charlemagne Palestine's *Strumming Music*, for example, or his *Island Song*, in which he drives around an island on a motorcycle harmonizing his voice with its engine, an economy of aesthetics as elegant as it is complex. But most drone artists rely heavily on templated music production tools, be they guitars, effects, Ableton Live software, or hacked electronics. This dependency on generic means of production is one major distinction between early minimal music and its recent implementations, and keeps recent drone music in an aesthetic realm quarantined from an understanding of what drove the creation of minimalist music in the first place.

To what extent are drone artists today doing something new, as opposed to merely perpetuating the past? As Barnett Newman would ask, are drone artists today actually creating, or are they simply making? Of course, at one level there is something different in recent drone music, but to what extent this is significant, or even recognized, remains unclear. A principal reason for this is that drone artists and their audiences are interested in romantic and, generally speaking, countercultural ideologies—an interest often expressed in the form of an interest in their own musical tradition that overlaps with performance. But uncritical nostalgia for the historically countercultural roots of drone music can hinder actual innovation by drone artists today.

Drone music in the 1960s was masterful in its use of the material artifacts of sound. This emanated from a conceptual attempt to extend the socially accepted physical conditions of making art. Resurfaced drone music today, even if it has very different and fragmented concerns, points in an altogether different direction through its genrification, its aesthetics bordering on ambient home listening, its mimicries of previous drone forms. The arrows no longer align against the membrane of what is acceptable, nor does the music strive to involve outside support and social institutions. What drone artists today have in common is their misalignment and tacit recycling of previous efforts. Even though the kernel of a music history is retained aesthetically, it is often too unconscious in its motivation to sell itself as an ideology. When drone-influenced music can neatly fit into expected formats, whether performed live or recorded for labels that cater to a certain aesthetic, the new becomes naturalized, so that a great distance now separates current motivations and concerns from those of the music that supposedly inspires it. Recent drone artists look to the past, but only to mechanically rearticulate its styles and forms. This evasion of the task of interrogating the inherent implications of past forms and the stultifying weight of their history threatens to make drone music into a mere craft. A good drone artist today would not create drone music at all.

Recent drone music often creates new work through mass-production techniques, and this possibly reveals how these products are bound up with far-flung ideals. This was always the case to an extent. La Monte Young was dependent upon sine wave generators that were quite advanced for the 1960s, but the generators were merely the tools used to advance the boundaries of the acceptable based on implications in the previous generation's music. In its simplicity, it exaggerated the

"Drone" continues below

Drone, continued from page above

LaMonte Young's studio

gap between the ideal of an eternal music and the alienating realm of the material. Young correctly identified the tonal tendency of western music and ran with it. In this way, his work negatively parallels the rebellion against tonality one sees in John Cage's percussive experiments. For Young, previous musical forms and traditions were the foundation of innovation, rather than an obstacle to it.

Like most drone music created now, the work of _i is characterized by a technologically based, individually expressive aesthetics, albeit one that is quite distinctive in its style. Its rearticulation of past drone and ambient music is centered upon tone field build-up with guitars looping, reverberating, stretching, ultimately reaching a crescendo, together with the predominant e-bow sound so favored in much drone music today, mainly because of its scintillating and uniquely melancholy affect—an affectation that was intentionally absent in the more extreme forms of minimalist music in the past. In performance, _i has sound waves fill the room and reverberate, performing a wistful melancholy through distended melody. These repeat in undulations until swallowed by a field recording of what sounds like branches being stepped on, a surprisingly common motif in experimental music that can be heard, for instance, in the work of Mountains, Keith Fullerton Whitman, and Michael Vallera, among others.

Similar to _i's work, a lot of the drone waves created by recent artists are affectively wistful. Adam Menzies, the man behind _i, says he likes sad music. Likewise with Michael Vallera. This is a new development in drone music and its cousin genres; not so long ago, Menzies cultivated rave music filled with euphoric dancing, which he took to be overtly "progressive" music, expressing an optimism that worked towards something full of social hope, promise, and complexity. This paradigm, which Menzies actively encouraged, proved fleeting; rave culture and the social hope vested therein have slipped away. As rave ran its course, Menzies changed with the times, allowing "emotional" music to gradually vaporize the previous form. Only the skeletal structure of rave music remains—minimal "clicks 'n' cuts," glitch music, and so on—all effects that would later be seen as progressive and cutting-edge in their own right as expressions of a "post-minimal" attitude.

But the emotive melancholy of Menzies's most recent music marks not only a departure for him, but also a change that minimalist drone music has undergone in general. The rave culture of the 1990s was dynamic. It attracted artists globally, and found ways to stitch them all into a single fabric. From a production point of view, at least, it succeeded in fostering a massive consumption of recordings, as well as an efflorescence of music production hardware and software, a steadily growing economy still imbricated with cultural obsessions. This once-popular rave music was textural and complex, constantly unfolding and revealing different layers of sonic change within a larger machination. By contrast, the new drone music is slow, painstakingly so. Rather than in a dance and drug-induced fervor, people share the drone music experience in a dark daze, in isolation or private company. Sounds are arranged to suggest that electronic music hit a wall and exploded in slow motion. The beats blur into tonal confusion, creating a dense cloud of debris, a dystopic fog of sound.

Possibly the only catalyst for stylistic musical change is the attempted overcoming of previous failures. Today it is difficult to locate in music stores many CDs that were once the pinnacle of previous music genres. The music currently produced by drone artists, who were once passionately supportive of and involved with different music movements, are in many respects undergoing complete stylistic reversal. It is as if the emancipatory impulses of rave culture, ultimately unsatisfied and frustrated, drove the music scene to the diametrical opposite of rave: the plodding and apocalyptic ambience that characterizes much of experimental music today.

The music of _i, as one representative of cutting-edge experimental music, is not just void of all defining characteristics of rave culture and its subgenres that were so prominent in the 1990s, but represents its polar opposite. The densely layered mechanized beats, overt raw sounds of technology, happy drugs, laser light shows, monumental voids of space, and large collections of people acting out (or seeking to act out) some richly imagined drama of freedom—these have all vanished. Instead, recent drone artists cull from a different tool box: petit acoustic instrumentation; electronics taken to the point where they are scarcely recognizable; slowly evolving, glacial soundscapes; sad, wistful tones; mopey sub-bass drones; and small, local, and intimate social arenas where listeners retreat.

The melancholy affectation of much recent drone music stands in contrast not only to the 1990s, but also to similar music genres of previous decades. Originally, the impetus for drone was a non-deterministic experiment that explored what could happen if the inherent, inescapable tonal elements of sound were exaggerated beyond the expected scope of listening. Drone music, with its immense breadths of time and an unprecedented spatial density presented as simply and objectively as possible, completely distended the rules of what was possible at the time, and considerable outside economic and social institutions were necessary to bring that about; *Dream House*, like Walter De Maria's long-term installation *The Broken Kilometer*, was made possible only by generous donations from art sponsors.

The current retreat into idealized sites of music presentation that so dominates contemporary music understands itself as a romantic throwback to 1960s projects like La Monte Young's *Dream House*, itself a throwback to Richard Wagner's Bayreuth. The return to minimalism, albeit in a different stylistic vein expressed in "clicks and cuts," had already started in the late 1990s. A return to it in the form of La Monte Young-influenced psychedelic drone at this moment represents, at worst, a collective disappointment embraced through nostalgia and, at best, a profound but obscure disappointment preserved in its sublimation. Either way, the new "static" drone music is confounding—a thick, expressive, ambiguous fog in which, at the moment, one enjoys wallowing. But a question remains: To what extent can this rediscovered interest in drone music locate the ideological shadow that lurks behind the nostalgia? Can drone music identify the original artistic impetus beyond the aesthetic? Recent drone music seems to reach toward this goal—but, if achieved, perhaps drone music would no longer need to exist.

Although aesthetically pleasing, what is most fascinating about drone is not the music itself. Producers of this music are unavoidably ideological, even and especially in the face of the preceding history of minimal music. The aspiration is always to expel everything that is not pure and objective sound, especially ideology. But the aspiration to expel ideology is itself ideological. That music being made today is overtly influenced by the history of minimal music takes on added significance in light of the various interpretations of that history, as these serve to fragment and complicate the form. In light of art history, bound up as it is now with the increasingly unoriginal idea that there is nothing original to say, artists seem resigned to an imitation of the past, either ironically or in earnest. While this is very much an explicit and already noted phenomenon in the visual arts, recent experimental music takes a less ironic and more earnest approach to respecting its history and, indeed, to the act of artistic creation in general. However, the small world of experimental music perhaps works against itself insofar as it yields to a complacent acceptance of the past, devoid of critical interest in its legacy, even as aesthetic forms that link us to the past are embraced and endlessly celebrated. Irony often characterizes how we relate to each other socially. To this, music stands as a poignant counterpoint, a singular area where ideology nearly runs wild. Although it is commendable that the many fascinating aspects of minimalism are more fully explored in recent experimental music (as in the work of Greg Davis, Bernhard Günter, and Carsten Nicolai, to name a few), the social significance it once had has now become obscure. Minimalism allows itself to be driven into more fragmented situations cut off from a sense of possibility. It meanders along, creating monuments to earlier cultural territories without ever really understanding its historical place or its destination. **|P**

1 Frances Morgan, review of *Monoliths & Dimensions*, by Sunn O))) (Southern Lord Records, 2009), *Frieze* 123 (May 2009), <www.frieze.com/issue/article/monoliths_dimensions/>.

Book Review: Detlev Claussen. *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius.*

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Haseeb Ahmed

Theodor Adorno in his youth.

FOR YEARS Theodor Adorno's theoretical work has suffered from either neglect or semi-hostile "interpretation." It is therefore refreshing to see Detlev Claussen, who studied under Adorno at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt from 1966 to 1971, take a more sympathetic approach to the study of Adorno's philosophy and intellectual life. In *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, Claussen attempts to track the historical and biographical factors that influenced Adorno's critical theory and, in doing so, strives to carefully reconstruct both the changing context and the abiding problematic that Adorno was attempting to grasp in and through his work.

The late 1960s witnessed an upsurge of student activism that culminated in massive strikes and demonstrations worldwide beginning in 1968 and extending into 1969, the year of Adorno's death. Though they had learned much from him, the student New Left in this period strongly counter-identified against their teacher, Adorno, who typified for them the old and impotent Left they sought to supersede. Following the lead of Herbert Marcuse, who said just after Adorno's death that "there is no one who can represent Adorno or speak for him," Claussen does not engage in a critique of Adorno's students and contemporaries on behalf of his former teacher, but attempts instead to allow Adorno to speak for himself by drawing from a huge array of intimate correspondence, diary entries, and assorted works, many of them previously unpublished. Claussen makes the point straight away that Adorno's criticism of the New Left and the parting of ways between Adorno and Marcuse over the latter's support for it was not exceptional but consistent with Adorno's lifelong history of remaining true to the Left by criticizing it. Claussen notes that Adorno's lectures around this time attempted to clarify how "the new is the longing for the new itself: that is what everything new suffers from" (327). It is for this reason that there must be an unrelenting differentiation between "representation for the purposes of agitation and practical reality" (336), something that the students failed to realize as the situation in 1968 escalated, and to which both Adorno and the student movement ultimately fell victim.

For Claussen, Adorno's childhood growing up in a Jewish bourgeois household in Frankfurt is crucial for understanding him, and Claussen returns to it throughout the book. Adorno is portrayed as the last generation to know the "broken promises of happiness" of the long Bourgeois era, which, at "the end of the nineteenth century denie[d] tradition by inventing it" (52), specifically through the cultivation of individual interests. For Adorno this meant chiefly musical pursuits. Claussen contrasts the relationship that Adorno and his family had to their Jewish origins with that of his colleague Leo Lowenthal and mentor Siegfried Kracauer. While Kracauer and Lowenthal would describe themselves as "hybrids," unable to reconcile tradition and secularized life, Adorno appeared to be relatively untouched by this dilemma. However, this tension between the lived Jewish experience and enlightened liberalism was not entirely arbitrary since, on Claussen's reading of Adorno, bourgeois ideology found its *necessary* conclusion with the rise of National Socialism. Claussen makes the point that this attitude towards "bourgeois" culture and society conditioned Adorno's work throughout his life; after his return to Germany in 1953 Adorno wrote, "I consider the survival of National Socialism within democracy to be potentially more of a threat than the survival of fascist tendencies against democracy" (335).

Before the Nazis took power, Adorno studied in Vienna under Arnold Schoenberg, the radical modernist composer, during which time Adorno had to reconcile his growing interests in philosophy and sociology with the pursuit of music. Claussen tracks how this tension remained constant and informed his work throughout his life. Adorno was repeatedly "forced to insist that social categories could not simply be applied to musical material from the outside but had to be generated from the material itself" (113). In this way, issues of technique in musical production could be potentially critical of the social situation that produced it, albeit never in a direct, unmediated way. The failure to recognize this capacity in art left it to the mere pathological function of "veiling" social reality. Furthermore, Claussen points out that the project of the institute was to query the character of a culture whose task "is to conceal the regression into barbarism" without having recourse to the tradition of Marxist categories that functioned also as signals for Stalinist and McCarthyite suppression (202). Claussen notes that, even today, much of the critique of Adorno internalizes the apparent contradistinction between theory and practice, by which Adorno is made to appear as a failed musician turned theorist. Claussen then goes on to quote Adorno as saying, "because of biographical destiny and assuredly also because of certain psychological mechanisms I have not achieved nearly as much as a composer as I believe I could have achieved" (133). But this was not merely a lament on Adorno's part. Rather, it is the attempt to register the damage inflicted on individual life by a form of social organization that is not adequate to itself.

Beyond Adorno's childhood and musical upbringing, Claussen illuminates the personal and professional difficulties that constantly confronted the intellectuals, grouped around Max Horkheimer, known as the Frankfurt School. Of Adorno's exile in the United States during World War II, Claussen reports that Adorno found himself isolated and "out of the firing line" (the title of an essay he wrote), along with other Jewish intellectuals, as the systematic murder of Jews in Europe remained distant, if ever-present. In this context, friendship took on an even greater importance for Adorno as an essential way of knowing himself. Claussen describes personal relationships that shed light on different aspects of Adorno's inner life and the potentials he wished to realize, since "for Adorno bourgeois society continued to live on in 'the minds of intellectuals, who [were] at one and the same time the last enemies of the bourgeois and the last bourgeois'" (137). Adorno's deep affection for his friends permeates the book: To his friend Fritz Lang, whom he nicknamed the Badger, Adorno was Hippopotamus King Archibald, while Horkheimer was the Soft Pear. In a birthday letter Charlie Chaplin became the Bengal Tiger as Vegetarian. Imagination was not reserved only for its use in creating work but as a way of shaping one's inner life, as Adorno employed playful references to our animal origins to animate the characters closest to him. If the experience of living in the United States strengthened Adorno's friendships with his fellow exiles, the political climate that led to their exile also complicated and strained these relationships. Living in the wake of the collapse of organized revolutionary Marxist politics, each member of this diverse and eclectic émigré intelligentsia had to decide for herself a relationship to the Soviet Union and "the Party." Claussen details Adorno's painful political partings with friends and comrades like Ernst Bloch and Bertolt Brecht, whose attitude, for Adorno, prefigured the anti-intellectualism of the students in 1968. Adorno refused to heed the call for "unity" between theory and practice which was the official Communist Party line and later a slogan of the students in 1968. In both cases it resulted in the suppression of critical thought.

Furthermore, the Frankfurt School group was not exempt from pressures of economic survival, and Claussen offers detailed accounts of how friendships fell prey to rivalry in the competition for financial and moral support. The experience of suppression in both the GDR (East Germany) and America in the McCarthy period showed how easy it was to fall victim to inquisitorial campaigns (156). Adorno did not become a full professor until the 1950s upon his return to Frankfurt, with the help of his old friend and benefactor Max Horkheimer. Even then, he was contemptuously referred to by his colleagues, who had continued on the faculty through the Nazi era, as a "reparation-professor," or someone who had achieved his position undeservedly through West Germany's policy of making reparations for Nazism by appointing Jews to faculty positions. Adorno only reached popular audiences in Germany with the post-war publication of his book *Minima Moralia.* All this fits with Claussen's image of Adorno as a "late bloomer," an opinion shared by many of Adorno's colleagues.

But while Claussen illustrates clearly how such friendships were formative for Adorno, at these points the identity between Adorno's life and its presentation in the book become confused and Adorno's own criticisms about biography as the bourgeois idealization of the individual, the topic with which Claussen paradoxically opens the book, seem applicable to the work itself. Nevertheless, Claussen's careful and sympathetic rendering of various aspects of Adorno's theory emerges as the greatest strength of *One Last Genius*.

Claussen identifies the most important thought-figures for Adorno, developed in different ways throughout his work, as being those of *identity* and *non-identity*. As Adorno puts it, "Freedom postulates the existence of something non-identical" (247). There is an integral link between individuals through a shared form of subjectivity. The persistent contradictions of social life under capitalism point to the possibility beyond, but as generated from within capitalism itself. For Claussen it is this basis that shapes Adorno's aesthetic writings from within and renders their ideological content. The attempt to superimpose political content onto aesthetic form, however, transforms it from an object of negative reflection into a tool for the affirmation of that which it seeks to critique. Claussen reports that in a radio talk prepared by Adorno in 1962 in honor of the death of Hanns Eisler, another one of Schoenberg's students whom Claussen's dubs Adorno's "non-identical brother," a small note appears: "Socially the relation of the intellectual to the proletariat amounts to a failed identification" (308). Referring to earlier sections of the book, we can understand that what Claussen is conveying is that certain Marxist intellectuals eliminated the standpoint of critical theory by attempting to collapse it into the ubiquitous standpoint of the proletariat in the name of unity; Eisler is now best known for his composition of East Germany's anthem. To identify with a proletariat whose political consciousness had been seriously undermined by political failures of the 20th century and who had been barred from mean-

"Adorno" continues below

Adorno, continued from page above

ingful, organized political practice by the dominance of Stalinism in the international Left—this would be an abdication of the attempt to describe the conditions of life under capital, in the face of those conditions.

According to Claussen, the categories of identity and non-identity are essentially derived from psychoanalysis, and this appropriation is one of the Frankfurt School's greatest contributions to Marxist critical theory. In texts such as *The Authoritarian Personality*, hailed by C. Wright Mills in 1954 as "the most influential book of the last decade," Adorno and his colleagues anticipated the underlying authoritarianism of the supposedly "anti-authoritarian" Left of the 1960s, a character structure that is still with us today. In this text, Adorno labored to understand how people could act against their own interests, and on such a massive scale, while at the same time allowing for the potential critical recognition of such cathartic behaviors that proliferated with the rise of fascism globally. On this point Claussen quotes Adorno: "the capacity for fear and for happiness are the same, the unrestricted openness to experience amounting to the self-abandonment in which the vanquished rediscovers himself" (246). One can recognize oneself in advanced capitalism's forms of mass mediation in both their apocalyptic and banal forms.

Claussen elaborates at length on the effect and meaning of Adorno's most famous dictum, that "after Auschwitz to write poetry is barbaric," a statement that curiously attracted poets and writers like Paul Celan and Samuel Beckett. Claussen makes the point that it is usually quoted without the following clarifying clause, from Adorno's last major work, *Aesthetic Theory*: "After Auschwitz no further poems are possible, except on the foundation of Auschwitz itself" (330). However, in a review of Eisler's work, Adorno admits that this argument "stems from politics, not aesthetic reflection." A radical *negative poetry* can register the absence of both a collective that would be able to deliver a sense of meaning more authoritative than private attempts, and a personal poetry able to deliver "truth in itself in the interest of society" (300). In an effective synthesis of biographical research and theoretical analysis, Claussen shows how this dictum was developed as an attempt to challenge radical left-wing artists, such as Brecht and Eisler, to register the changing character of one's social situation and to respond to it through aesthetic form. The failure of reason, which allowed itself to be instrumentalized in the systematic murder of millions of Jews, still also contains within it the kernel of individual thought, through which freedom can become generalizable. By overcoming its own form through consciousness of itself, it can make good on the promise that allows life to carry on. This is what formulating the non-identical would mean.

Conditions of life under capitalism are in constant flux and seem to deny the essential forms of social relations at their core. For that very reason such social relations must be approached as historically specific. Specifically, Claussen points out that anti-Semitism was "not the function of an authoritarian national character but... a historically determined manifestation of violence that could not be eliminated simply by an enlightened program of information." In 1967, before the student uprising, this was the real point of contention between Adorno and Marcuse, something that remains a key factor in the reception of Adorno's work, according to Claussen. Today we see Marcuse's argument reproduced in a degenerate form in the criticism of mass media as the "manufacturing of consent" (Noam Chomsky, after Walter Lippmann), which assumes that culture, as the form of representation of society, and society itself are identical with one another. This eliminates the core of freedom, conceding it to the "totally administered world." It is this core non-identity that Adorno never loses sight of in his writings and that Claussen traces throughout his work, revealing Adorno to be a far more "optimistic" theorist than colleagues like Marcuse. Claussen similarly shows how Bloch's and Brecht's work to "reconstruct a meaningful connection between reason and revolution... was irrevocably doomed after the Stalinist regression and the fact of Auschwitz" (327), because these thinkers allowed an idealized reason to obscure the reality of the historical moment they were hoping to address. This also differentiates them from Adorno, who was willing to register the effects of the cataclysm on himself and, in that way, on everyone else subject to the shared historical moment.

Benjamin argued through the dialectic of continuity and change that each historical moment up to and including the present has to be understood in the terms of its form of appearance (*Schein*), and it is for this reason that the categories of identity and non-identity offer a way of registering the character of an otherwise opaque form of subjectivity. The book *Adorno: One Last Genius* at times makes it difficult to differentiate between Adorno's lived experience and the interpretation of it offered up by Claussen. Nevertheless, it offers a robust historical and theoretical foundation for understanding the categories of Adorno's thought. The pleasure of seeing in such great detail how ideas were a way of living for Adorno and those around him, allowing them to understand, in and through their own lives, what it was that gave them form, is exhilarating. Thus revealed, Adorno's critical categories retain their capacity to deepen our understanding of present social reality. Claussen's contribution advances and broadens the potential use of these categories, even if it risks obscuring them even further by exploring them in a biographical form. **IP**

Labor, continued from page 1

hopes with the Democratic Party is evident even in the slogans chanted at the rally, which included, in addition to the tired old ones mentioned above, the fresh, new, if desperate, "Si se puede! Yes we can!" Given this linkage to Obamania, it is unsurprising that most commentators on the current struggle within labor's ranks view the rift with regret. For them, it threatens to weaken the labor movement at just the moment they have fought so long for. As John Nichols argues in the pages of *The Nation,* "The problem, and it is a big one, is that Change to Win and the AFL-CIO are both struggling to win passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), health care reform and other labor agenda items."[2] This is a view widely shared by labor leaders and rank-and-file workers: The struggle between SEIU and UNITE HERE distracts American unions from fighting for the passage of the EFCA to help secure workers' rights to unionize.

Yet it is not unlikely that the Obama administration's support for EFCA has been vastly overestimated. The White House is asking Change to Win and the AFL-CIO to reunify into one federation, which may prove no more than a distraction from the setbacks to the passage of the EFCA. Certainly, the Democratic Party intends to use EFCA to bludgeon American organized labor into forming a single negotiating body that is more than ever beholden to them. Meanwhile, the economic crisis has hampered workers' ability to fight for better wages. Waiting for legislation that may never come, organized labor around the country fails to resist management's relentless speed-ups, cutbacks, and layoffs. As Chuck Hendricks, an organizer for UNITE HERE who was arrested during the civil disobedience, states with regards to organized labor in a previous issue of *The Platypus Review*, "The vision of what is possible is what is lacking."[3] After a training and rehearsal session for the civil disobedience in Chicago, Hendricks commented, "It is the first time I actually feel like I am part of a movement." The question for organizers like Hendricks, then, is not so much unity for its own sake or for the sake of further subordination to the Democratic Party, but strategic fighting, and building rank-and-file leadership in the labor movement.

Richard Rubin of Platypus recently pointed out that, in the early 20th century, the working class faced the dilemma of whether to reform capitalism or to abolish it. Over the last four decades it has become clear the path that was taken. As Rubin argued, both cause and effect were "an internalization of defeat and even a fear of victory."[4] The last forty years have unquestionably been a period in which the last vestiges of the international Left withered and died. It is therefore unsurprising that during these same decades the strength of the American labor movement has waned considerably.

So the question to be posed in light of even the most well-coordinated labor activism is clear: To what extent does an action like that held in Chicago lead not only to the improvement of the conditions of workers in the U.S. and internationally, but to the constitution of a labor movement whose vision extends beyond the Obama administration and the Democratic Party? Was the September 24th civil disobedience an action in the struggle for socialism? Of course not. Yet, as Hendricks expressed, the action does potentially strengthen the union and build the confidence necessary to make more far-reaching demands. On the other hand, the wishes of organizers in unions like UNITE HERE to build a powerful labor movement from the ground up, may prove implausible in the present. As the recent UNITE HERE split and re-affiliation with the AFL-CIO might indicate, certain unions will find strategies of direct politicization and labor militancy insufficient. The fault, however, might not lie solely in unions, but on the overall impotence of the Left. Certainly, there is little reason to doubt workers and organizers when they proclaim in both word and deed to employers and union bosses alike, "We Are Not Afraid." **IP**

1 See Peter Dreir's article "Divorce—Union Style," in the August 12, 2009 issue of *The Nation*, available online at <www.thenation.com/doc/20090831/dreier/1>. Dreir expresses the consensus opinion of political analysts with regard to workers' rights in the recession: "Ask any union official, labor organizer, rank-and-file leader or labor-oriented academic—they'll all tell you the same thing: this is labor's moment."

2 John Nichols, "House of Labor Wrangling: UNITE-HERE v SEIU, AFL v CtW," State of Change Blog, *The Nation*, posted March 13, 2009, <www.thenation.com/blogs/state_of_change/417383/house_of_labor_wrangling unite here v seiu afl v ctw>.

3 Chuck Hendricks *et al*, "Left Behind: The Working Class in the Crisis," *Platypus Review* 13 (July 2009).

4 Luis Brennan *et al*, "What Is a Movement?" *Platypus Review* 14 (August 2009).

Book Review: Randi Storch. *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grassroots, 1928-35.*

Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

Ashley Weger

> "It was not the economics of Communism, nor the great power of trade unions, nor the excitement of underground politics that claimed me; my attention was caught by the similarity of workers in other lands, by the possibility of uniting scattered but kindred peoples into a whole."
> — Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

RANDI STORCH'S *RED CHICAGO* takes to task prevailing caricatures of American Communism during the so-called "Third Period" of the late twenties and early thirties, a period in the history of American Communism frequently criticized for its growing ideological rigidity, its organizational Stalinization, and its ultimate failure to revitalize the flagging world revolution and to check the threat of fascism. Against such views, Storch argues historians have been unfair to the early Chicago Communists, falsely constructing them either as mannequins manipulated by Soviet puppeteers, or else as heroic defenders of the city's working class, a collection of hyper-romantic organic radicals whose every breath stood in defiance of both employers and the party itself. Storch, whose political imagination is less that of a historian than an anthropologist, attempts to resist these tendencies by uncovering the stories, personalities, and politics of Chicago's Communists with more nuances in mind than the usual Stalinist, anti-communist, or anti-Stalinist histories. In place of the old preoccupations, Storch proposes parallel analyses of Soviet policy during the Third Period and local stories and practices of party organizers, members, and affiliates. In so doing, Storch postulates that party leaders, youth organizers, workers, and intellectuals each wished to paint the town red, albeit with different hues. Posing an inquiry as to how and why Chicago Communists' crimsons, corals, roses, and maroons maintained their distinct character as part of a red Chicago offers an opportunity to interact with the fractures and complexities Communist politics assumed in its turn towards Stalinism.

In one sense, the combination offers insight into "the period's broader social and political context and calls attention to the social, political, economic, and cultural forces that shaped American working-class life from the 1920s through the mid-1930s… [and explains] why and how ordinary people became radicalized" (5). Some were born into socialism, others gravitated to it from other radical traditions, and still others shared Richard Wright's perhaps simplistic aim of joining together "the poor, the downtrodden and oppressed people all over the world" (54). The manner in which Storch's work illuminates the variety of inspirations Chicagoans found in Communism during these years is effective in her conception of her work as a community study, but misses the mark in evaluating the political underpinning of such a Communist culture. It asks rather than assumes, "who were Chicago's Communists? How, when, and why did they implement Third Period policy? What did they actually do in the city's neighborhoods and industries? How did they understand the party line? When and why did they reinterpret it?" (4) However, *Red Chicago* cannot resist understanding Stalinism as a force somehow alien to party membership, rather than as a nuanced ideological reality that they actively participated in constructing. Perhaps, then, the use of Storch's text lies in its psychological analysis of party members, but it does not operate as a political history.

The volume of information Storch compiles in *Red Chicago* is considerable. The book usefully highlights key tendencies within the Communist Party during the Third Period, and delves into considerable detail regarding recruitment, party culture, relief initiatives, radical trade unionism (and its demise), youth organizing, women's rights, and anti-racism. In some ways, Third Period organizing appeared to take a dramatic turn to the Left, adopting a quixotic rhetoric of revolution. A microcosm of such Stalinist ultra-Left tactics is found in the dual-unionism strategy epitomized by the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), which vilified the "moral capitalism" of organized labor under the AFL-CIO as a hazard and hindrance to working-class organizing. Under the Popular Front, the hyperbolically sectarian TUUL became passé, quickly forgotten in a rhetorical and political shift away from revolution towards unapologetic reformism, as groups previously described as "fascist" became close allies in the power shift inaugurated by the unfolding of the Second World War.

Storch claims these contradictions and paradoxes are partially products of the intense politicization of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chicago was no exception, as its radical past acted as a peculiar foundation for its vein of Communism. The site of the Haymarket Riots and of the struggle against the resulting bogus prosecutions, not to mention the home of a massive eight-hour movement, Chicago was also the backdrop to the Pullman Strike, and a major center in the founding, first, of the Industrial Workers of the World and, later, of the American Communist Party. The rich history of struggle amongst anarchists, socialists, and communists for leadership of Chicago's labor movement was clearly evident in the earliest days of the American Communist Party, when party leaders maintained contacts and friendships with "an array of activists struggling to find their own answers to the problems they saw inherent in the capitalist system" (9). Leftists of all varieties were in frequent dialogue and dispute with one another, polemicizing in parks to crowds of thousands: a political landscape almost unimaginable to modern readers, and antithetical to policies of zero collaboration.

Chicago epitomized a particular imagination of the proletariat. Brawny and bustling, built by 19th century industrial manufacturing and mass transportation, it was home to many militant workers, including thousands of highly politicized immigrants and black migrants, each of whom came to the party "with their own newspapers, cultural groups, institutions, and willingness to quarrel" (19). Of Chicago's Communists, nearly half spoke foreign languages, and a quarter were African American; the party also included an abundant unemployed population, though this often conflicted with its organizing strategies, which were based in the labor union. It is too easy, however, to distill the Chicago party culture to a fundamental essence, a tendency Storch does not entirely escape. It was cosmopolitan and traditional; it had communities propelled towards preserving ethnic identity, and those promoting Americanization; it grappled with issues of sexism and racism in the State and within the party, with limited degrees of success. Perhaps Chicago was the muscle of the Communist Party, but it hardly resigned itself to that alone: it was home to such radical spaces as the Dill Pickle Club, Bughouse Square, and the John Reed Club, where famous intellectuals, writers, and artists such as Richard Wright and Nelson Algren debated and created works of artistic and political significance. And yet, Storch's portrait of the city supposes that intellectuals were (and, frighteningly, perhaps forever are) outside, looking in on the proletariat, rather than existing as an integral part of working-class politics. Striving to dismantle preconceptions of the early Communist Party, Storch falls short on recognizing her own problematic reproductions of certain historical fictions.

Storch's fascination with cultural contexts, then, sometimes comes at the expense of fully characterizing a sober evaluation of the pervasiveness of Stalinist politics, which is frequently positioned as some sort of Soviet boogeyman rather than the worldwide reality of Communist politics that it actually was. This is exemplified by her treatment of the problem Trotskyism posed within the Third Period. From Storch's claim that Chicago's Trotskyist sympathizers and non-conformists were "infrequently expelled, not forever severed and, sometimes, even readmitted," one might suppose that political intolerance was only a Soviet phenomenon (95). Storch produces an unfortunate historical imagination here: While Trotskyists in the Soviet Union are condemned to exile, work camps, and extermination, their American counterparts are assumed to be benignly tolerated by party members. It is a dangerous assumption, one that proposes that American Communists were not conscious agents in the repression of political dissidence. Albeit generally more amiable than the USSR, the Chicago Communist circles were hardly a space for internal polemicizing.

There were real political commitments and allegiances based on cues taken from Moscow, so that plenty of American Communists quickly came to assume the role of Stalinist counterparts in the Soviet Union. Chicago Communists tirelessly organized, recruited, and routinely burned themselves out for the party. Take, for instance, the 2,088 demonstrations that the Chicago Communists organized or participated in during the first five years of the Depression. Beyond protesting, organizing labor, and working on reform initiatives, the Communists formed party schools, hosted community functions, and created relief networks. The repression and economic depression of the time produced a steadfast, even uncritical belief in capitalism's imminent demise—a belief guided in equal parts by eagerness, theoretical immaturity, and a collective memory of the October Revolution. So while retention was a serious problem for recruiters, membership increased four hundred percent nationwide and five hundred percent within Chicago during the Third Period. This is expressive of a central contradiction of the Third Period: revolutionary fervor, on the one hand, and on the other a dilution of strength, with size taking precedence over sustained, ideological commitment (36). While the Popular Front attracted even greater numbers, including formerly unresponsive white-collar workers and Marxist intellectuals, its emphasis on collaborative efforts surrounding anti-fascism emerged only after fascism had already gained momentum in Europe and, even then, occurred at the expense of clear ideological stances. The embodiment of such a betrayal exists in the apology made by Communists internationally for the Hitler-Stalin Pact. As international relations became confused by the rise of the right, along with the Second World War and its aftermath, the aims and ambitions behind ultra-Left tactics appeared as a misguided dream.

If the history of the Left is one ultimately of failure, the Communists of *Red Chicago* prove to be no exception. And yet, we must not be disillusioned or delusional in our disappointment, but instead admit that it is only in their confusions and missteps that we can find potential. Storch's text is a microcosmic example of why we must re-evaluate our relationship with the past. While, practically, it teaches both of methods and mechanisms successful in engaging interest about communism and of the systems, structures, and spaces that can be used as support for inquiry, it also represents a certain intellectual and political poverty, one that Storch seeks to overcome, but cannot entirely escape. *Red Chicago* poses a challenge that it does not fully deliver upon: to seriously consider how a Marxist understanding has (d)evolved since the Third Period through a reconfiguration of imaginations regarding the Left's past and its participants. In the scores of narratives found in *Red Chicago*, no one is totally exempt from or irredeemably victim to the particularities of Stalinism and the Soviet Union; by projecting fictions of helplessness and radical subjectivity onto the past, we negate the potentiality history has to offer our present. At the same time, optimism for our political future exists only in accurately pronouncing the failings of the historic Left in terms of a regression of the possibility in actualizing Marxist intents. **IP**

Rosa Luxemburg's corpse

The stench of decay on the German Left, 1932–2009

Jerzy Sobotta

IN MAY OF 2009 SCIENTISTS IN BERLIN claimed to have unearthed the corpse of the martyred revolutionary leader Rosa Luxemburg. Stored in the cellar of a hospital, the corpse had neither a head, nor feet, nor hands. The stump of a corpse of Rosa Luxemburg lay rotting in a basement, subjected to the un-tender mercies of modern forensic science.

Less than fourteen years after the death of one of its greatest leaders, the German Left died. Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor, after which what can best be described as the suicide of the Left took place. The proletarian world revolution, when it was needed the most, on the day of January 20, 1942—the day of the Wannsee Conference, where the mass annihilation of European Jewry was decided—did not take place. Instead, the mass of German workers, the revolutionary subject for the emancipation of mankind, was transformed into *Volksgemeinschaft*, the German collective based on race, blood, soil, and concrete labor. The class conflict, based on the fundamental antagonism between use value and exchange value, had to be externalized because there was no place for it in the organic body of the Germans. Auschwitz was the German nation's revolt against its mortal enemies, exchange value and the sphere of circulation.

In much the same way that the British relate to the Magna Carta, the Americans to their war of independence, and the French relate to their revolution, so the Germans relate to National Socialism—except, in the German case, the relationship is condemned. Through Nazism, German ideology, which had previously been criticized by Marx, took on an altogether different quality after the Shoah.

In the face of the Cold War, the Allies gave up their attempt to denazify Germany. Teachers, lawyers, and politicians who had loyally served the Nazi regime were rarely replaced and were instead allowed to remain in positions of power and influence. But more important than such personal continuities were the ideological ones. As Adorno wrote in the sixties, "National Socialism lives on, and even today we still do not know whether it is merely the ghost of what was so monstrous that it lingers on after its own death, or whether it has not yet died at all, whether the willingness to commit the unspeakable survives in the people as well as in the conditions that enclose them."

The post-war silence surrounding Nazism was broken by the New Left and the student movement of 1968, who aggressively criticized their parents' generation for complicity with fascism and exterminatory anti-Semitism. This theme was one of the most important aspects of the anti-authoritarian mood that developed among the youth in Germany. In those years, the broad Left understood itself as fighting fascist tendencies in Germany.

But as long as the victims were still alive, their very presence served to remind the perpetrators of their crimes. And this proved to be unbearable, not only for the old Nazis, but also for their revolutionary children. In 1969—the same year that Adorno, in correspondence with his old friend Marcuse, wrote, "Might not a movement, by the force of its immanent antinomies, transform itself into its opposite?"—the radical left-wing group Tupamaros West-Berlin placed a bomb in the city's Jewish Community Center. The date: Kristallnacht, November 9, the anniversary of the nationwide anti-Semitic pogroms of 1939. Only a technical defect in the bomb prevented the shedding of blood. In a leaflet the group declared,

> True anti-fascism is the clear and simple expression of solidarity with the fighting fedayeen. No longer will our solidarity remain only with verbal-abstract methods of enlightenment as in the case of Vietnam… The Jews who were expelled by fascism have themselves become fascists who, in collaboration with American capital want to eradicate the Palestinian people. By striking the direct support for Israel by German industry and the government of the Federal Republic, we are aiding the victory of the Palestinian revolution and force for the renewed defeat of world imperialism. At the same time, we expand our battle against the fascists in democratic clothes and begin to build a revolutionary liberation front in the metropole.[3]

Later years were marked by growing radicalization and militancy. Anti-imperialism, Maoism, and solidarity with national liberation movements in the Third World peaked. The Red Army Faction (RAF), the biggest left-wing terrorist organization at that time, more popularly known as the "Baader-Meinhof Gang," even went as far as to praise the murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Ulrike Meinhof, one of the group's founders, wrote, "The action of Black September in Munich has exposed the nature of imperialistic dominance and the anti-imperialistic fight, transparent in a way as no revolutionary action before in West Germany and West Berlin. It was at the same time anti-imperialist, anti-fascist and international."

Four years later, in 1976, German left-wing extremists of the Revolutionary Cells (RZ) collaborated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in the hijacking of an Air France plane to Entebbe, Uganda. There the hijackers separated Jewish passengers from non-Jews and forced the latter off the airplane. The operation ultimately concluded with the liberation of the hostages by Israeli special forces, the Sayeret Matkal.

The response of the German government to such widespread terrorism, including hundreds of bombings and dozens of murders, was the restriction of civil liberties. In the seventies and eighties, especially after Mao's death in 1976, many groups dissolved themselves and the radical Left took on issues like ecology, pacifism, and anti-militarism. The founding of the nonviolent Green Party in the early 1980s was the logical consequence of this development. In 2002 the Greens achieved political power by forming a coalition with Rosa Luxemburg's old party, the SPD, which reformed itself as a center-left party after World War I, dropping all revolutionary ambitions.

Recently, the political development in Germany has been the founding of a new party, Die Linke, or "The Left." Founded in 2007, out of a merger between some left-wing SPD dissidents and the successors to the parties that had ruled East Germany, Die Linke has grown rapidly in strength, achieving electoral results as high as 13 percent. Despite the appearance of success, Die Linke is merely another sad example of what it means to be leftist in post-Nazi, post-unification Germany. In 2005, the party's leader and main spokesman Oskar Lafontaine proclaimed, "The state is obliged to protect its citizens. It is obliged to prevent family fathers from becoming homeless because foreigners take their jobs for lesser wages." Although Die Linke openly criticizes capitalism and the party sporadically cooperates with old-style Marxist-Leninist parties, its criticism of capitalism, once meant to lead humanity to a "society of free human beings," in fact reeks of unfreedom. The stench of Lafontaine's words is worse than that emanating from Luxemburg's rotting torso: "We want to overthrow capitalism… We will change the economic order."[4] Elsewhere he declares, "If the gamble hell of casino-capitalism can be found somewhere, than it is in New York. If money rules the world, then New York is the world's capital."[5]

Nationalism, racism, and anti-Americanism are the main ideological weapons of Die Linke. Capital, the circulation sphere, and abstract value are their enemies. The glorification of state and concrete labor is their answer to the crisis of late capitalism.

The early eighties saw the first signs of awareness of the theoretical bankruptcy of the German Left. Beginning with a few individuals polemicizing against the anti-Semitic character of the pro-Palestinian consensus, a current in the radical Left came to strongly oppose the reunification of Germany, which finally took place in 1989. This current, which became known as the Anti-Deutsch tendency, was at that time a much more diverse and heterogeneous current unified by a shared concern about the possible reemergence of fascism in German society. Shortly after the reunification, Germany saw the most extreme xenophobic riots of the post-war period, with perhaps the most striking incident occurring in a suburb of Rostock, in the former East, where a crowd of several hundred militant right-wing extremists, backed by around 3,000 locals, hurled stones and Molotov cocktails at a house used by asylum-seekers. The police were unable to stop the raging mob and after three days the attackers outnumbered the police forces. At the same time, the increasingly aggressive rhetoric of German politicians, including discussions about greater militarization and a "legitimate" expansion towards the East, underscored the reasons for Anti-Deutsch to be concerned. Consequently, they made efforts to reflect this development theoretically. The Gulf War in 1991 and the resulting pacifist or even pro-Hussein sentiments of the broad German Left produced an insurmountable gap between Anti-Deutsch and other leftists. The new current of Anti-Deutsch began with a re-reading of Marx that breaks with the old anti-imperialism. This renewed focus on Marx, especially the theory of value, and on Critical Theory took place together with attempts to intervene in the Left.

Most recently, in the wake of the anti-Semitic attacks of 9/11 and in the face of the fraternization of the global Left with the Ba'athists in Iraq and Islamists in Afghanistan and Palestine, Anti-Deutsch concluded that solidarity with Third World movements is solidarity with barbarism. Emancipatory, communist critique had to be articulated *against* the Left.

The rotten, headless, and footless corpse, with its unbearable stench of resentment, has been left for the bourgeois scientists and their cadaver-eating leftist counterparts. The only question that matters: How could it have been left to rot for such a long time? **IP**

1 Theodor W. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3–4.
2 Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," in *New Left Review* I/233 (Jan–Feb 1999): 129.
3 Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Editions HIS Verlagsges, 2005), 48.
4 Oskar Lafontaine, "We Want to Overthrow Capitalism," interview by Spiegel Online, May 14, 2009, <www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,624880,00.html#ref=nlint>.
5 Oskar Lafontaine, "Das Ressentiment hat einen Namen—Oskar L.," Wartezeit überbrücken, posted March 24, 2009, <waiting.blogsport.de/2009/03/24/das-ressentiment-hat-einen-namen-oskar-l/>.