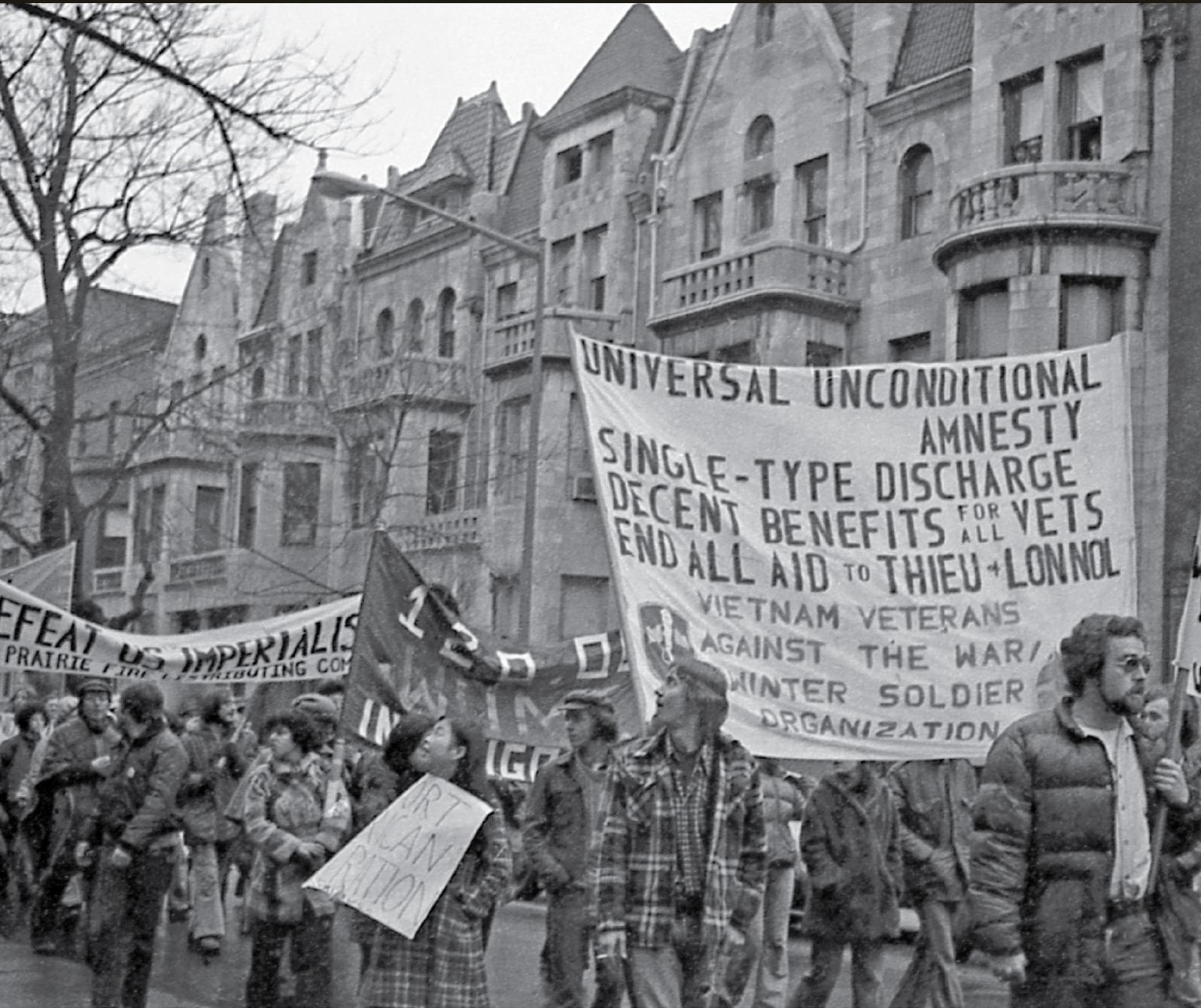


# *Journal of Studies in History & Culture*



## **Articles | Interviews | Reprints | Reviews**

**Malini Bhattacharya | H el ene Zamor | Arpita Mitra | Anthony Eames  
Anna Barcz | Antonio Perra | Uma Das Gupta | Rabindranath Tagore  
Ashok Mitra | Tariq Ali | Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta | Frank Jacob**

**Issue 1 | Vol. 1 | Fall-Winter 2014**

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## Editors' Note

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The *Journal of Studies in History and Culture* (JSHC) was born over many stimulating conversations with friends and colleagues, regarding the limitations as well as the lack of dialogue across the disciplines. This was and is still a uniform phenomenon across the world, albeit with varying attempts at bridging the divide having been initiated in some centres.

Connected with this was the question of making research accessible to everybody. Scholarly research has for many years been circulating within the academia without taking up a holistic approach and engaging with the people at large.

JSHC would hope to provide a platform both towards an interdisciplinary approach and research which analyzes existing scholarship through a new lens. Our first issue is an endeavour towards that very goal, while keeping our journal open access. We also hope to publish many relevant articles from our historical, cultural and literary heritage, in translations so as to make them available to all.

Even though we had numerous submissions for our first issue, many of which showed a definite bend towards engaging in a dialogue, a cross disciplinary methodological predisposition and a scientific bend, we could have included only so many. Our contributors co-operated throughout the process and had their revised papers sent to us in time for publication, for which we are grateful.

Our CFP was broadly constructed on the basis of varying forms of resistance, protest movements, etc. We were also specific about not building our issue around a specific theme so as not to be constrained in scope for our first issue. Many of the papers included here do suggest a commonality of topoi while others may not.

Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta and Frank Jacob's book reviews cover two books from diverse topics—one falling broadly within the contours of comparative literature and comparative cultural studies while the other is essentially archaeology and history.

Our reprint section was born out of our belief in digitizing a bit of what needs to be preserved and making it accessible to scholars all over the world. In this we intend to

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publish scholarly essays by academics, litterateurs, etc., which might still be relevant today but are not available in print anymore. In our very first issue we have an essay by Uma Das Gupta on Rabindranath Tagore's sense of history, analyses which shall shed much light on how he differed from the notions of the revivalists and yet was embedded in his cultural matrix. Tagore's own essay on 'his' vision of India's history has also been reprinted here.

Malini Bhattacharya's special article deals with many of the issues which have shrouded us in a sense of despair at the moment. While atrocities against women continue unabated, the recent incident of police violence on protesting students at Jadavpur University has cast a pall over the academic community at large.

Dr. Ashok Mitra's interview is essentially an insightful diagnosis of the Left. A critique is, most of the times, laced with pain and a sense of loss, which is more than evident from his words.

Tariq Ali talks on issues ranging from Crimea to the conflict at Gaza. His insightful analyses of imperialism as well as the perceptible yearning for an alternative, makes the interview a timely interjection in times like ours.

Author bios have been provided for all articles, other than Tagore's.

Despite our best efforts the issue may contain errors and mistakes. Any inconvenience caused due to this is regretted.

The Editors - JSHC

Special Article / Malini Bhattacharya.

## Women's Matters

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There was a time when there would be a weekly or fortnightly 'women's page' in prominent national and regional newspapers. Traditionally pre-eminence would be given in these to cookery and home-making, but in the 1970s and 1980s, other voices were also emerging on these pages raising questions about women's status, about laws that need to be changed and about social attitudes on gender. Today it has mostly disappeared; I do not know about other regions, but it is not there in the most widely-circulated Bengali papers. This perhaps suggests an universalisation of 'women's issues' which should make people like us who have been fighting for this over the years happy. But one suspects that there is actually another dimension to this which causes concern.

In most big newspapers, the editor's autonomy has given place to the overweening power of the owner or the financial manager who is obsessed with his/her own ideas of what would sell. It is generally modern, urban, progressive and educated women who are seen as the target group of such newspapers. If women who matter are already thus empowered, then what is the use of keeping a special niche for them? They are already part of the 'mainstream' readers! On the other hand, such women are also assumed to be inveterate consumers and the policy-makers do not mind choking newspaper space with illustrated reports on fashion-shows, shopping and eating sprees, weddings and birthday parties presided over by celebrities and even celebrations of 'karva chauth' and 'dhanteras'. This is how 'women's matters' find a space in the mainstream today.

There are of course exceptions to this. For one thing, journalists have not necessarily sold themselves out to this exclusively commercial approach and they do sometimes succeed in smuggling in 'women's matters' of a different and more thought-provoking kind even when they have less appeal to the consumerist instincts of the reader. Secondly, there are occasions when some particularly blatant incident

(generally of some atrocity) agitates the public mind so much that media has to foreground it, if for no other reason than for its sensational nature, and when this happens, articles, debates and media discourses on the issues thrown up by the incident find prime space in newspapers for some time. But then the furore subsides as the situation throws up some other exciting subject and 'women's matters' again take a secondary place in them.

I am not arguing here for a return of the 'women's page', but for a more consistent and regular interest within public space, of which media is an important part, in urgent matters which are outside the ambience of the consumerist approach taken by media. That even the needs of the empowered woman targeted by newspapers are not covered by market-driven solutions offered by media is evident from recent incidents in Viswa Bharati and Jadavpur University. Media deserves praise for highlighting these incidents, but its general atmosphere of trivialization still tends to brush aside the burning questions raised by them.

Both Viswa Bharati and Jadavpur University are elite institutions of higher education in the public sector known not only for academic excellence but also for a liberal atmosphere within the campus which enables women to move around with freedom and self-confidence. Even under the guardianship of its illustrious founder Rabindranath Tagore, Viswa Bharati had allowed its women greater freedom of movement than other educational institutions did at that time. The same can be said of Jadavpur University since more and more women came to study here from the 1950s particularly in the newly-founded faculties of Arts and Science. Jadavpur University was one of the first institutions in the country to develop Women's Studies as an academic field and had been able to put in place a comprehensive gender policy for the campus and to implement it in accordance with the Visaka Guidelines before most other higher education institutions in the country. The general liberal atmosphere in both institutions had been sorely put to test from time to time, particularly in recent times, but the academic community had still survived these tests.

The two incidents that took place in these institutions in the course of the last few months have assumed a different dimension because in each case the topmost administration has not only failed to respond appropriately to the charge of

molestation (molestation and blackmailing in the case of Viswa Bharati) brought against senior male students of the institutions by girls who were studying in the same place, but further because in both cases there have been atrocious attempts by the administration to suppress the complaints. In the case of Jadavpur, the administration went several steps further by getting the protesting students beaten up not only by the police, but also allegedly by armed goons associated with the ruling party. The operation took place at dead of night right in front of the Administrative Building at the personal behest of the Vice Chancellor and girl students too were allegedly beaten mercilessly, as well as molested.

Jadavpur is still on the boil because the entire academic community, including students, teachers and non-teaching employees, have decided to resist the Government move to give permanent tenure of Vice-Chancellorship to a man who has discredited himself so badly and has even refused so far to utter a single word of regret. In Viswa Bharati, a strange dead silence is pressing down upon the campus in spite of the fact that the complainant has been virtually forced to interrupt her studies and return home and while the police have arrested the accused students on the basis of the girl's FIR, the administration has done nothing to salvage its accountability in the matter of the mishandling of the issue and the attempt to suppress facts. While the matter is known to the Central Government and the UGC, they too have maintained silence so far. In the meantime both campuses are overrun by security personnel of all kinds engaged by the administration and restrictions have been imposed on the movements of students and teachers as well as 'outsiders' like emeritus professors, alumni, visitors, retired teachers and other employees.

Instead of remaining confined to these two incidents, however, my proposition here is that the present situation within these elite institutions is symptomatic of a general shift in the negative direction in public perception. The image of the emancipated woman in media whose consumer status enables her to wield complete control over her own world tends to cover up this shift. The image in media asserts the emancipated status of the modern urban woman who is its target. But in public perception, this status is trashed so that her vulnerability is exposed. The callousness and hypocrisy of the administration in the two institutions feeds on the widespread attitude that we find in the public sphere today that women who speak up against

sexual or familial violence are out to make trouble, that their moral character is in question, that they are making false complaints to bring trouble to men and so on. A distinction is also made between the traditional woman and the modern elite woman with disruptive tendencies. If they really face sexual violence in fact, it is asserted that they attract it by their boldness. The University authorities in both cases have proceeded on the assumption that an issue has been made out of trivial occurrences only by media to disrupt order on the campus and it will die down when media ceases to take interest. This itself shows how the all-pervasiveness of media distorts reality.

Sometimes today, the question arises as to whether there has been a real rise in the incidence of violence against women, or whether it is because women complain more often and media highlights such complaints that we have an impression of increase. To put the same question from a different angle, are women more empowered since they are voicing complaints or does the rise in complaints show that their vulnerability has gone up? I would say that there is some truth in both these views. Through their larger participation in the public sphere, women have acquired a voice of their own. Supported by the Constitutional promise of no discrimination, they have fought for equal rights and have succeeded on the basis of their struggles in bringing changes in law and in policy which might give them greater autonomy and dignity. All this has been happening since Independence and traditional society has shown signs of positive changes. However, when the forces of patriarchal conservatism within society are spurred by the fear of losing control, they always generate a backlash. This has caused a real aggravation in all kinds of violence against women particularly in the last two or three decades when the state itself has changed its character under the compulsion of neo-liberalism.

The assurance of unfettered growth and free trade relations with the whole world underlying the neo-liberal agenda carries the sheen of a global brand of modernity. Still such are the self-contradictions within this agenda that it can only flourish by aligning with the most reactionary tendencies within society. To allow ruthless competition, all protective measures to ensure the democratic rights of the vulnerable sections of society are withdrawn by the state; apart from aggravation of economic inequality this also has the effect of encouraging and reinforcing the

conservative backlash from within society. It is not as if traditional society did not suffer earlier from fear of losing control over subservient sections like women; it is not as if it did not make pious utterances and take stringent action to crush or contain dissent. But in independent India, some constitutional and legal protection had been extended by the democratic republic to such sections. Conservatism had persisted, but it had remained subdued to some extent in the public sphere.

Today, however, not just ordinary people, but celebrities, elected representatives and religious leaders make the most horrendous statements in public with impunity. Bhupender Singh Hooda as chief minister of Haryana justified the activities of the so-called 'khap panchayats' and said publicly that it is the sentiment of the family that leads to honour killings. Mahant Adityanath, a member of Parliament, propagated the fabricated theory of 'love jihad' which not only encouraged honour crimes, but added fuel to communal tension. Tapas Paul, also an elected member of Parliament, talks in an open meeting of getting houses of his political opponents raided by 'my boys' who would also rape the women in these houses. Lobbies which seek to dilute or trash laws to protect women from domestic violence on the argument that women are prone to misuse these laws are given political legitimacy by the state itself. Let us take the case of the two Universities mentioned earlier. A law has now replaced the Visaka Guidelines on sexual harassment at workplace. What prevented the University authorities from informing the complainants about available redress and from setting up a legally constituted 'internal committee' to enquire into the complaint? Nothing but that neither the state nor the institutions feel that all efforts must be put in implementing the laws which protect women's lives and dignity. Withdrawal of the state from the social sector means that even the minimum budgetary support is lacking for such implementation. The 'mantra' of development tells us that people are expendable, women more so.

Another factor that links the neo-liberal regime with the increased violence on women is the fragmentation of the rights perspective. Abdication by the state of its responsibility to look after the rights of all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, religion and gender, means that it grows more and more oppressive towards minorities and vulnerable sections. Not only the economically dominant, but the socially dominant are free to install the rule of majoritarianism. The aspirations of

the oppressed then get channelized into separate caste-based, community-based lobbies. Sectional control over women becomes important as a result of this identity politics. Hindu patriarchy, Muslim patriarchy, patriarchy within dalit and Adivasi groups gets intensified. An Adivasi girl going to work outside her community as a result of increased mobility enforced by neo-liberal forms of labour is not only vulnerable to exploitation by non-tribal employers where she works, but she also gets penalized by their enforced conservatism within her own community.

The fact that women today are fighting conservatism under circumstances that are quite unprecedented cannot be denied. But there is no going back for them. There is an attempt to revive the myth that women are better off at home and that they can even earn while working from home. To prescribe domesticity when public space is allowed to become more and more unsafe for women only serves to revive conservatism at a very different level altogether at a time when women are trying very hard to protect their right to the public space which they have gained through a long fight. The space they are given in mainstream media is by no means adequate to highlight where the real struggle for empowerment lies. A Malala Yusufzai may be showcased for having survived a vicious attack from Talibans. But when this violence is highlighted we think of it as violence coming only from within a traditional society from which global modernity can save us. The reconstitution of conservatism in a world caught in the grip of neo-liberalism is ignored. The iconic language of mainstream corporate media today mostly reinforces this ideological neglect. To widen and deepen this discourse, then, we have to discover alternative channels of communication.

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JSHC / Special Article / F-W 2014

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## Emergence of the Martiniquan Gwan Wòb

by

Hélène Zamor

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### Introduction

The Gwan Wòb, the national costume of Martinique, came into existence during colonial times. It is the end-product of creolization. In the past, it was worn for specific events such as church services, weddings and christenings and by women who were over fifty years old. Although, the Gwan Wòb is not now worn daily, it has remained present in Martinique's cultural tradition. During Carnival, there are contests in which both the Reines (Queens) and Mini-Reines (Mini-Queens) who are dressed in their Gwan Wòb parade on stage in front of judges. The Madras Material which is usually used for the headpiece now makes dresses, shirts, blouses and other accessories such as bags or purses. Gwan (Grande) is the Creole for "large" or "big". Wòb (Robe) is the French Creole word for dress. Together the term Gwan Wòb may be described as the full dress, since the costume comprises of a full length skirt and a blouse or dress. Some costumes are made up of as many as five pieces, including headdress, underskirt and other layers of material that complete the outfit. In nineteenth-century Trinidad, the Gwan Wòb was known as the "Martinican Dress"<sup>1</sup>.

#### 1. Creolization

Anthropologists, historians, linguists and other researchers have expressed a strong interest in the concept of creolization over the years. The word "Creole" initially referred to a person of French and Spanish ancestry (Bolland 2002, 15).

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<sup>1</sup> Pamela R. Franco. "The Martinican Dress and politics in nineteenth-century Trinidad Carnival". In *Culture in Action-The Trinidad Experience*, ed. Milla Cozart Riggio (New York: Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, 2004), 65. The dress was given the name of Martinican Dress because most of the immigrants who came to Trinidad were from Martinique. Various costly pieces of material such as scotch plaid, printed cotton, silk, damask, madras muslin and lace were used to make the Martinican Dress.

Another definition of the word Creole was given by Roberts who writes: "From its beginning, the term "criollo" was once used primarily for differentiation rather than for identifying a place or a specific national, cultural or ethnic group" (Roberts 2008, 265). The term was later applied to Africans and Europeans who were born in the New World. In recent times, local products which originated from both the Old and New World elements have been perceived as "Creole" as well.

The notion of creolization developed in the field of Linguistics around the mid-twentieth century. Linguists suggest that Creole languages came from pidgins which arose during contacts between Europeans and non-Europeans outside Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Creoles and pidgins are mostly associated with plantations and trades. Linguists draw our attention to the differences existing between both Creoles and Pidgins. The former owes its existence to European and African languages. They draw the bulk of their lexicon from the European (English, Dutch, French, Portuguese and Spanish) and present affinities with African dialects in terms of syntax, pronunciation and grammar. In contrast to Creoles, pidgins have no native speakers because they arose in contact situations particularly during trade in the sixteenth century. Creoles were spoken by slaves who were born in the colonies.

Kamau Brathwaite<sup>2</sup>, a well-known Barbadian poet and writer, made a valuable contribution to the study of creolization of the Jamaican colonial society. He defines creolization as a "form of "cultural action based upon the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their environment and-as White/Black, culturally discrete groups-to each other". He also argues that "the scope and quality of this response and interaction were dictated by the new circumstances of the society's foundation and composition". We must bear in mind that the newcomers responded to changes in various ways to adjust to their new environment. Even though the slaves were forced into abandoning some of

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<sup>2</sup> Brathwaite, kamau. The Development of Creole society in Jamaica 1770-1820. (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005), 296

their customs they managed to preserve some aspects of their culture: music and dance. The changes in the newcomers' lifestyle were associated with the rigid laws of the plantation society where each group of individuals was granted a particular status. For instance, the upper-class was composed of European settlers, priests, merchants and administrators. This group of individuals exerted socio-economic and political power over Free Coloured people<sup>3</sup> and African slaves. The freemen class consisted of free blacks and manumitted Free Coloured people. They were engaged in various entrepreneurial activities such as jewellery making, craft, trading and others<sup>4</sup>.

Let us look at some of the changes that would have occurred in the newcomers' customs. Slaves were imported from various parts of Western Africa. Therefore, they spoke a large number of dialects that were not necessarily mutually intelligible. However, Brathwaite informs us that "the Creole language is not confined to the Negroes. Many of the ladies who have not been educated in England, speak a sort of broken English<sup>5</sup>.... To reinforce Brathwaite's argument, I must say that the French settlers living in colonial Martinique spoke various dialects of the French language. They also came from various parts of France: Bittany, Gascony, Normandy<sup>6</sup>. The amalgamation of these languages gave birth to the French Creole language. Two concepts called "acculturation" and "interculturalization" are discussed by Brathwaite<sup>7</sup>. On the one hand, "acculturation" is the process leading a group of individuals to adopt the culture of another group.

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<sup>3</sup> During the colonial times, many European masters had children with some of their slaves. The term was extended to individuals who were children of a European master and an African slave woman and who were free. When a Free Coloured child was enslaved like his mother, his White father would decide to free him or not. The term Free Coloureds or gens de couleur in French were used in the French colonies of Louisiane, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Sant-Domingue. [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_people\\_of\\_color](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_people_of_color)

Children of mixed race (Black and White) were often referred as "mulattoes".

<sup>4</sup> Pedro L.V. Welch and Richard A "Red" and Black over White. *Free Coloured women in pre-emancipation Barbados*. (Bridgetown: Carib Research & Publications Inc., 2000), 10

<sup>5</sup> Kamau Brathwaite. *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*. (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005), 302.

<sup>6</sup> Dale Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*. (Kingston Publishers Limited), 65. Some of the French settlers also originated from the Ile-de-France and Saintonge. See "Creole".

<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/amsudant/creole.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Kamau Brathwaite. *Contradictory Omens: cultural diversity and integration in the Caribbean*. (University of Texas: Savacou Publications), 11

On the other hand, “interculturalization” takes place when groups of individuals borrow from each other’s culture.

Creolization has recently appeared in the area of culture. Around the nineties, the term “cultural creolization” was implemented in Anthropology by scholar Ulf Hannerz. The term refers to the fusion of two or several distinct cultures and traditions (Eriksen 1999). Buisseret<sup>8</sup> views self-importance, material abundance, climate, environment and economic motives as vital elements in the process of creolization.

Paraphrasing Mintz, Price and Trouillot, Palmie observes: “To be sure, it was in precisely such marginal social spaces that enslaved Africans transformed themselves from mere collectivities of deracinated individuals into viable communities integrated by cultural forms that, although selectively drawing on Old World resources, were nevertheless wholly the products of locally eventuating and locally inflected histories of struggle<sup>9</sup>.”

The International Migration Institute<sup>10</sup> at Oxford University recognizes that ‘Creolization’ is a “highly contested term, used in multiple contexts and in largely inconsistent ways.” The IMI notes: “While there is a general consensus among scholars that its utility can extend beyond the study of Creole languages and linguistics, there remains an unresolved debate around the extent to which creolization can be applied outside its initial associations with colonization, slavery and the plantation system in the New World. Indeed, for some, creolization refers specifically to the violent encounters between the cultures of colonizers, slaves and indigenous people in the New World – and more specifically the Caribbean – and to use the term beyond such contexts risks undervaluing or disregarding the highly politicized circumstances within which the terminology emerged.” (Palmie, 8)

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<sup>8</sup> Buisseret, David. *Creolization in the Americas*. (Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>9</sup>Stephan Palmie. “Creolization and its discontents”.

Isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic454352.files/creolization%20and%its%20c.

<sup>10</sup> Olivia Sheringham and Robin Cohen. *Quotidian creolization and diaspora echoes: Resistance and co-optation in Cape Verde and Louisiana*. Working papers, July 2013. [www.mi.ox.ac](http://www.mi.ox.ac)

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Outside of its linguistic origins, Creolization was expressed in a variety of ways, beginning with the arrival in the New World of both Africans and Europeans who had to make adjustments to their lifestyle in order to adapt to their new environment.

In the sixties, a literary and political movement called Antillanité was spearheaded by the late Martiniquan poet and writer Edouard Glissant. Antillanité was created to redefine French Caribbean identity. For Glissant, Martinique's society is diversified because of the colonial experience of the island. Martinique shares a common past with other islands in the Caribbean.

Two decades after the birth of Antillanité, Martiniquan writers Jean Bernabé, Raphaël Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau established their Créolité School. Inspired by the late writer Edouard Glissant's concept of Antillanité<sup>11</sup>, the three authors of *Eloge de la Créolité*<sup>12</sup> also recognized that Martinique is multiracial. Martiniquans are descendants of Africans, Asians and Europeans. Bernabé and his colleagues wrote: "Creoleness is an "interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history"<sup>13</sup>. The use of the French Creole is encouraged by the Créolité fathers: "Creole, our first language, we the Caribbeans, the Guyanese, the

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<sup>11</sup>During the sixties, Edouard Glissant observed that Martiniquans' cultural identity was under threat because of the dominant French culture and political power. Most of the English-speaking Caribbean territories opted to become independent after the Second World War whereas Guadeloupe, French Guyana and Martinique have remained politically attached to France. In other words, they are not independent and they were granted the status of French Overseas Departments in 1946.

The creation of both Antillanité and Créolité Schools was a response to the Negritude founders (Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Gontran-Damas) who stressed more on Black identity. According to Glissant and his colleagues, the Négritude pioneers including Aimé Césaire (Martinique), failed to acknowledge the presence of Asians in Martinique.

During the thirties, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Gontran-Damas who were studying in Paris saw the need of revalorizing the African race and culture in the Black diaspora. According to them, Blacks from Africa, France and Antilles should be united. Aimé Césaire used the term Négritude which derives from French "nègre" literally "Negro" in order to pay tribute to Africa in his book entitled *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Return to my Native Land).

<sup>12</sup> Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. *Eloge de la Créolité. In Praise of Creoleness* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1993), 87

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

Mascarins, is the initial means of communication of deep self, or our collective unconscious, of our common genius, and it remains the river of our alluvial Creoleness.”<sup>14</sup> Emilia Melasuo<sup>15</sup> mentions that Patrick Chamoiseau has replaced some French words “serpent”<sup>16</sup> and “HML” by French equivalents “bête-longue” and “achélème.

Edouard Glissant<sup>17</sup> views the process of creolization as a dynamic phenomenon. In today’s world, many cultures and regions are creolized because globalization, migration the media, tourism and economic forces. Glissant mentions the case of Europe where many immigrants from various parts of the world have brought with them their culture. He explains that the continent hosts numerous regional dialects (Basque, Corsican, Catalan...) and other languages. Creolization has been taking place in Arts, music, cinematography and Literature.

### The Madras Material and the Code Noir

Buisseret’s views on creolization may be also relevant to understanding how the Gwan Wòb was created. Economic prosperity was the main concern of the French who set up their trading posts in India in the early seventeenth century. They purchased cotton, embroidery and Madras handkerchiefs. Another source indicates that the Real Madras Handkerchief travelled to African countries including Benin, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Liberia. (Prasad, 158). Some other sources point out a strong Senegalese influence in the use of Madras. It was also brought to London and auctioned either to the Royal Africa Company or private merchants.

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Emilia Melasuo. “Paroles d’Espoirs. Oralité dans Texaco de Patrick Chamoiseau”. April 5, 2004. <http://users.utu.fi/emjume/Senegal-projekti/Memoires/Texaco.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> French words « serpent » and « HML » means « snake » and « Low-income housing ». The abbreviation HLM stands for Habitation à Loyer Modéré.

<sup>17</sup> Frédéric Joignot, “Pour l’écrivain Edouard Glissant, la créolisation du monde est irréversible », *Le Monde.fr*. February 4, 2011, <http://www.lemonde.fr/disparitions/article/2011>

The Madras material was found on the Martiniquan shores when the first Frenchwomen settled in the island during the seventeenth century (Zamor 2014, 1). Due to the tropical climate of Martinique, these women covered their heads with the material. In addition to the climatic conditions of Martinique and the economic motives of the French, self-importance and social status accounted for the use of Madras in the Martiniquan society. It is important to note that the life of the slaves was regimented by the Black Code also known as Le Code Noir in French. This decree was passed by Louis XIV in 1685. It dictated the conditions of slavery in all French colonies and imposed the Catholic religions upon the Blacks. Slaves in particular were not able to retain all their customs due to the pressure to which they were subjected under institutional instruments of control such as the Code Noir.

Under the Code Noir, the dress code for slaves, Free Coloured and Emancipated individuals, that helped to symbolize class and race differences, were defined. For example, female slaves were compelled to wear a white blouse, two skirts and silver jewellery. Neither Free Coloured women nor the Affranchies (Emancipated women) were allowed to wear hats. Therefore, they wore Madras headpieces for which they created an interesting language code. Their headpieces were tied to four peaks. One peak meant: I am single. Two peaks: I am married. Three peaks: I am a widow or divorced. Four peaks: I accept everyone who tries<sup>18</sup>.

### 2. Self Identity and erotic Agency

I am of the opinion that both Free Coloured and Emancipated women were searching for self-identity since they were oppressed by the rigidity of the colonial power. For them, wearing Madras headpieces were not merely symbols of beauty but also a search to assert themselves in a racially and socially divided society. This is a language of symbolic resistance which Mimi Sheller<sup>19</sup> notes is an

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<sup>18</sup> National Dress of Saint Lucia. Folk Research Center-St Lucia Outfits. [www.stluciafolk.org/outfits/view/18](http://www.stluciafolk.org/outfits/view/18).

<sup>19</sup> Sheller, M. 2012. *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom*. Duke University Press. pp 251.

important frame of reference for unsilencing the practices of agency by the subaltern during colonialism. The literature reveals that a Matadore was a woman who dated several men for money and jewellery (*Costumes Créoles*, 3). Sheller describes this as erotic agency – a form of “embodied resistance” within structures dominated by bio power after Foucault, i.e. the use of the body as an agent of resistance. Paraphrasing Kempadoo, Sheller also notes that the sexual economy undergirds inequalities with “possibilities for agency.”<sup>20</sup> Agency for Foucault<sup>21</sup> is also a feature of the racist relationship between state and individuals during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this regard, Foucault observes that the state was aware of citizens’ sex, and that sex was employed as an instrument of control. For instance, the citizens’ sex lives were tightly “scrutinized” as far as birth rates, death rates and illegitimate births<sup>22</sup> were concerned.

The Matadore also made herself popular by wearing a sophisticated Madras headpiece. The literature distinguishes between the Matadore du Nord and the Matadore du Sud. The former lived in the northern town of Saint-Pierre in Martinique while the latter resided in the south of the island. The headpiece of the Matadore of Saint-Pierre comprised a small triangle at the front and a pleated tail at the back. However, the headpiece of the Matadore du Sud was different. It was shaped like a fan in the front and in the back<sup>23</sup>.

The idea of the exotic valorization of particular regions of the world during the colonial period is stressed by Kempadoo<sup>24</sup> as a practice that imposes inferiority upon the culture. Paraphrasing Porter (Kempadoo, 426), Kempadoo notes that exotic lands provided Europeans with “paradigms of the exotic.” “Away from the repressive sexual mores of western Europe, strange cultures and particularly the

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, M. 2000. 2001. “The History of Sexuality” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. W. W. Norton and Company. New York. pp 1635

<sup>22</sup> *The History of sexuality: an Introduction Vol 1 Part Two Chapter*.  
[www.sparkNotes.com/philosophy/histofsex/Section1.html](http://www.sparkNotes.com/philosophy/histofsex/Section1.html)

<sup>23</sup> *Costumes Créoles*. <http://kmaniok.fr/merveille/merveille.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Kempadoo, K. 2013. “Theorizing Sexual Relations in the Caribbean” in *Caribbean Cultural Thought*. Ed. Hume, Yanique and Kamugisha, Aaron. pp 424-445

women in them, became sex where sex “was neither penalized, nor pathologized nor exclusively procreative.” The Matadore is an exemplar of

how white exoticism is mediated in Martinique and how perceptions of women as sexual and erotic objects, to follow Kempadoo, were consolidated in the period, with the mulatto woman being particularly exotic. (Kempadoo, 2012, /430-431)

In 1887, with France already a nation devastated by slave uprisings in Haiti to inaugurate the end of their colonial rule in the West Indies, Greek born international traveller, Lafcadio Hearn<sup>25</sup> notes how the *fille de couleur*<sup>26</sup> was compromised by the bankruptcy of the White *béké*<sup>27</sup>. Before the seizure of her property for debt, the *fille de couleur* “pours out her pain in song, like a bird.” The author includes one of these improvisations, in which the Madras, a stamp of elegance and security, become part of the legend of Martinique’s colonial sexual economy. He speaks to what is now termed by scholars “erotic agency” and the undermining of the Matadore’s economic prospects by the prevailing circumstances of economic and social ruin in the colony for the *béké*.

“Yearly the number of failures increase; and more whites emigrate;— and with every bankruptcy or departure some *fille-de-couleur* is left almost destitute, to begin life over again. Many a one has been rich and poor several times in succession;—one day her property is seized for debt;—perhaps on the morrow she finds some one able and willing to give her a home again,... Whatever comes, she

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<sup>25</sup>Lafcadio Hearn. *Two Years In The French West Indies*. Project Gutenberg. August 2004. Last updated: November 17, 2012. Accessed August 20, 2014, <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/>.

<sup>26</sup> The “*fille de couleur*” literally means “Coloured girl”. The term was initially used by the French settlers to refer to both Black women and women of mixed-race (Black and White).

<sup>27</sup> The origins of the word *Béké* are not clear. However, it is said that it may have originated from Nigeria where it is used to refer to a White person or a European. See article entitled *Béké*-Wikipedia. [fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Béké](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Béké). In the French Caribbean, a *Béké* is also a White person who is a descendant of a French colonizer and who was born in the French Caribbean (both Guadeloupe and Martinique). During the colonial period and after Emancipation, the *Béké* ran his ancestors’ plantations in order to preserve his economic power and the sugar industry. In modern times, *Békés* are still in control of the economy of Martinique.

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does not die for grief, this daughter of the sun: she pours out her pain  
in song, like a bird."

—*"Good-bye Madras!*  
*Good-bye foulard!*  
*Good-bye pretty calicoes!*  
*Good-bye collier-choux!*  
*That ship*  
*Which is there on the buoy,*  
*It is taking*  
*My doudoux away.*

—*"Adiéu Madras!*  
*Adiéu foulard!*  
*Adiéu dézinde!*  
*Adiéu collier-choux!*  
*Batiment-là*  
*Qui sou labouè-là,*  
*Li ka mennein*  
*Doudoux-à-moin allé.*

[He (the *béké*) answers kindly in French: the *békés* are always kind to  
these gentle children.]

—*"My dear child,*  
*It is too late.*  
*The bills of lading*  
*Are already signed;*  
*The ship*  
*Is already on the buoy.*  
*In an hour from now*  
*They will be getting her under way."*

—*"Ma chère enfant*  
*Il est trop tard,*  
*Les connoissements*

*Sont déjà signés,  
Est déjà sur la bouée;  
Dans une heure d'ici,  
Ils vont appareiller."*

—*"When the foulards came....  
I always had some;  
When the Madras-kerchiefs came,  
I always had some;  
When the printed calicoes came,  
I always had some.  
... That second officer—Is such a kind man!*

—*"Foulard rivé,  
Moin té toujou tini;  
Madras rivé,  
Moin té toujou tini;  
Dézindes rivé,  
Moin té toujou tini.—Capitaine sougonde  
C'est yon bon gâçon!"*

### 3. The Madras Headpiece

Needless to say the Madras headpiece<sup>28</sup> is obviously a product of creolization. Both the Real Madras Handkerchief and its counterpart Imité Madras made inroads into the Martiniquan society. A description of the Real Madras Handkerchief is provided by Devika (1999) who explains that the fabric is "36 inches wide and woven in lengths of 24 yards". Each yard is marked by a stripe in order to make the square handkerchief. Furthermore, it is a light and hand-woven fabric with squares. In order to make Madras designs, manufactures resort to

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<sup>28</sup> The Madras headpiece was worn essentially by women who were eighteen and over. The Martiniquan expression "prendre la tête" literally meaning "take the (new) head" was commonly used to indicate that an eighteen-year old woman was no longer wearing a scarf to cover her head. Instead, she began to wear the Madras headpiece. Pamela R. Franco. "The Martinican Dress and politics in nineteenth-century Trinidad Carnival". In *Culture in Action-The Trinidad Experience*, ed. Millia Cozart Riggio, (New York: Routledge, 2004, 70).

plain weaves also known as dobbies and carded yarns depending on the quality of the material<sup>29</sup>. Fabric historians note that the first Madras “was made of yarn from the tip-skin of old trees”<sup>30</sup>. According to Prasad, the Real Madras handkerchiefs were produced and exported from South India for more than 400 years. “The Portuguese were the earliest involved in the trade with West Africa and were followed by Dutch, French and English merchants.” Prasad<sup>31</sup> states that the weavers in the Chirala area of the Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh were trained in the Jacquard weaving from French traders. Sandra Lee Evanson<sup>32</sup> also states that the Kalahari people of Nigeria adopted the Real Indian Madras possibly since the 1400s for rituals and other ceremonies and for daily wear. Also known as Injiri, Madras “was imported by Portuguese, Dutch, and English traders through the East India Companies to West Africa, possibly even from the earliest days of trade in the 1400's due to the Portuguese trading post empire.”<sup>33</sup> English, French and Portuguese traders loved this special material for various purposes.

In the early days, it was common to see the Martiniquan women brighten the colors of their Mouchoirs<sup>34</sup>. Thus, they borrowed the “calendage” technique from the Indian indentured workers who came to the French island around 1853. This technique consisted of painting all the pink squares of the Mouchoir with an Arabic gum and yellow chrome. If we follow Prasad’s argument, the possibility exists that Indian indentured servants in Martinique had also come to the colony with weaving techniques handed down by French traders living in India. This may be a part of the explanation for its high popularity within the French colonies.

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<sup>29</sup> The History and Making of Plaid Madras. <http://www.plaidmadras.com/plaid-madras/the-history-and-making-of-plaid-madras>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Prasad Puttu Guru. “The forgotten Saga of Real Madras Handkerchief”.

[www.scrib.com/doc/18382306/real-madras-handkerchiefs-the-forgotten](http://www.scrib.com/doc/18382306/real-madras-handkerchiefs-the-forgotten) saga of Real Madras Handkerchief”. [www.scrib.com/doc/18382306/real-madras-handkerchiefs-the-forgotten-saga-of-RMHKfull-paper-RMHK](http://www.scrib.com/doc/18382306/real-madras-handkerchiefs-the-forgotten-saga-of-RMHKfull-paper-RMHK)

<sup>32</sup>Evanson, Sandra Lee. n.d. “The Role Of The Middleman In The Trade Of Real Madras Handkerchief (Madras Plaids).” Pp. 94-304. Available @ [digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> The French word “mouchoir” means handkerchief. It is also called “Imitation Madras” because it looks like the Real Madras Handkerchief. However, it is a piece of material which is not as strong as the Real Madras Handkerchief. Most the time, the dominant colours of the Mouchoir include navy blue, pink and green

The Real Madras Handkerchief generates a spicy smell because of the use of turmeric powder and indigenous indigo<sup>35</sup>. The most common colours found in Madras include red, blue and black<sup>36</sup>. Both yellow and green are extracted from plants and minerals. Madras producers soak their fabric in a mixture consisting of boiling water, soda, salt and stabilizers. Research indicates that the colours of the Imité Madras are darker (navy blue, pink green sometimes red.) The material itself is woven out of fibres. Prior to the calendage process, the calendeuse washes the madras with vinegar or sea water. Afterwards, the fabric was starched with cassava flour. The preparation of the starch required the use of castor oil, wax (candle) and a pinch of salt. Boiling water was also added to the mixture which had to cool for 24 hours. After soaking the Madras material in the mixture, the calendeuse put it to dry away from the sun and the light. Once, the material is dried, it is ironed. Finally, the material was stretched across a wide piece of board and painted. The Tête Calendée was the name given to the Mouchoir headpiece. There seems to be a close connection between the Madras headpiece and the French provincial styles. In article entitled "Traditional Dress in Dominica<sup>37</sup>", the Madras headpiece is described as follows: "a white kerchief was wrapped around the head or sometimes shaped into a bonnet...French provincial woman".

#### 4. The Gwan Wòb and Exotic

The Gwan Wòb deserves careful attention. Other names such as *douillette*, *wòb* or *wòb agwan jipon* or *dwett* are common in the French Creole-speaking islands of Dominica and St. Lucia. Before the Gwan Wòb came into existence, the *chemise-jupe*<sup>38</sup> was the first dress used by the Creole women. Under the rigid laws of the Code Noir, slave women wore a white blouse, two skirts and silver jewellery. The first skirt was usually colourful whereas the second one was made from cotton and muslin. They covered their heads with a white piece of cotton. The *chemise-jupe*

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<sup>35</sup> The Handloom Export Promotion Council. <http://www.hepcindia.com/handkerchief.php>.

<sup>36</sup> Indian Textiles: Trade and Production. [www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/intx/hd/\\_intx.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/intx/hd/_intx.htm). Accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>37</sup> "Traditional dress in Dominica". [http://www.avirtualdominica.com/trad\\_dress.htm](http://www.avirtualdominica.com/trad_dress.htm).

<sup>38</sup> The word "chemise-jupe" means "blouse-skirt". In colonial Trinidad, the chemise-jupe was called à la jupe or chemisette et jupe. Pamela R. Franco. "The Martinican Dress and politics in nineteenth-century Trinidad Carnival". In *Culture in Action-The Trinidad Experience*, edited by Milla Cozart Riggio (New York: Routledge, 2004), 65

was comprised of a calf length skirt and a white cotton or poplin blouse. Red ribbons were added to the collar and the sleeves. Both the *Affranchies* and Free Coloured women adopted the *chemise-jupe*. Additionally, they put a piece of Madras material around their waists<sup>39</sup>. Frenchwomen wore a wide flower-printed cotton or silk skirt. The French civil servants' wives adopted embroidered blouses and several satin and lace skirts. A satin foulard completed the *chemise-jupe* style. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Frenchwomen created a one-piece dress to which they added a long trail. The new style was called *Gaule*. Worthy of note are the similarities between the Watteau dress and the Gwan Wòb (Réache and Gargar, 2009, 225). The Watteau dress or the sack-back gown made its appearance at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was described as an informal style but it gradually gained popularity in the French royal court<sup>40</sup>. The dress featured loose box pleats, a flounced corsage and three-quarter sleeves. The *Caraco*, another French dress, became popular in the 1760's. It was open in the front and featured three-quarter sleeves.

The Gwan Wòb is shaped the same way as both the *Caraco* and the Watteau dress. Similarly to the Watteau dress, it features tight three-quarter sleeves and high-waisted and flounced top and a large petticoat. Both the Watteau and Gwan Wòb present a string around the waist. Petticoats in crimson or lace came into fashion. In the nineteenth century, the Gwan wòb "overthrew" the *chemise-jupe* (Hearn, chap. 9). Already in 1887, Hearn attempted to account for the gradual disappearance of the costumes, attributing new social conditions and changes in the colonies to their decline in usage in the post emancipation period. Hearn (2001, 242) writes: "Probably the question of health had something do with the almost universal abandonment in Martinique of the primitive slave-dress, *chemise* and *jupe*-which exposed its wearer to serious risks of pneumonia." He surmised that the "almost universal abandonment" of the *chemise-jupe* could have had more to do with the disappearance of the *béké* as a slave master since slavery was abolished in Martinique in May, 1848. "For as far as economical reasons are concerned, there was no fault to find with it (the *chemise-jupe*) : six francs could

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<sup>39</sup> E. Désormeaux. *Les guides pratiques de la famille créole* (Désormeaux, 2009), 212.

<sup>40</sup> "Caraco" the free encyclopedia en Wikipedia.org/wiki/caraco

purchase it when money was worth more than it is now. The douillette, a long trailing dress, one piece from neck to feet, has taken its place.”

Once women became free after Emancipation, the dress code would have changed. The chemise-jupe as a slave dress that was imposed upon women would have been put aside in favour of the douillette, which was a more elaborate and prestigious dress. Up to then the douillette would have been worn especially by mulattas and free black women. Resistance now took a new shape as women were free from chains and no longer had to adhere to the restrictions of the Slave Code. The Béké, however, would not have completely disappeared from the society in which he was living because he was still in charge of the plantations. Money in scarce supply after Emancipation, the writer was convinced that an inability to purchase the more luxurious variants of dress would have equally contributed to the decline in its use.

“I refer to the celebrated attire of the pet slaves and *belles affranchies* of the old colonial days. A full costume,—including violet or crimson "petticoat" of silk or satin; chemise with half-sleeves, and much embroidery and lace; "trembling-pins" of gold (*zépingue tremblant*) to attach the folds of the brilliant Madras turban; the great necklace of three or four strings of gold beads bigger than peas (*collier-choux*); the ear-rings, immense but light as egg-shells (*zanneaux-à-clous* or *zanneaux-chenilles*); the bracelets (*portes-bonheur*); the studs (*boutons-à-clous*); the brooches, not only for the turban, but for the chemise, below the folds of the showy silken foulard or shoulder-scarf,—would sometimes represent over five thousand francs expenditure. This gorgeous attire is becoming less visible every year: it is now rarely worn except on very solemn occasions,—weddings, baptisms, first communions, confirmations.”

The writer did not conceal his attraction to the sensuality of the Martiniquan pet slave and the “*da* (nurse) or “*porteuse-de-baptême*” when decked out in such attire - who bears the baby to church holds it at the baptismal font, and afterwards carries it from house to house in order that all the friends of the family may kiss it.”

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"If tall, young, graceful, with a rich gold tone of skin, the effect of her costume is dazzling as that of a Byzantine Virgin. I saw one young da who, thus garbed, scarcely seemed of the earth and earthly;—there was an Oriental something in her appearance difficult to describe,—something that made you think of the Queen of Sheba going to visit Solomon. She had brought a merchant's baby, just christened, to receive the caresses of the family at whose house I was visiting; and when it came to my turn to kiss it, I confess I could not notice the child: I saw only the beautiful dark face, coiffed with orange and purple, bending over it, in an illumination of antique gold.... What a da!...She represented really the type of that *belle affranchie* of other days, against whose fascination special sumptuary laws were made; romantically she imaged for me the supernatural god-mothers and Cinderellas of the Creole fairy-tales."

Clearly intrigued by the costume's uniqueness, Hearn's description is reminiscent of what Said refers to as: "not an airy European fantasy"... but a created body of theory and practice."<sup>41</sup>

He compares the adaptation of the female to that of a West Indian Cinderella 'a beautiful metisse" wearing the *collier-choux*, *zépings tremblants*. *Ça té ka baille ou mal zie!*—(it would have given you a pain in your eyes to look at her!)"

He went on to express not only his most considered judgment on the shifting patterns of female fashion within the colony but to show up prejudices based on the racial beliefs and practices of the day to which Darwin and Gobineau lent their well known "scientific" ideologies that became Enlightenment rationales for racial inferiority constructs. The author did not deviate therefore from the then standard belief that racial characteristics were determinate. Reacting to the less worked patterns of the *douillette*, he remarked:

"...the every-day Martinique costume is slowly changing. Year by year the "calendeuses"—the women who paint and fold the turbans—have

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<sup>41</sup> Said, Edward. 2001. "Orientalism." In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Leitch et al. W. W Norton and Company. pp 1995.

less work to do;—the colors of the *douillette* are becoming less vivid;—while more and more young coloured girls are being *élevées en chapeau* ("brought up in a hat")—i.e., dressed and educated like the daughters of the whites. These, it must be confessed, look far less attractive in the latest Paris fashion, unless white as the whites themselves: on the other hand, few white girls could look well in *douillette* and *mouchoir*,—not merely because of color contrast, but because they have not that amplitude of limb and particular cambering of the torso peculiar to the half-breed race, with its large bulk and stature. Attractive as certain coolie women are, I observed that all who have adopted the Martinique costume look badly in it: they are too slender of body to wear it to advantage."

The likely relationship of the Gwan Wòb to the dress tradition of the Montpellier region of southern France has been discussed by Hearn. The dress is completed by elaborate coiffures that might have some association to French country fashions of the south and south west.<sup>42</sup> The departure in style from the French country fashion denotes modification based on the Creolization of Martinique – the interweaving of langue and behaviour to create a new local tradition. The tradition is influenced in no small measure by the capacity of the Madras cotton to retain brilliant dyes and colour on the one hand and by that of the calendeuses to create variations of French style. The inclusion of jewellery (what Hearn calls "semi barbaric") was also a colonial invention by local goldsmiths.<sup>43</sup> The *collier choux* was purchased in beads overtime, after which they were strung and worn. Far more important than the origins of the *douillette* or the *collier-choux*:

"I found (...) the facts of that strange struggle between nature and interest, between love and law, between prejudice and passion, which forms the evolutionary history of the mixed race."

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<sup>42</sup> Hearn, Lafcadio. 1903. **TWO YEARS IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES**  
*Release Date: August, 2004 [EBook #6381]*  
*Last Updated: November 17, 2012*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*

Hearn underscores the unification of disparate cultures into one singular tradition and does not apologize for lack of desire to fully understand or interpret the individual inherent strands of Creolité expressed in the Gwan Wòb. What appears to be valid is the uniqueness of the transformation and its place in the aesthetic world. In contrast, Mintz' and Palmié, developed theories around the Afro-Caribbean context of the social practices derived from Creolité. The idea of the collective identity had been "unclaimed" so that the subaltern in the Afro-Caribbean official discourses held a predominant relationship to the scope and nature of African retentions. Even regionalisms became underrated in these post emancipation discourses. (Palmié: 440)

Even though the Gwan Wòb and its Madras headpieces are no longer worn by modern Martiniquan women, the Madras material has been used to make short dresses, pants, blouses, shorts, bags and purses. The Gwan Wòb is no longer linked to social class and marital status. It has indeed moved to the area of entertainment. During Carnival, as mentioned earlier, some women participate in contests during which they must parade in their Gwan Wòb in front of the judges. They are selected according to a number of criteria: good speech, beauty, choice of pieces of jewellery and good posture. In other words, they must be able to walk confidently in their dress and shoes to become Miss Martinique.

Introduced into Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique and St. Lucia in the eighteenth century, the Quadrille<sup>44</sup> won the hearts of the Free Coloureds, free Blacks and slaves. In the mid-twentieth century, the dance gradually waned in popularity due

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<sup>44</sup> Quadrille, a French square dance, was introduced to the slaves in the eighteenth century. This dance is performed by four couples. In the early days, the French quadrille band features violins, harps and pianos. In Martinique, the dance took the name of Haute-Taille because women used to wear high-waisted dresses. The word Haute-Taille means "high posture". The French Quadrille consists of five dances: Le Pantalon, L'Été, La Poule, La Pastourelle and Le Galop. In Martinique, the Haute-Taille comprises dances such as Contredanse 1, Contredanse 2, Contredanse 3, Contredanse 4, L'Été and L'Aimable. A Haute-Taille band includes an accordion, a Dibas drum, a commandeur (caller) and a siyak. Several steps are executed by the four couples who form a square.

The Guadeloupian Quadrille is made of seven dances: Biguine, Mazurka, Waltz, Le Pantalon, L'Été, La Pastourelle and the Galop. Kwadril is the name of the St. Lucian version. Several Quadrille varieties in Dominica were presented by Daryl Phillip. See Daryl Phillip. *The Heritage Dances of Dominica*. (University of Texas), 1998.

to the invasion of musical genres including Dominican Kadans-lypso<sup>45</sup>, Haitian Kompa<sup>46</sup>, Disco<sup>47</sup> and others. However, many cultural associations, artists and educators felt the need to preserve Quadrille. For the past two decades, the revival of Quadrille has been taking place in Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique and St. Lucia. All four islands have chosen the Gwan Wòb and the Madras headpiece as the dress code for female Quadrille performers. The males are required to wear black pants, white shirts, and a hat.

The Gwan Wob merits special attention for an additional reason. In the Gwan Wòb lays a complex mix of fashion sense grounded in the foundations and evolution of Creolization – an evolved adaptation of symbols and language to mark a specific cultural tradition. It is the embodiment of the individual layers of local, regional and metropolitan influences. If the Creole and their variations are the expression of the development of a unique regional language then the Gwan Wòb can be said to be the maximum aesthetic expression of Creolization in the Caribbean region, worthy of preservation. In the ongoing evolution of the Creole language and culture, will also be continued adaptation of the Gwan Wòb to meet the demands of future shifts in aesthetics, culture and economy.

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<sup>45</sup> A mixture of cadence and Calypso that came into fashion during the seventies. It featured electric guitars, synthetizers, drums, saxophones and a brass section.

<sup>46</sup> Haitian Konpa became popular in the sixties. The style comprised electric guitars, saxophones, a brass section, drums.

<sup>47</sup> A musical genre that originated in North America in the seventies. It comprised a brass section, electric guitars, saxophones and sythetizers.

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## **Painting and Money:** The problematic of art in modernity with insights from early nineteenth-century France\*

by

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**T**here is an implicit tension between the discourse of the material disinterestedness of art, on the one hand, and the reality of making a living from art, on the other. The present paper seeks to examine this tension by analysing a case-study from early nineteenth-century France – the controversy regarding paid art exhibitions in Paris around 1800, which resulted in a public debate that continued in the press for about three months. The objective is to analyse the digests of the discourse of the concerned French artists and the response of critics and the public at large to their initiative with reference to the issue of the tense relationship between art and money.

**I.**

'When once this corroding lust for profit has infected our minds, can we hope for poems to be written that are worth...storing away in cases of polished cypress?'<sup>1</sup> Thus

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<sup>1</sup> Horace, *On the Art of Poetry*, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. T. S. Dorsch, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965, p. 90, as cited in Paul Mattick, Jr., 'Art and money,' in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick, Jr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 157.

wrote Horace. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, Johann Winckelmann lamented that an artist of his times felt compelled 'to work more for bread than for honor'.<sup>2</sup> By the turn of one more century, in one of his letters to the press, asking for confirmation of his commission for writing a criticism piece on the Salon, Théophile Gautier, the proponent of the *l'art pour l'art* movement in France, wrote that he was in 'absolute need of money'. The letter ended with the following exasperation: 'nothing repulses me as do discussions on money. I have suffered without complaining, but this Salon which gives me a few hundred francs, allows me to pay the rents and the debts which I would not have been otherwise able to meet with the 138 fr with which to feed five mouths.'<sup>3</sup>

Thus, we have a pre-modern Horace at one end, counter-posing 'lust for profit' and immortal art; then the still idealised reaction of an eighteenth-century Winckelmann in lamenting the triumph of utility over glory; and a mid-nineteenth-century Gautier at another end (accompanied and to be followed by several others), pointing out the crude realities of making a living out of art and thereby revealing the dilemmas of the *modern* artist in reconciling the demands of material sustenance with those of artistic calling – both of which, curiously, in their nineteenth-century configurations, were engendered by modernity<sup>4</sup> itself. And finally, we have also witnessed the radical

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<sup>2</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755), trans. E. Heyer and R. C. Norton, La Salle: Open Court, 1987, p. 55, modified translation as cited in Mattick, Jr., 'Art and money,' p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> James Kearns, *Théophile Gautier, Orator to the Artists: Art Journalism of the Second Republic*, London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2007, p. 181; translation mine.

<sup>4</sup> As the title of the paper indicates, the relationship between art and modernity is going to be dwelt upon here. This relationship is multi-dimensional. Commonly, we tend to associate modernity and art

twentieth-century attempt at dissociating art from the economy and from bourgeois culture, and the impossible artistic aspiration of "*vivre sans vendre*" (to live without selling), to invoke Raymonde Moulin, that is, being free, in the sense of being able to live without having to sell. Between themselves, these varied positions articulate the several tensions embedded in the uneasy relationship between art and money.

Little did Horace know that what seemed so unsuspectingly obvious to him, would become a *problem* in modernity; in Winckelmann, we see intimations of that problem, which would become full-blown by the time of Gautier, and would continue to plague art doggedly in times to come, probably without hope of resolution along any absolute lines. Given that what we understand by 'art' today is a *modern* concept, and given that 'modern society has been based like none other in history on commerce, it is a striking paradox that, in discussions of the arts from the eighteenth century to the present, "commercial" has been a synonym for "low"'.<sup>5</sup>

There have been dominant tendencies in eighteenth-century aesthetic discourses to exclude or reject the material particularity of art in favour of abstract or formal considerations.<sup>6</sup> But there also have been instances, where art critics – Denis Diderot being an important example – have been poignantly aware of the materiality of art,

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in terms of the impact of the former on the content and form of the latter (modernism). The present work does not deal with the relationship from this perspective. Instead, it seeks to explore the impact of the structural changes brought about by modernity – both as a socio-economic formation and as a discourse – in the artistic *field* of early nineteenth-century France.

<sup>5</sup> Mattick, Jr., 'Art and money,' p. 152.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth A. Bohls, 'Disinterestedness and denial of the particular: Locke, Adam Smith, and the subject of aesthetics,' in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*, ed. Mattick, Jr., p. 17.

and especially that of painting, which makes it into an object that arouses 'the desire of annexation and possession'<sup>7</sup>.

Schiller had warned the artist against the corruption of modernity: 'Let him direct his gaze upwards, to the dignity of his calling and the universal Law, not downwards towards Fortune and the needs of daily life.'<sup>8</sup> Such an outlook would be too naïve today, when the existence of art itself has become a *problem*. Paul Mattick, Jr. rightly identifies the problem:

a conflict at the heart of the modern practice of art - that the commodity status of artworks hinges on their representation of an interest superior to that of mundane commerce - has achieved frank expression, if only in the form of the wistful hope that it can be overcome. Fundamental to this practice is the idea that art's production differs from all other production in its freedom from the market. [...] In reality, however, art's rise to autonomous status itself involved the tendential replacement of work to the order of pre-modern patronage by production for the market. It is therefore not surprising that the "delightful illusion" of art's separateness from the commercial culture which in fact produced it in its modern form has proved impossible to sustain, and that the history of this institution to the present day has seen artists alternate between claims to a higher calling and complaints of insufficient payment for their practice of it.<sup>9</sup>

## II.

The precarious situation of reconciling the fact of making a living out of art – and at times, a good and respectable living – with the discursive status of art as a 'disinterested' pursuit became quite acute in post-Revolutionary France. The *Journal*

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<sup>7</sup> Michael T. Cartwright, 'Diderot's Connoisseurship: Ethics and Aesthetics of the Art Trade,' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 10 (1981), p. 227.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. and trans. E. M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 57, as cited in Mattick, Jr., 'Art and money,' pp. 175-76.

<sup>9</sup> Mattick, Jr., 'Art and money,' pp. 176-77.

*de Paris* noted in 1796: 'the artist lives off neither glory nor love of his art, he should be able to find in his work what the simple artisan looks for and finds in his.'<sup>10</sup>

If one contrasts this with the mid-nineteenth-century artistic aspiration of "living for art, and not off art" (*vivre pour l'art et non de l'art*) that emerged in France, one would ask the most obvious question: how did this *volte face* come about in less than a century? This was, in fact, the culmination of a long-drawn process of transformation in the way painting and painters were conceived of, on the one hand, and the de-stabilisation of traditional modes of subsistence on the other. Discursive and socio-economic changes interacted with each other to produce a composite structural change in the art world.

An analysis of the chosen episode from early-nineteenth-century France would help us understand how these issues were crystallising around that time. How did French painters in early nineteenth century negotiate with changing social structures to exercise autonomy and what was their own perception about their autonomy? From our retrospective perspectives, the commercial status of art on the one hand, and the autonomy of art, on the other, make odd couples. Baudelaire's late nineteenth-century abhorrence for bourgeois modernity and the attempt of a part of the artistic avant-garde of the twentieth century to dissociate art from the economy, have re-enforced an image of the opposition between art's commercial value and its

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<sup>10</sup> « l'artiste ne vit ni de gloire ni de l'amour de son art, il doit trouver dans son travail ce que le simple artisan cherche et trouve dans le sien » as cited in Annie Becq, 'Expositions, peintres et critiques : vers l'image moderne de l'artiste,' *Dix-huitième siècle*, special issue 'Au Tournant des Lumières : 1780-1820', 14 (1982), p. 146; translation mine.

autonomy. But, standing at the cross-roads of political, economic, social and discursive changes, the French artist by the turn of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth might have perceived of his artistic autonomy in different terms.

Pierre Bourdieu has written about 'the process of differentiation through which the various fields of symbolic production gained autonomy and constituted themselves as such, thus distinguishing themselves from the economic universe [...] This process is inseparable from the full-scale symbolic revolution through which European societies gradually managed to overcome the denial of the economic on which precapitalist societies were founded [...].'<sup>11</sup> In the French art world, while this repression of the economic happened once during the seventeenth century with the establishment of the Royal Academy and the purging of the profession of painting from all mercenary practices, it can be argued that the same repression occurred once again with the *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) movement. However, for all the discursive celebration of art for art's sake, ground realities remained tense.

The painter Bergeret complained in 1848: 'It is not the abundance of artists that causes the misfortune [...] it is the too-small number of enlightened amateurs and true connoisseurs who would consecrate a part of their wealth to the encouragement

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<sup>11</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 17-18.

of the arts and artists, rather than speculating on the needs of one who is so miserable as to have to accept the prices offered for his works.<sup>12</sup>

In the field of literature, Bourdieu has pointed out that in contrast to the earlier 'golden bohemia', in mid nineteenth century emerged – as a result of the gap between the supply and demand for culturally dominant positions – the 'second bohemia', denizens of which were directly subject to the laws of the market and were often 'obliged to live off a second skill (sometimes with no direct relation to literature) in order to live an art that cannot make a living.'<sup>13</sup> The same was true of the field of painting. Thus, the bohemian lifestyle discursively transformed life itself into a work of art.

When the artists' prospects of financial stability became bleak in mid- and late-nineteenth-century France, the emergence of discourses counter-posing art and 'bourgeois modernity' can be interpreted as a kind of making "a triumph of defeat" (although the notion of "art for art's sake" should not be reduced merely to an attempt at making a virtue of a necessity). But for all of Baudelaire's abhorrence for bourgeois culture (based on money and market), the predicament of art in modern society is 'the very existence of the work of art as a commodity, the pre-dominant role

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre-Nolasque Bergeret, *Lettre d'un artiste sur l'état des arts en France* (Paris, 1848), pp. 18-19, translation as cited in Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvasses and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965, 1993, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 57. For details on the gap between the supply and demand for dominant positions, see pp. 54-55.

played by the market in the organisation of artistic life, and the subjection of artists to the constraints inherent in the logic of the economy.<sup>14</sup>

Raymonde Moulin has put it succinctly: Art has never been without a price. But on the other hand, its special nature has been recognised by intellectuals. Unique and without a substitute, art is an object of pleasure which is different from all other commodities of consumption. It is mobile, subject to circulation and financial manipulation. The moment the artist enters into a contract with his dealer – as does the writer with his publisher – the process of circulation acquires a different dimension. In the earlier system of patronage, the artist shared a direct and personalised relationship with the *amateur* (art-lover), which was substituted by a direct relationship with the art-dealer. In the words of Moulin: 'aux impératives de la commande ont succédé les contraintes insidieuses de la demande'<sup>15</sup> (the imperatives of the commission were succeeded by the insidious constraints of [market] demand). The present paper tries to shed new light on this theoretical problem with the help of an empirical case-study. Before we move into the episode of paid exhibition and an analysis thereof, a few brief remarks on historiography, methodology and so on are in order.

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<sup>14</sup> « l'existence de l'œuvre d'art en tant que marchandise, le rôle prédominant assumé par le marché dans l'organisation de la vie artistique, l'assujettissement des artistes aux contraintes inhérentes à la logique de l'économie », Raymonde Moulin, 'Vivre sans vendre,' in *De la valeur de l'art*, Paris: Flammarion, 1995, p. 17; translation mine.

<sup>15</sup> Moulin, 'Vivre sans vendre,' p. 19.

The episode of the paying exhibition of Jacques-Louis David's *Sabines* has been well-documented by Antoine Schnapper<sup>16</sup>. His essay<sup>17</sup> on David's fortunes is also full of useful empirical details. Annie Becq<sup>18</sup> also discusses the episode of the paid exhibition in connection with the emergence of modernity and its concomitant problems for the artist. However, Schnapper does not quite raise questions from the same perspective as has been done in this paper. As for Becq, while she relates the episode to larger questions about art and modernity, pertinent to this study, the present paper also tries to situate the episode back and forth, linking it to the chain of developments, both past and future. Moreover, although the episode *per se* is quite well-known, the present paper examines David's *arguments* very closely, which is a contribution to the existing literature on the episode.

A word about the methodology: The paper deals with art and artists but is not an art historical work. Art historical scholarship in the past three decades or so has moved into an interdisciplinary direction, engaging with complex stories of institutions, politics, power and gender. However, the focus of art history continues to be an interpretation of artworks. The present work refrains from interpreting or discussing art-works. It is not to imply that art is reducible to its social aspects. It is just that the

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<sup>16</sup> Antoine Schnapper, *Jacques-Louis David, 1748-1825*, Paris: Réunion des Musées nationaux, 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Antoine Schnapper, 'David et l'argent,' in *David contre David*, ed. Régis Michel, vol. II, Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1993, pp. 911-26.

<sup>18</sup> Annie Becq, 'Artiste et marché,' in *La Carmagnole des Muses : L'homme de lettres et l'artiste dans la Révolution*, ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet, Paris: Armand Colin, 1988, pp. 81-95; Annie Becq, 'Creation, aesthetics, market: origins of the modern concept of art,' in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*, ed. Mattick, Jr., pp. 240-54.

set of questions taken up in this study do not call for visual and aesthetic analyses. This work is close to intellectual history in that it examines discourses. So long as complex realities are not reduced to monads, all perspectives are equally legitimate in so far as they serve to achieve the end in view – to arrive at an understanding of a chosen problematic.

The present work is also not in the tradition of a social history of art. However, it is quite akin to sociology of art because this discipline has systematically addressed questions related to the internal structuring of the art world; the interaction between actors, institutions, and networks; the issues of autonomy, professionalization, and vocationalisation of art – questions that are of purport in this study.

Finally, it is important to explain the working definition of artistic autonomy<sup>19</sup> used in this study. It is based on the two nodes of a) the possibility of drawing *material* sustenance from art as a *means of livelihood*, on the one hand; and b) the possibility of drawing *creative* sustenance from art as a *vocation*, independent of extra-artistic (commercial, political) constraints. An artist often oscillates between these two nodes in the exercise of artistic autonomy. Much quest for autonomy often boils down to a tug of war between these two tendencies.

Before we move on to the episode of paying exhibitions around 1800, let us first discuss the historical background to it.

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<sup>19</sup> Autonomy as well as the autonomy of art has been defined by many theorists from different points of departure. These theories are not being discussed here as they are not particularly relevant to the study.

### III.

This section discusses the development of institutions vis-à-vis the practice of art as an occupation, profession and vocation in France across two centuries.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, while the notion of 'interest' was used predominantly in the economic sense<sup>20</sup>, that of disinterestedness was counter-posed to mercantile values and manual work.<sup>21</sup> The idea of material disinterestedness of art is directly related to the valorisation of art as a 'liberal' pursuit. In this context, 'liberal' implied 'free' (*libre*) – free from the constraints of commercial stakes and manual activity – art was noble, because it was sufficient unto itself with no ulterior purpose. In the specific case of painting, this valorisation was relatively new, compared to some other art forms, like music, for instance, which always enjoyed a much privileged status.<sup>22</sup>

Before the establishment of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris in 1648 at the behest of a handful of art-practitioners, painting and sculpture were represented by guilds of artisanal professions and belonged to the category of "*arts mécaniques*" (manual arts) as opposed to the "*arts libéraux*" (liberal arts), comprised of the *Trivium* (grammar, dialectics and rhetoric) and the *Quadrivium* (arithmetic,

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<sup>20</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>21</sup> Gisèle Sapiro, 'La vocation artistique entre don et don de soi,' *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 168 (2007/3), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> For details, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics Part I,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12(4) (1951), pp. 496-527.

geometry, astronomy and music).<sup>23</sup> Painters – generally known as “*imagiers*” or “*tailleurs d’images*”, that is, “image-makers” – were engaged in the sale of their own works, as well as those of others, and even sold raw materials used in painting. Therefore, painting involved both manual and mercantile activities, and was not noble enough.<sup>24</sup>

In the process of the establishment of the Royal Academy and in the subsequent decades, painting came to be intellectualised and assimilated into the order of the so-called higher art forms. The institution of the Academy represented those branches of human vocation that were characterised by material disinterestedness. Nathalie Heinich writes that, therefore, the Academy came to represent a new kind of elite, not determined by birth, as in the case of the nobility, nor by material possessions, as in the case of the bourgeoisie; it was determined exclusively on the basis of knowledge capital. This new criterion of excellence was characterised by intellectualisation, de-materialisation and individualisation.<sup>25</sup> Heinich has further pointed out that in their bid to justify the need of an Academy for painting and sculpture, the practitioners did not question the principle of the superiority of the liberal arts; on the contrary, they tried to assimilate their art into this higher category, which indicates an implicit acceptance of the superiority of cerebral activity over manual work.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste : Artisans et Académiciens à l'âge classique*, Paris: Minuit, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> The Greeks had not assigned any Muse to either painting or sculpture.

<sup>25</sup> Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste*, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste*, p. 16.

It should, however, be remembered that till guilds were definitively abolished during the Revolution of 1789, the Academic and the guild systems continued to co-exist as parallel entities in the field of painting.<sup>27</sup> However, there was an increasing thrust from above to valorise the practice of this art form in a “liberal” fashion. This is illustrated by the case of the royal declaration dated 15 March 1777, following the reinstatement by Louis XVI of 44 corporations out of all those abolished by Turgot by the decree of 5 January 1776 to do away with the guild system. For the practice of a *liberal* art, two criteria were indispensable: one, the practitioner had to acquire a level of competence, which is not merely manual, but also intellectual; and two, the artist was entitled to sell only his own artwork, and not undertake commercial dealings of others’ works, or of raw materials like frames and colours – ‘in other words, he could no longer be artisan or merchant’<sup>28</sup>. We thus see that material disinterestedness was a significant constitutive element of the new identity of the artist.

By the late nineteenth century, the French art world went through further change. Harrison and Cynthia White<sup>29</sup> have traced the history and sociology of the transition from the Academic system of Salon exhibition to the emergence of the Impressionists, that is, independent artists with their independent system of exhibitions and relations with the market. They describe this transition as a passage

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<sup>27</sup> Based on the data available, it can be estimated that by 1700, only 178 artists (8%) were Academicians, while the vast majority (86%) – about 1820 artists – exercised their profession outside the orbit of the Academy. Heinich, *Du peintre à l’artiste*, p. 241.

<sup>28</sup> Nathalie Heinich, *L’élite artiste : Excellence et singularité en régime démocratique*, Paris: Gallimard, 2005, pp. 46-47.

<sup>29</sup> White and White, *Canvasses and Careers*.

from “canvasses” (centrality of works of art) to “careers” (centrality of the persona of the artist). They also characterise the independent system as the “dealer-critic system”, as now, more than ever, the artist was dependant on the dealers to get their painting sold and on critics to build their reputation in order to be able to sell.

Based on the historical development of the French art system, Raymonde Moulin<sup>30</sup> has offered a three-fold classification of it into the guild; the Academy; and the market as well as the homologous classification of the artist as artisan, “homme de métier” (man of occupation); academician, “homme de métier et de savoir” (man of occupation and knowledge); and artist-creator, “dieu libre” (free god) over the span of time.

Nathalie Heinich<sup>31</sup> argues that the guild system was an *occupational* (*métier*) regime; the Academic system a *professional* regime; and the final regime attained by the modern Western artist is the *vocational* regime, where the artists emerged as individual heroes. The last of these regimes go hand in hand with the democratic ‘singularity regime’. In this regime, the artists came to be looked upon and to look upon themselves as creators of original and unique works by vocation and inclination, instead of being a mere artisan or an ordinary professional. However, such an exalted status often accords a singularity – bordering onto social marginalisation – to the artists, which is well-articulated in characterisations such as ‘*artiste maudit*’ (the accursed artist). This paradoxical way of characterising the role

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<sup>30</sup> Raymond Moulin, ‘De l’artisan au professionnel : l’artiste,’ *Sociologie du travail*, 4 (1983), pp. 388-403.

<sup>31</sup> Heinich, *L’élite artiste*.

of an individual, argues Heinich, is peculiar to the case of the artist in modern society.

#### IV.

Let us now look at the ground reality of how French artists made their living from art just after the Revolution of 1789. During and because of the French Revolution, the artists lost their traditional clientele. The revolutionaries gave out encouragement awards, commissioned works, and organised competitions – which, however, did not compensate for the loss of traditional clients. The awards and remuneration were usually paid in thirds and in *assignats* which depreciated over the years, which meant that eventually artists received sums that were smaller than the amount that was initially accorded to them. Secondly, ministers changed in rapid succession which led to a discontinuity in the chain of promises made and promises kept. The last resort of artists was to chase the bureaucracy to recover the sums due to them: such was the case with the painter Peyron, who had received two awards of encouragement, but had to beg to the bureaucracy in year VIII to receive the last third of his first prize awarded in year III.<sup>32</sup>

Many experimental initiatives were taken to tide over the crisis. For instance, since the time of the Salon of 1789, *Le Spectateur français* conceptualised a “projet d’encouragement patriotique pour les arts de l’Académie de peinture” (patriotic programme for the encouragement of the arts of the Academy of Painting). If 1200

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<sup>32</sup> Annie Jourdan, ‘Napoleon and his artists: in the grip of reality,’ in *Taking Liberties: Problems of a New Order from the French Revolution to Napoleon*, ed. Howard G. Brown and Judith A. Miller, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 187.

citizens contributed 50 livres each, then 24,000 livres could be dedicated to the commissions of history painting and statues, 24,000 livres to other genres of painting and 12,000 for engraving part of these works. The subscribers would be compensated with the engravings and by a lottery of commissioned and purchased artworks.<sup>33</sup> From the side of the State, the means of distribution of “prix d’encouragement” (encouragement prizes) had been debated at length during the Salon of 1791, and thereafter in successive Salons. In the face of difficulties arisen out of the disappearance of usual clientele, the revolutionary government tried to remedy the situation by taking appropriate measures. According to Becq, many of these measures should as much be understood as ‘efforts at resisting – albeit vain – the development of mercantile speculations.’<sup>34</sup> It was only during the Consulate, 1801 onwards, that a true system of retribution by the State was implemented.

The episode of the paying exhibition of the *Sabines* was inscribed within a debate that spread across the whole of the Revolution. The waning of the traditional patronage of the monarchy, the aristocracy and the Church had jeopardized the means of subsistence of artists, and especially threatened were genres like history painting, which were almost exclusively dependent on state patronage.

The present paper seeks to explore the stakes involved in this episode from the conceptual grid of the interaction between the social status of the modern artist, on the one hand, and the specific development of modern market economy, on the other. One of the lasting images of the artist that late modernity has bequeathed to us

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<sup>33</sup> Schnapper, *Jacques-Louis David*, p. 328.

<sup>34</sup> Becq, ‘Artiste et marché,’ p. 81; translation mine.

is that of the “doomed artist” (*artiste maudit*) – bohemian, poor, ill-understood, unrecognised, unappreciated. While this image has come to be pre-dominant, historically, there existed another model: the artist-entrepreneur. Bourdieu has cited Beethoven as a typical example of the same.<sup>35</sup>

Beethoven’s career was situated at a time when the traditional economic bases of music experienced a deep crisis, it was in a period of transition between two systems of economic organisation. Beethoven was successful not just by virtue of an innovation strictly in the field of music but that combined with the ability to successfully manoeuvre economic possibilities to serve the interest of his art:

*The enterprise of a cultural production being essentially of a dual nature, cultural innovation is not possible without a concomitant economic innovation (a fact which hagiography suppresses as something shameful). Beethoven could have become a great musical innovator because he was a great economic entrepreneur. His economic ingenuity – which was brought totally in the service of his art – consisted in drawing profitably – with a sure pragmatism, during a period of transition – from the co-existence of several competing sources of revenue that were at times even perceived as incompatible: the private salon of music and the public concert; pensions or subsidies from cultured patrons [...] and the entry tickets of the bourgeois public [...].<sup>36</sup>*

But around 1800, France was not yet ready for an economic innovation in the enterprise of a cultural production. In his daring act, David succeeded commercially,

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<sup>35</sup> It might be of interest to compare the contrasting careers of Mozart and Beethoven. For sociological works on the same, see Norbert Elias, *Mozart: Portrait of a Genius*, ed. Michael Schröter, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993 and Tia De Nora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792-1803*, California: University of California Press, 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Bref impromptu sur Beethoven, artiste entrepreneur,’ *Sociétés & Représentations* 11 (2001/1), pp. 16-17 ; translation mine; emphasis in original.

and in his individual capacity; but the idea failed to gain any real social support, although many artists were in favour of such a practice.

**V.**

In December 1799, about two months after General Bonaparte's *coup d'état* against the Directory, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* (Fig. 1) by Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) – which had been initially estimated to be ready for the Salon of 1798 – was exhibited in the Louvre in a separate room, which was granted for free by the government – apart from also the coverage of the cost for the frame<sup>37</sup> – and which David got decorated to 'fulfil its intended purpose'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The Ministre de l'Intérieur, François de Neufchâteau, had agreed to bear the costs of the frame, which was 4,000 francs.

<sup>38</sup> Philippe Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, New Haven: Yale University Press & Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2005, p. 10. In a letter dated 9 August 1800, David sought a reimbursement of the "frais d'aménagement "immeubles"" (charges for the renovation of the exhibition room). Lucien Bonaparte, the then Minister, refused, and adhered to the dispensation of the sum of 533.79 francs that his predecessor had spent for a renovation of the room. See Schnapper, *Jacques-Louis David*, p. 332.



**Figure 1: Jacques-Louis David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1799), Louvre Museum, Paris**

Among many other things unusual about this exhibit (for instance, the excessive nudity of the subjects) that occasioned a controversy that continued in the press for some time, was the fact that David decided to charge an admission fee: 1 F 80 cents per visitor – a sum which according to the estimates of the *Journal* of Mme Moitte of a few years later (1806), would correspond approximately to the cost of one pound of butter, one box of asparagus, 700 g of ham, half a pound of candles or half consultation fees of a doctor, but the amount would be higher than that of the entry fee to the Panorama, which cost 1 F 25.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Schnapper, 'David et l'argent,' p. 918.

In the contemporaneous French art system, paintings were exhibited at the Salon, which was a government platform for encouraging the arts, and entry to the Salon was always free since its inception in 1667<sup>40</sup>, only the catalogue was to be purchased for a price. The French word for exhibition is *exposition*; in cases specifically perceived as a commercial venture, the French used the English word “exhibition” to highlight the mercantile element involved, as it corresponded to the practice of their neighbours across the Channel to hold paid art exhibitions (which the English did, not just to raise funds, but also to prevent crowds from thronging the premises, which obstructed serious picture-buyers).<sup>41</sup>

Fully aware of the unusualness of the exercise, David wrote a brochure to be distributed at the exhibition, explaining the subject, defending the nudity of the heroes, but firstly, explaining the rationale for his decision to charge an entrance fee.

David having inaugurated a new practice, others soon followed suit. The *Décade philosophique* of 30 nivôse (20 January 1800) announced that Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1754-1829) would hold at the Louvre a paying exhibition of three of his paintings: *Mercure et Alceste*, *La Mort de Cléopâtre*, *Les Trois Grâces*. His exhibition was also accompanied by a written justification, à la David; however, his attempt did not meet with much success. In March 1800, David’s pupils, François Gérard (1770-1837),

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<sup>40</sup> It was in 1857 that the state introduced an admission fee. For details, see Jon Whiteley, ‘Exhibitions of Contemporary Painting in London and Paris 1760-1860,’ in *Saloni, Gallerie, Musei e loro influenza sullo sviluppo dell’Arte dei secoli XIX e XX*, ed. Francis Haskell, Bologna: CLUEB, 1979, p. 69.

<sup>41</sup> Whiteley, ‘Exhibitions of Contemporary Painting,’ p. 69.

Anne-Louis Girodet (1767-1824) and Gioacchino Giuseppe Serangeli (1768-1852), along with Regnault's pupil, Pierre-Narcisse Guérin (1774-1833), advertised a proposed paid exhibition of their works. Among others, with whom the English tradition of paid exhibitions found much favour, were Jean-Baptiste Isabey (1767-1855) and Carle Vernet (1758-1835), who exhibited at the old hôtel de Coigny, place du Carrousel, according to the *Journal de Paris* of 14 brumaire an IX (5 November 1800), and other artists like Roehn and Gadbois, Boze and the sculptor Boizot.<sup>42</sup>

Alarmed by the rapid currency that the idea of such a practice was gaining, the press, which was initially rather neutral or more or less favourable, quickly turned hostile, and attributed the poor turn-out of painters in the Salon of 1800 to David's move, apart from articulating several other points of contention to such a practice.

In 1801, David added two more works to his exhibition of the *Sabines* – two versions of Napoleon crossing the St. Bernard, one of which was commissioned by Napoleon himself and the second one was a copy commissioned by the King of Spain. The exhibition of the *Sabines* lasted for about five years, free admission being given during the last few months, as David became the First Painter of the Empire. In the course of its run, it had at least 50,000 visitors. David had promised his students a treat each time the revenue from the exhibition would touch 24,000 F, and records say that such treats took place at least thrice. An approximate total revenue of 65,627 F is believed to have been generated by the show.

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<sup>42</sup> For details, see Whiteley, 'Exhibitions of Contemporary Painting,' p. 73.

Henry Redhead Yorke has recorded in a letter in 1802 that David's wife advised him to buy *The Sabine Women* for £ 5,000 and exhibit it in London. Even before the closing of the exhibition, David tried to sell the painting to Napoleon. The idea was originally proposed by the journalist Dusaulchoy in 1804, and David quoted the price of 72,000 francs – the exact sum that he had anticipated in 1790 for his *Jeu de paume*. Napoleon turned down his offer in March 1805, but in 1808, he seriously re-considered his decision on his visit to David's studio. Eventually he refused again, judging so much nudity unsuitable for the Tuileries Palace. In 1814, David exhibited *The Sabine Women* and *Leonidas at Thermopylae* outside the Salon, with a brochure with descriptions and reproductions of both paintings. Finally in 1819, David succeeded in selling both *Sabines* and *Leonidas* to Louis XVIII for 1,00,000 francs for the Musées Royaux.

David's initiative of a paying exhibition raised concern on several counts. One was the issue of '*expositions particulières*' (individual exhibitions): when artists – especially important artists – exhibited their works separate from the regular Salon, critics became concerned, as it led to significant absences from the Salon, disappointment of the native as well as foreign visitors, disgrace to the nation, non-fulfilment of the purpose of the existence of the Salon and apprehensions about its survival. In brief, the practice of individual exhibitions was perceived to be a threat to the 'noble' institution of the Salon.

Individual exhibitions with free of cost admission were already in vogue, not only in England (Gainsborough), but also in France (Greuze). Following his embroilment with the Academy over the issue of his reception painting and the refusal of the

Academy to grant him the status of a history painter, around 1769-70, the painter Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805) had started to hold private exhibitions in his studio, always to coincide with the official Salon – partly as a challenge to the Academy, and partly to keep up public discussions on himself by running into controversies.<sup>43</sup> David took one step ahead in introducing a *paid* individual exhibition. Louis Hautecoeur has pointed out that David was contemplating the system of paid exhibition as early as 1785, while in Rome, for his *Horaces*.<sup>44</sup>

The second issue involved in this episode is a more fundamental one and has a wider resonance beyond this individual case, as it bears upon a significant and tension-ridden discourse in the domain of the arts in general: the question of the material sustenance of art on the one hand, and that of art and money making odd couples, on the other.

### VI.

In the accompanying brochure to the paid exhibition, David invoked many reasons in defence of his action. The following passages will briefly discuss the major strands of his arguments.

First, David invoked the example of Antiquity:

Antiquity has never ceased to be the great school for modern painters, the source of the beauties of their art. We seek to imitate the ancients in the genius of their conceptions, the purity of their drawings, the expression of their faces and the grace of their forms. Can we not take one step further, and

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<sup>43</sup> Anita Brookner, *Greuze: The rise and fall of an eighteenth-century phenomenon*, London: Elek, 1972, p. 72.

<sup>44</sup> Louis Hautecoeur, *Louis David*, Paris: La Table Ronde, 1954.

imitate them also in their morals and the institutions established by them in order to bring the arts to a state of perfection?<sup>45</sup>

Secondly, David cited the contemporary example of the English: how the paintings of Benjamin West were worth immense sums of money; and how the practice of “exhibition”<sup>46</sup> had already existed in England for quite some time, being introduced in the preceding century by Van Dyck<sup>47</sup>, whose works the public ‘came in droves to admire’, and who had made a considerable fortune through such means. It is amusing to note in this context that, while the French ‘envied the willingness of the British public to support the living artist; the British in turn were equally impressed by the policy of the French state in buying and commissioning works of art’<sup>48</sup> – scope of citizen’s enterprise *versus* state control being the characteristic difference between these two societies regarding many other issues as well.

Thereafter, David invoked the issue of autonomy, the independence of the arts, which was, in fact, his principal argument:

Is it not an idea as just as it is wise; one which procures the arts with the means to exist independently, to maintain themselves through their own resources, and to enjoy the noble independence which so befits genius, without which the flame which gives it life is soon extinguished?<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Jacques-Louis David, ‘The Painting of the Sabines’ (1799), translation as published in *Art in Theory, 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, pp. 1119-20.

<sup>46</sup> The English word ‘exhibition’ is used in the original French text.

<sup>47</sup> Modern historiography contradicts this contention. For details, see Schnapper, *Jacques-Louis David*, p. 329.

<sup>48</sup> Whiteley, ‘Exhibitions of Contemporary Painting,’ p. 72.

<sup>49</sup> David, ‘The Painting of the Sabines,’ p. 1120.

David, further enumerated the hardships and sacrifices that, of all artists, painters, and in particular, practitioners of history painting, had to go through – from the time required to be invested (three to four years, which naturally affected the prospects of making more money by producing more paintings – a fact which was, however, adjusted by the high price of history paintings) to paying for costumes and models. He argued that such measures helped the arts to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency, which was imperative not only for the material survival of art and the artist, but also for ensuring the freedom of the artist to paint noble subjects without any compromise from want and compulsion to please baser tastes in order to earn their bread and butter:

These [financial] difficulties, we do not doubt, have repelled many an artist; and it may well be that we have lost many a masterpiece conceived by the genius of several of them, and that their poverty impeded them from executing. Let me go further: how many honest and virtuous painters, who would never have taken up their brushes to paint anything but noble and moral subjects, have been forced to degrade and debase them through sheer need! They have prostituted their works for the money of the Phrynes and the Lais: it is solely their poverty which has made them guilty; and their talent, formed to fortify respect for mores, has contributed to their corruption.<sup>50</sup>

Next, David invoked the moral purpose of art (moral education of man through depiction of noble subjects), and argued how the hoarding of paintings by the rich (implying that paid exhibitions could replace the conventional mode of dependence on private clientele?) deprived the common man of opportunities to increase one's knowledge and form one's tastes. He also invoked patriotism, adding how this proposed system of paid exhibitions might prevent the art masterpieces from going out of the possession of the nation and help in keeping them in their native land, by

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<sup>50</sup> David, 'The Painting of the Sabines,' p. 1120.

citing the case of the Greek painter, who, being satisfied with what the public had to offer, would eventually gift his works to the nation.

Thereafter, he asks an unsettling question: while there is no embarrassment on the part of the playwright or the musician to draw revenue from their art, 'can it be that what is honourable for some can be humiliating for others?'<sup>51</sup>

A very significant point lies in his next assertion:

[...] we should hasten to do what has not been done, if some good is to come of the result. What prevents us from introducing into the French Republic something which both the Greeks and the modern nations practise? *Our former prejudices are no longer opposed to the exercise of public freedom. The nature and the course of our ideas have changed since the Revolution; and we will not return, I hope, to the false sophistication which repressed genius in France for so long.*<sup>52</sup>

And finally, his concluding statement:

These reflections that I have proposed here, and the system of public exhibitions, of which I will have been the first to give an example, were suggested to me principally by the desire to procure for professional painters a means of being indemnified for their time and expenses, and to secure for them a resource against poverty, which is all too often their sad fate.<sup>53</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the letter of thanks written by Greuze to Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun<sup>54</sup> (1748-1813) for holding private exhibitions of the works of

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<sup>51</sup> David, 'The Painting of the Sabines,' p. 1121.

<sup>52</sup> David, 'The Painting of the Sabines,' p. 1121; emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> David, 'The Painting of the Sabines,' p. 1122.

<sup>54</sup> 'Artist, historian, dealer, politician, a friend of the leading painters of the day, the survivor of revolution and tyranny', 'the last (and possibly the greatest) in a long and distinguished line of eighteenth-century French dealer-connoisseurs' and who 'has gone down to history as an unscrupulous gambler and womanizer' thanks to the testimonies of a disillusioned wife, the painter

contemporary painters at his place during 1790-92<sup>55</sup>, the former had made a similar case for 'liberty' and 'encouragement of the arts.'<sup>56</sup> Regnault, in his note of justification, apart from stating more or less similar grounds as did David, also added some points on the relative difficulty of the painter to earn a just compensation, compared to practitioners of other art forms.<sup>57</sup>

### VII.

Now we turn to the response that these moves provoked among the critics. Criticism of David's initiative revolved around many issues, as indicated above, but the principal issue was the divergence between respective ideas of what the attitude of an artist should be vis-à-vis the commercial question. To the critics, glory and gain persisted as two irreconcilable ends:

We have no intentions of robbing the artist of the rewards of his labour – far from it. At a time, when paintings hardly sell, all the legitimate means of obtaining a price should be employed. We would therefore not reproach David or Regnault for exhibiting their works for money. One can no longer exclaim:

This mingling of glory and gain is perturbing,

We owe everything to honour and to fortune nothing. (PIRON)

All artists can lay a claim for a just compensation of their artworks, but the arts should never be made objects of speculation. *Painting can add to the riches of the painter, but the painter should not seek to become rich.*<sup>58</sup>

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Elizabeth Vigée (1755-1842). Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*, London: Phaidon, 1976, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>56</sup> *Nouvelles Archives de l'Art français* (1874-75), Paris, 1875, p. 435.

<sup>57</sup> 'Exposition de trios tableaux dans une des salles du Palais national des Sciences et des Arts...par le Citoyen Regnault...,' Paris, Delance, an VIII [1800], Collection Deloynes, vol. 21, no. 603.

<sup>58</sup> 'Sur les expositions particulières,' in *Coup d'œil sur le Salon de l'an VIII*, Paris, Bernard & Debray, an IX [1800-01], Collection Deloynes, vol. 22, no. 627, pp. 441-42 ; translation mine, emphasis added.

Reactions were particularly sharp after David added the two versions of Napoleon crossing the St. Bernard to his exhibition of the *Sabines* in 1801. Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Chaussard, one of the most influential critics of the time, who was positively disposed towards the idea of charging an admission fee for the painting of the *Sabines*, reacted sharply to David's move of making the public pay a second time for works that had already been paid for: 'genius and interest should not live together.'<sup>59</sup>

Another critic pointed out:

I presume that these portraits have been paid for, and generously paid for, by those to whom they belong. Therefore, it is not a dignified speculation to seek to get them paid for a second time by the public. David's fortune, probably mediocre compared to his talent, is nonetheless not such that his resources are wanting.

He should realize that the principle of sustenance, based on which he justified his innovation in the case of the *exhibition*<sup>60</sup> of the painting of the *Sabines*, cannot be applied to the present case [...] David's peers would not support the idea of seeing his palette being transformed into a means of agiotage.<sup>61</sup>

According to the same critic, the example of Van Dyck cannot be applicable to France, because he belongs to 'a country, which has given Europe a unique example, where everything is estimated on the basis of and reduced to money; where poverty [...] is considered a disgrace, and wealth as virtue'<sup>62</sup> and that such an example does not befit David, who had so far professed a different set of principles – a probable reference to David's revolutionary affiliations.

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<sup>59</sup> *Journal des Arts*, 5 brumaire an X (27 October 1801), Collection Deloynes, no. 699; translation mine.

<sup>60</sup> The English word 'exhibition' is used in the original French text.

<sup>61</sup> 'De deux tableaux de David,' 1801, Collection Deloynes, vol. 27, no. 712, pp. 517-18; translation mine.

<sup>62</sup> 'De deux tableaux de David,' pp. 519-20; translation mine.

**VIII.**

Just as Dutch painting carried the stigma of commerce in the eighteenth century (albeit in terms of their form and content), Holland being the hub of trade<sup>63</sup>, anything English was practically synonymous with commerce and speculation for the French in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and consequently, not fit for emulation by the French society. While this may be true, the sharp reaction of the French public to such an innovation was not provoked merely by concerns of national identity. There are deeper issues at stake here. When the art critic Chaussard counter-posed genius and interest, he harked back to the ethos of artistic disinterestedness, which was evidently the dominant value system in French society, for which such a blatant association of exalted art and speculation of a commercial order was unacceptable. The French artist, on the other hand, was at cross-roads – ‘between profession and vocation’, as Heinich has put it<sup>64</sup> – experiencing the challenges from the real world and exploring viable alternatives that would allow them to survive – even be affluent perhaps – while retaining the noble idea of art and the exalted status of the artist.

Heinich writes that among various aspects of the vocational regime was the process of personalisation of artistic production, understandable as the passage from “canvases” to “careers”, as argued by the Whites. However, Heinich instead proposes the analytical grid based on regimes of activity, by virtue of which it will be possible to discern why the process of transformation of the art world during the nineteenth century is not so much a transition from “canvases” to “careers”, as it was a tension-

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<sup>63</sup> Mattick, Jr., ‘Art and money,’ pp. 165-67.

<sup>64</sup> Heinich, *L’élite artiste*, pp. 66-68.

ridden co-existence of two different regimes of activity, professional and vocational, with an increasing importance of the latter.<sup>65</sup>

The present study testifies to the existence of two such different artistic drives that manifest themselves in the discourses and debates of the period. The case of David's paying exhibition is an illustration *par excellence* of the issues at stake.

Becq considers David's experiment as an attempt to overcome with the same stroke both a painter-merchant status reminiscent of the times of the art guilds, as well as the relation of dependence between the painter and the patron of private commissions in the modern times.<sup>66</sup> When David's arguments are examined closely, it would be noted that he himself considered "speculation" as vile and in his own understanding – as he wrote in a note sent to newspapers two days before the opening – what he was doing was 'not a vile speculation, but an honourable endeavour for art and artists.'<sup>67</sup> David actually turned several of the critics' arguments on their heads, and he did so, as if in anticipation. He pointed out that the system he initiated was not a degradation in itself, but a move to counteract a potential and real threat of degradation that painters faced out of want. If we recall the working definition of artistic autonomy to be used in this study, we would see that with his initiative of a paying exhibition, David did strive to achieve autonomy in both senses at a single stroke –a) the need to draw *material* sustenance from art as a *means of livelihood*, on the one hand; and b) the need to draw *creative* sustenance

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<sup>65</sup> Heinich, *L'élite artiste*, p. 68.

<sup>66</sup> Becq, 'Artiste et marché,' p. 87.

<sup>67</sup> Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David*, p. 13.

from art as a *vocation*, on the other. He was able to paint what he wanted to paint (historical subjects) notwithstanding the pecuniary precariousness involved in the project.

While relating this episode to the transformation of the traditional hierarchy of genres and the change in the nature of patronage, Tony Halliday has concluded that the painting of the *Sabines* being an uncommissioned history painting, the 'paying exhibition [...] camouflaged the painting's uselessness, the gratuitous way in which it had been created, and prefigured its only permanent destination, the museum.'<sup>68</sup> David did manage to paint a historical subject and make handsome money out of it – and all in the name of a *value* – the autonomy of art, and the liberation of the man of genius from false sophistications of pre-modern times. The experiment was more than a desperate response to the ailing patronage of history painting. It was symptomatic of a change where several forces – both forces of social, economic and political change as well as ideas – were at play. It had its roots in a long chain of unsettling transformations in the ideas on art, the status of the artist and the nature of the relationship between artist and patron in modern Western society.

While critics thought, a painter of progressive revolutionary credentials such as David ought not to emulate the ways of a mercantile nation, David's invocation of the principle of public liberty and the cessation of "false sophistication" in a post-Revolutionary society, bring to mind his abhorrence for pre-modern notions that tied the artist to subordinate positions, subject to the dictates of the moneyed classes.

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<sup>68</sup> Tony Halliday, *Facing the public: Portraiture in the aftermath of the French Revolution*, Manchester & NY: Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 188.

Here too, he upturns the criticism in advance, and his rallying cry is liberty, which underlies modernity and the concomitant – at least discursive – emancipation of the artist from ties of ignoble dependence. Therefore, we see that, in effect, the same concepts (speculation, Revolutionary affiliations) were used by the two camps in defence of their positions, only differently interpreted.

While David's inclusion of two commissioned portraits in a paying exhibition may seem to spring out of self-interest, it may also plausibly be an attempt at setting a norm whereby the French public gets accustomed to the practice of paid exhibitions. As pointed out above, David armoured his action with a cause. Secondly, even when David's move could have been motivated by personal interests, the general readiness of many of his contemporaries to adopt this mode refers to the larger picture – of transformations and tensions, aspirations and ambivalences.

The Napoleonic period that followed is in fact well-known for the exorbitant prices the leading artists quoted and managed to get. For instance,

- David demanded 24,000 francs from the King of Spain for *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps*, and later 20,000 francs for each of the three copies of the same; he managed to get 65,000 francs for *The Coronation of Napoleon*; and received 25,000 francs from Alexander Douglas for his *Napoleon* painted in 1812.
- Girodet got 12,000 francs for *Apotheosis of French Heroes*, intended for the Château de Malmaison; and received 80,000 francs for 26 portraits of the Emperor completed by 1814.

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- Gérard received 12,000 francs for his portrait of Josephine; he charged 6,000 francs for a single copy of the Emperor's portrait; 12,000 francs for a large portrait; and 14,400 francs for the one to be reproduced by the Gobelins tapestry-makers.
- Guérin demanded 24,000 francs for *Phaedra and Hippolytus*.
- Gros was given 16,000 francs for his painting of *Napoleon Visiting the Plague Victims at Jaffa*.
- Isabey asked for 20,000 francs for his painting *Napoleon visiting the Severe Brothers' factory at Rouen*; initially he had to settle for only 6,000 francs that was offered to him, but later in 1811, he returned to press his point and succeeded.<sup>69</sup>

In the context of David asking for 24,000 francs for three reproductions of *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps*, Dominique Vivant Denon, Bonaparte's Minister of Arts, wrote to Napoleon on 13 May 1803:

Nothing is more difficult than judging the price of artistic productions. The reputation of artists, the tariffs they set on the use of their time, the flattery of those who are not supposed to pay for them, the ill advice always received by self-esteem, the natural inclination to work less, all this should always be taken into account before the undertaking of works [...] It is indeed a matter of great misfortune that the artists would not be able to enjoy a future life of blissful retirement; but perhaps it is a matter of equal misfortune for the arts that the price of some productions become so exorbitant that they serve as an

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<sup>69</sup> For these details, see Jourdan, 'Napoleon and his artists'. However, these were leading painters; there were painters who got modest sums too, for instance, the painter Robert Lefèvre received 3,000 or 3,500 francs for Napoleon's portraits.

example and ensure that the means of these instances being repeated are exhausted.<sup>70</sup>

It may thus be noted that the issue of a just compensation for art was ridden with tensions around the turn of the century. As Becq has pointed out:

One witnesses the surfacing of the ambiguities present since 1747, of a kind of contradiction between the image of the artist that was in the process of formation, and his economic situation, that is to say, the manner in which he procured his resources, in terms of his mode of integration into society and a particular type of market for art-works; a contradiction that was probably unsurpassable under modern capitalist society, and the failure of the efforts to resolve which by David between 1800 and 1805, probably bear witness to the irresistible scope and traps, so to speak, of the system of production for the market.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> « Rien n'est plus difficile que de prononcer sur le prix des productions des arts. La réputation des artistes, le taux qu'ils ont mis à l'emploi de leur tems, la flatterie de ceux qui ne doivent pas les payer, les mauvais conseils toujours reçus par l'amour-propre, l'intérêt et l'envie naturelle de peu travailler, tout cela devrait toujours être prévu avant que les ouvrages fussent entrepris, afin que chacun scût à quoi s'en tenir lorsqu'ils sont terminés. Ce serait sans doute un grand malheur que les artistes ne pussent pas entrevoir dans l'avenir la jouissance d'un doux repos ; mais c'est peut-être un malheur aussi grand pour les arts, que le prix de certaines productions devienne si exorbitant qu'il serve de type et fasse qu'il ne se trouve plus de moyens de les faire exécuter ou de les faire répéter. » *Vivant Denon, Directeur des Musées sous le Consulat et l'Empire. Correspondance*, Paris: Réunion des Musées nationaux, 1999, p. 1245; translation mine.

<sup>71</sup> « On assiste à la révélation d'ambiguïtés présentes dès 1747, d'une sorte de contradiction entre l'image en voie de constitution de l'artiste et sa situation économique, c'est-à-dire la manière dont il se procure des ressources, en fonction de son mode d'intégration à la société et du type de marché de l'œuvre d'art ; contradiction probablement indépassable dans le cadre de la société moderne capitaliste et dont l'échec des tentatives d'un David pour la résoudre, entre 1800 et 1805, témoigne peut-être de l'irrésistible extension et des ruses, pour ainsi dire, du système de production pour le marché. » Becq, 'Expositions, peintres et critiques,' p. 138.

It is difficult to assess if David indeed failed in his efforts or not. In his individual capacity, he did not, because the public did visit the exhibition and he made money out of it. His stature as an artist was a key factor in nullifying the impact of criticism. French society, however, did not accept it as a general rule until very late, but that is probably because it was not yet ready for it at the beginning of the nineteenth century. More importantly, David succeeded in marshalling important normative justifications for such a move.

In David's case, an interplay between the particular and the general can be noticed. In historiography, David is known for his inclination to make money out of his art. He was certainly never shy about it. And he did it, well-armoured with normative rationale. While Schnapper has documented details of David's fortunes, we rarely come across any discussion of David's attitude towards the value—especially the monetary value—of art-works. While, I think, that it is important to take note of the latter, as, unlike many leading artists who made money, David was articulate about voicing these issues in ideological and normative terms.

Artists at this point were, so to speak, in a precarious situation: Post-Revolutionary sensibility decried any kind of privilege in owning art. This, coupled with the real debacle in the domain of private commissions by the traditional clientele, made the issue of private commissions an uncomfortable affair. In the wake of the crisis, the state was not in a position to support the arts substantially, and especially the genres like history painting, that were primarily dependent upon state patronage due to the costs involved. On the other hand, the now exalted status of the arts and the discourse of disinterestedness prohibited artists from entering into any kind of even

seemingly speculative venture. But the reality of the material plight of artists was too harsh for them not to want to avail of any opportunities for just remuneration. In this context, David's attempt was basically one of finding an alternative to a situation that seems to be a stalemate. It was a challenge for the artist to act as his own dealer, without invoking the mercenary image of the painter-shopkeeper of the guild regime, and in the same breath, be able to circumvent the relationship of dependence implied in the case of private commissions.

According to Becq:

He [David] sought to establish a direct relationship between producer and consumer, one which clearly has nothing in common with the older private and ultimately tyrannical commission. It is David who chose to paint what he is showing. And his relationship to the viewer remains outside every speculative project, because he is not selling the painting. In this way he bypasses the circuits of the merchants and of art-loving investors, thus preserving the aesthetic quality of the work of art, without for all that pretending scorn for material necessities. *The representation of the artist which this is an attempt to formulate is of a man who performs a specific kind of work from which he is not ashamed to live.*<sup>72</sup>

The political specific of the post-Revolutionary situation in France apart, one could think of such a phenomenon in general sociological terms as well: does looking forward to material compensation for a calling such as art nullify the creative legitimacy of art? If one is to exercise art as a professional occupation one has to draw material sustenance from it, and justly so, as the artist has put in his labour and resources. In spite of sharing this aspect with other occupations, art remains art –

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<sup>72</sup> Becq, 'Creation, aesthetics, market,' pp. 253-54; emphasis mine.

that is, a complex phenomenon – on account of the *vocational* status it has achieved discursively in society. In common parlance, whatever we wish to represent as a person's calling is usually referred to using either the trope of art or of worship. And in spite of this vocational status, those who are artists by profession still have to fend for themselves; in the words of the *Journal de Paris*, as cited above, one does not live off the glory or the love of art. Thus, the modern artist is caught in a deadlock by virtue of the very specifically *modern* developments in the sphere of art.

This brings us to the issue of modernity and the ambivalent values it has brought with itself. David was notorious for quoting exorbitant prices for his works, and Philippe Bordes interprets this as a particular attitude towards state patronage – the belief that it was incumbent upon the government to support art.<sup>73</sup> While this might be true, to this can be added that for David, it was not only a question of the obligations of the state, it was also his ideas on the autonomy and value of art itself. He considered genuine independence of the arts as lying precisely in that which later art discourses came to criticize as a hindrance to true autonomy – its commercial value. This ambivalence is inherent in modernity itself – which commodified and valorised art in the same breath.

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In her doctoral work—which is close to the discipline of sociology of art—she critically examined how French painters in early nineteenth century negotiated with changing social structures to exercise autonomy and what their own perception about this exercise was. The reference point of the analysis was the dichotomous status of art in modernity: on the one hand, a revenue-generating activity subject to market economy; while on the other, a vocation marked by values such as disinterestedness. Dr. Mitra's research interests lie in intellectual and cultural

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<sup>73</sup> Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David*.

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## **The Maturation of Anglo-American Protest Music in the Antinuclear Environment from 1957-1969**

by

**Anthony Eames**

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The post-war years in Britain are often understood in the context of decolonization, the loss of empire, and the collapse of imperialism alongside the rise of American power, ideals and culture. Nuclear weapons programs were at the centre of this transition. The British decision to build an independent nuclear arsenal in the late 1940s and the pursuit of nuclear collaboration with the United States in the late 1950s engendered opposition in the United Kingdom. In 1958, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (henceforth CND) united a number of antinuclear factions to pursue the abolition of nuclear weapons. The CND pursued disarmament through a method of protest that focused less on politics and more on mass involvement. Music became essential to engaging people in mass demonstrations against nuclear weapons. It emerged as a preferred medium for the transmission of emotions that roused support for disarmament in the young, educated, middle-class. International dimensions of the protest music industry connected British activists with American demonstrators. The link the CND forged between music and mass demonstrations codified an approach to protest for a variety of social movements in the United Kingdom and the United States in the nuclear age.

The twelve-year period of this study is carefully chosen to correspond to the first wave of CND activism. This analysis of the transatlantic creation of modern protest music developed in an antinuclear environment pulls together arguments concerning the socio-economic dimensions of protest, shared musical styles between America and Britain, and the rejection of nuclear weapons. These areas of study must be united in order to accurately depict the cross-cultural connection between music, antinuclear rhetoric, generational conflict, and social protest.

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Fran Parkin's sociological investigation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmaments proves crucial for understanding the transformation of protest in the nuclear age.<sup>1</sup> He argued that protesters after World War II assumed a social identity that was not present in the earlier protest movements. In the working-class radicalism of the pre World War II years, protest aimed to garner economic and material concessions specific to certain groups. In contrast, middle-class radicalism, which was spawned by the antinuclear movement in Britain, was concerned with benefits for society at large. This style of protest relied on mass support primarily coming from the young, educated middle class.<sup>2</sup> The historian Richard Taylor explains that as the first mass social movement of its kind, CND articulated the fears of thousands of people. The development of the campaign and its politics, he claims, impacted social movements of later generations.<sup>3</sup>

British historian, Meredith Veldman, contends that generational conflict underpinned antinuclear protest. Antinuclear activists struggled to come to terms with Britain's inability to control world events. As a result, a generation of young social activists rejected both the bomb and the culture that produced it.<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Wittner, an authority on nuclear protest, added that CND members rejected authority in the context of action against the bomb. This resulted in generational conflict between the elite leadership of the CND and the core of its base.<sup>5</sup>

In his study of jazz revivalism in relation to social protest in Britain, cultural historian George McKay suggests that jazz contributed the "leftist marching music of the streets." He argues that this fuelled CND demonstrations, which made antinuclear protest a distinct form of sub cultural expression in Britain. He stops short of applying the antinuclear-musical framework to America as a category of

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<sup>1</sup> Fran Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism* (New York: Praeger, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb: The British Peace Movement, 1958-1965* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Meredith Veldman, *Fantasy, the Bomb, and the Greening of Britain: Romantic Protest, 1945-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 137-139.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 82-84.

analysis.<sup>6</sup> Brocken's analysis of the British folk revival deserves consideration alongside McKay's work. Brocken posits a Marxist construction of the folk revival. He argues that nuclear weapons were representative of the capitalist worldview that divided society. Folk music provided the post-war generation with a method to reject capitalism – the system that was responsible for Anglo-American nuclear expansion.<sup>7</sup>

Historical accounts of social protest, generational conflict, and the jazz and folk revival during the 1950s and 1960s point to a transformation of protest in the nuclear age. Music and opposition to nuclear weapons were at the centre of this transformation. These two forces converged to create an atmosphere that attracted a new breed of social activists that demonstrated its discontent through mass protest.

### **Antinuclear Groups and Generational Conflict**

In the late 1950s a number of antinuclear movements appeared in the United Kingdom and the United States. Britain's antinuclear groups greatly surpassed the numbers and influence of their American counterparts. Two groups in particular gained notoriety in their push to disarm Britain of nuclear weapons. In 1957, the Direct Action Committee (DAC) sprouted from a core of prolific non-violent activists who initially united in peaceful protest against the British Government termed "Operation Ghandi."<sup>8</sup> The CND was founded in 1957 as a political pressure group, with a host of elite Britons leading the fight. Amongst the nineteen founders of the organization, thirteen could be found in *Who's Who*. Bertrand Russell, E.P. Thompson, A.J.P. Taylor, Canon John Collins, and MP Michael Foot were among the eminent members of the self-appointed council of the CND.<sup>9</sup> In 1960, Bertrand

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<sup>6</sup> George McKay, *Circular Breathing* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival, 1944-2002* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 43-66.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 121-126.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Driver, *The Disarmers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 44. Bertrand Russell was one of the most prolific British intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His work is significant in fields ranging from philosophy to computer science. A.J.P. Taylor was a leading British diplomatic historian

Russell established the Committee of One-Hundred by inviting prominent activist to participate in the leadership of the CND. The Committee of One-Hundred's command of the CND further separated its bourgeois leadership from its younger, middle-class constituency. After the formation of the Committee of One-Hundred, the high-profile organization consolidated all antinuclear factions in Britain under the umbrella of the CND.

There were many divides over leadership and tactics in the internal machinery of the CND. Canon Collins represented the organization's leadership, when he determined the first priority of the CND was to "win a majority for CND policy [disarmament] within the Labour Party" and only "second, ... to put ... nuclear disarmament to the *British public* as a whole."<sup>10</sup> Such a strategy tied antinuclear efforts solely to the Labour Party. It rejected the force of public demonstration on the Conservative Party and the government of the day.<sup>11</sup> Michael Foot confirmed this strategy. When asked if he would support an anti-bomb Conservative versus a pro-bomb Labour politician, he cried, "Certainly not!"<sup>12</sup> Unlike their younger foot soldiers, CND leaders only envisioned nuclear politics within the confines of accepted political parameters: a defence-oriented Conservative Party and a Labour Party focused on social problems. The strategy tied the outcome of nuclear politics to the fate of Labour and the decisions of its leadership, but at the same time it protected the movement from accusations of being an anarchic youth rebellion, or worse, a Communist run organization.<sup>13</sup>

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and E.P. Thomas was one of the most influential Marxist historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Canon Collins was a leading social activists and the canon at St. Paul's Cathedral in London for more than thirty years. Michael Foot was a member of parliament and later became the Labour Party leader during the height of British disarmament politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

<sup>10</sup> Canon L. J. Collins, *Faith Under Fire* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1966), 326.

<sup>11</sup> In the United Kingdom decisions regarding nuclear programs are made entirely by the Prime Minister and a group of selected advisors.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968), 48.

<sup>13</sup>The CND's notable concentration of Communist members made political elites suspicious of the group's intentions. See; Parkin, *Middle-Class Radicalism*, 77-86.

The Direct Action Committee (DAC) represented the younger faction of the antinuclear movement. The group advocated non-violent protest and organized the first of the annual Easter marches to Aldermaston, in protest of nuclear weapons in 1958. The Aldermaston marches soon became a hallmark of the antinuclear movement. At its peak, the 1962, Aldermaston March drew over 150,000 marchers galvanized by contributions from performers along the marching route. This non-violent form of protest, the largest mass demonstration since the Chartist actions in 1848, appealed to the younger generation of the antinuclear movement.<sup>14</sup>

The DAC's penchant for non-violent protest relying on large-scale turnouts clashed with the initial designs of the CND's leadership to work primarily through political channels. The success of DAC marches and sit-ins co-opted CND leadership to join forces in the fight for disarmament in 1959. The CND's greater name recognition and its influential Committee of One-Hundred quickly overwhelmed the DAC's organizational autonomy by 1960. The consolidation of antinuclear groups under the CND prompted disagreement within its leadership.

Canon Collins and General Secretary Peggy Duff argued over the value of consolidation and the institution of an umbrella strategy. Duff's camp won out. She later recalled that, "CND achieved its amazing success during the early years because it united under its flag a very wide spectrum of people and organizations with wildly different approaches in terms of politics, morals, religion and methods of working."<sup>15</sup> The identity of the antinuclear movement soon tied itself to the image of the CND. Though CND became interchangeable with antinuclear, the scope and tactics of protest mirrored earlier DAC efforts, which relied on music to inspire mass turnouts and sustain morale. Under the reluctant protection of the elite leadership of the CND, antinuclear musicians borrowed directly from past themes of struggle and oppression and mixed them with the heady political climate of the late fifties and early sixties, to capture youthful exuberance in support of disarmament.

The young core of protestors that drove action against the bomb in Britain and America were supported by the ubiquitous presence of musical groups. Young jazz,

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<sup>14</sup>Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb*, 82-84.

<sup>15</sup> Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left* (London: Allison &Bugsby, 1971), 208.

folk, and rock musicians wrote the music for antinuclear demonstrations. Their approach to musical-mass protest conflicted with the methods of the older leadership of the CND. Paradoxes in the birth of the antinuclear sound-track illuminated the growing generational divide between the bourgeois elites of the CND, who aimed to restore British prestige, and a younger class of activists who nominally accepted British decline and wrestled with the imbalanced transatlantic Anglo-Saxon connection.

British and American music of the late fifties and sixties is ripe with contradiction. Despite a cultural rivalry, both sides lifted styles and melodies from the other. In Britain, this cross-fertilization matured in the antinuclear environment. As a result, broad-based public support for the disarmament agenda inspired by music emerged first in Britain and then moved to the United States. The antinuclear filter politicized the genres of music that later identified Anglo-American protest movements and transformed public opposition to the government from a select group of anti-establishment elites to the ranks of the middle class. The caustic lyrics that characterized protest music of the period were underpinned by internal tensions over national, generational, and class conflicts, that added another dimension to the formation of modern political music.

The political legitimacy provided by the older generation of the antinuclear movement to the younger grassroots faction engendered discord within the movement. Many young protestors failed to see the difference between their privileged leaders and the political elites they were actively protesting against. The older generation harboured its own resentments, Taylor claims, "The growth of the mass Movement from 1959-60 and the developing leftward slant of CND policy were achieved against executive committee wishes, and, together with the equally unpalatable process of democratization ... were embarrassing."<sup>16</sup> The growing generational divide manifested itself in the planning of musical performance: the Committee of One-Hundred aimed to control song selection and invitations to musical groups in order to manage protest content. Young musicians responded to internal censorship by positioning themselves along the parade routes before marchers arrived. The groups played music with an antinuclear message that lifted

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 46.

morale, but that also rejected the conservatism of the Committee of One-Hundred. Jeff Nuttall, the young, but prominent jazz musician, presented the paradox, noting, "If CND grew by the infectious enthusiasm of the beatnik group, it grew under the auspices of comparatively cosy-minded people who had *not* come to maturity with the certainty of the uncertainty twisting in their guts." He further labelled CND leadership as "squares - hard-working, well-meaning squares - whose particular refuge was in the life of socialist progress."<sup>17</sup> Internal contradictions aside, the "squares" attachment to the "socialist progress" of the Labour Party kept CND free from serious accusations of being a Communist-based movement.

The impact of political music on the antinuclear movement was directly related to the demographic makeup of CND supporters. Though some of the country's most influential personalities remained active at the top, the CND drew its core from the young, educated middle class.<sup>18</sup> As the first generation to come of age during Britain's demotion from Great Power status, members of the CND searched for alternatives to the political and cultural identity of earlier generations. Parkin acknowledged this separation. He argued that, "Nominal support for CND was, for many teenagers, a more or less commonly accepted feature of the youth culture; like the preference for folk music ... it was a way of drawing a line of demarcation between adolescent and adult values."<sup>19</sup> Music provided young CND supporters a channel for political expression that they believed would directly impact the decisions of government officials. As a single-issue campaign with a variety of political affiliations, the CND's ability to coalesce over the issue of disarmament and musical expression of solidarity made it a threatening political force.

### **Antinuclear Emotion in the Jazz and Folk Revival**

Much of the rapid growth in size and influence of the antinuclear movement was related to revivals in British music, specifically jazz and folk. The artistic accessibility of these styles provided the ideal flexibility for protest music. Jazz and folk allowed for easy insertion of complex emotions into music, which provided the appropriate degree of gravitas to promote antinuclear rhetoric. The protest musician

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<sup>17</sup> Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Fran Parkin, *Middle-Class Radicalism*, 162-180.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 158.

Ian Campbell believed that the revival of jazz and success of antinuclear protests were linked. He commented, "It is significant that 1958, the year that saw the climactic boom in jazz popularity, also produced the first Aldermaston march. The jazz revival and rise of CND were more than coincidental; they were almost two sides of the same coin."<sup>20</sup> Campbell later acknowledged the effectiveness of folk music as a vehicle for protest, commenting, "The warm fraternity of the peace and folk movements, and the ready demand for peace songs in folk clubs ... showed the surprising speed which songs could still be passed on by word of mouth today."<sup>21</sup>

The CND was not the first organization to use music for political purposes in Britain, but never before had a transatlantic exchange of musical styles initiated a new form of protest. Antinuclear music helped create the social dimension of protest in the nuclear age that diverged from the economic and material interests of earlier movements. Music contributed to the rise of a socially conscious middle-class in Britain. The common interactions with the similar styles on either side of the Atlantic created shared values and objectives. The CND's appropriation of folk and jazz music for political purposes during a period of heightened musical exchange between the UK and the US entrenched music as an essential mode of protest in both nations and informed the political undertones of performers ranging from small local groups to international music sensations.

The economic situation of the early 1950s created the environment within which political music laced with antinuclear rhetoric could thrive and spread across the middle class. Britain's reduced industrial capacity, which had already lagged behind her cultural competitor, America, led Britons to pursue the cheapest forms of entertainment. Attending the cinema or sporting events were costly one-time fixes, while radio and television remained expensive and production was constrained by industrial capacity. The import of the "skiffle" phenomenon in the early 1950s from America provided young Britons a substitute for other forms of entertainment. Skiffle fanatics relied on cheap or nonconventional instruments to produced jazz,

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<sup>20</sup> Ian Campbell, "Words, music and marches" in *The CND Story: The first 25 years of CND in the words of the people involved* (ed.) John Minnion and Philip Bolsover (London: Allison & Busby, 1993), 115.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 117.

blues, and folk music based on improvisation. The rise of teenage wages and student grants relative to the income of other sectors of the population expanded the market for cheap instruments.<sup>22</sup>

By the time of the famous marches to Aldermaston, British youth were eager to embrace antinuclear music on its stylistic merits alone. One CND musician marcher exhorted, "You want to know why we came here? Well, the simple reason is we are lovers of good music for one thing, and if this hell of a lot goes up, we're not likely to hear good music anymore!"<sup>23</sup> Based on African-American tone models, skiffle bridged the gap between conservative forms of music and more aggressive styles. At the same time it provided a unified musical foundation for disparate political groups supporting the CND.<sup>24</sup>

Marchers and musicians countered the negative imagery of nuclear war with joyful protest and song, which illuminated the dichotomy between pro and antinuclear mentalities and validated the strategy of the young core of activists in the CND, who pushed for a larger role for music. Protestors, musicians, and outsiders alike, commented on the success of the music-march approach. Jeff Nuttall remembered the change music brought in the attitude of the protest: "Protest was associated with festivity. There was a new feeling of license granted by the obvious humanitarian attitude of the ravers themselves."<sup>25</sup> The artist John Minnion recalled the effectiveness of this method, "CND identified a fundamental flaw in conventional politics: let's live, not destroy the world. So: let's have a good time. So: music and dance! People thought about us: not only are they protesting, they're having a good time too!"<sup>26</sup> *The Financial Times* added its endorsement of music as an effective form of political protesting its review of Lindsay Anderson's film *March to Aldermaston*, which emphasized the importance of music in the CND. The review column read, "It squashes the idea that the music and dancing which enlivened the march showed

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<sup>22</sup>Nuttall, *Bomb Culture*, 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> Lindsay Anderson, *March to Aldermaston* (1958).

<sup>24</sup> Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*, 14.

<sup>25</sup>Nuttall, *Bomb Culture*, 46.

<sup>26</sup> Published Interview from *American Pleasures, Anti-American Protest: 1950s Traditional Jazz in Britain*: Minnion, John. Interview with George McKay, 2001-2002.

some kind of immaturity. As the commentator says, 'It's no good being against death if you don't know how to enjoy life when you've got it'<sup>27</sup> By using political music to foster a festive atmosphere of protest, marchers and musicians established a crucial theme of celebration for protest movements in the US and the UK in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. This theme of celebration, in part, is responsible for the growth of mass marches as a successful protest tactic in a range of social movements.

A symbiotic relationship emerged between the CND's Aldermaston Marches and the revival of jazz and folk music in British life. The marches were places for experienced and young musicians alike to collect a fan base and practice new styles in front of a large crowd. For marchers and spectators, marching to Aldermaston became a musically informative experience that many took back home, spreading antinuclear rhetoric like a virus through the vector of folk and jazz revivalism. Protest musician Ewan MacColl explained, "There are now more new songs being written than at any other time in the past 80 years - young people are finding out for themselves that folk songs are tailor-made for expressing their thoughts and comments on contemporary topics, dreams and worries."<sup>28</sup> By 1964 civic leaders worried about the political potential of folk revivalism, over three hundred clubs sprouted across Britain with thousands of members. These clubs were considered "hotbeds for new songs" that warned of holocaust and the dangers of remaining a nuclear power.<sup>29</sup> Peggy Seeger recalls the atmosphere on the road to Aldermaston was based firmly in music, "It was an adventure. Every 100 yards or so you had a different kind of band - jazz, blues, skiffle, West Indian. And of course people made up their own songs. You didn't just shuffle along in misery. They were hopeful days and Aldermaston Marches had a sense of optimism."<sup>30</sup> The diversity of musical groups along the marching path encouraged innovation and exploration and helped British musicians adapt quickly to imported American styles and rhythms, specifically those from black America.

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<sup>27</sup> Christopher Driver, *The Disarmers*, 58.

<sup>28</sup> Colin Irwin, "Power to the People" *The Observer*. 9 August 2008.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

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By importing African-American tonal models, musicians imported themes of oppression as a mode of protest. These tonal models were at times direct copies of famous American ballads that called forth familiar emotions to elicit specific conceptions of the new lyrics. The Glasgow Song Guild, more commonly referred to as the “Polaris Singers from Glasgow” produced exceptionally potent combinations. Set to the melody of the African-American spiritual “I Shall Not be Moved” and protesting the stationing of American nuclear submarines in Scotland, the group sang.

*Hiroshima, I shall not be moved*

*Nagasaki, I shall not be moved*

*Just like a tree that's standing by the Holy Loch*

*I shall not be moved...*

*CND forever*

*I shall not be moved*

*CND forever*

*I shall not be moved*

*Just like a tree that's standing by the Holy Loch*

*I shall not be moved*<sup>31</sup>

Another famous single, “Ban Polaris,” reconciled environmental concerns with antinuclear rhetoric. Accompanied by the abolitionist tune from the American Civil War, “John Brown’s Body,” the Polaris Singers sang.

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<sup>31</sup> The Glasgow Song Guild, “I shall not be moved” in *Ding Dong Dollar*.

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*When Dunoon folk breathe atomic dust and drink the strontium waste,  
They'll hae clever deils for bairnies, dooble-heidit, dooble-faced,  
Like the fish that soom in the Holy Loch the first three-leggit race,  
Send the Yankees hame.*

*Ban Polaris — Hallelujah,  
Ban Polaris — Hallelujah,  
Ban Polaris — Hallelujah,  
And send the Yankees hame.<sup>32</sup>*

These hymns were intended to capitalize on themes of oppression experienced in the African-American community and connect them to the United Kingdom's experience with American atomic imperialism and nuclear proliferation.

"Send the Yankees hame" represented the feeling that many members of the CND held. It is worth noting that both the rank-and-file and the elite membership favoured a break from the American connection, though not all advocated leaving NATO. Considered in the larger narrative of the loss of empire, the anti-American lyrics echoed the same sentiments harboured by CND leadership and many of its members who registered as Labour Party members. The ubiquitous rationale charged that by banning the bomb and pulling away from the nuclear connection with the US, Britain could assume control of a new international moral standard and regain its status in the world. A.J.P. Taylor later re-examined this assumption and levelled the critique, "But we made one great mistake which ultimately doomed CND to futility. We thought that Great Britain was still a great power whose example would affect the rest of the world. Ironically we were the last Imperialists."<sup>33</sup>The imperial dimension was one of the most visible demarcations between generations. The older generation held fast to notions of restoring empire, while the young

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<sup>32</sup> The Glasgow Song Guild, "Ban Polaris" in *Ding Dong Dollar*.

<sup>33</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, *A Personal History* (London: Hamilton Press, 1983), 227.

educated middle class looked to avoid the pull of the expanding American cultural empire by anchoring the musical revival in the British antinuclear effort.

Music from the British disarmament movement thus provided a cognizable form of anti-Americanism. Still, performers singing anti-American lyrics remained tied to styles imported from the United States. The Anglo-American musical exchange was not a direct cause-effect relationship like so many political movements are. The exchange between the two cultures was a non-linear, dynamic process marked by transatlantic cultural competition.

The British folk revival owed much to the African-American tonal models, but nowhere was this paradox more apparent than in the jazz revival that partnered with the CND. Antinuclear protestors most closely identified with folk music, but jazz took a near second. Britain owed its traditional, or, "trad" jazz revival to a host of musicians heavily influenced by American performers, and in many cases by their stints in New Orleans and Chicago. Aldermaston jazz musician Colin Bowden explained, "The New Orleans style was swing on wheels, perfect for those marching occasions."<sup>34</sup> One of the most significant variations between the Aldermaston marches and earlier protest marches was the commitment to music that related so closely to the emotion of the African-American experience, that it linked nuclear weapons to slavery and oppression. This version of jazz music, filtered through antinuclear activism, and created a cross-cultural linkage that informed future protest movements on the strategy of connecting human struggles to construct the perception of a larger base. English jazz star George Melly recounted, "For us, jazz was black music, poor people's music ... so the politics was bound to appeal to those interested in struggle, overcoming oppression."<sup>35</sup>

The narrative of oppression exercised significant influence on the young, educated middle class, who saw mass protest as a form of not just political protest, but also cultural linkage to maligned populations in the United States. The British

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<sup>34</sup> Published Interview from *American Pleasures, Anti-American Protest: 1950s Traditional Jazz in Britain*: Bowden, Colin. Interview with George McKay, 2001-2002.

<sup>35</sup> Published Interview from *American Pleasures, Anti-American Protest: 1950s Traditional Jazz in Britain*: Melly, George. Interview with George McKay, 2001-2002.

sociologist and Marxist historian, Colin Barker acknowledged the impact during his college years in the late 50s and early 60s, "I read in the newspaper about the early civil rights movement in the States, and automatically identified with it without ever thinking why. So jazz did imply a kind of connection with anti-racism, even though the term was unknown then."<sup>36</sup> The ability of CND and antinuclear music to forge connections between disparate social struggles added still another political dimension that made protest and the music associated with protest even more popular.

When CND leadership relinquished musical control to the folk and jazz revivalists, marches began to resonate across a larger swath of the population. Aldermaston jazz musician Val Wilmer recalled, "To have bands marching alongside or by the roadside for CND wasn't perhaps such an unusual feature. The difference was that they were playing jazz and there was the strong connection with New Orleans music and culture."<sup>37</sup> With jazz musicians covering CND marching routes the genre gained a foothold to sustain its popularity between marches. The connection between antinuclear sentiment and jazz created opportunities for CND supporters to voice their displeasure with nuclear weapons outside of organized demonstrations. Expression of antinuclear emotion through jazz helped imbed opposition to nuclear weapons in the middle-class attendees of jazz events.

The jazz explosion married well with the political efforts of the CND and resulted in increased support for both. Ian Campbell contends, "Similar social attitudes and positive humanist values informed them both. At any jazz event a liberal sprinkling of CND badges, and perhaps even leaflets and posters, would be in evidence; conversely, at every CND demonstration live jazz music set the tempo for the march."<sup>38</sup> The roots of jazz and its revival in Britain made it an exceptional

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<sup>36</sup> Published Interview from *American Pleasures, Anti-American Protest: 1950s Traditional Jazz in Britain*: Barker, Colin. Interview with George McKay, 2001-2002.

<sup>37</sup> Published Interview from *American Pleasures, Anti-American Protest: 1950s Traditional Jazz in Britain*: Wilmer, Vil. Interview with George McKay, 2001-2002.

<sup>38</sup> Ian Campbell, "Words, music and marches" in *The CND Story: The first 25 years of CND in the words of the people involved* (ed.) John Minnion and Philip Bolsover (London: Allison & Busby, 1993), 115.

vehicle for antinuclear rhetoric. In his analysis of British jazz in the late 1950s Eric Hobsbawm argued, "The music lends itself to any kind of protest and rebelliousness much better than most other forms of art."<sup>39</sup>Hobsbawm based his conclusion in his empirical study of Aldermaston Marches. He noticed "anti-nuclear marches ... have rarely lacked their quote of imitation New Orleans jazz players."<sup>40</sup>Moulding jazz into a political tool for CND marches attracted a younger generation of musicians who blurred the boundaries between folk, jazz, and rock. The new integrated form of music launched British musicians and their American counterparts to stardom and provided the soundtrack for a coming wave of protest movements ranging from Vietnam and civil rights to the woman's movement.

### **The Transatlantic Music Exchange as a Foundation for Modern Social Protest**

The less distinctive national institutions of folk, jazz, and rock became from each other the more artists struggled to assert their national tradition to protect claims of unique cultural contributions. American and British artists battled to control the narrative of struggle. Many artists sought to connect the struggles of select groups in the US and the UK, such as the African-American struggle with slavery and the fight against nuclear weapons in Britain. Other musicians specifically rejected this approach, believing that national narratives were unique and independent. These rejections fell in line with the repositioning of the US and the UK in the superpower era.

Certain American artists held tight to the notion of US exceptionalism, while others outwardly rejected it. The American folk singer in the UK, Peggy Seeger, remarked, "I sing American songs. Because they represent to me the particular struggle of a particular people at a particular point in time. But when I hear a British person singing a folksong from America I feel that there's an anachronism."<sup>41</sup>British counterparts wrestled with the same problem, divided between those who valued the American melodies that were easily politicized because of their accessibility and

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<sup>39</sup> Francis Newton (pseudonym for Eric Hobsbawm), *The Jazz Scene* (London: Penguin Books, 1961), 254.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>41</sup> Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*, 79.

those who criticized the lack of a single issue in many American protest songs. Nuttall valued the American style for its foundation in class equality. "American culture was free of our snobbery, was against the British class system. You take some energy - whether it's Faulkner, Krazy Kat, Lenny Bruce - because it really did seem to be enormously liberating at the time."<sup>42</sup> Discord amongst protest musicians owed much to the dynamic and fluid nature of the transatlantic music exchange, but the issue of struggle is what struck further controversy into the community.

The sequential development of protest movements in both American and Britain gave protest musicians a chronology to distinguish their contributions to antinuclear music and, more broadly, protest music. Nuttall upheld the British claim to the origin of postwar protest, of which the CND was the first mass movement. He explained, "Antinuclear protest was one thing that passed across the Atlantic the other way, east to west."<sup>43</sup> The veteran CND marcher Leon Rosselson, who became an important contributor to the satirical television program *That Was the Week that Was*, defended the influence of the British antinuclear protest music on famous American musicians, he recounted,

Americans came over and were very impressed to find people writing songs. That wasn't happening at the time in America so they went back and founded Broadside, which was the mag set up specifically to publish new American songs. That was the first one to publish Dylan, Phil Ochs and all those. Rather than American protest singers inspiring British songwriters, it was the other way round.<sup>44</sup>

The American styles of music that keyed British revivals in folk and jazz, and launched the rock 'n' roll scene were politicized in the United Kingdom. The re-exportation of American melodies with political messages from Britain influenced American musicians, who broadened the message to apply to a range of social movements in the sixties, seventies, and eighties.

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<sup>42</sup> McKay, *Circular Breathing*, 21

<sup>43</sup> Nuttall, *Bomb Culture*, 61.

<sup>44</sup> Colin Irwin, "Power to the People" *The Observer*. 9 August 2008.

The emergence of political music under the domain of CND's performing partners established a vast living legacy for the movement. Music sustained the campaign from an artistic, political and financial standpoint, as well as offering a touchstone to link the second wave of CND popularity in the 1980s to the first peak in the 1960s. The annual CND pop festival in the West Country developed by CND musicians supplied a significant portion of the campaign's funding until the 1980s.<sup>45</sup> George McKay believes the same counterculture that developed the festival also created an American connection rooted in culture, "As with trad jazz and the founding of CND in the 1950s, there is a connection of (American) pop music with alternative politics, festival culture with a kind of alternative or youth lifestyle. Again, these are in the context of protest against American nuclear domination."<sup>46</sup> The foundations of protest built on music provided the added bonus of longevity. The left-wing Manchester based journalist advocated that protest be rooted in music as a protection from fleeting political condition, or possible international conflict, he wrote "The hydrogen bomb may be able to destroy singers but cannot destroy songs - songs are stronger than the hydrogen bomb... we believe that song has a powerful role to play in the struggle of the British people for peace and socialism."<sup>47</sup>

The alternative music culture of the CND spread to other protest movements and instigated a new form of political action. Richard Taylor and Colin Pritchard contend the campaign's success convinced other social movements that best practices dictated "putting power into the hands of ordinary people."<sup>48</sup> The assessment of one of CND's founders and respected historian of peace movements, Nigel Young, suggested the importance of the organization in codifying a method of activism for protest movements in the Anglo-Saxon world. Young asserted, "What we have succeeded in doing is in creating a 'style' - a new kind of politics in which policy is not of paramount importance." Rather, he believed, "it is the way the movement does things - the symbols and the pennants, *the songs*, the typography and lay-out of its posters and literature, the atmosphere of the marches and sit-

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<sup>45</sup>George McKay, "Anti-Americanism, Youth, and Popular Music," 8.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>47</sup> Colin Irwin, "Power to the People" *The Observer*. 9 August 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Taylor and Colin Pritchard, *The Protest Makes: The British Nuclear Disarmament Movement of 1958-1965, Twenty Years On* (Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1980), 131.

downs, the attitude to direct action and to individual participation" that contributed to its success. "Most importantly "the way in which the bomb is related to other issues, local and international. It is an ambience which is contagious; it has spread to North America ... a new sort of politics."<sup>49</sup> The "new sort of politics," which favoured mass demonstrations supported by cultural expression, quickly became a favourite for American musicians to take back to the United States.

Fusion of American and British musical styles with political issues inspired songwriters who drew on their interactions with the antinuclear movement to create protest music with a larger application. Bob Dylan's contributions to American protest music provided activists ranging in purpose with a songbook of opposition. Dylan represented a brand of American musicians based in the tradition of Woody Guthrie, which drew criticism in Britain.<sup>50</sup> The refashioning of New Orleans style jazz and folk music in Britain created significant animosity in the transatlantic music community. Each national camp battled to represent the emotions of an emerging politically aware generation, but neither side could separate from the influences of the other. If American music provided the inspiration for Britain's musicians to produce music with wide spread appeal, then British performers added the political aspect that American artists perfected to colonize the sounds of America's protest.

Dylan's trip to England in 1962 is indicative of the transatlantic protest music exchange/rivalry at work. That winter while in the UK, Dylan wrote and tested much of the music for his album "Freewheelin' Bob Dylan," including the first performance of his well-known protest anthem "Blowin' in the Wind." The British folk tradition, that owed much of its revival to an injection of American style captured Dylan's attention. Some of CND's most treasured musical allies, including Ewan MacColl and Martin Carthy, taught Dylan a range of politically tested folk melodies, which Dylan later appropriated for future compilations. Dylan's most successful adaptation of British folk came from the hand of an American artist engaged in the same cross-cultural exchange as Dylan. Jean Ritchie's arrangement of the traditional English

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<sup>49</sup>Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, 221-2.

<sup>50</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs from Billie Holliday to Green Day* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 51-69.

folk song "Nottamun Town" gave Dylan the melody for his influential single "Masters of War."<sup>51</sup> The song reacted to Eisenhower's "military-industrial complex" that fuelled a rivalry between the three existing nuclear capable states and nations aspiring to attain nuclear weapons.<sup>52</sup> Dylan's lyrics condemned the Cold War nuclear weapons society.

*You that build the death planes*

*You that build all the bombs*

*You that hide behind walls*

*You that hide behind desks*

*I just want you to know*

*I can see through your masks*<sup>53</sup>

British critics argued over the song's value, like most of Dylan's work, was limited because it failed to target a single issue. MacColl blasted Dylan, saying his songs were "puerile" and "too general to mean anything."<sup>54</sup> Dorian Lynskey acknowledges the positives of this approach; "its flaws were also its strengths. Yes, it employed broad strokes ... but only broad strokes could have painted it across the minds of a generation."<sup>55</sup>

Dylan was only one of many Americans who engaged the CND and lent artistic support and publicity. Peggy Duff noted CND's dependence on the contributions of artists like Dylan, including those of his long time girlfriend Joan Baez. Duff

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 56-7

<sup>52</sup>Edna Gundersen, "Dylan is Positively on top of his Game" *USA Today* 10 September 2001.

<sup>53</sup> Bob Dylan, "Masters of War," *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963).

<sup>54</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions*, 55.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 55.

recalled, "We accepted with gratitude the songs and the singers – from Joan Baez to Meg the Busker," which were significant because "the style of the movement was also linked to the songs it sang as it marched along the roads, all over Britain."<sup>56</sup>

Other well-known American musicians borrowed directly from CND musicians and made certain protest anthems more available to American audiences. Topic Records and Transatlantic Records played a major role in this process. Topic was originally founded by the Communist backed Worker's Music Association, but went independent by the early sixties. The label targeted folk musicians on both sides of the Atlantic and, by doing so, made artists more familiar with the creations of their international contemporaries. Transatlantic Records was founded in 1961 with the purpose of importing American folk traditions to the British folk revival. Performers supporting the CND, such as Peggy Seeger, Ewan MacColl, and Ian Campbell signed with both labels and used them as distribution agents for their antinuclear rhetoric.<sup>57</sup>

The Ian Campbell Folk Group's song produced by Topic Records, "The Sun is Burning in the Sky," captured the interest of the famed song-writing duo, Simon and Garfunkel. In 1964, the Simon and Garfunkel album "Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M." hit stores with the single "The Sun is Burning in the Sky," a direct copy lyrical copy of the Ian Campbell production. Released in both the US and the UK, the song represented many of the trends of the transatlantic protest music community at the time. Campbell's connection with the American folk label Transatlantic Records influenced his revivalist style, which he soon politicized with lyrics condemning nuclear war. The American duo of Simon and Garfunkel appreciated the infusion of protest and folk and their single reproduced the imagery of Campbell's creation for American audiences. The lyrics painted a powerful picture of nuclear war.

*Now the sun has come to Earth*

*Shrouded in a mushroom cloud of death*

*Death comes in a blinding flash*

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<sup>56</sup>Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, 209. Joan Baez was Dylan's girlfriend in the early 1960s.

<sup>57</sup> Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*, 55-64.

*Of hellish heat and leaves a smear of ash  
And the sun has come to Earth*

*Now the sun has disappeared  
All is darkness, anger, pain and fear  
Twisted, sightless wrecks of men  
Go groping on their knees and cry in pain  
And the sun has disappeared<sup>58</sup>*

The cyclical development of the song and connection of the artists involved, united disarmament rhetoric on both sides of the Atlantic. The song's imagery applied equally to American and British societies, making music a transatlantic bridge for protest against nuclear weapons and war.

The export of nuclear rhetoric via music found traction in the United States. The growth of mass social movements in the US, like in Britain, depended on music to send political messages to a young political engaged generation. Music became a practical method for transmitting arguments and emotions that young protestors latched on to. In the US, antinuclear rhetoric did not occupy the same hallowed position in protest circles as it did in Britain. While the CND and affiliated professional leagues maintained a single-issue campaign to disarm the UK, American activists chose to integrate antinuclear protest into larger social movements. The connection that musicians formed between African-American oppression and experience with British disarmament action prepared antinuclear for incorporation into the Civil Rights movement. Nuttall contended that, "The bomb became just one item amidst the violent actualities of the Negro civil-rights program."<sup>59</sup> Antinuclear rhetoric was also swallowed up opposition to the Vietnam War. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and Partial Test-Ban Treaty in 1963 undermined the momentum of

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<sup>58</sup> The Ian Campbell Folk Group, "The Sun is Burning in the Sky" in *The Crow in the Cradle & The Sun is Burning in the Sky*. Topic Records: London, 1963; Simon and Garfunkel, "The Sun is Burning in the Sky" in *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.* Columbia Records: New York, 1964.

<sup>59</sup>Nuttall, *Bomb Culture*, 61.

individual antinuclear movements, especially the CND. However, by becoming items on the agendas of other social movements, antinuclear protest remained alive. Taylor and Pritchard indicate that the inheritors of the CND style of protest were all movements “concerned with decentralising and humanising society.”<sup>60</sup> The codification of protest methods, specifically the mass-music approach, provided social movements in both the US and the UK a guide to activism that mobilized multiple generations of activists. Parkin predicted the value of such innovation, “given the kind of global radicalism it represents, CND would thus appear to have a certain built-in resilience in so far as its continued existence is not directly dependent on the achievement of its pristine aims.”<sup>61</sup> The musical aspect of the CND and its strategy of mass protest helped endear the organization to future activists who returned to the movement when a new call to action materialized in the 1980s. Though the organization had been dormant for nearly twenty years, the export of its music and other cultural artefacts to other successful social movements demonstrated that the CND had the cultural foundation to challenge the political status quo.

### Conclusion

The transatlantic music exchange of the 1950s and 1960s keyed a revival in British music, specifically in folk and jazz. British musicians used the experience with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to integrate political messages and antinuclear rhetoric into music. Impressed by the political music coming from British performers, American musicians refined the politicization of folk music and broadened its application to a greater number of protest movements in the United States. The process of musical exchange from America to Britain and back was dynamic, but the sequential development of mass protest first in the United Kingdom and then in America provided a touchstone for artists to assert their national traditions.

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<sup>60</sup> Taylor and Pritchard, *The Protest Makes*, 131.

<sup>61</sup>Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism*, 40.

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Within British protest music and major divide emerged based on generational conflicts and the issue of Anti-Americanism. Many British musicians pilloried their American counterparts for generalizing protest goals in music. Paradoxically, the American musical styles were often the melodic foundations for many British songs that carried a bold streak of anti-Americanism. Anti-Americanism in British protest songs was partially in response to American atomic imperialism, and also connected to themes of oppression from other communities; especially with the African-American experience. The connection between antinuclear rhetoric and African-American struggle depended on Chicago and New Orleans style jazz, as well as African-American spirituals. The broad musical connections between social movements sustained mass protest as a viable form of political action. The CND's innovative approach to incorporating music into mass marches became a time-honoured method of protest in the US and the UK throughout the sixties, seventies, and eighties. This tradition helped secure the CND's role in modern protest and kept alive its message of disarmament, even in times of limited public support. Music transformed the methods of protest in the West. The maturation of British folk and jazz revivals in the antinuclear environment set off an exchange of political music that characterize the future of protest action in the US and the UK.

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**Animal and the *Muselmann* as a Paradigm of the Victim**

by

**Anna Barcz**

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*What is human? What impossible?*

*The question we must answer is: Do these words still have a meaning?*

Jean-Francois Lyotard

*There is a transcendence in the animal! [...] It reminds us of the debt that is always open.*

Emmanuel Levinas

1.

**The Post-human Victim**

**W**ho is the real victim? The one who is not a metaphor and experiences violence that is impossible to resist, although the realm of experience and suffering might be hidden behind such constructions like language, human identity, or agency. Therefore, the victim – especially in the time of being oppressed – cannot be compared to human that speaks and acts, as it is depicted by Jean-Francois Lyotard and Giorgio Agamben. Both were analyzing two figures of victims in their texts: the animal and the *Muselmann*. Regarding them, both referred to the traumatic past of the largest European catastrophe – to the Second World War where such extreme situations like organized genocide and inhuman reality of creating subhuman species generated a massive impact on literature. After-Holocaust writers started to experiment with the text and search for other strategies to represent at least something “probable” from the camp experience. It appeared, though, that “to represent” is not equal with “to reconstruct”. The facts and events of the past bared by the postwar victims were often distorted by what they have individually remembered and by their irremovable experience. Unreliability of human testimony became a basis for rethinking the relations between the experience and realism in terms of the method but not the style. It means that the language of description

appears to be a realist in style or “possible to describe” what is in fact impossible to represent. Observing how the literature of the Holocaust developed was especially fruitful to indicate, then, major changes in the theory of representation, which includes the post-human re-evaluations and ontological de-hierarchizations for the ontological inclusiveness of non-human experience and radically different perspectives in viewing the world. The realist strategies of constructing the story, narrative, or poetics started to be more interesting from what has really happened.<sup>1</sup>

In this context of post-traumatic realism there is a vast area of recreating measures, means, and methods of representation, particularly when we face issues that surpass all our predictable human expectations. Nevertheless, for some people it will be still self-evident “that human suffering is virtually in a class of its own, and that animal suffering, while sometimes objectionable, isn’t really as important or as morally significant”.<sup>2</sup> Despite the dominant humanist point of view, I assume that a limit situation or a border experience is such a source of expression where perhaps it is better understood why a non-human animal (and not a human) is juxtaposed with an extremely emaciated man that the Nazi death camp prisoner, the *Muselmann*, embodied. Perhaps, and that could be another promising question to follow, the category of ultimate victim, a victim that was brought up by these experiences, is searched by Lyotard and Agamben to be discussed and captured in its essence, however, what makes the victim to be chosen as a paradigmatic example has almost nothing to do with what we would associate with distinguished and exceptional humanity. In other words, both philosophers encounter and assign a kind of border of anthropological ability to express a totally strange experience and a way of participation in the world, and so different than the human in their attempts to figure out the real victims, that they cannot be grounded in an individual, independent anthropocentric subjectivity. One of the main reasons why the notion of suffering is surpassing here all humanly constructed borders is its solipsist

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<sup>1</sup> Compare for instance: Whitehead, Anne. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004; Rothberg, Michael. *Traumatic Realism. The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Linzey, Andrew. *Why Animal Suffering Matters. Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. p. 9.

phenomenology. We are in a situation of losing access to what is “anthropocentric subjectivity” which resembles a situation of a closed animal existence.

That is why the idea expressed in the present article is to fill the category of victim with non-human and post-anthropocentric representations or to redefine it with a more realistic source of experience that belongs to another being. In this section, I will try to combine it with what is understood by the real animal victim – mediated by the philosophical reflection of Lyotard – and the Nazi camp figure of the *Muselmann*, originally brought by Primo Levi, especially in his *If this is a Man*, and interpreted by Agamben in *The Remnants of Auschwitz*. Such compilation is done purposely trespassing on the assumptions of post-traumatic realism but it should be also noted that the animal as a victim reminds one of the oldest roles that humans assigned to it: the role of sacrificial animal performed in the religious rituals by different groups of people. As Andrew Linzey, a British theologian states in his book, *Why Animals Suffering Matters Morally*, and simultaneously offers an alternative to a dominating Aristotelian-Thomist tradition of Christian theology in the Catholic Church: the suffering of animals can be an “essential component of our response to Christ”. For instance, the prophet Isaiah (53:7) “compares the coming Messiah to a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth”.<sup>3</sup> Linzey includes animals otherwise, and indirectly contributes with a question that I would like to pose: whether the animal can be a victim in a different way than a ritual, and other than animal sacrifice.

Similar mediation of the animal, or a significant reference, is recognizable in the portraiture of the victim in the after Holocaust literature. Since the animal brings the idea that the term victim is not reserved for humans only, it might be worthy to add that it is not a victim that operates in the context of pouncing on a prey by predatory animals, so it is not understood as a deer killed by a tiger because this happens outside the human and inhuman world, outside what is understood by moral values, and without humans' influence. The cruelty, which descriptively affects the notion of a victim, begins when one sentient being is killed, often tortured before, for other needs than biological, and it cannot be explained on empirical grounds; in

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

other words, it means that there are some other, non-empirical reasons to act cruelly. It is not possible to deny how extremely enormous, overwhelming and unbearable has to be suffering felt by an aware gnu being eaten by a lion, which lasts sometimes for an hour but that **only looks cruel to us**. Obviously, we empathize through a television with an animal being lacerated, however, it does not mean that it is a cruel act in the moral sense. Since the ethical standards were dramatically exceeded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the mediation and accompaniment of animals in recognizing ethical cruelty started to be realized in the progressing process of a massive domination of humans over animals and other humans (condemned to represent other races like Jews or Gypsies). A true breakthrough began to be observed when this process entered and developed its practices on an **industrial** level: in the extermination camps, slaughterhouses, laboratories, and other abandoned, and usually invisible spaces for the public sphere, where life of non-humans is deprived of any dignity and subordinated without any moral limits. In case of animals, it is quite a recent inspiration to penetrate those areas and spaces of humans' power over other creatures. However, it has quickly extended into a tremendous impact on humanities, especially in literary studies, taking into account for instance John Maxwell Coetzee's novel *The Lives of Animals*<sup>4</sup> or Sue Coe's series of drawings in *Dead Meat*.<sup>5</sup> Thus, due to that, and regarding the changes in the theory of representation, **the non-human** embodied by the real animal and the almost dead *Muselmann*, both differentiated from the inhuman, started to be a problem as a new type of victim in the post-traumatic, and post-secular Euro-American world.

A change in meaning in the very category of a victim has not been possible without many other transformations within patterns of (post-anthropocentric) culture, and theory of subjectivity, particularly expressed by naturalization of science and by a rapid development of cognitive theory, and by the impact of empirical science on social and human studies, where more sentient non-human subjects, like mammals, are recognizable due to their sensory sensitivity, emotions, and ability to

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<sup>4</sup> McHugh, Susan. *Animal Stories. Narrating across Species Lines*. Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. p. 2; Weil, Kari. *Thinking Animals. Why Animal Studies Now?* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. p. XIX.

<sup>5</sup> See for example: Wolfe, Cary. *The Ethics of (Dis)figuration: Sue Coe's Dead Meat*. In: *What is Post humanism?* Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. p. 146-158.

learn even abstract symbols of human language<sup>6</sup>. Another strong influence to rethink the notion of a victim is generated by a philosophical current indicated under the name of post humanism, mainly because the human subject has been weakened, especially in its individual and liberal costume, or even erased: "The 'essence' or true being of the human is in fact its 'absence' [*Ab-wesen-heit*]"<sup>7</sup>. Further consequence that follows from this position may lead to a situation when it is no longer possible for humanism to place:

the other-than-human animal, or animality itself, in a separate sphere or category of otherness to which ethical and political considerations do not apply, or at best apply in very reduced form, because the other is either sub- or supra-ethical in status.<sup>8</sup>

Dominick LaCapra argues few times in *History and Its Limits* that humanism, in general, requires such notion of the victim as a radical other, reduced to infra-ethical status. This would approach us to parallel patterns readable from Agamben and Lyotard examples, in which the non-human victim appears but only when simultaneously it is accompanied by the very criticism of anthropocentric humanism. Both of them follow, or exalt the victims, whose image in the anthropocentrically understood culture was solely unrecognized or put in a form of "raw material, purely instrumental being, or mere life".<sup>9</sup> Now, we could say in a more profound way, that these, especially non-human scapegoats are treated in the post humanist frameworked texts with greater dignity, as pangs of conscience, questioning human identity and its system of values. Some authors, then, like Donna Haraway, would say that we are living in a world, in which rather post-humans than humans, transcend and transgress it, what was constructed by them, by tradition, science and

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<sup>6</sup> See for instance a bibliographical list in the chapter „Animals as Reflexive Thinkers“ in: *The Animals Reader. The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*. Ed. Kalof, Linda and Fitzgerald, Amy. Oxford-New York: Berg, 2007. p.111. The editors refer to such already well-recognized researchers as to Marc Bekoff, Frans de Waal, Donald Griffin, Sue Savage-Rumbaugh, and others.

<sup>7</sup> Herbrechter, Stefan. *Post humanism. A Critical Analysis*. London-New Delhi-New York-Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013. p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009. p. 159.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

culture, and they transform it by bringing non-human elements, affirmatively and refreshingly; or by creating new adaptive relations with the world outside based on flat ontologies; and by being critical to recent hierarchical experience.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, post humanism would neither refer to what is *post* humans, nor to any futurologist vision of super-humans (which has been already differentiated as ‘transhumanism’), but rather in the first place to what is lacking in the humanist project, what has been thoroughly repressed and covered under anthropocentric needs, and what should be now excavated to establish alternatively closer, and possibly non-hierarchical relations with some of the representatives of the non-human world; also because humans have destroyed this world utterly (not only due to military conflicts but also in the context of its environmental resources that are disappearing).<sup>11</sup> Thus, the non-human victim reminds us – on different and corresponding levels: aesthetically, affirmatively, and ethically – that we are not the dominant species on the planet and that the non-human victim can transmit the sense of guilt in the most radical way, which seems to be irremovable from our humanist tradition. Taking this into a serious account, Cary Wolfe in his *Animal Rites* introduces his understanding of the post human perspective which is based on a predictive and normative premise that:

a hundred years from now we will look back on our current mechanized and systematized practices of factory farming, product testing, and much else that undeniably involves animal exploitation and suffering – uses that we earlier saw Derrida compare to the gas chambers of Auschwitz – with much the same

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<sup>10</sup>Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis-London: Minnesota University Press, 2008; Braidotti, Rosi. *Posthuman, All Too Human: Toward a New Process Ontology*. In: *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7-8 (2006). p. 197-208.

<sup>11</sup> There is some controversy among ecologists what we should defend: ecosystems or particular animal species – see for example: Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. p. 180-181. In my opinion, though, animals treated as agencies and performative real figures may only strengthen the aims of environmental criticism (more often posed as ecocriticism) due to their mediatory role between culture and nature and to mostly positive emotions they engage (for example in children).

horror and disbelief with which we now regard slavery or the genocide of the Second World War.<sup>12</sup>

Besides a political and social effect that can be implicated from Wolfe's words, there is another, more general, context that should be reconstructed: the universalizing humanist project led to the oppression of not only human groups (because they were not included in the 'full humanity' with regard to their race, nationality, class or gender) but also non-human others (that constituted the opposite, what was structurally essential for becoming human). Stefan Herbrechter, who refers to Wolfe's critical position, is trying to reformulate the rejection of subjectivity in posthumanism by claiming that: "Our 'posthuman condition' is thus not a liquidation of the subject but rather a *proliferation* of subjects, their responsibilities and their associated forms of life".<sup>13</sup> Thanks to this perspective, I would maintain the criticism of humanist subjectivity and argue for "proliferation" of victims, no matter if they are humans, non-humans, or post-humans.

Such approach to redefine the meaning of the sufferer, regardless of species' subjectivity, is recognizable in Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Le Differend*, when he encompasses animals in reflecting on, and defining the very concept of the victim. The most significant element, necessary to define the victim, is the fact that he/she/or it has no opportunity to speak and present what has happened and why he/she/it was mistreated or harmed. In the note no 9 – the whole book is constructed by shorter and longer notes, that are numbered fragments, which give the impression of building blocks, or writing as a process of looking for essential but ordered particles of narrative and discourse on violence – Lyotard writes:

It is in the nature of a victim not to be able to prove that one has been done a wrong. A plaintiff is someone who has incurred damages and who disposes of the means to prove it. One becomes a victim if one loses these means. One

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<sup>12</sup>Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. p. 190.

<sup>13</sup> Herbrechter, Stefan. *Posthumanism. A Critical Analysis*. London-New Delhi-New York-Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013. p. 198.

loses them, for example, if the author of the damages turns out directly or indirectly to be one's judge.<sup>14</sup>

The most controversial idea expressed here is this statement of the “nature of a victim”, as if there were some universally fixed conditions to be a victim; but then he says that “one becomes a victim”. The lack, or loss of means – as language, arguments, evidence, instruments, or anything – to prove the crime is very significant when he distinguishes a victim, although more dramatic and appalling is the state when an abuser is substituted also by a judge. It seems an unimaginable situation in a democratic state of law but for Lyotard one of the most powerful examples that demonstrates it is Auschwitz; and later problems that appeared with proving that the gas chambers (installed in the water showers interiors) really existed, when there were no eyewitnesses because all people, except the executioners, were themselves the victims who died directly there. In the same note, he adds that a “perfect crime” is organized to silence the victim and to eliminate any testimony, to make it completely absurd. Hence, the one who is the victim as he originally express it: is the “differend”, the one who is unable to prove anything, due to the fact that he/she/it is forced to be silent.<sup>15</sup> In other words, that appear quite surprisingly, in the note 38 Lyotard turns to the animal, stating that “the animal is a paradigm of the victim”:

Some feel more grief over damages inflicted upon an animal than over those inflicted upon a human. This is because the animal is deprived of the possibility of bearing witness according to the human rules for establishing damages, and as a consequence, every damage is like a wrong and turns it into a victim *ipso facto*.<sup>16</sup>

A paradigm here indicates a model, a pattern of being a victim, however, not all animals are victims but those who are: have not got any means to speak according to human rules about their suffering. They cannot act as a witness because they are

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<sup>14</sup> Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Transl. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

mute in culture, history and the whole humanly constructed world. Here, nature of the victim has a real referent: the non-human animal is a concrete being, like one of those Jews who could not speak what had happened in the gas chambers that looked like water showers before and after the liberation. The parallel that is subtly drawn here is meaningful because it signifies the obstacles in access to communication, and because we are dealing with the ultimate, 'paradigmatic' victim that is conditioned to be lost.

The authors, who very often refer to Michel Foucault, recognize here the effect of bio power and a threatening possibility that the Holocaust can repeat but some of them, like Polish historian (partly working in Stanford), Ewa Domanska, anticipates joint studies where animals' and humans' matters are juxtaposed:

In this context it is extremely important to provide comparative studies on the issue of institutionalized cruelty, which will apply not only to people (comparing for instance the holocaust with slavery) but also to animals (where the slaughterhouse would be seen as a prototype of the extermination camp). This phenomenon of institutionalized cruelty gives us a basis for drawing analogy between the holocaust and slavery of humans and animals.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the most influential and radical book that greatly fulfils the need to present human supremacy and exploitation of animals, especially in the industrialized slaughterhouses (farm factories), through "Nazi" lens, is *Eternal Treblinka* written by a social historian and educator, Charles Patterson.<sup>18</sup> This text, however, also functions as a reductive example of thinking, despite the author's intention, that our relation toward animals is mainly subordinated to one-way violence. Such reductions might be helpful, influence and affect people, shock them regarding even their everyday choices. But still there are major problems left beside like: how to consider and represent non-human victims? How to speak on behalf of someone/a creature who was totally deprived of causative power, or in other words – agency; how in the

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<sup>17</sup> Domańska, Ewa. Muzułman: świadectwo i figura. In: W sprawie Agambena. Konteksty krytyki. Ed. Łukasz Musiał, Mikołaj Ratajczak, Krystian Szadkowski and Arkadiusz Żychliński. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010. p. 234-5.

<sup>18</sup>Patterson, Charles. *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York: Lantern Books, 2002.

age of human posttraumatic events bring the idea of other victims that exist in non-anthropocentrically understood history.

Lyotard claims that the one who is not able to speak but somehow represents himself in being a victim, radicalizes its meaning. His philosophical and communicational project assumes that it is possible to constitute new speakers, new meanings and new objects, so harm and mistreat could be revealed and speakable. In this theoretical proposal speaking is understood as a relation: there is someone or something that speaks and someone or something that listens. In the note 21, where Lyotard expresses such affirmative stance and descriptive positivism, he is also confirmed that it is a matter of gaining new competence.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, he does not explain if it is also a situation when other than human subjects can express themselves, and how, in this posttraumatic but communicative society; or put into convincingly understandable for humans phrases what was suppressed and painful for them, perhaps with a help of mediatory figures like zoologists, etiologists, animal behaviorists, or any other “non-human” interpreters. It seems that for Lyotard this is a very hypothetical vision to believe in such a lingual construction of the world and ignore a whole bunch of methodological and practical issues. He does not defend himself in this text from treating animality only as an abstract and purified concept of the radical and ultimate victim. To believe in the possibility of representing non-human perspective of being oppressed does not follow as a consequence from this book, however, I would like to assume it as an alternative mode of thinking that appeared in the after holocaust literature. Since the post holocaust literature creates such an opportunity and conditions, a question of expressibility of liminal or border experience might be asked by changing the perspective for the non-speaking being, which finds its application especially in the situation that exceeds human perceptive and rational competences.

Despite Lyotard's implemented affirmation in disclosing cruelty, animals have to be represented in speaking for their own sake, even passively, which likely happens in case of the *Muselmann* who indicates a similar figure that plays a paradigmatic role in portraying the non-human victim in Giorgio Agamben's

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<sup>19</sup> Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Transl. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. p. 13.

*Remnants of Auschwitz*. Here, paradoxically, the *Muselmann* victim used to be a human but transformed into a non-human being under the pressure of a massive suffering and hunger in German Nazi extermination camps. Two quotes illustrate that the *Muselmann* "marked the moving threshold in which man passed into non-man and in which clinical diagnosis passed into anthropological analysis"; or as Primo Levi put it, "the *Muselmann*, the 'complete witness', makes it forever impossible to distinguish between man and non-man."<sup>20</sup> So, the *Muselmann*, as Agamben sees him, raises fundamental questions to politics, ethics, and all branches coming from humanism, blurring the borders between what/who was perceived as human and non-human in reference to biological life *per se*.

In the memories of survivors, especially the one that were written by the former *Muselmen*, or more often mentioning them, what is emphasized is the feeling of **unreal** reality in the camp and humans' transformations into beasts, insects, or other creatures that creep and crawl, striving to live through in being reduced to pure biological instincts.<sup>21</sup> The *Muselmann* is also compared to automata, to a passive, inert mechanism struggling to preserve his life.<sup>22</sup> It demonstrates an association with what Rene Descartes wrote on animals:

It is certain that in the bodies of animals, as in ours, there are bones, nerves, muscles, animal spirits, and other organs so disposed that they can by themselves, without any thought, give rise to all the animal motions we observe. This is very clear in convulsive movements when the machine of the body moves despite the soul, and sometimes more violently and in a more varied manner than when it is moved by the will".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. Transl. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 1999. p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Gawalewicz, Adolf. *Refleksjez poczekalni dogazu: zewspomnień muzulmana*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968. p. 97, 132.

<sup>22</sup> Kępiński, Antoni. *Refleksje oświęcimskie*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2005. p. 22-23.

<sup>23</sup> Descartes, Rene. From Letter to More. 5 February 1649. Transl. Anthony Kenny. In: *The Animals Reader*.

*The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*. Ed. Kalof, Linda and Fitzgerald, Amy. Oxford-New York: Berg, 2007. p. 61.

But Agamben, seemingly to Lyotard's figure of the animal, forces us to think of the *Muselmann* as a paradigm of the victim, of a border creature, a figure that was **real**, despite the criticism that in such a theoretical perspective it resembles a mere construction.<sup>24</sup> **Figural** representation of the *Muselmann*, not figurative, brings the idea of Auerbach's that:

[...] a figural schema permits both its poles – the figure and its fulfillment – to retain the characteristics of concrete historical reality, in contradistinction to what obtains with symbolic or allegorical personifications [...] An event taken as a figure preserves its literal and historical meaning. It remains an event, does not become a mere sign.<sup>25</sup>

And by being reflected as an **event**, the figure of *Muselmann* preserves reality forever, whereas the concept of paradigm opens it to a wider context: historical and discursive<sup>26</sup>, giving an opportunity to include the non-human realm and go beyond, what was conceptualized as human species borders.

The most dramatic evidence, related to *Muselpeople*, and repeated by Hannah Arendt, Primo Levi, and Agamben, is connected with not even perceiving them as dead bodies but as figures, in the visual sense, or dolls – such view and such creatures were totally new to other humans who were captivated in Auschwitz, too. Even so, they aroused compassion and readiness to react in spite of what is human and what is traversed in humanity: they became figures of boundless suffering that stayed present in the mute creatures as well. The greatest issue, raised for the first time by Primo Levi, was a decision to speak on behalf of the complete and ultimate witnesses and victims, who the *Muselmen* tragically and realistically embodied. That is why, parallel to the animal, the *Muselmann* questions humanity or human values so radically that such categories as dignity and respect for humans just – because

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<sup>24</sup> Domańska, Ewa. Muzułman: świadectwo i figura. In: W sprawie Agambena. Konteksty krytyki. Ed. Łukasz Musiał, Mikołaj Ratajczak, Krystian Szadkowski and Arkadiusz Żychliński. Poznań: Wydawnictwo

Poznańskie, 2010. p. 243.

<sup>25</sup> Auerbach, Erich. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Transl. Willard Trask. Introd. Edward Said. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. p. 195-6.

<sup>26</sup> Agamben, Giorgio. Che cos'è un paradigma? In: Signatura rerum. Sul metodo. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008. p. 11.

they are humans – are erased. Most of the people exceed humankind limits, even in affects, emotions or simply, by their biological needs – this, according to Agamben, proves that such limits are insufficient and abstract. These human borders were purposely and normatively constructed, as Wolfe, or LaCapra notices: to eliminate the non-human otherness, to strengthen and legitimate humans in their violent, anthropocentric actions. But extermination camps (and also animal slaughterhouses) show that even “in the most extreme degradation” there is still life; and this life, no matter if owned by the animal or *Muselmann*, is devoid of possibility to die; in other words, we are dealing with a massive and constantly depressing production of corpses, whereas death, as a subjective and individual phenomenon, is especially in these paradigmatic examples consequently eliminated.

Both, anthropomorphizing animal victims and dehumanizing the *Muselmann* transforms the “anthropos” into “bios” and the very understanding of the victim. In the foreground Auschwitz brings the victimization into a phenomenon that is not reserved for humans, in the background – it reflects a disagreement with the anthropological dogma naturally linked with humanities: that a man is described by his opposition to the non-human, including animals, machines, and others (condemned or defective groups like disabled people), which is one of the main traits in Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism?*<sup>27</sup> Posthumanist lesson emphasizes a radical doubt into everything what is categorized as human, and leads also to extend the meaning of suffering and harm, enabling to see the other non-human species, like farm or laboratory animals' suffer and to compare their situation to extermination camps, as in the case of Peter Singer, Jacques Derrida, Coetzee, Coe, or Haraway. Still, the question of ridding or reproducing the anthropomorphic instruments into something new and critical to humanism stays, as well when the notion of the victim is analyzed, blurting such components out as neurological experience of one's body.

What has changed in our notion of the victim, which hybridizes the human and non-human elements, is on the one hand portrayed by the *Muselmann* who means,

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<sup>27</sup>Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

according to Agamben, the non-human produced within a man, and from the other – the animal as the non-human processed by acting as a man. The example of Lyotard and Agamben's contribution brings the idea of how to represent the mute victims who cannot testify and speak as witnesses; how to reveal their harm and mistreatment reserved also for the non-human experience, how to perform it and reverse their passivity. One of such attempts, to speak on behalf of the radical other and non-human creature, is made by a French writer and philosopher, Helene Cixous.

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### **The affective influence of the victim**

Writing to express, to give meaning of wounds – this might be a motto of Cixous's work. In the poetic of wound is the *Stigmata, or Job the Dog* framed. It is an autobiographical and also poetic text, full of metaphors, fishing in traumatic past of the writer, who memorized, when being a little girl, she had to live with her family in Algeria. So the context of the story belongs to that time and concrete place.

Cixous's Algerian house was placed near Arab slums, and not in French neighborhood because her father was employed as a doctor and until he worked there nothing dangerous happens. In fact, the story really begins with his death. This was a time of Algeria rising against French colonizers and for the Arabs, as a Jewish-French family, they were attractive because of their need to express anger. Despite the humans' framework of these events, the tale's central figure is represented by a dog named Fips. Through his miserable perspective, Cixous in her speaking and narrating position brings the memories back. She calls the animal "a unique case of triumph of life over all the conditions and customs"<sup>28</sup> and the conditions, she speaks about, were the cruelest for the dog. She explains that after her father died, the dog had to be put on the lash in order not to bite, and when the Arabs started to rain on their family house hails of stones, he eventually got mad. In those sad days Cixous was twelve but she still feels guilty for the dog's suffering; the guilt and affective

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<sup>28</sup> Cixous, Hélène. *Stigmata. Escaping texts*. Transl. Eric Prenowitz. London – New York: Routledge, 2005. p. 248.

remembrance of the dog's figure occurs as the main idea and the motive of this text. She also carries permanent signs of the dog's teeth on her body, after once being bitten by him. The physical wound has been interiorized, incorporated in her deep imaginary self:

I have his teeth and his rage, painted on my left foot and on my hands, I never think about it, because the little mute lips of the wounds have travelled, what remains of them on my feet and my hands is only an insensible embossment, the marks of the cries are lodged on the sensitive very sensitive membranes of my brain. I have that dog in my skull, like an unrecognizable twin.<sup>29</sup>

"The dog in my skull", "unrecognizable twin" signal that within her subjectivity there are appropriate resources and pre-discursive means to speak in the name of voiceless animal. Her empathy for the dog, permanently marked on her body, accompanies her unforgettably, in her brain, in her tissues, and in her imagination. In her suffer, inside painful emotions, in anger, she feels not only like Fips the dog, she even identifies with him:

You who know my bursts of rage, the sudden moments when the door of my calm opens to give way to a very ancient furor, you do not know that then I am Fips, I leap out of myself called by his gallop that hoped to pass in a prodigious bound over the of the portal, barking I follow his hope I am his extravagance (...).<sup>30</sup>

She feels that as a result of her guilt she needs to become the dog for a moment but this is only a substitute, "mydog" (written together) as she calls it; repetitive and therapeutic method to recall what has been hidden in the humanly and egocentrically constructed past. The dog in itself, Fips, this dog was something else, something more than she could imagine<sup>31</sup>, or rather someone. The very idea of the animal as a victim is brought into the text when she starts to speak of the dog as an imaginary lamb:

A dog guards the entrance. If he barks so loud it's so you won't see he's the lamb.[...] Because as a lamb the dog is born to give his life for us. Which

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

entails that in return we be ready to give our life for him. But we did not want to give our life to the dog. We wanted the ideal dog, the all powerful, the assistance, the idea of dog in the heavens. This is how his misfortune began even before he appeared preceded by our desire.<sup>32</sup>

Being a lamb represents here – in Cixous's case it is a non-Christian world, however full of remaining Christianity symbols, dreadful signs, rendering anthropocentric model of religion – the offering animal that was accidentally devoted to humans events, dramatically embodying innocence as a pure victim and as a sacrifice belongs to a hierarchical world, where humans dominance and exploitation over animals is inscribed in the metaphysical and patriarchal order of beings. Regardless of religious reasons and connotations, Cixous respects the dog's story and feels concerned and troubled about it, also because of sorrow, when she was too young to understand the "animal height"; now she is intrinsically forced to speak on behalf of Fips: the dog that in her memory counts as an individual and someone close, which is more painful for her because he is also commemorated as a real, however, non-human victim. Eventually, Cixous assigns him "the terrible role of holocaust".<sup>33</sup> Since he suffered not for his guilt, being stormed by plenty of stones, he found himself in the unknown for him fire of humans' conflict: "he was punished because of the misfortune he suffered to be us".<sup>34</sup> In the affective poetics of the non-human victim the borders of being human and the opposite are meshed with each other: being a victimized Jew and a sentient animal is juxtaposed here:

I did not speak to him. Am I Jewish? he thought. But what does that mean Jewish, he suffered from not knowing. And me neither. And I did not make light in his obscurity, I did not murmur to him the words that all animals understand.(...) He knew only horror without hope.<sup>35</sup>

It seems like their bonds, their closeness was brought because of alienation of being Jewish. The dog was also alienated by treating him as an animal to whom nobody – no human – spoke. Such painful and irresistibly undeniable relation between the dog

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

and the writer has been deeply rooted by the real and memorized wounds, but also by the dog's extreme suffering that irreversibly entered the author's remembrance:

We acted as if there were two moons. But he had ticks big as chickpeas. This gave him saintliness. Job was that dog I am sure. (...) The suffering of the beast made me suffer for myself."<sup>36</sup>

The ticks of the dog returned to the writer as stigmas, the stigmas of radically unfair and unexplained suffering in which humans' fault was significantly involved, because the stigmas belonged to a real victim represented now by the figure of the dog in Cixous's memory and in the corresponding guilt.

Cixous's dog as Job in comparison with Levinas's account on Bobby, a wandering, stray dog that once settled in the death camp, presents completely different. Bobby was also a figure, perhaps used instrumentally, to prove humanity of nearly non-human slaves of the camp. Despite the feeling of being "subhumans, a gang of apes" that Levinas tragically describes, or being "no longer part of the world", "beings entrapped in their species", "without language" the dog named Bobby brings hope to rebuild humanity inside the camp prisoners because "for him, there was no doubt that we were men".<sup>37</sup> But for Cixous – and this is radically a new position – the dog is also a victim of war, holocaust, and all those events that we used to ascribe to humans only. Fips is taking his part in a historical world, embodying a figure even more painful for humans who regain their sophisticated language and can express their suffer and injustice. The non-human animal but also the mute *Muselman* are left alone, abandoned in their direct experience that encompasses them totally.

Cixous ends her tale with the words: "And even so I loved Fips but not then, not there in the garden of war, not yet, but later."<sup>38</sup> "The garden of war" resembles the garden of Eden where everything started: the sin, the guilty, the animals' subordination to humans, the humans manipulation with nature....everything what seems to be a problem in human and non-human relations and that means between

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>37</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel. *The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights*. In: *Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism*. Transl. Sean Hand. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990. p. 153.

<sup>38</sup> Cixous, Hélène. *Stigmata. Escaping texts*. Transl. Eric Prenowitz. London – New York: Routledge, 2005. p. 261.

people but also between all other sentient creatures. Because the concept of human and non-human victim is meshed, revealing, as the dog and the figure of *Muselmann*, the need to continuous return, rethink, and hopefully - react.

The conclusive question is why the animal and mute Jew are comparable as victims? What is potential in the non-human category that opens the notion of the victim into something radically new, non-rational and incomprehensible? First answer would be reduced to the experience which is inexpressible, or better: unspeakable. And second, perhaps more important – lies not on bringing them to a very biological level of existence, but to recognition that such imposed language of biological extremes and suffer is just a beginning to say something more, to extract from them hidden transcendence, from the animal and from the *Muselmann*, like Cixous in her text on Fips.

Thus, there are reasons that enable us combining animal studies and trauma studies because both develop in the difficulty of assessing how animals and mute Jews experience the violence.<sup>39</sup> Giving voice to non-humans, through literary or art representations of what is painful in their figural testimonies, are probably the most realistic strategy to exceed anthropocentric limits of language, epistemology, and ethics. And finally, paraphrasing Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, I would like to ask: can the non-human subaltern speak? Thanks to us or through us, changing our perspective on what is suffering and pain when these and other conditions are for sure not only reserved for humans but shared among sentient and liminal creatures? Including the subaltern in the gamut of the paradigm of a 'victim' results in the boundaries of social and non-social worlds are also being blurred. It is a significant extension that the *Muselmann* and the animal as the paradigm – a figural of the victim – have the same scope as a marginalized section of society. Proliferation of victims, no matter if human or non-human, is a constant condition to be used to indicate (at least for this essay) that the inclusion of the subaltern should result in

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<sup>39</sup> Weil, Kari. A Report on the Animal Turn. In: Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 21, no 2 (2010). p. 4.

returning the question of what is social and fundamental to build our future communities.

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## **What is Democracy? The Odd Case of Israel and Palestine**

by

**Antonio Perra**

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### **History is written by the Victors**

For decades, the Middle East has been the centre of political debates, socio-economic studies and historical assessments. From the old days of the Cold War and the creation of Israel in 1948, all the way to the current gory fight in Palestine, this restless region has the eyes of the entire international community once again fixed upon it.

Thirteen years ago, the world followed the Bush administration in its quest to fight and defeat Al-Qaeda, after the sorrowful events of September 2001. Years later, the deposition of Saddam Hussein and the killing of Osama Bin Laden were welcomed with hasty enthusiasm by thousands of American people who saw in Washington's accomplishment the triumph of the American democracy over the Islamist terror. In 2011, the explosion of the "Arab Spring" -the series of uprisings that have toppled the authoritarian governments in Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Tunisia, and shook many others - spread all over the world the assertion that the Arab world was not, perhaps, so different from ours: the Arab people, or better still the Arab youth, was fighting for democracy in a region where democracy never really existed. And again today, in 2014, the Middle East has permeated our homes with reports of yet another bomb launched by the Israeli army against the Palestinians. Another attack, another bloodshed.

The Middle East today is, needless to say, the product of nearly seventy years of history. Both the polarization of the globe caused by the Cold War, and the simultaneous explosion of the revolutionary transformations that followed the post-war dissolution of the colonial empires, have contributed in shaping the region and in altering its dynamics so profoundly that today it is still possible to see the consequences of years of power struggles, internal wars and radical changes.<sup>1</sup>

Among the uncountable events that have punctuated the contemporary history of the Middle East, one emerges as particularly significant, at least in terms of its consequences: the creation of Israel. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1948, just two days before its formal establishment, the Truman administration was informed that the creation of "A separate Jewish State is inevitable..."<sup>2</sup> and that it was just a matter of days before it would actually be set up. Because of such inevitability, and because of the fact that the recognition of a Jewish State was thought to be "... consistent with US policy from the beginning"<sup>3</sup>, the United States government decided to "... steal a march on USSR"<sup>4</sup>, by recognising it before any other country did. Thus, on May 14, 1948, US President Harry S. Truman recognised the newborn State of Israel. The day coincided with the end of the British mandate for Palestine, a legal commission confirmed by the League of Nations that had made Palestine a British protectorate since 1920. The end of the British mandate is pivotal in the analysis of the geopolitical scenario that came to be. For years, British policy-makers had opposed the creation of a Jewish homeland for fear that this would dramatically provoke the Arab world. London considered the maintenance of friendly ties with the Arabs "... vital to

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<sup>1</sup> One could think for instance of the coups that put a definitive end to the monarchical regimes in Egypt (1952) or Iraq (1958), or the geopolitical changes occurred after the Six-Day War. During the long and troubled history of contemporary Middle East, the geopolitical map of the region has been rewritten, governments have been toppled and regimes have fallen, altering forever the internal dynamics of the region as well as its foreign relations.

<sup>2</sup> Editorial Note. FRUS, 1948, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (in two parts)* Vol. V, Part 2, 976

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*

the British Empire"<sup>5</sup>, and during the almost thirty years of its protectorate of Palestine, it adopted policies that highly antagonised the leaders of the Zionist movement. The White Paper, which limited the admission to Palestine of Jewish immigrants to 75,000 and no more than that (unless the Palestinians would agree to a higher number), was perhaps the main issue between London and the leaders of the Zionist movement. Thus when the mandate expired, the founding father and future Prime Minister of Israel David Ben Gurion rather unsurprisingly wasted no time in declaring: *"Accordingly we, members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish Community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist Movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel."*<sup>6</sup>

*It is significant to note, as Rory Miller argues, that "... one major consequence of the Anglo-Zionist split over the White Paper... was a shift in Zionist efforts from London to the United States..."*<sup>7</sup>Unable to find comfort in the policies designed by the British government, Zionist leaders shifted their attention to the United States, already home of many Jews, finding more sympathetic ears in the American public, and an administration that would not oppose the creation of the Jewish Nation. Indeed, as the United States government waited only eleven minutes before extending recognition to Israel, a number of considerations were made. The tragedy of the Holocaust echoed in the memory of US policy-makers, terrified by the prospect

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<sup>5</sup> Rory Miller, *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel, May 14, 1948. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx> (accessed 29.07.2014).

<sup>7</sup>Rory Miller, *Britain, Palestine and Empire...*, 9

of facing the same criticism that assaulted Roosevelt, accused of "... incompetence, delay, and even obstruction of a variety of rescue efforts..."<sup>8</sup> to save the Jews from the Nazi oppressions. Perhaps, recognition of the State of Israel could offer the United States the perfect chance to redeem itself from the misguided approach adopted by the Roosevelt administration in dealing with the issue of the Nazi persecutions of the Jews in Europe. However, more importantly, recognition worked in line with US Cold War strategies of "... establishing a world in which several centres of power could exist, each exerting a restraining influence upon the other"<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Truman was not moved by the Jewish propaganda, which portrayed Israel as a 'divine' Jewish right or as a debt that history had to pay, especially after the Nazi atrocities. A transcript of a conversation he had in 1947 about the issue of Palestine shows that the American President was quite frankly annoyed with the American Jewry and its attempt to press the White House to support the creation of Israel. Speaking about the 35,000 pieces of mail he received, Truman confessed: "I put it all in a pile and struck a match to it -- I never looked at a single one of the letters..."<sup>10</sup>

Cold War, not propaganda, was one of the key factors that motivated Truman to recognise the new-born state of Israel so promptly. If Washington could benefit from the presence of a State in the Middle East directly associated with the United States, it would always have an anti-USSR fortress, regardless of what could happen in the region. On their side, advocates of the creation of Israel knew all too well which string to pull. Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization, wrote that "The world... would regard it as especially appropriate that the greatest living

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<sup>8</sup> Diaries of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Book 694, 190-192. <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/pdfs/holocaust.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Michael T. Benson, *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*. Westport; Praeger Publishers: 1997, 86.

<sup>10</sup> Truman Library, *The Recognition of the State of Israel*, Chronology, October 17, 1947. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/israel/large/index.php?action=chrono](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/israel/large/index.php?action=chrono), accessed (31.07.2014)

democracy should be the first to welcome the newest into the family of nations."<sup>11</sup>

Democracy was indeed a very appealing concept, particularly in a time dominated by the Cold War.

Since then, the US-Israel relationship developed at blistering pace. Arms sales, joint high-level consultations and economic, political and strategic cooperation, have marked the history of this special friendship between Washington and Tel Aviv. However, it is important to stress that, if on one hand a certain kind of sympathy has always characterised the relationship between these two countries, it was only after the Six-Day war in 1967 that Israel became a precious regional asset for the United States. In fact, prior to that, Washington had always been particularly careful to show excessive support to Israel, given that oil interests and the policy of containment of International Communism required Washington to rely on Arab proxies, and not to antagonise them by explicitly favouring Tel Aviv. However, Israel's astonishing defeat of the Arab states equipped with Soviet weapons, convinced the White House that Israel could really be a credible deterrent against Moscow's expansionism in the region. Thus, in a mix of political interests and strategic importance, the relationship between Washington and Tel Aviv was finally cemented, moving from generic friendship to strategic partnership.

As easily deducible, the direct association between United States and Israel has largely benefited the Jewish Nation, and not only from the perspective of military supremacy in the Middle East.

The Cold War has indeed shaped and settled the profound difference between US and non-US world: while the latter, easily identified with the Soviet Union, represented a world of brutal dictatorships "...defined by political terror and an

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<sup>11</sup>Ibidem, May 13, 1948

economy organised upon the dominance of the party-state bureaucracy"<sup>12</sup>, the United States was a land of capitalist development and free elections, "... a bastion of 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'liberty'".<sup>13</sup> Such historical crystallization of the international role of the US, whether defined economically, politically or even morally, has by extension benefited the countries that were directly associated with it. Inevitably, the countries that orbited close to the United States during the Cold War era were carried along in the slipstream.

Israel is the perfect example of how historical association with the 'democratic' United States, as opposed to the 'totalitarian' Soviet Union, has fixed the idea that Israel is a democracy in the collective consciousness. But what defines a democracy? Theoretically, as Seymour Martin Lipset argues, a minimalist definition of democracy would be "An institutional arrangement in which all adult individuals have the power to vote, through free and fair competitive elections, for their chief executive and national legislature".<sup>14</sup>To that extent, Israel is indeed a democracy.<sup>15</sup> But subscribing to such a minimalist notion of democracy is limitative, if not paradoxical, particularly if we apply it to the current tensions in the Gaza Strip. From 1967 to 1994 Gaza has been militarily occupied by Israel, as a result of the astonishing defeat of the Egypt-

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Saull, *The Cold War and After: Capitalism, Revolution and Superpower Politics*. London, Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, Jason M. Lakin, *The Democratic Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004, 19. The literature on the subject of Democracy is incredibly vast, and constantly updated. A debate on the definition of democracy would take this paper far beyond its reach, but it is nonetheless interesting to note that a certain similarity exists in the literature when it comes to the analysis of the key aspects of a democratic system. Just like Lipset has suggested in his minimalist definition of democracy, Joseph Schumpeter has also argued that the right to vote is the prime aspect to keep in mind when assessing the level of democracy in a country. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 243-246. Conversely, Robert Dahl has argued that there is more to democracy than the simple process of forming a government through elections, such as equal opportunities in the political process, as well as civil rights. Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 177-180. Indeed, today the issue of how to define a democracy is still very much on the table. Richard Katz contends that it is hard to determine the role of free elections in defining a democratic system because it is difficult to define democracy itself, a problem that stays unresolved to this day. Richard S. Katz, *Democracy and Elections*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Israel Democracy- How does it work, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/State/Democracy/Pages/Israeli%20Democracy%20-%20How%20does%20it%20work.aspx> accessed (30.07.2014)

Syria-Jordan coalition during the Six-Day War. But after the Oslo Accords of 1994, Israel transferred the governmental authority to the Palestinians, completing the withdrawal of its troops in 2005. However, despite the Oslo Accords and its apparent willingness to subscribe to them, the Israeli government has bolstered its authority over the Gaza Strip, by controlling its airspace and waters, its commerce activities, the population registry and the Palestinians' movements in and out of Gaza, as well as electricity supplies and other inputs.<sup>16</sup> Such control, highly criticised by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)<sup>17</sup> was somehow motivated by the transitional phase from occupied to non-occupied territory that began after Israel's 2005 decision. Such phase allowed Israel to monitor the transition until full self-governmental capacities are achieved. However, Israel's power over the Gaza strip was again exacerbated by Hamas's victory in the 2006 elections, a government that Acting Prime Minister Olmert refused to recognise and that has allowed Israel to maintain control over Gaza, while simultaneously extinguishing, as a result of the 2005 withdrawal, its responsibility towards the civilian population.<sup>18</sup>

The paradoxical situation developed after the 2006 elections takes us to the second point of this analysis. Indeed, if we could define democracy exclusively relying on the existence of a system of election for the chief executive and the national legislature, we would have to acknowledge that Hamas, the official government in Palestine, is also a democratic one, since it was voted into power in the elections of 2006 by the Palestinian population. Thus, if we were to consider both Israel and Hamas as

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<sup>16</sup> "Scale of Control: Israel's Continued Responsibility in the Gaza Strip", *Gisha*, November 2011. <http://gisha.org/publication/1660> accessed (24.09.2014)

<sup>17</sup> "A Debate on Israel's Invasion of Gaza: UNRWA's Christopher Gunnes v. Israel Project's Meagan Buren", *Democracy Now*, January 5, 2009. [http://www.democracynow.org/2009/1/5/a\\_debate\\_on\\_israels\\_invasion\\_of](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/1/5/a_debate_on_israels_invasion_of), accessed (24.09.2014)

<sup>18</sup> "Scale of Control: Israel's Continued Responsibility in the Gaza Strip..."

'democracies' in light of the fact that both governments have been elected by the people, we would struggle to understand how democracies work and interact with each other. Subscribing to Kant's Democratic Peace Theory, an idea that dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and that argued that democracies generally tend to repudiate war<sup>19</sup>, Lipset suggests in his analysis that a democracy, "... tends to promote international peace"<sup>20</sup> and does not "... wage war with other democracies".<sup>21</sup> Again, in light of the situation in Gaza, a paradoxical result emerges. Indeed, if we were to combine the two assertions provided by Lipset in the definition of democracy, the free elections and the rejection of war, we would have to acknowledge the democratic Israeli government is engaging in war with the democratic Hamas, thus violating the very nature of democracy. However, among the most agreeable principles for a country to be considered as a democracy, the United Nations enlists one that seems to offer a more complete definition of it: "Respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of the human being."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, after the horrific experience of World War II, democratic countries around the world joined each other in the effort to prevent similar atrocities from ever happening again, formulating the Human Rights Bill and converting it into international law in 1976. Although the Bill has been the object of different interpretations and controversies over its legal status, it nevertheless expressed the will of the free world to reject brutality in respect of human life. Again, the tragic events of Gaza seem to contradict the assumption that Israel is in fact a democratic country. The respect of the rights, freedoms and dignity of the human being is not only being ignored, but deliberately crushed, which opens

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<sup>19</sup>Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part 1," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1983), 213-15, 17

<sup>20</sup>Lipset, *The Democratic Century...*, 227.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibidem*, 230.

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Democracy Caucus, UN Watch,  
[http://www.unwatch.org/site/c.bdKKISNgEmG/b.1342849/k.897D/Democracy\\_Caucus.htm](http://www.unwatch.org/site/c.bdKKISNgEmG/b.1342849/k.897D/Democracy_Caucus.htm)  
(30.07.2014)

Watch,  
accessed

several doubts as to what extent a country can be considered democratic, and to what extent non-democratic actions can be tolerated within a democratic framework.

From this preliminary assessment, it seems clear that the notion of democracy is a rather fragile one. While democracy remains, in its idealist assertion, the best form of government, its nature today is nothing more than a product of history. Winston Churchill once said "Democracy is the worst form of government, except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time", and he could not have been wiser. The historical heritage of decades of totalitarianism still shapes our perception of democracy and still prohibits us from overturning historically consolidated assumptions.

Indeed, when in 1947 Truman launched his doctrine, establishing that the United States would provide "... political, military and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces"<sup>23</sup>, he marked the moment when the separation between US and non-US world, between democratic nations and authoritarian forces, was forever secured. Now, in light of the brutal events taking place in Gaza, we should question if this assumption should be revisited.

### **Democracy and War on Terror**

The interweaved relationship between the United States and Israel, and the way their policies interact within a broad democratic context, assumes particular relevance in the analysis of the events that took place after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

The terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in September 2001 are possibly among the most significant events of modern history. Apart from the visual impact of

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<sup>23</sup> The Truman Doctrine, *US Department of State*. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine> accessed (30.07.2014).

the images of the two planes crashing into the majestic Twin Towers, itself a symbol of American global power, the attacks produced a number of consequences that have reshaped not just US foreign policy, but our perception of it – and with it, inevitably, the very concept of democracy.

Following 9/11, the Bush administration launched a global war on terror, aimed to defeat Islamist terrorism and to prevent similar terrorist attacks against America. This has resulted in a prolonged and exhausting American war in the Middle East that, starting off as a manhunt, soon spread across the entire region in a mix of controversies and allegations.

Three elements of the Bush doctrine are pivotal in this assessment. The first one is that the Bush doctrine is based around the notion of preventive war. Preventive war, differently from pre-emptive war where the threat is immediate, implies in itself that it is based on conjectures rather than on imminent threats, and it is the attempt of one country to forestall a shift in the balance of power with the other country involved, by attacking first.<sup>24</sup> In the wake of the terrorist attacks, Bush ventured in the historical comparison with the events of December 1941, which clearly illustrates Washington's perception of 9/11 and the way it would deal with it. Bush commented that "The Pearl Harbor of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century took place today"<sup>25</sup>, and thus committed the American government, as well as many others, to ensuring that it would never happen again. It was the beginning of Bush's preventive war on terror.

The concept of preventive war echoes well in the history of Israel. Since its creation, the Israeli government has appealed to the traditional problems of its country, such as its being a small strip of land, surrounded by hostile Arab countries, inferior in

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy*. New York; W.W. Norton and Company, reprint edition, 2006, 222-225

<sup>25</sup> David Kohn, "Bush on 9/11 Moment to Moment: The President talks in detail of his Sept. 11 experience", *CBS News*, September 2, 2003. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/bush-on-9-11-moment-to-moment/> accessed (30.07.2014).

population and fearful because of a troubled past<sup>26</sup>, in order to move the United States government to provide foreign aid to enhance Israel's military position in the Middle East. Such an attempt responded to the main concern and objective of Israel's founding fathers, the *bitahon*. The *bitahon* is nothing more than the defence of Israel, or to put it in different words, the "...people's senses of political, bodily and emotional security"<sup>27</sup> in relation to a threat. Given the geo-political framework, the threat comes from outside.

In the book of Deuteronomy, in the Book of Genesis and in the book of Exodus, the Jews are identified as the 'chosen people'. In several passages in fact it emerges how God had made the Jews as His chosen: "And God has chosen you to be his treasured people." (Deuteronomy 14:2); "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants" (Genesis 17:7); "And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exodus, 19:6). Because of the Jews historical fate, from the Diaspora to the more contemporary Palestinian situation, and on the basis of the ideological framework provided by the Bible, as outlined above, Israeli policy-makers convinced themselves that only in a Jewish State the Jews could "...become sovereign and self-sufficient".<sup>28</sup> They believed that the Jews were, in effect, legitimized by God to live in the Promised Land, and it was up to the Israeli government to ensure that this would not change.

The *bitahon* represents in substance the objective that has guided Israel's foreign policy and the reason why this has been tied to the United States. As David Ben Gurion commented in the wake of the creation of Israel, "When one climbs a mountain, it is not enough to look at the high peak...One must see the paths which

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<sup>26</sup> The closest nations, Egypt and Syria, had in fact a decisive advantage in terms of population. While Egypt counted 25 million and Syria 5 million, Israel was a nation of only 2 million people.

<sup>27</sup> Juliana Ochs, *Security and Suspicion: An Ethnography of Everyday Life in Israel*. Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, reprint edition, 2011, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Avraham Avi-hai, *Ben Gurion State-Builder: Principles and Pragmatism 1948-1963*. New York, Toronto, Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1947.46, 47.

lead to that peak"<sup>29</sup>. In light of such pragmatism, Tel Aviv has committed itself to the achievement of two strategically vital goals. First of all, Israeli policy-makers believed it was important to orient Israel towards America: in fact, after the collapse of European superpowers following the Second World War, US and USSR emerged as the two poles. Since the Soviet way was excluded because of the extremism of the Communist regime (Ben Gurion aligned Stalin's communism to Hitler's national-socialism and Mussolini's fascism) and because of Stalin's alleged anti-Semitism<sup>30</sup>, the United States, already home of many Jews, became the perfect ally for Israel. Secondly, Israel had to achieve military supremacy, in both arms and technology. Again, an orientation towards America was inevitable because of its "... technological sophistication"<sup>31</sup>: if Israel wanted not only to be able to defend itself but also to stand out of the Middle East on a military level, it needed America to be the supplier of such armaments.

For instance, when in 1955 President Eisenhower withdrew the economic help promised to Egypt in light of his Cold War strategies, the Cairo government turned to the Soviet Union, signing an arm deal with Czechoslovakia aimed to enhance its military capability to face Israel. Terrified by the prospect of a war of destruction against the Jewish Nation, Ben Gurion, Golda Meir *et al.* worked unrelentingly to boost Israel's military capability via Washington, adjudging their "... right to

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<sup>29</sup>Ibidem, 55.

<sup>30</sup>Enquiries on Stalin's alleged anti-Semitism began after the purge of the Jewish anti-fascist committee, during the conclusion of the war. Gennady Kostyrchenko, in light of the disclosure of secret documents, explains how the creation of the JAC and Stalin's support for the creation of Israel was derived from strictly political calculation, and the repression of the Russian Jews began right after Stalin had exploited the political convenience in supporting the Jewish people. Марк ДЕЙЧ, *КакубивалиМухомэла*, Moskovskij Komsomolets, 2005. Besides the feeling of "... revulsion and disgust..." for the Jews, Stalin was also afraid that the emancipation of the Jewish people in Israel would create a subversive feeling against the regime among the Russian Jews. Orlando Fingés, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*, London, New York: Penguin Group, 2007, 493.

<sup>31</sup>Avraham Avi-hai, *Ben Gurion State-BUILDER...*,41.

existence"<sup>32</sup> as the main reason why the United States should provide military help to Israel. Since then, the notion of "right to existence" has often been used to justify adoption of many an otherwise unfavourable policies.

But Israel's defence was not based exclusively on the achievement of military supremacy in the region. It needed to prove it. Israel's main national policy was, and to a certain degree still is, based on the so called "active defence"<sup>33</sup>, whose purpose was to "... keep the Arabs psychologically off balance by repeated reminders of Israel's alertness and striking capability..."<sup>34</sup> Israel would prevent attacks against its country by attacking first, and would keep the Arabs in a position of psychological disadvantage by conducting preventive retaliatory raids. From the border fracas of the era of Ben Gurion and Nasser, to the more recent 'search and destroy' expeditions against Hezbollah and Hamas, Israel's preventive war finds in Bush's war on terror a common denominator.

The rhetoric behind the use of preventive war is particularly significant from a cultural viewpoint, which is the second point of this analysis. Among the many outcomes of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, one is that they have moved people to acknowledge, or admit, that, as Santiago Zabala puts it, "... the apparently invincible United States was not invincible after all".<sup>35</sup>

The cultural significance of the attacks against the Twin Towers does not rest exclusively upon the damage inflicted or the number of victims, or even on the attack itself, but on the fact that the United States was perforated in its own territory, assaulted in the very comfort of its own domesticity. To be fair, the terrorist attacks of September 2001 were arguably a continuation of that of 1993, when a group of

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<sup>32</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation, White House, Washington, March 10, 1960. FRUS, 1958–1960, Vol. XIII, *Arab-Israeli Dispute; United Arab Republic; North Africa*, 131.

<sup>33</sup> Research Memorandum, RNA-26, May 23, 1962. JFK Library, Box 407, Robert Komer, Arab Israeli Dispute.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>35</sup> Santiago Zabala, *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, (Monteal & Kingston, London, Ithaca; McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 111

radical Islamists detonated a truck bomb below the north tower of the World Trade Center. Yet, it is the audacity of 2001 and the haunting images of the two planes crashing into the Twin Towers that have made 9/11 not only an horrific day, but also a strident symbol of global cultural change.

The incessant media campaign aimed at highlighting the "...Western 'innocence' destroyed by an outside 'evil'"<sup>36</sup> has not only justified Bush's preventive global war on terror, but has also demarcated an invisible, yet indissoluble, line between 'us' and 'the Other'. Whether acceptable or not, 9/11 has produced in the collective consciousness an image of the Muslim world sharply in contrast with our own. As Amaney Jamal contends, one of the results of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and Bush's war on terror is that it produced an "... undeniable perception that Arabs are considered as suspicious Other"<sup>37</sup>, that has doomed the Middle East to be seen as an indeed at least suspicious land. Just like the Cold War produced a demonization of Communism, 9/11 has produced a demonization of the Arab world that, as Martin Randall argues, "Has also contributed to racism, cultural paranoia, illegal invasions, war crimes, civil right abuses and global political tension."<sup>38</sup> Once again, the United States, land of democracy and freedom, was to face the foreign threat of a surely non-democratic evil.

This played well for Israel, with which America had already shared so much. Before 9/11, Bush had condemned Israel's impassibility with regards to the question of Palestine, an issue that the administration had unsuccessfully tried to tackle. Following 9/11, during Bush's war on terror, Israel came to be regarded as a precious strategic ally against Arab terrorists, moving to the top of Washington's list of

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<sup>36</sup>Martin Randall, *9/11 and the Literature of Terror*. Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 36.

<sup>37</sup>Amaney Jamal, "Arab American Racialization", *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, edited by Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008, 321.

<sup>38</sup>Martin Randall, *9/11 and the Literature of Terror...*, 36

regional assets. Meanwhile, Tel Aviv did not miss out on the chance to enhance its strategic partnership with Washington by sending constant reminders that "... Hamas...regarded Osama Bin Laden as a hero in the wake of his aerial assault on the United States".<sup>39</sup> Perhaps because of the historical opposition of Israel to the now 'immoral' Arab world, or because the fear of an invasion by an "outside evil" was now shared among Americans as well, opinion polls revealed "...steadily rising support for the Jewish state among the American public, who lumped Hamas together with al-Qaeda."<sup>40</sup>

But it was not just the American public showing its support for Israel. US policy-makers, champions of democracy, were more than eager to use Israel as a regional proxy for America's war on terror. Pledging full cooperation with US military operations, Ariel Sharon first and Ehud Olmert later not only secured a bilateral agreement of 3 billion dollars per year in military and economic aid<sup>41</sup>, but also a large level of tolerance for their actions, being now a special ally of the US in the fight against terrorism. Thus, when Israel conducted its brutal war in Lebanon in 2006, the killing of over one thousand Lebanese, many of which civilians<sup>42</sup>, was justified by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as "... the birth pangs of a new Middle East..."<sup>43</sup> But what is this "new Middle East" Rice talked about? This question takes us to the third point of this discussion.

Fearing the almost too easy juxtaposition of 'Terrorist threat' with the buried "Soviet threat", the Bush administration concluded that only the protraction of direct US interventionism in the region would prevent the Middle East from becoming a new

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<sup>39</sup> Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, Third Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008,315.

<sup>40</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup>"Israel accused over Lebanon war: A human rights group has accused Israel of carrying out indiscriminate air strikes that killed hundreds of civilians during the 2006 Lebanon war.",*BBC News*, September 6, 2007. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/6981557.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6981557.stm) accessed (30.07.2014)

<sup>43</sup>Douglas Little, *American Orientalism...*, 336

anti-US pole. In an attempt to secure such an objective, the Bush administration resorted to a concept dear to the millions of Americans scarred by al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks: democracy.

Addressing the Council of Foreign Relations in October 2001, Condoleezza Rice stated: "We do not seek to impose democracy on others, we only seek to help create conditions in which people can claim a freer future for themselves... Our vision of the future is not one where every person eats Big Macs drinks Coke—or where every nation has a bicameral legislature with 535Members."<sup>44</sup> While admitting that democracy did not correspond necessarily to the adoption of an American lifestyle, Dr Rice confirmed that the United States' prime objective was now working to build a democratic Middle East.

Although the fact that the United States has taken the burden to democratise the Middle East is largely debatable, this is however more in line with strategies that belong quite clearly to a pre-9/11 era, even more so than one could think. Social progress, economic development, modernization – all sides of the same 'democratic' coin – was John F. Kennedy's 1960s recipe to stabilise conservative Arab regimes against the revolutionary changes occurring in the Middle East with the rise of Arab nationalism and the collapse of the colonial powers. Kennedy feared that the backwardness of the political and socio-economic system of the Arab monarchies could provoke internal turmoil in countries where the United States harboured either economic (such as Saudi Arabia) or geo-strategic (such as Jordan and Iran) interests. It was through this strategy that the Kennedy administration managed to ensure the

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<sup>44</sup>*Dr Condoleezza Rice discusses President's National Security strategy.* New York, October 1, 2002. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021001-6.html> accessed (30.07.2014). Also quoted in D. Little, *American Orientalism...*,321.

survival of monarchies that were otherwise doomed to disappear<sup>45</sup>, strengthening these countries not just through economic and military aid, but through processes of reforms that touched pretty much any sphere of their society.

Forty years later, the Bush administration revived tools that had already been implemented in the global framework of the Cold War. Concluding that the best way to protect US interests was not just by fighting terrorism, it was by exporting democracy, (just like JFK concluded that the best way to fight communism was by pushing programs of capitalist development) the United States government began bombing Afghanistan and Iraq, portraying its effort to democratise the Middle East as a perfectly reasonable, and largely sharable, justification for a war that appeared progressively less justifiable. Democracy was, in the eyes of the administration, the best antidote to anti-US sentiments. In the eyes of the American people, it was the best way to prevent future Islamist attacks against the United States.

For the purpose of this work, the most interesting passage of Dr Rice's speech reads: "The United States, our NATO allies, our neighbours in the Western Hemisphere, Japan and our other friends and allies in Africa and Asia all share a broad commitment to democracy, the rule of law..."<sup>46</sup> This quote is particularly interesting, because with a few words the Secretary of State managed to find a world-wide justification of the American war on terror, again by stressing the difference between the US and its allies, the democratic side of the world, and those who belonged to a different category. Once again, by siding with the United States in a fight against non-democratic forces, a country would automatically be carried in the slipstream and be regarded as a democracy, in spite of actions that more or less clearly clash with the notion of democracy.

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<sup>45</sup>Guidelines of United States policy and operations concerning Jordan.JFK Library, NSF, Box 125, Jordan, General, 1-61, 3-62.

<sup>46</sup>*Dr Condoleezza Rice discusses...*

Needless to say, this broad commitment to democracy and the rule of law has been amply abandoned in protection of the interests of those committed to its very establishment. It is important, however, to stress how the cultural framework within which the war on terror was carried out, one characterised by fear, alarmism and a general phobia of the Arab world, has led the international community to tolerate actions that are clearly anti-democratic with the hope that they will eventually lead to the establishment of democracy.

It is quite clearly a paradox, if not a failure, of our democratic system. September 2001 and Bush's following war on terror have altered our idea of democracy, if not its very nature. It has made us perceive democracy as a pre-set product that can be exported to other countries, imposed from above, established as required. Democracy, people have then assumed, also consists of military interventions, more or less grave bloodsheds, frequent and unexpected political changes, and the evergreen foreign occupation. Democracy can also justify the scary concept of preventive war, particularly if this is carried out against a non-democratic country. Democracy has marked once again a line between "us" and "them", between US world and non-US world. Democracy has also become the tool through which one defends its own home from non-democratic forces. Democracy, after 9/11, allows US partners to act as they please.

### **Gaza, 2014: Old rhetoric**

With a death toll increasing day after day, this new round of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has taken the world of international affairs by storm. Once again, just a few

years after we witnessed the astonishing phenomenon of the so called "Arab Spring", we look to the Middle East with uncertainty and concern, silenced in our attempt to explain yet another bloodshed and unable to make any prediction about what will be next in Gaza.

The kidnapping and killing of three young Israeli students in the West Bank set in motion a series of events that culminated in the umpteenth conflict between the Netanyahu government and Hamas, for which, as is always the case, the Palestinian population is paying the highest price. Tel Aviv was very quick to attribute the responsibility of the killing of its three youngsters to Hamas, the government in Gaza since the elections in 2006, and its response is as brutal as it could be expected. Operation "Protective Edge", arguably the deadliest military operation since 2008, was launched by the Israeli government on July 8, and is the result of the escalation between the two factions that followed Israel's fierce quest to find the abductors and murderers of the three students. After the rounding up of hundreds of Palestinians, allegedly affiliated to Hamas, carried out by the Israeli government in mid-June with the operation "Brother's Keepers", the hostilities between the two factions have tragically renewed: Hamas fires rockets against Israel, Israel fires against Gaza, and both factions cause the death of thousands of undefended Palestinians civilians in a vicious circle of escalating violence.

The international community has tried to intervene and mediate between the factions involved, failing. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has urged the Israeli government to "exercise maximum restraint" and to stop the bombing of Gaza, condemning the "atrocious action"<sup>47</sup> of a government whose reprisal policy is costing hundreds of lives. Yet, without the strong support of the United States, the UN has little chance to exercise any influence on Tel Aviv. The government in Cairo, led by

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<sup>47</sup>'UN Security Council to hold emergency meeting on Gaza', *RTE News*, July 21, 2014.

President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi after the events of the Arab Spring a couple of years ago, seem to have lost credibility in the eyes of Hamas's leaders. After the military coup that brought him to power, al-Sisi has not limited his means to persecute the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas's ideological partner in Egypt, and to stiffen his attitude towards the leaders in Gaza. Despite its key role in the region and the successful mediation operated by Cairo during the previous Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Egypt struggled to exercise a positive role in bringing the two factions to a life-saving cease-fire. And still to this day, despite the fact that Cairo's mediation was eventually accepted, tensions are not completely eliminated. Tony Blair, official envoy of the 'Quartet on the Middle East', a foursome group established in Madrid in 2002 with the goal of mediating between Israelis and Palestinians, seems unable to do better. Palestinian representatives have strongly criticised his work, which appears to be limited to that old rhetoric unable to lead towards some sort of agreement: "Always the statement of the Quartet really means nothing because it was always full of what they call constructive ambiguity that really took us to nowhere"<sup>48</sup>, commented Mohammed Shtayyeh back in 2012, an aide to the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and not much has improved since then. On the contrary, Blair's attempt to establish a tripartite mediation over the conflict – the Quartet, al-Sisi and Israel – has further fuelled Hamas's hostility, quite literally cut out of the equation. Thus, in a negotiation process doomed since its very beginning, neither faction has disengaged.

As the conflict drags on, the world watches, horrified at the extermination of hundreds of Palestinian civilians in what increasingly appears to be a cold-blooded execution rather than a strategic military operation. There are still no evidences of

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<sup>48</sup> Matthew Kalman, 'Useless, useless, useless': the Palestinian verdict on Tony Blair's job, *The Independent*, December 16, 2012.

the correlation between the murderers of the three Israeli students and Hamas – on the contrary many believe that the abductors belonged to a different cell –and yet, Israel has found in this event a new justification for carrying out its objectives of foreign policy. Indeed, Israel was arguably simply terrified by the agreement between Hamas, the government in Gaza, and Fatah, the government in the West Bank, given that the fracture between Fatah and Hamas worked very well for the Netanyahu government, who benefited from the internal rivalry between the two governments. As commented by Peter Beaumont, the unity agreement between Hamas and Fatah “...poses big challenges both to any attempt to revive a peace process with Israel”.<sup>49</sup> Even more dangerously, Beaumont continues, it could cause “... punitive measures from the government of the Israeli Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu”.<sup>50</sup> Scarily enough, Beaumont was right: shortly after the agreement, Israel began the bombing. So, what does Israel really want?

In general, Israel wants to maintain the status quo of Gaza and West Bank separated: “If Gaza is the only outlet to the outside world for any eventual Palestinian entity...” commented Chomsky, “... whatever it might be, the West Bank—if separated from Gaza, the West Bank is essentially imprisoned—Israel on one side, the Jordanian dictatorship on the other.”<sup>51</sup> After taking what it wants from the West Bank to integrate it with its own territory, Israel would leave nothing more than a prison to the Palestinians. Furthermore, if the two entities were to be unified, Israel would lose the argument that has allowed it to evade negotiations until now, the argument that it cannot negotiate with the Palestinians if they are divided. But there is more to this

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Beaumont, Fatah and Hamas agree on new Palestinian prime minister”, *The Guardian*, May 29, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/29/fatah-hamas-agree-new-palestinian-prime-minister>, accessed (13.08.2014)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> “A Hideous Atrocity”: Noam Chomsky on Israel’s Assault on Gaza & U.S. Support for the Occupation”, *Democracy Now*, August 7, 2014. [http://www.democracynow.org/2014/8/7/a\\_hideous\\_atrocity\\_noam\\_chomsky\\_on](http://www.democracynow.org/2014/8/7/a_hideous_atrocity_noam_chomsky_on), accessed (13.08.2014).

geo-strategic analysis. In a recent article for the New York Times, Avraham Burg, chairman of *Molad, The Center for Renewal of Democracy* and author of "The Holocaust is Over: We must Rise from its Ashes", argues with dismay that Israel is becoming much less a democracy and much more a theocracy.<sup>52</sup> Now, Burg contends, Israel is no longer tied to other world democracies by that set of humanitarian values that constituted the foundation of the post-war democracies, but by "a new set of mutual interests: war, bombs, threats, fear and trauma".<sup>53</sup> The radicalised coalition of Orthodox Jews that is in power in Israel, echoes Bassam Abu Sharif, one of the main initiators of the Oslo accords, has adopted an approach that does no longer contemplate the possibility of co-existence of both Arabs and Jews, but is based on the ambition to conquer "...by force the lands of the Palestinian people".<sup>54</sup> Such objective, he continues, is not presented merely as an objective of foreign policy, but as a right obliged by God and, as such, able to justify the brutality of the actions of the Israeli government: "Only God may judge them"<sup>55</sup>, sorrowfully concluded Sharif. Such analysis, though influenced by more than a month of brutality that now prevents anyone from keeping a non-partisan stand, does not appear too far from reality. On the contrary, the actions of the Israeli government seem to confirm the interpretations provided above and one does not need to look too far back to notice a pattern emerging. Indeed, a cable dated October 2008 published by WikiLeaks, reports that "Israel will use disproportionate force upon any village that fires upon

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<sup>52</sup> Avraham Burg, "Israel's Fading Democracy", *The New York Times*, August 4, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/opinion/sunday/israels-fading-democracy.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/opinion/sunday/israels-fading-democracy.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) accessed (07.08.2014)

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>54</sup> Bassam Abu Sharif, "I was wrong then: The Israelis do not want peace", *Middle East Eye*, July 23, 2014. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/i-was-wrong-then-the-israeli-s-do-not-want-peace-1352698671>, accessed (07.08.2014)

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem.

Israel, 'causing great damage and destruction'<sup>56</sup>, as part of the so called *Dahiya Doctrine*, aimed at deliberately targeting and destroying civilian villages. Thus, in 2008, nearly 1,500 Palestinians, mainly civilians, were killed in what the Israeli Deputy Defence minister called "... a bigger shoah..."<sup>57</sup> against Gaza, caused again by the conflict with Hamas. However, in spite of the disarming declaration and brutal actions, nothing changed for Israel, which continues its indiscriminate murders of the Palestinian population to this day. The nature of Israel's posture with regards to its actions in Gaza today has a double explanation in the eyes of the international community: firstly, Israel is allowed to fire missiles against Gaza because Hamas is firing missiles against Israel. Secondly, Israel is allowed to destroy Gaza because of Hamas's underground tunnels that run from Gaza into Israel. Such assumptions have helped Tel Aviv to mark the "defensive" nature of its Palestinian policy and thus justify the horror in Gaza as a right to "self-defence". Israel portrays itself as an 'innocent' country that is fighting a terrorist organization in an effort to avoid the peril of an external threat, once again appealing to the concept of self-defence, right to exist and, especially, terrorist threat, one that always finds very sympathetic ears in the United States.

But in what is almost unilateral violence it is hard to recognise the defensive nature of Israel's military operation. In an article appearing on *The Guardian* on July 31, 2014 some figures are reported: over 1,400 Palestinians have perished, 8,200 were wounded, and over 200,000 displaced. More than 103 UN facilities were attacked, with schools, hospitals and shelters destroyed. More than 80% of the Palestinian

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<sup>56</sup> "IDF Regional Commanders Speak Out in Press Interviews, *WikiLeaks*. October 15, 2008. [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08TELAIVIV2329\\_a.html#efmBOyBhT](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08TELAIVIV2329_a.html#efmBOyBhT), accessed (13.08.2014)

<sup>57</sup> Staff and Agencies, "Israeli Minister warns of Palestinian Holocaust", *The Guardian*, February 29, 2008. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/29/israelandthepalestinians1> accessed (08.08.2014)

victims are civilian.<sup>58</sup>And while Netanyahu numbly commented that “a country’s got to do what a country’s got to do”<sup>59</sup>, Washington’s position remained ambiguous to say the least. In a recent interview for *Fox News* dated July 21, Secretary of State John Kerry has commented: “You have a right to go in and take out those tunnels... We completely support that. And we support Israel’s right to defend itself against rockets that are continuing to come in.”<sup>60</sup> Just a couple of days before, on July 19, President Obama crafted similar remarks: the United States respects Israel’s right to self-defence and invites it to respond to Hamas’s rockets “in a way that minimises civilian casualties.”<sup>61</sup>Although the notion of minimising civilian casualties is itself debatable, it is interesting to see how the rhetoric of “self-defence” used today echoes perfectly in the history of US-Israeli relationship.

By the beginning of August however, Obama’s discontent with Israel became more apparent. The administration condemned Israel’s attacks against schools, hospitals and UN facilities, commenting that “the United States... was ‘appalled’ by the ‘disgraceful shelling’...”<sup>62</sup>of civilian buildings. Arrogantly, Netanyahu then told Kerry and Dan Shapiro, US Ambassador to Israel, “not to ever second-guess me again”<sup>63</sup> about his actions towards Hamas, and things eventually moved on with the usual formula: “The nature of our relationship is strong and unchanged”<sup>64</sup>, was the final comment of the State Department. This position is hardly a surprising one. Although

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<sup>58</sup>Jason Burke, “Gaza ‘faces precipice’ as death toll passes 1,400”, *The Guardian*, July 31, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/31/gaza-faces-precipice-death-toll-tops-1400>, accessed (07.08.2014).

<sup>59</sup>HasaniGittens, Eric McClam, AymanMohyeldin, “Netanyahu says Hamas wants to ‘pile up the bodies’ for sympathy”, *NBC News*, July 21, 2014. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/netanyahu-says-hamas-wants-pile-bodies-sympathy-n161236>, accessed (13.08.2014)

<sup>60</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>61</sup>Jack Simpson, ‘Israel-Gaza conflict: Barack Obama warns Benjamin Netanyahu against escalating civilian deaths in Gaza’, *The Independent*, July 19, 2014

<sup>62</sup>Elise Labott, Richard Roth, Josh Levs, “Has Gaza conflict brought new low in U.S.-Israel relationship?”, *CNN*, August 5, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/05/politics/israel-us-relationship/index.html>, accessed (13.08.2014)

<sup>63</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>64</sup>Ibidem.

the Obama administration does not hold much sympathy for the Netanyahu government, the United States has an immutable interest in keeping close ties with Israel, with which Washington can collaborate to pursue its goals in the region (among which preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons). Thus, even though Obama does not necessarily feel a special, friendly bond with the Israeli Prime Minister, he does not hold back from stressing that "... we do not have a closer friend or ally than Israel and the bond between our two countries and our two peoples is unbreakable. And that's the reason why on a whole spectrum of issues we consult closely."<sup>65</sup>

The events of Gaza and US position with regards to Israel's actions are a clear testament to the volatility of today's democracy. Although both countries have historically been regarded as bastions of freedom, democracy and liberty, today their actions appear more and more clearly and sharply in contrast with such principles. Geo-political and strategic interests prevail over common sense, while one of the main pillars of democracy "Respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of the human being", succumbs under the weight of an imperialist foreign policy more and more untouched by democratic considerations. This is perhaps nothing new. After all, the tendency of the United States to close more than one eye whenever its interests are at stake has long been acknowledged. For instance, Egyptian President al-Sisi was welcomed by the White House despite his premeditated massacre of nearly one thousand Egyptian protesters during the events of the Arab Spring a couple of years back.<sup>66</sup> Or even before the Arab Spring, Hosni Mubarak, the dictator forced to resign by the Egyptian uprisings, had largely

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<sup>65</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>66</sup> Patrick Kingsley, "Egypt Massacre was Premeditated, Says Human Rights Watch", *The Guardian*, August 12, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/12/egypt-massacre-rabaa-intentional-human-rights-watch>, accessed (13.08.2014)

benefited from US support, granted because of his commitment to the Camp David accords signed in 1979 with Israel. A cable of March 2009, leaked by 'WikiLeaks', perfectly sums up the American geostrategic advantage in supporting Mubarak's regime: "Egypt remains at peace with Israel, and the US military enjoys priority access to the Suez Canal and Egyptian airspace".<sup>67</sup>The United States and Israel had achieved their goals, and now Egypt is still under a military dictatorship that was established after the military coup in 2013 to overthrow the elected President Morsi. The new, authoritarian government in Cairo is now unsurprisingly backed by the American and Israeli democracies.

It is therefore hard to imagine an end to the endless spiral of violence that is taking place today in the Middle East. Israel's actions of terror in the Gaza strip, and the unconditional support of the United States, are still justified through a rhetoric that appeals to the concept of "greater goods" (one could for instance have a look at the rhetoric used by the United States government during the invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq), able to present certain conducts of foreign policy as a somehow justifiable necessity. Israel's rhetoric is in fact the subject of the next analysis.

### **A new vocabulary**

"And remember, it's not what you say that counts. It's what people hear."<sup>68</sup>With this sentence, Dr Frank Luntz opens the book "The Israel's Project 2009: Global Language Dictionary", a booklet commissioned in 2009 by a group called the "Israel's Project", born with the purpose of improving Israel's rhetoric in front of the American and international audience. The Israel's project is a non-profit

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<sup>67</sup>'WikiLeaks cables show close US relationship with Egyptian President', *The Guardian*, January 28, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/28/wikileaks-cairo-cables-egypt-president>, (accessed 24.10.2013).

<sup>68</sup> Frank Luntz, "The Israel's Project 2009: Global Language Dictionary", *The Israel's Project*, April, 2009.

organization that was established in the United States in 2002 with the purpose of providing "... factual information about Israel and the Middle East to the press, policy-makers and the public".<sup>69</sup> Practically, the group was committed to show and sell Israel's side of the story to the American audience.

Following the events of 2008, the group asked Dr Luntz, a well-known Republican consultant on the language of politics, to help Israel "... succeed in winning the hearts and the minds of the public"<sup>70</sup>, particularly with regards to the issue of the settlements in the West Bank. The housing construction operated by the Israeli government in the West Bank, a region regarded by the Palestinians as the centre of their future state, was indeed among the main reasons for the friction between Obama and Netanyahu, and one of the least appreciated actions of the Israeli government by the American public. With his book, Dr Luntz worked to secretly re-shape the international community's perception of Israel and its foreign policy through the adoption of a different, less cold rhetoric. Luntz's booklet contains in each page the mark "not for distribution or publication", but it was almost immediately leaked to *Newsweek Online*.<sup>71</sup> It is easy to understand why the group wished to keep Luntz's work secret: the booklet is in its essence a shameless list of *dos and don'ts* for Israeli leaders and spokesmen, to help them cover up and justify their actions in Gaza and the West Bank.

Luntz suggests to use a positive language, show sympathy towards the Palestinians, avoid harsh tones and in general spread the belief that Israel is committed to peace. Just as argued above in relation to September 2001 and the perception of Israel in the United States during the war on terror, Luntz makes the point that Israeli leaders

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<sup>69</sup><http://www.theisraelproject.org/>

<sup>70</sup>Luntz, *The Israel's Project* 2009...

<sup>71</sup> Newsweek Staff, "How to Sell Americans on Israeli Settlements", *Newsweek Online*, July 10, 2009. <http://www.newsweek.com/how-sell-americans-israeli-settlements-81783>, accessed (13.08.2014).

should “Draw direct parallels between Israel and America- including the need to defend against terrorism”<sup>72</sup>, again by appealing to the similarities between the 9/11 attacks and those that Israel suffers from Hamas or Hezbollah. He also recommends to stress that Israel is America’s *democratic* ally in the Middle East, “...In contrast to those in the Middle East who indoctrinate their children to become hate-mongers and suicide bombers”.<sup>73</sup> And again, the invisible line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is exploited and strengthened by Luntz’s recommendations. Luntz also teaches Israeli leaders how to mitigate the fact that hundreds of children have died under Israel’s bombs, using phrases such as: “I want to recognize those Palestinians that have been killed or wounded, because they are suffering as well. I particularly want to reach out to Palestinian mothers who have lost their children. No parent should have to bury their child”<sup>74</sup>; he also suggests ways to switch the focus from Israel’s terror to Hamas’s: “When people hear the words of the Hamas charter, Israel goes from bully to victim – and sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians dissipates.”<sup>75</sup>Luntz also quotes Netanyahu to give an example of what he calls “Words that Work”: “So that’s what we must do, and Israel is ready to be a partner. But it’s also time for someone to ask Hamas: What exactly are YOU doing to bring prosperity to your people?”<sup>76</sup> Though Luntz perhaps forgets, or chooses to ignore, that Israel counts the calories allowed to Palestinian children and its economic policy has reduced Gaza to poverty and misery (Israel’s policy is to “... put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger”<sup>77</sup>, as candidly admitted by Olmert’s advisor, Dov Weisglass, back in 2006).

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<sup>72</sup>Luntz, *The Israel’s Project* 2009..., 10.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibidem*, 11

<sup>74</sup>*Ibidem*, 30.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibidem*, 34.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibidem*, 28

<sup>77</sup>Conal Urquhart, “Gaza on brink of implosion as aid cut-off starts to bite”, *The Guardian*, April 16, 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/apr/16/israel>, accessed (13.08.2014).

Luntz's 116-page long work is a shameless, hypocritical guide designed to alter our perception of Israel's brutal policy in Gaza and the West Bank. It is based on Luntz's research and polls on what the American audience does and doesn't like to hear, whether this being a concept, a sentence or even a word (Luntz suggests to change a term like 'allow', which suggests "A patronizing, parental tone [that] will turn Americans and Europeans off"<sup>78</sup> with more instructive and hopeful words). Luntz strongly recommends that Israel presents itself as an actor striving for peace but arrested in its effort by the terrorism of Hamas. Furthermore, Luntz urges Israel to avoid openly declining the "two-state solution", given that a poll he conducted in 2009 shows that "over 78% of Americans support a two-state solution"<sup>79</sup>. But Luntz has a remedy: "... it is important to note that there are effective ways to uphold the ultimate goal of a Palestinian self-government while legitimately questioning how soon the solution can be reached. This is the rhetorical area in which you need to operate."<sup>80</sup>

When "The Israel's Project 2009: Global Language Dictionary" was leaked to *Newsletter Online*, many have started questioning Israel's foreign policy. After all, why would anyone need a 'Dictionary' to explain the nature of its actions if these are oriented towards the ultimate goal of peace? Patrick Cockburn, eminent journalist and author who has been writing about the Middle East since 1979, states that "... on television and radio and in newspapers, Israeli government spokesmen such as Mark Regev appear slicker and less aggressive than their predecessors, who were often visibly indifferent to how many Palestinians were killed."<sup>81</sup> Thus, the reason why

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<sup>78</sup>Luntz, *The Israel's Project 2009*....,8

<sup>79</sup>Ibidem, 22.

<sup>80</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>81</sup>Patrick Cockburn, "The secret report that helps Israel hide facts: The slickness of Israel's spokesmen is rooted in directions set down by the pollster Frank Luntz", *The Independent*, July 27, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/israel-gaza-conflict-the-secret-report-that-helps-israelis-to-hide-facts-9630765.html>, accessed (14.08.2014).

today Israeli leaders and spokesmen appear more upset about what is happening in Gaza than their predecessors, is because their words, gestures and comments are very carefully crafted to arouse sympathy for the Zionist cause among the American and European public. But the argument that the Israeli leaders want peace, as suggested by Dr Luntz, does not match their actions. The occupation of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza are hardly going to be a solution to stop the attacks against Israel, because the threat is different from that of 1967, for example. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a coalition of Arab states such as Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Syria moving an actual war against Israel. And even if that was to happen, Israel defeated them in six days in 1967. Now, with the level of military and technological sophistication it has achieved with the help of the United States, it would probably take six hours. That is why the concept of "self-defence" appears more and more insufficient to justify the brutality of the Dahiya Doctrine. Surely, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was a threat to Israel, but it is hard to think that the new moderate President of Iran Hassan Rouhani would move war against the Jewish state. The threat against Israel's territory today comes from terrorist Islamist organizations, and Israel's brutal occupation of the West Bank or its devastation of Gaza will not provide any help to the *bitahon*. It would be, as Peter Beinart puts it, "... like trying to contain a brush fire by dousing it with gasoline".<sup>82</sup>

But the lucidity of a geo-political analysis does not take root in a collective consciousness moulded by skilfully manipulated rhetoric. Luntz, and thus for extension Zionist leaders and spokesmen, know very well which strings to pull to create sympathy for Israel's actions and again 'democracy' is a term that appears too often in "The Israel's Project 2009: Global Language Dictionary". In fact, in his 116

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<sup>82</sup> Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*. New York; Times Books, 2012, 64

pages, Luntz mentions the word democracy twenty-five times, urging Israeli leaders to constantly remind the public that Israel is a democracy in the Middle East, as opposed to the non-democratic countries that surround its territory. But today it is hard to embrace the notion that Israel is a democracy. As Ariella Azoulay rightfully argues, for years the world has accepted the “false temporariness of ‘the Occupation’”<sup>83</sup>, the notion that Israel would occupy foreign territories until a peaceful solution to the issue could be achieved, but has disregarded a long history of deceitful sabotages of any negotiation attempted, economic policies aimed to keep the Palestinian in a condition of continuous precariousness, and the massive financial investments carried out with the settlements. Now, after yet another brutal devastation in Gaza, the world should really ask itself if we can still abide by the notion that Israel is a democracy.

### Conclusion

In August 1960, John F. Kennedy stood in front of the Senate and read a speech that described Israel as an entity that “... carries the shield of democracy and it honours the sword of freedom”.<sup>84</sup> Although in a time dominated by the Cold War such a statement probably fit rather well with the American strategy of containment of Communism, today nothing appears more distant from reality. The international conduct of the Netanyahu government and the inability of the United States to invert the course of its bilateral relationship with Israel opens, or should open, a serious

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<sup>83</sup>AriellaAzoulay, AdiOphi, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine*, Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2013, 14.

<sup>84</sup>Speech by Senator John F. Kennedy, Zionists of America Convention, Statler Hilton Hotel, New York, NY August 26, 1960, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=74217>, accessed (14.08.2014)

debate on the level of the democratic nature of two countries that have traditionally been considered as democracies.

Surely, the Middle East is a troubled region in the world, with a long history of conflicts, struggles for power and revolutionary transformations, and made even more obscure by the profound cultural difference that exists between Islamism and westernised world, further sharpened by the events of September 2001. But this cannot be a reason to ignore what happens today in Gaza, where thousands of people suffer the consequences of a progressively more ambiguous, and surely more vicious, policy carried out by Israel. And even though today, after the massacre of the Palestinian population, important political figures such as Hilary Clinton keep professing that "... Israel did what it had to do to respond to the [Hamas] rockets. Israel has a right to defend itself"<sup>85</sup>, the international community should really question if fundamental democratic principles can be crushed for political, economic or strategic interests, and brutality can still find a plausible justification through the use of an old and now obsolete rhetoric.

Perhaps today, whether because we are less used to witnessing violence against undefended children, or because we have access to a whole new range of information sources, we are more aware of what is happening in the Middle East. After all, as Noam Chomsky has pointed out, "Israel was one of the most admired countries in the world. Now it's one of the most feared and despised countries in the world."<sup>86</sup> But there is no easy solution to this endless conflict, unless a radical change occurs.

Israel is now in a very comfortable position. If Hamas stops firing rockets, then the Netanyahu government will just carry on its usual policy in Gaza and the West Bank.

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<sup>85</sup>"Hillary Clinton criticises Barack Obama's policy on Syria and Israel", *The Guardian*, August 10, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/10/hillary-clinton-barack-obama-policy-syria-israel>, accessed (14.08.2014)

<sup>86</sup> "A Hideous Atrocity": Noam Chomsky on Israel's Assault on Gaza...

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If Hamas does not, Israel will have a 'justification' to continue the massacre. Only the United States can change this trend, but the position has to be firm. History has proven that half-measures (a Suez crisis-type of condemnation) are not only useless but can even exacerbate the danger. Only if the United States changes the route of its relationship with Israel, by exercising tremendous pressure on the Netanyahu government, something could probably be achieved. Yet, even this auspice contains intrinsic limitations. Is Washington really in the position to teach a lesson on democracy after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have caused thousands of civilian casualties? Probably, sadly, not.

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Prior to moving to London, Antonio completed an MA in International Relations at the University of Political Science in Cagliari (Italy).

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## The Poet on the Past

Rabindranath's Analysis of India's History\*

by

**Uma Das Gupta**

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In Rabindranath's interpretation of India's history there were three main concerns: first, to emphasize the fact that the history of India we read in text books is not about how the people lived. It is about the kings, wars, invasions and conquests. Yet as Rabindranath saw it the history of India's past is not to be found in politics, it is to be found in what the people of India were doing with their beliefs and values despite the invasions and the conquests.<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath was angry that even the educated among us could not ascertain where India's stability lay, where her life was beyond all appearance. An answer to these questions had to become a part of our consciousness, a part of our imagination, something that would help us to reconsider the past in order to connect it with the present. All nations should not be alike in history. One who has read a biography of Rothschild should not expect the same milieu from a biography of Christ. The reader of the two biographies should not be asking how would Christ be great without a penny to his credit? Similarly with India's history. If on reading India's history one asks how can there be history where there is no politics then that would be like asking for egg plants where paddy grows, and if disappointed concluding that paddy was no food crop at all. Rabindranath went on to argue that those who find nothing in the pages of India's history do so not because India had nothing to offer. It is because those who write of India's history write of British conquests of India in trade and politics. This is the only history we come to know. We are told that our forefathers did not trade and did not fight but we are not told that what they did nor do we realize what we can do. The responsibility for this lies with our education and not with India's history. We do not realize Rabindranath argued that everything we get in India, from education to justice to administration,

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has to be bought by us as if from a huge departmental store like the Whiteway Laidlaw. All that we get, Rabindranath said, may be of 'good quality but there is little of India in it. India lies where our mothers light the evening lamp everyday bowing as the lamp is lit to the sacred tulsi plant. That is where we would find our history.

A second concern of Rabindranath in his interpreting India's history lay in his idealization of the Indian village. We have in his essay *City and Village* or in other essays in the collection called *Palliprakrit, Swadeshi Samaj, Swadesh*<sup>ii</sup> a very strong suggestion that the ideal Indian society had grown round the village. Within the village he laid great stress on the importance of human relationships, in other words on a neighbourly society, as he was convinced, had existed in the Indian tradition. To Rabindranath the expression "human family" actually meant a family, and he believed that Indian history had known this family. And it existed in rural India. The breakdown came with the establishment of the city and the migration of the educated middle class from the village to the city. Rabindranath did not place this in time but it is very plausible that he was referring to the modern period. It was not that he did not respect modernity; in fact he was a staunch advocate of the application of modern science in our lives. What made him angry was that in Indian society the village was left behind only to be sucked of what it could give without returns. That led to the denudation of the material wealth of the Indian village and created a basic imbalance in Indian society through this historical development.

Rabindranath drew such strands together in the two models of human development. To him human beings have either emphasized the importance of the political state as in Greece and Rome, or they have emphasized the importance of the civil society as in India and China. In the former political history naturally took precedence over all other histories of human beings and a collapse of the state meant calamity for the people. In India and China on the other hand the state though despotic remained limited in its effective power. Society in which human beings lived was far more important in this model than the political state, and it was in this society that neighbourliness grew. It was this society which taught human beings discipline and self-sacrifice because it had the duty to protect its members and help them grow. The

decline of political authority in such a society therefore did not mean any significant disruption in social living.

Rabindranath's other major concern was to see in India's efforts towards unity the major force in Indian history. Rabindranath was an ideologue where the interpretation of India's unity was concerned. In its entirety he saw India's history as the evolution of an ideal, an ethical code to which Hinduism (including Buddhism) contributed and which was for centuries the most important factor in preserving the unity of India. To a large extent Rabindranath's Indian history lay in the complex nature and intricate growth of Hinduism itself. Behind all of it was Rabindranath's own fundamental approach to man and society. He was skeptical about history text books because they were concerned with the confrontation of races, not their unity. Rabindranath's vision led him to concentrate on the one major force in India's history, in the unity of the belief generated that the world has a deeper meaning than what is apparent and it is there that the human soul finds its ultimate harmony and peace. Rabindranath believed that in this wisdom the elite and the outcastes were one and the same. He wanted to show historically that India's problem lay in a continuing endeavour towards unity within Indian society despite every dust storm of invasion and battle.

With this general background in mind we shall try to examine Rabindranath's analysis of India's history. His starting point was the Indus Valley Civilization, the earliest known Indian civilization with a fairly advanced level of achievement reached by about 2500 B.C. It decayed in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. because of the invasion of people who described themselves as Aryan, whose language as Sanskrit and whose religion was represented in the Rig Veda. As Rabindranath saw it, one of the important indications of the gradual unification of India is the way the Aryan and the non-Aryan mythologies merge and a common mythology develops. He was also interested to explore how from the point of view of Hindu philosophy their different outlooks upon life influenced each other and compromises emerged – such as the philosophies of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and so on. Rabindranath dated the Upanishads around 800 B.C. or after, but after the Buddha. He saw in this period the process of amalgamation between the Vedic and the non-Vedic elements of Indian culture. To Rabindranath one other extremely significant source for the

understanding of a unified Indian culture lay in the epics, Ramayana-Mahabharata, and the Puranas. He believed that these epics constituted one of the main sources of our knowledge of popular religious practices. The specifically Ramayana-Mahabharata form of Hindu Philosophy is the doctrine of the avatara, the Divine incarnation in human form. The two Divine incarnations that appear in the epics are Rama, the hero of the Ramayana and one of Rabindranath's own heroes, as well as Krishna, the exponent of the Bhagavad Gita. Moreover the epics contributed to the formation of a moral code of conduct which to Rabindranath was an important force for a larger synthesis.

Rabindranath's vision of India's unity was based entirely on his idealization of the three Kshatriyas in the story of the Ramayana. They were Janaka, Visvamitra, and Rama. In Rabindranath's scheme they cut across kinship, age, and time but were the key figures of that grand movement to embrace both Aryan and non-Aryan, Brahmin and Kshatriya, in a larger synthesis. This synthesis as Rabindranath saw it was the triumph of the religion in which, at a later date, Rama occupied a central place. This religion was a breakaway from the Brahmin orthodoxy. It was revolutionary because it relegated ceremonials for avenging injury or acquiring merit to a secondary place. This was Brahmin-vidya, the knowledge of Supreme Truth, the worship of love between God and man and their spiritual unity.

In Rabindranath's analysis the fight between the Kshatriya Rama and the Brahmin Parasurama as represented in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana has deeper roots. This was a battle of ideals, one representing the principle of movement and the other representing the principle of stability. Just as those two forces depended upon each other for their truth they were also very prone to losing their balance in human affairs and erupt into fierce conflict. This was the conflict of the new and old within the Aryan community created out of the ideals represented by Krishna. Rabindranath called this the making of a 'social revolution.' Here again Rabindranath cuts across age and time to build on this hypothesis of the conflict between the new and the old within the Aryan community with Parasurama representing the long drawn out Brahmin movement that was anti-Kshatriya with Rama and Krishna emerging victorious and then striving to manifest and develop their common ideal. Rabindranath knew that the period of history covered by the main incidents related

in the Ramayana and that of the Kurukshetra war were widely apart in time. But then Parasurama's role in both the epics was to him sufficient proof that the incidents related to a mighty movement led by the great personalities of the age. It is important to note here that what Rabindranath saw as 'social revolution' was in his conviction that the spiritual religion which Krishna preached must have ignored the exclusiveness of the priestly creeds and extended its invitation to peoples of all classes, Aryans and non-Aryans alike. He believed that the religion of which Krishna was the centre came to be the great refuge of the lower castes and out-castes of the present Indian population. To quote from Rabindranath himself<sup>iii</sup>

The most significant fact of Indian history is that all the human avatars of Vishnu had, by their life and teaching, broken the barriers of priest-craft by acknowledging the relation of fellowship between the privileged classes and those that were despised.

There came the day when Rama-chandra, the Kshatriya of royal descent, embraced as his friend and comrade the lowest of the low: the untouchable chandala, Guhaka – an incident in his career which to this day is cited as proof of the largeness of his soul. During the succeeding period of conservative reaction, an attempt was made to suppress this evidence of Rama-chandra's liberality of heart in a supplemental canto of the epic, which is an evident interpolation; and in order to fit it with the later ideal, its votaries did not hesitate to insult his memory by having it in their rendering of the episode that Rama beheaded with his own hands an ambitious Sudra for presuming to claim equal status in the attainment of spiritual excellence. It is like the ministers of the Christian region, in the late war, taking Christ's name for justifying the massacre of men.

However, that may be, India has never forgotten that Rama-chandra was the beloved comrade of chandala; that he appeared as divine to the primate tribes, some of whom had the totem of monkey, some that of bear. His name is remembered with reverence because he won over his antagonists as his allies and built the bridge of love between Aryan and non-Aryan.

This is the picture we see of one swing of the pendulum in the Aryan times. We shall never know India truly unless we study the manner in which she reacted to

the pull of the opposite principles, that of self-preservation represented by the Brahma and that of self-explanation represented by the Kshatriya.

Taking this historical analysis further Rabindranath held that his state of preservation and expansion referred to an age of continuous war between the worshippers of Siva and the worshippers of the Vedic Gods producing an extraordinary maze of religions and doctrines. This country appeared to have lost direction. It was against this background that the two great Kshatriya religious leaders emerged, Buddha and Mahavira., in the same eastern part of India where once Janaka had his seat of power. Buddha and Mahavira brought simplicity into all the confusion of so many doctrines by emphasizing that there was no inherent distinction between man and man and that, man could only be saved by realizing truth and not by social conformity or non-ethical practice. It was remarkable how they succeeded in overcoming all obstacles of tradition and custom, and swept all over the country. However they had created a problem too. With the spread of the Buddhist influence a major force of Indian history was weakened, thus destroying the regulated stream of unification. In the midst of all this the Brahmins were able to keep themselves intact because of their exclusiveness. But the Kshatriyas had merged with the rest of the people. So did the Sakas and the Hunas then pouring into India. The Aryan civilization felt threatened at last and launched on an endeavour to establish the question of race and individuality. This was how their empire came to be defined as Bharatvarsha, the empire of Bharata who was a legendary suzerain of the past. A new age of recording achievements and arranging historical material began and the Vedas were compiled as the oldest part of Aryan lore to serve as a fixed centre of reference where the distracted people could find their feet. A permanent record of this phenomenon is represented by the Mahabharata which embodied in Rabindranath's words "the thread of unity" both historically and spiritually.

It was this unity that Rabindranath looked for and hence his commitment to the creative syntheses that was the message of the Mahabharata. The only thing that made him uncomfortable was the Mahabharata's constant reiteration of the sacredness of the Brahminic lore. He explained why this was so. It was the Aryan answer to the undercurrent of race-mingling and religious compromise that prevailed in the Buddhist period. Yet Rabindranath knew that Hindu civilization was

a product of the combination of the old Dravidian culture with the Aryan. In Rabindranath's understanding the Aryans were spiritual and the Dravidians artistic. A marriage of the two had given birth to the Hindu. The attainment of Hindu civilization lay in its realization of the infinity of the Universal. Its essence lay in the reconciliation of the opposites. Wherever it has failed in its essence the result has been disastrous. Disaster lay at the roots for although the Aryan and the non-Aryan had crossed each others paths they did not merge completely. The result was a deposit of a huge medley of customs, ceremonials and creeds and a consequent shackling of the mind of the people. But Rabindranath shows how throughout India's later history the message of the spiritual freedom and unity of man came from the obscurest of quarter. In the medieval age for example the cry of unity was raised by the Brahmin guru Ramananda; by even the lowliest of the lowly such as Kabir, a Mohammedan weaver, and Ruidas, an outcaste cobbler. Throughout the dark ages the message that he only knows Truth who knows the unity of all beings in the spirit—remained ever alive, Rabindranath believed that in the modern age India would rouse herself once more to search out her oneness not only among her own constituent elements but with the great world. We know that the creation of Visva-Bharati was his own contribution to this effort.

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<sup>3</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *A Vision of India's History*, Visva-Bharati, 1962, pp. 31-32.

## **A Vision of India's History**\*

by

**Rabindranath Tagore**

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**W**hen individual communities, who come to dwell in the same neighbourhood, differ from each other in race and culture the first attempts at unity become too obviously mechanical in their classified compartments. Some system of adjustment is needed in all kinds of Society, but in order that a system should be successful it most completely submit itself to the principle of life and become the organ for the vital functions.

The history of India has been the history of the struggle between the constructive spirit of the machine, which seeks the cadence of order and conformity in social organisation, and the creative spirit of man, which seeks freedom and love for its self-expression. We have to watch and see if the latter is still living in India; and also whether the former offers its service and hospitality to life, through which its system can be vitalised.

We know not who were the heroes of the day when the racial strife between Aryan and Non-Aryan was at its height. The significant fact is, that the names of such conquering heroes have not been sung in Indian epic. It may be that an episode of that race war in India lies enshrouded in the mythical version of King Janamejaya's ruthless serpent sacrifice,— the attempted extermination of the entire Naga race. There is, however, no special glorification of that king on this account. But he who strove to bring about the reconciliation between Aryan and Non-Aryan is worshipped to this day as an Avatar.

As the leading figures of the grand movement of that age, which sought to embrace both Aryan and Non-Aryan in a larger synthesis, we find the names of three

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\* Rabindranath Tagore, *A Vision of India's History*, Visva-Bharati, 1962.

Kshatriyas standing out in the story of the Ramayana. There Janaka, Visvamitra and Rama-chandra are not merely related by bonds of kinship or affection, but through oneness of ideal. What if it be possible that Janaka, Visvamitra and Rama may not have been contemporaries as a matter of historical fact? That does not take away from their nearness to one another in the plane of idea. Viewed from the stand-point of intervening space, the distance between the earth and the moon may loom large, and tend to obscure the fact of their relationship. There are many double stars in the firmament of history, whose distance from each other does not affect the truth of their brotherhood. We know, from the suggestion thrown out by the poet of Ramayana, that Janaka, Visvamitra and Rama, even if actually separated by time, were nevertheless members of such a triple system.

In the history of idea, as distinguished from the history of fact, a hero often comes to mean, for his race, the ideal, and ceases to be an individual. In Aryan history, Janaka and Visvamitra as well as Rama have become historical symbols. They are composite pictures of numerous personalities having a common purpose. Just as King Arthur, from the Christendom of the Dark ages, represents the Christian Knight, the valiant champion of the faith against all challengers, so in India we get glimpses of the Kshatra ideal gathering round its champions for a determined and prolonged crusade against its opponents. Proofs are not wanting, that often these opponents were the Brahmins.

The idea, which was behind the neo-Kshatriya movement of old, cannot be known today in its full meaning, but still it is possible to make out the lines along which the divergence of Brahmin and Kshatriya had occurred.

The four-headed god Brahmaa represents the four Vedas with all their hymns and regulations of sacrifice. The Brahmin Bhrigu, one of the most renowned priests of the ancient days, is said to have sprung from the heart of Brahmaa, thereby showing that he occupied a prominent part in the cult of Vedic ceremonialism. It is said in the BhagavataPurana that the Kshatriya king, Kartavirya, stole a sacrificial cow from Yamadagni, a priest of the same Bhrigu clan which was the cause of the class-war led by Parasu-rama, the son of Yamadagni, against the whole Kshatriya community. Unless the stealing of the sacrificial cow stands for an idea, such a crusade of the Brahmin against the entire Kshatriya class misses its meaning. It really indicates that

among a great body of Kshatriyas there arose a spirit of resistance against sacrificial rites, and this gave rise to a fierce conflict between the two communities.

It has to be noted that the series of battles, begun by Parsu-rama, the descendant of Bhrigu, at last came to their end with his defeat at the hands of Rama-chandra. This Kshatriya hero, as we all know, is accepted and adored as an incarnation of Vishnu, the deity of the monotheistic sect of Bhagavatas. It certainly means that this fight was a fight of ideals, which terminated in the triumph of the religion in which, at a later date, Rama-chandra occupied a central place.

It is well known that Rama had an intimate relationship with the great king Janaka, which also we consider to be a relationship of ideals. Janaka has won from the people of India the title of Rajarshi, the kingly prophet. It has been said about him in the Bhagavad-Gita:

[कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धं अस्थिता जनकादयः]

Janaka and others of his kind have attained their fulfilment through the performance of duty.

This means that Janaka, and others who had the same faith as he, followed the path of moral action for attaining spiritual perfection. This was specially mentioned because it was not the path of the orthodox religion, which laid stress on ceremonials performed for the sake of averting injuries or acquiring merit or wealth. It was evidently a revolutionary movement one of whose leaders was Janaka, and Rama-chandra obtained his inspiration from him. Therefore when we find that it was the Kshatriya Rama-chandra who defeated the Brahmin Parasu-rama, we feel certain that the battle which was fought was the battle of two differing ideals.

Those institutions which are static in their nature, raise their fixed walls of division. This is why, in the history of religions, priesthood has everywhere hindered the freedom of man and maintained dissensions. The moving principle of life unites. It deals with the varied, and seeks unity in order to be able to deal truly. The Brahmins,

who had the static ideals of Society in their charge, spun into elaboration the different forms of ritualism and set up sectarian barriers between clans and classes. Of the two original deities of the Indo-Aryan tribe, the Sun and the Fire, the latter specially represented the cult of Brahmins. Round it different forms of sacrifice gathered and grew in number, accompanied by strict rules of incantation; with it came to be intimately associated the pluralism of divinity, since the fire had always been made the vehicle of oblation to numerous gods.

The Kshatriyas, on the other hand, as they sallied forth in their endeavour against all obstacles, natural and human, developed in their life the principle which was for expansion and inclusion. Born and bred amidst the clash of forces, hostile and favourable, in the field of life's strenuous conflict, the superfine complexities of the external forms of religious worship could have no special significance for them. With them the Sun-god seems to have a special connexion. From him, Manu, the law-giver who was a Kshatriya, and also the great kingly line of Raghu, to which belonged Rama-chandra, are said to have sprung. This Sun-god, in course of time, developed into the personal god, Vishnu, the god of the Bhagavata sect, the god who principally belonged to the Kshatriyas.

From Brahma's four mouths had issued the four Vedas, revealed for all time, jealously sealed against outsiders, as unchanging as the passive features of Brahma himself rapt in meditation. This was the symbol of Brahmanism, placid and immutable, profoundly filled with the mystery of knowledge. But the four active arms of Vishnu were busy, proclaiming the sway of the Good; expanding the cycle of unity; maintaining the reign of law; supporting the spirit of beauty and plenitude. All the symbols carried by Vishnu have the different aspects of Kshatriya life for their significance.

Brahma-vidya—the knowledge of Supreme Truth,— had its origin in the seclusion of the primaeval forest of India, where the human mind could intensely concentrate itself in the depth of things and the reality of spiritual existence. The world must acknowledge its debt to the contemplative Indo-Aryan for this profound vision of truth which he has revealed to man. This Brahma-vidya in India has followed two different courses. In the one, the Supreme Soul is viewed as monistic, absolutely negating the phenomenal world; in the other as dualistic in creative imagination, yet

one in essence. Unless duality is admitted there can be no worship; but, if at the same time, fundamental unity be not recognised, the worship cannot be intimate and loving.

The original gods of the Vedas were separated from man; they received worship which consisted only of external ceremony, not the homage of love. When the relationship between God and man came to be known as based on their spiritual unity, then only the worship of love became possible. That is how the mystic Brahma-vidya brought in its train the Religion of Love, of which the god was Vishnu. There is no doubt, that the religion of love had its origin, or at least its principal support among Kshatriyas, whose freedom of movement had the effect of liberating their minds from the coils of established forms of sacrifice.

That, naturally; there was a period of struggle between the cult of ritualism, supported by the Brahmins, and the religion of love, is evident. The mark of the Brahmin Bhrigu's kick, which Vishnu carries on his breast, is a myth-relic of the original conflict. In the fact, that Krishna, a Kshatriya, was not only at the head of the Vaishnava cult, but the object of its worship; that in his teaching, as inculcated in the Bhagavad-Gita, there are hints of detraction against Vedic verses; we find a proof that this cult was developed by the Kshatriyas. Another proof is found in the fact, that the two non-mythical human avatars of Vishnu,— Krishna and Rama-chandra— were both Kshatriyas, and the Vaishnava religion of love was spread by the teaching of the one and the life of the other.

The ideal which was supported by the Kshatriya opponents of the priesthood, is represented by the Bhagavad-Gita. It was spoken to the Kshatriya hero, Arjuna, by the Kshatriya prophet, Krishna. The doctrine of Yoga which it advocates,— the doctrine of the disinterested concentration of life, with all its thoughts and deeds, in the Supreme Being,— had its tradition, according to Krishna, along the line of the Rajarshis, the kingly prophets. He says:

[एवंपरम्पराप्राप्तमिमंराजर्षयोविदः।]

[सकालेनेहमहतायोगोनष्टःपरन्तप॥]

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This, handed on down the line, the king sages knew. This Yoga, by great efflux of time, decayed in the world, O Parantapa.\* ↓ \*All the translations of the verses from the Bhagavad-Gita are in the words of Annie Besant. ↓

That this religion of Yoga, as revived by Krishna and inculcated in the Bhagavad-Gita, was not in harmony with Vedic scriptures is directly affirmed by the Master in his teaching to his disciple Arjuna, when he says:

[श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्नतातेयदास्थास्यतिनिश्चयला।]

[समाधावचलाबुद्धिस्तदायोगमवाप्स्यसि॥]

When thy mind, bewildered by the scriptures, shall stand immovable in contemplation, then shalt thou attain unto Yoga.

Krishna undoubtedly takes his stand against the traditional cult of sacrificial ceremonies, which according to him distract our minds from the unity of realisation when he speaks thus:

यामिमांपुष्पितांवाचंप्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः।

वेदवादरताःपार्थनान्यदस्तीतिवादिनः॥

कामात्मानःस्वर्गपराजन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम्।

क्रियाविशेषबहुलांभोगैश्वर्यगतिंप्रति॥

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानांतयापसहृत्चेतसाम्।

व्यवसायात्मिकाबुद्धिःसमाधौनविधीयते ॥

The flowery speech that the unwise utter, O Partha, clinging to the word of the Veda, saying there is nothing else, ensouled by desire and longing after heaven, the speech that offereth only rebirth as the ultimate fruit of action, that is full of recommendations to various rites for the sake of gaining enjoyments and sovereignty— the thoughts of those misled by that speech cleaving to pleasures and lordship, not being inspired with resolution, is not engaged in contemplation.

These words are evidently of him, who in his teachings has for his opponents the orthodox multitude, the believers in Vedic texts.

The Kurukshetra war, described in the Mahabharata, was a war between two parties, one of whom had rejected Krishna, and the other of whom were his followers, guided by him in the war. The motive of this conflict, which had attracted all the great ruling powers of that age into one or other of the two opposing parties, could not have been a mere scramble for land between cousins. In this latter version of the epic the fact is suppressed, that it was an unorthodox religious movement, acknowledging Krishna to be its prophet that gave rise to the most desperate fight in the ancient ages in India. The very fact, that Krishna was the charioteer of Arjuna, is proof enough that it was a war of rival creeds; and for that very reason the battle ground of Kurukshetra has ever remained a sacred spot of pilgrimage.

It is significant to note that the lives of great Brahmins of the olden times, like that of Yajnavalkya, have the association of intellectual profundity and spiritual achievement, while those of great Kshatriyas represent ethical magnanimity which has love for its guiding principle. It is also significant, that the people of India, though entertaining deep veneration for the Brahmin sages, instinctively ascribe divine inspiration to the Kshatriya heroes, who actively realised high moral ideals in their personalities. Parasu-rama,— the only historical personage belonging to the Brahmin caste who has been given a place in the list of avatars,— has never found a seat in the hearts of the people. This shows that, according to India, the mission of divine power in this country is, to bring reconciliation, through moral influence, between races that are different,— never to acquire dominance over others through physical prowess and military skill.

The most important aspect of Rama-chandra's life, which has made the Vaishnava accept him as the incarnation of divine love, has been missed by the current version of the Ramayana. There he is depicted merely as an ideal son, brother and husband, a paragon of domestic virtues, a king who holds that cultivation of popularity is a duty higher than doing justice in the teeth of clamorous disapprobation. I have no doubt that the real story of his life, which has become dim in the course of time and

with the growth of conventionalism, is concerned with his sympathy for the despised races, his love for the lowly; and that this made him the ideal of the primitive people whose totem was Hanuman.

The religion represented by the third human avatar of Vishnu, who is Buddha, has in it the same moral quality which we find in the life and teaching of Rama and Krishna. It clearly shows the tendency of the Kshatra ideal, with its freedom and courage of intellect, and above all its heart, comprehensive in sympathy, generous in self-sacrifice.

Foreign critics are too often ready to misread the conservative spirit of India, putting it down as the trade artifice of an interested priestcraft. But they forget that there was no racial difference between Brahmin and Kshatriya. These merely represented two different natural functions of the body politic, which, though from the outside presenting the appearance of antagonism, have as a matter of fact co-operated in the evolution of Indian history. Sowing seed in one's own land and reaping the harvest for distant markets are apparently contradictory. The seed-sowers naturally cling to the soil which they cultivate, while the distributors of the harvest develop a different mentality, being always on the move. The Brahmins were the guardians of the seed of culture in ancient India and the Kshatriyas strove for putting into wide use the harvest of wisdom. The principle of stability and the principle of movement, though they depend upon each other for their truth, are, in human affairs, apt to lose their balance and come into fierce conflict. Yet these conflicts, as meteorology tells us in the physical plane, have the effect of purifying the atmosphere and restoring its equilibrium. In fact, perfect balance in these opposing forces would lead to deadlock in creation. Life moves in the cadence of constant adjustment of opposites,— it is a perpetual process of reconciliation of contradictions.

The divergence of ideals between the Brahmins, dwellers in the forest, and the Kshatriyas, founders of cities, often led to prolonged fights, a fact which is revealed by the story of the struggle between Vasishtha and Visvamitra. The Brahmins were not all on one side, nor the Kshatriyas all on the other. Many Kshatriyas espoused the Brahmin cause. We are told how the Brahmanic Vidyas, as personified in the form of three maidens, outraged by Visvamitra, were sore distressed, and how the chivalrous Kshatriya King, Harischandra, came to their rescue, losing his all for their sake.

Then, again, Krishna in the course of his endeavour to liberate the Kshatriya victims from a dread ceremonial, slew King Jarasandha with the help of the Pandava braves. This Jarasandha, himself a Kshatriya, was on the other side and had defeated and imprisoned many Kshatriya kings. Krishna and the Pandavas had to disguise themselves as Brahmins in order to gain entrance within the walls of his stronghold. Many other legends bear this out. The spiritual movement started by Krishna had something in it, which went against the orthodox forms of worship. This is further hinted at by the legend, belonging to a later period, of his taking the part of the Abhiras against their persecution by Indra, the king of the Vedic gods, and preventing the devastation of the pasture land, Govardhana, held by that tribe.

Anyhow, it is abundantly clear that the ideals represented by Krishna had divided the Aryan community into two rival camps. When king Yudhishtira, as overlord, summoned a Rajasuya Yajna in order to heal those dissensions, King Sisupala tried to wreck the proceedings by publicly insulting Krishna, the acknowledgment of whose precedence over all assembled Brahmins and Kshatriyas was the object of that great conclave. The main motive behind the devastating Kurukshetra war was this very internal strife within the community,— the party which opposed Krishna being generalled by Drona, the famous Brahmin warrior, with his kinsmen Kripa and Asvatthvama. It is a notable fact that Drona himself was a disciple of Parasu-rama; and Karna, one of the most important fighters who stood against Krishna's party, also had Parasu-rama for his teacher.

There can be no doubt that the period of history, covered by the main incidents related in the Ramayana, and that of the Kurukshetra war, are widely apart in time; and therefore we have no other alternative but to admit that Parasu-rama, who takes part in both the narratives, represents a long continued Brahmin movement, anti-Kshatriya in character; and Rama and Krishna, who come out victorious in this conflict, have some common ideal, which also had a long period of struggle for its manifestation and development.

Any number of such stories show, that the two Epics of India were concerned with this same social revolution, that is to say, with the conflict of the new and the old within the Aryan community. We have its analogy in comparatively modern days, when the Bengali epic, Kavikankan Chandi, was written. In this poem is also

described the conflict of religious ideals, with the god Siva on one side, and the goddess Chandi on the other. It represented the tragedy of the downfall of a higher principle of religion, which had its devotees in the cultured classes, and the usurpation of its altar by the vindictive deity Chandi, patron of wild animals, who was worshipped by the aboriginal Vyadha tribes, as is described in the poem.

In the age of which the Ramayana tells, Rama-chandra was the champion of the new party. Rama was born in the orthodox creed at the head of which was Vasishtha, the priest of the royal house. But from his boyhood he was won over by Visvamitra, the implacable antagonist of Vasishtha. From this Kshatriya sage, the Kshatriya prince received his initiation into a path of adventure, which evidently had behind it a mighty movement led by the great personalities of the age. It appears to me that Rama's banishment had its cause in some conflict of ideals between Vasishtha, who stood as the symbol of the Brahmanic tradition, and Visvamitra, who had fought against it and had wrenched Rama-chandra away from the clasp of the unwilling royal household.

When later, for sectarian reasons, the story of the great movement was retold as the Ramayana— a dynastic history,— the absurd reason was invented about the weak old king yielding to a favourite wife, who took advantage of a vague promise which could fit itself to any demand of hers, however preposterous. This story merely reveals the later degeneracy of mind, when form assumed a greater value than spirit, and some casual words uttered in a moment of infatuation could be deemed more sacred than the truth which is based upon justice and perfect knowledge.

Janaka is considered to be an embodiment of the kingly virtues of an ideal Kshatriya. In the history of the colonisation of India by the Aryans, his life must have served a great purpose. We can guess from his own position in the story of the Ramayana, that he was the principal inspiration in an enterprise which had a large meaning, and that Rama accepted his mission of life from Janaka. If we pierce through the mist which has gathered round the original narrative, we shall see that there is a general challenge to all Kshatriyas of that time in the story of Sita's wedding.

Sita is said to have been no ordinary mortal. She came out of the soil itself when King Janaka was employed in ploughing, as was his wont. "Furrow-line" is the meaning

which the name "Sita" bears. This daughter of the soil he promised to give in marriage to him who could break the bow of Siva. Rama was led to this trial by Visvamitra, and he succeeded first in bending the bow and then breaking it, thereupon being declared worthy of receiving Sita from the hand of Janaka. A great fact of history, which very probably occupied a large expanse of time and was borne along by several generations of heroes, appears to have been condensed in this story. Janaka was one of those sublime figures who could focus in himself all the significance of an epoch-making endeavour, scattered through time and space.

The fact that Janaka's personality comprehended in its inner realisation the Brahma-vidya, and in its outer activity the cultivation of the soil, indicates that the Kshatriya kings developed the art of agriculture, on which the civilisation of the Aryans of India was established. Originally the tending of flocks had been the main occupation of the Aryan tribes. This pastoral life likewise suited the forest tracts of India, and Brahmins in their forest retreats continued to regard the cow as their principal wealth. But though tending cattle was fit for the nomad life, or for that of small groups of individuals living in forests, the concentration of large bodies of men in cities required the organised production of food. Naturally the necessity of such organisation was more keenly felt by Kshatriyas, who were founders of cities, than by the others. Therefore, in the life of Janaka, the ideal king of ancient India, are seen, side by side, Brahma-vidya,— the philosophy which, if truly accepted, could be the spiritual support of the unity of races,— and Agriculture, which could be the material support of the economic union effected by the large communities. And just as the European colonists in America, while cutting down its forests, had to contest every step with the aborigines, who depended on the chase for their living, so also in India the pioneers of agriculture encountered the opposition of the non-Aryans living in its wildernesses, whose fierce onslaughts made their task far from easy.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Zarathushtra, the great spiritual master of ancient Iran, had, like Janaka himself, an ideal which combined spiritual wisdom with a faith in agricultural civilisation. And it also became his mission to save agriculture from the depredation of nomadic hordes.

Let me quote from "Zarathushtra in Gathas," translated from Dr. Geiger's book on the subject, a passage which bears strong analogy to the aspect of the old Aryan

history in India as revealed by the legend of Janaka. "The Iranian people of the Gathic period," he says, "were, in fact, subdivided into husbandmen and nomads, and in the sharp opposition which obtained between the two, the prophet Zarathushtra played a prominent part. In a number of Gathic passages we see him standing as an advocate of the settled husbandmen. He admonishes them not to be tired of their good work, to cultivate diligently the fields, and to devote to their cattle that fostering care which they deserve. And far and wide spreads the dominion of husbandmen and 'the settlements of the pious people increase, in spite of all molestations, all persecutions, and violence, which they have to suffer from the nomads who attack their settlements in order to desolate their sown fields and to deprive them of their herds."

King Janaka reigned over Mithila, which shows that the Aryan colonies had extended along the North to the easternmost natural boundary of India. But the Vindhya hills were then inaccessible, and the forest regions to their South remained intact. Here the Dravidian culture had reached its height, proving a formidable rival to that of the Aryans, and here the puissant Ravana had established the Dravidian god, Siva, defeating Indra and other Vedic deities.

The question which then arose in the Aryan community as to who should be the champion of their civilisation, proving his competency to carry his standard forward by success in the preliminary trial of the breaking of Hara-dhanu, Siva's bow, is to be read in the same light. He who could break the strong resistance of the Siva-worshippers and carry into the South the civilisation which had Brahma-vidya for its spirit, and for its body Agriculture, would verily win, for his spouse, Janaka's earth-born daughter Sita.

When Rama-chandra set out under his master, Visvamisra on what became his life-mission he started, even at that early age, by emerging triumphant through three severe tests. First, he slew the foremost of the obstructive barbarians in the vicinity. Next, at his skilled touch, the desert soil, which had lain for long years bound in the hardness of stone,— becoming ahalya, not fit for ploughing— resumed the bloom of life. It was the self-same soil, which Rishi Gautama, the foremost of the early Aryan pioneers who had striven to drive the plough southwards, had found treacherous and had abandoned in despair. Thirdly, to the prowess and wisdom of this disciple of the

Kshatriya sage was due the subduing of the virulence of the anti-Kshatriya movement, personified in the Brahmin, Parasu-rama.

Both in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the wedding of the principal heroes is connected with the story of a preliminary trial. This is not a mere chance coincidence. It is the crystallisation, in the memory of the race, of a great fact which had an epoch-making character. In both cases, it was the acknowledgment of a difficult ideal, which involved the heroic responsibility of upholding it in the teeth of desperate opposition. In both cases the bride was not a mortal woman, but a great mission. The trial described in the Mahabharata is the piercing of a disc in the sky, difficult to discern, fixed in the centre of a revolving wheel, which has to be reached by concentrating one's attention on its shadow reflected in a vessel of water. This trial is obviously of a spiritual nature. The fixed centre of Truth, in the heart of the revolving wheel of the World (Samsara), is reflected in the depth of our own being, which can be reached by the one-pointed concentration of Yoga. Is not this the doctrine of the Gita in a language of picture? The symbolism of the piercing of the target is well known to us, as it is used in the Upanishad:

प्रणवोधनुःशारोहयात्माब्रह्मतत्त्वक्षयमुच्यते ।

The bow is omkara,— the utterance of the sound Om, which helps mental concentration,— the soul is the arrow, and the Infinite the target.

Though it was Arjuna who originally won the maiden whose name was Krishna, she was accepted in marriage by all the brothers. It is ridiculous to try to establish, on the strength of this fact, that the Pandava clan came from the Himalayan regions, where polyandry is tolerated. As a matter of fact, it was a sacred rite of ideal polyandry which came to be shared by all the brothers. Krishnaa is the impersonation of the truth taught by Krishna himself, which had some association with the Sun-worship which was the original meaning of Vishnu-worship. It is related in the epic, that in the vessel carried by Krishnaa, food would become inexhaustible when she invoked the sun to help her. This must refer to the unlimited spiritual food ready for all guests who chose to come and enjoy it.

Evidently, the Panchala kingdom was one of the great centres of this unorthodox religion led by the Kshatriyas. It is to be noted that it was in Panchala that the Brahmin student, Svetaketu, went to the Kshatriya King, PravahanaJaibali, for instruction in the mystic philosophy consisting in the doctrine that the creative process, going on in the world of stars, in sky and earth, and in man himself, is a perpetual ceremony of sacrifice, for which the sacrificial fire appears in different aspects and forms. We know the story of how the Brahmin, Drona, had a grudge against the King of Panchala owing to the latter not recognising the right of his Brahmin comrade to an equal share in his kingly wealth and power. It is not unlikely that in this legend lies hidden the history of the conflict between the power of the priesthood and that of the religious movement started by the Kshatriyas.

It can be surmised that it was from the province of Panchala, in the close neighbourhood of Mathura, that the Pandava brothers received the new creed preached by Krishna. It is significant that the Brahmin, Drona, who originated the quarrel, was the first general on the side of the Kurus. Krishna was insulted by the Kuru brothers, as was Sita by Ravana, and she was rescued from her humiliation by Krishna. It was proved to those who tried to expose her to indignities, that her veil of honour was of unlimited length, just as the food in her vessel was inexhaustible. It was proved, in like manner, that Ravana had not the power to defile Sita, though, for a time, she was under his dominance, for ideal truth is inviolable even though it may remain for a time in obscurity. That the hero of the Ramayana, the rescuer of Sita, and the hero of the Mahabharata, the friend of Krishna, both occupied the same exalted position in the later Vaishnava religion, is not a mere accident. This fact itself gives us the clue, that the original narration in the case of both the epics had for its motive the great fight for the ideal, which ushered in a new age with its new outlook upon life.

It is evident that the sun, which is the one source of light and life to us, had led the thoughts of the Indo-Aryan sages towards the monotheistic ideal of worship. The following prayer addressed to the sun, with which the Ishopanishat is concluded, is full of the mystic yearning of the soul:

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हिरण्मयेनपात्रेणसत्यस्यापिहितंमुखम्।

तत्त्वंपूषन्नपावृणुसत्यधर्मायद्दष्टये ॥

O Sun, nourisher of the world, Truth's face lies hidden in thy golden vessel. Take away thy cover for his eyes, who is a devotee of Truth.

When according to the Chandogya Upanishad, the teacher Ghora, after having explained to his disciple Krishna, who had become apipasa, free from desire, the consecration ceremony which leads to giving oneself a new spiritual birth,— in which austerity, almsgiving, harmlessness, truthfulness, these are one's gifts for the priests,— he winds up his teaching with these words: "In the final hour one should take refuge in these three thoughts: You are the Indestructible; you are the Unshaken, you are the very Essence of Life." On this point there are these two Rig verses:—

आदित्प्रत्नस्यरेतसो

ज्योतिष्पश्यन्तिवासरम्

परोयदिध्यतेदिवि।

उदवयंतमसस्परि

ज्योतिष्पश्यन्त उत्तरम्

-- स्वःपश्यन्तउत्तरम्---

देवंदेवन्नासूर्यम्

अगन्मज्योतिरुत्तममिति

----- ज्योतिरुत्तममिति ॥

Proceeding from primeval seed,

The early morning light they see,

That gleameth higher than the heaven,

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From out of darkness all around,

We, gazing on the higher light—

Yea, gazing on the higher light—

To Surya, god among the gods,

We have attained the highest light!

—Yea, the highest light! (The thirteenth principal Upanishads, pages 212-213.)

We find a hint here of the teaching which was developed by Krishna into a great religious movement, which preached freedom from desire and absolute devotion to God, and which spiritualised the meaning of ceremonies. That this religion had some association with the sun can be inferred from the legend of Krishnaa finding an inexhaustible store of food in her vessel after her worship of the sun, and also the one about the piercing of the target of the disc by Arjuna, which very likely was the mystic disc of the sun, the golden vessel that holds Truth hidden in it, the Truth which has to be attained by piercing the cover.

It is interesting to see how, in the history of religion, the sun has also had a strong monotheistic suggestion in civilisations other than the Aryan. The great Egyptian King, Akhenaten, belonging to the 14th century B. C., struggled against the congregated might of the priestly polytheistic ceremonials, substituting for them the purer form of worship of "the radiant energy of the sun". Here also we find the significant analogy of a religious revolution, initiated by one belonging to the kingly caste, against the opposition of the orthodox priestly sect of the land. This Egyptian King, like other prophets of his type, speaks of the truth coming to him as a personal revelation, when he sings:

Thou art in my heart, there is none

Who knoweth thee excepting thy son;

Thou causest that he should have understanding,

In thy ways and in thy might.

"In ethics a great change also marks this age," says Prof. Flinders Petrie. "The motto 'Living in Truth' is constantly put forward as the keynote to the king's character, and to his changes in various lines."\* ↓\*\*'A History of Egypt', by W. M. Flinders Petrie, page 218. ↓ Thus we find that History is a plagiarist that steals its own ideas over and over again.

In connection with this we have to note that the spiritual religion which Krishna preached must have ignored the exclusiveness of priestly creeds and extended its invitation to peoples of all classes, Aryans and non-Aryans alike. The legend of his intimate relationship with the shepherd tribes supports this view and we still find the religion, of which Krishna is the centre, to be the great refuge of the lower castes and outcastes of the present Indian population. The most significant fact of Indian history is, that all the human avatars of Vishnu had, by their life and teaching, broken the barriers of priestcraft by acknowledging the relation of fellowship between the privileged classes and those that were despised.

There came the day when Rama-chandra, the Kshatriya of royal descent, embraced as his friend and comrade the lowest of the low, the untouchable chandala, Guhaka,— an incident in his career which to this day is cited as proof of the largeness of his soul. During the successive period of conservative reaction, an attempt was made to suppress this evidence of Rama-chandra's liberality of heart in a supplemental canto of the epic, and in order to fit it with the later ideal, its votaries did not hesitate to insult his memory, by having it in their rendering of the episode, that Rama beheaded with his own hands an ambitious Sudra for presuming to claim equal status in the attainment of spiritual excellence. It is like the ministers of Christian religion, in the late war, taking Christ's name for justifying the massacre of men.

However that may be, India has never forgotten that Rama-chandra was the beloved comrade of a chandala; that he appeared as divine to the primitive tribes, some of whom had the totem of monkey, some that of bear. His name is remembered with

reverence because he won over his antagonists as his allies and built the bridge of love between Aryan and non-Aryan.

This is the picture we see of one swing of the pendulum in the Aryan time. We shall never know India truly unless we study the manner in which she re-acted to the pull of the two opposite principles, that of self-preservation represented by the Brahmin, and that of self-expansion represented by the Kshatriya.

When the first overtures towards social union were being made, it became necessary for the Aryans to come to an understanding with the non-Aryan religion as well. In the beginning, as we have seen, there was a state of war between the followers of Siva and the worshippers of the Vedic gods. The fortune of arms favoured sometimes one side, sometimes the other. Even Krishna's valiant comrade, Arjuna, had once to acknowledge defeat at the hands of Siva of the Kiratas, a hunter tribe. Then there is the well known record of a refusal to give Siva place in a great Vedic sacrifice, which led to the breaking up of the ceremony by the non-Aryans. At last, by the identification of Siva with the Vedic Rudra, an attempt had to be made to bring this constant religious antagonism to an end. And yet in the Mahabharata we find the later story of a battle between Rudra and Vishnu, which ended in the former acknowledging the latter's superiority. Even in Krishna worship we find the same struggle, and therefore in the popular recitation of Krishna legends we often hear of Brahmaa's attempt at ignoring Krishna, till at last the ancestor god of the Aryans is compelled to pay homage to the later divinity of the populace. These stories reveal the persisting self-consciousness of the new-comers, even after they had been admitted to the privileges of the old-established pantheon.

The advent of the two great Kshatriya founders of religion, Buddha and Mahavira, in the same eastern part of India where once Janaka had his seat, brought into being a spirit of simplification. They exercised all their force against the confusing maze of religions and doctrines, which had beset the bewildered country and through which it could not find its goal. Amidst the ceremonial intricacies on the one hand, and the subtleties of metaphysical speculation on the other, the simple truth was overlooked that creeds and rites have no value in themselves; that human welfare is the one object towards which religious enthusiasm has to be directed. These two Kshatriya sannyasins refused to admit that any distinctions between man and man were

inherent and perpetual; according to their teaching, man could only be saved by realising truth, and not by social conformity or non-ethical practice. It was wonderful how the triumph of these Kshatriya teachers rapidly overcame all obstacles of tradition and habit, and swept over the whole country.

Long before the full flood of the Buddhistic influence had subsided, most of the protecting walls had been broken down, and the banks of the discipline, through which the forces of unification had been flowing in a regulated stream, had been obliterated. In fact, in departing, Buddhism left all the numerous aboriginal diversities of India to rear their heads unchecked, because one of the two guiding forces of Indian history had been enfeebled, which with its spirit of resistance had been helping the process of assimilation.

In the midst of the Buddhistic revolution only the Brahmins were able to keep themselves intact, because the maintaining of exclusiveness had all along been their function. But the Kshatriyas had become merged into the rest of the people, and so in the succeeding age we find that most of the kings had ceased to belong to Kshatriya dynasties. Then there were the Sakas and the Hunas, repeated hordes of whom flowed into India and got mixed with the elder inhabitants. The Aryan civilisation, thus stricken to the quick, put forth all its life force in a supreme attempt at recovery, and its first effort was directed to regain its race consciousness, which had been overwhelmed.

During the long period of this social and religious revolution, which had the effect of rubbing out the individual features of the traditional Aryan culture, the question "What am I?" came to the forefront. The rescue of the racial personality from beneath the prevailing chaos, became the chief endeavour. Aroused by the powerful shock of a destructive opposition, it was then, for the first time, that India sought to define her individuality. When she now tried to know and name herself, she called to mind the empire of Bharata, a legendary suzerian of by-gone days, and defining her boundaries accordingly, she called herself Bharatavarsha. She tried to pick up the lost threads of her earlier achievements, in order to restore the fabric of her original civilisation. Thus collection and compilation, not new creation, were characteristics of this age. The great sage of this epoch, Vyasa, who is reported to have performed

this function, may not have been one real person, but he was, at any rate, the personification of the spirit of the times.

The movement began with the compilation of the Vedas. Now that it had become necessary to have some common unifying agent, the Vedas, as the oldest part of Aryan lore, had to be put on a pedestal for the purpose, in order to supply a fixed centre of reference round which the distracted community could rally.

Another task undertaken by this age was the gathering and arranging of historical material. In this process, spread over a long period of time, all the scattered myths and legends were brought together, and not only these, but also the beliefs and discussions of every kind, which still lingered in the racial memory. And thus a great literary image of Aryan India of old was formed which was called the Mahabharata—the great Bharata. The very name shows the awakened consciousness of the unity of the people struggling to find its expression and permanent record.

The eager effort to gather all the drifting fragments from the wreck, resulted in the overloading with indiscriminate miscellanies of the central narrative of the epic. The natural desire of the artist to impart an aesthetic relevancy to the story, was swamped by the exigency of the time. The most important need of the age was for an immortal epic, a majestic ship fit to cross the sea of time, to serve the purpose of carrying various materials for the building of a permanent shelter for the race mind.

Therefore, though the Mahabharata may not be history in the modern western definition of the term, it is, nevertheless, a receptacle of the historical records which had left their impress upon the living memory of the people for ages. Had any competent person attempted to sift and sort and analyse this material into an ordered array of facts, we should have lost the changing picture of Aryan society which they present,— a picture in which the lines are vivid or dim, connected or confusedly conflicting, according to the lapses of memory, changes of ideal, and variations of light and shade, incident to time's perspective. Self-recording annals of history, as they are imprinted on the living tablet of ages, are bared before our sight in this great work.

The genius of that extraordinary age did not stop short at the discovery of the thread of unity on which were strung the variegated materials scattered through its history;

it also searched out the unity of a spiritual philosophy running through all contradictions that are to be found in the metaphysical speculations of the Vedas. The outline presentation of this philosophy was made by the same Vyasa, who had not only the industry to gather and piece together details, but also the power to visualise the whole in its completeness. His compilation is a creative synthesis.

One thing, which remains significant, is the fact that this age of compilation has insisted upon the sacredness of the Brahmins and Brahminic lore by constant reiteration in exaggerated language. It proves that there was a militant spirit fighting against odds, and that a complete loss of faith in the freedom of intellect and conscience of the people had come about. Its analogy can be found in the occasional distrust of Democracy which we observe among some modern Intellectuals of Europe.

The main reason for this was that, during the period of alternating ascendancy of Brahmin and Kshatriya, the resulting synthesis had its unity of Aryan character, but when during the Buddhist period, not only non-Aryans, but also non-Indians from outside, gained free access, it became difficult to maintain organic coherence. A strong under-current of race-mingling and religious compromise had set in, and as the mixed races and beliefs began to make themselves felt, the Aryan forces of self-preservation struggled to put up wall beyond wall in order to prevent successive further encroachments. Only those intrusions which could not be resisted found a place within extended barriers.

Let no one imagine, however, that the non-Aryan contributions were taken in by sheer force of circumstance only, and that they had no value of their own. As a matter of fact, the old Dravidian culture was by no means to be despised, and the result of its combination with the Aryan, which formed the Hindu civilisation, acquired both richness and depth under the influence of its Dravidian component. Dravidians might not be introspective, or metaphysical, but they were artists, and they could sing, design and construct. The transcendental thought of the Aryan by its marriage with the emotional and creative art of the Dravidian gave birth to an offspring, which was neither fully Aryan, nor Dravidian, but Hindu.

With its Hindu civilisation, India attained the gift of being able to realise in the commonplaceness of life, the infinity of the Universal. But on the other hand, by reason of this dual strain in its blood, whenever Hinduism has failed to take its stand on the reconciliation of the opposites which is of its essence, it has fallen a prey to incongruous folly and blind superstition. This is the predicament in which Hindu India has been placed by its birthright. Where the harmony between the component differences has been organically effected, there beauty has blossomed; so long as it remains wanting, there is no end to deformities. Moreover, we must remember that, not only the Dravidian civilisation, but things appertaining to primitive non-Aryan tribes also, found entrance into the Aryan polity; and the torment of these inassimilable intrusions has been a darkly cruel legacy left to the succeeding Hindu society.

When the non-Aryan gods found place in the Aryan pantheon, their inclusion was symbolised by the trinity, Brahmaa, Vishnu and Siva,—Brahmaa standing for the ancient tradition, exclusive externalism; Vishnu for the transition when the original Vedic Sun-god became humanised and emerged from the rigid enclosure of scriptural texts into the world of the living human heart; and Siva for the period when the non-Aryan found entrance into the social organisation of the Aryan. But though the Aryan and non-Aryan thus met, they did not merge completely. Like the Ganges and the Jumna at their confluence, they flowed on together in two separately distinguishable streams.

In spite of Siva's entry amongst the Aryan gods, his Aryan and non-Aryan aspects remained different. In the former, he is the lord of ascetics, who, having conquered desire, is wrapped in the bliss of nirvana, as bare of raiment as of worldly ties. In the latter, he is terrible, clad in raw, bleeding elephant hide, intoxicated by the hemp decoction. In the former, he is the replica of Buddha, and as such has captured many a Buddhist shrine; in the latter, he is the overlord of demons, spirits and other dreadful beings, who haunt the places of the dead, and as such has appropriated to himself the worshippers of the phallus, and of snakes, trees and other totems. In the former, he is worshipped in the quietude of meditation; in the latter, in frenzied orgies of self-torture.

Similarly in the Vaishnava cult, Krishna, who became the mythological god of the non-Aryan religious legends, was not the same in character as the brave and sagacious ruler of Dwaraka who acted as the guide, philosopher and friend of the valiant Arjuna. Alongside the heights of the Song Celestial are ranged the popular religious stories of the cowherd tribes.

But in spite of all that was achieved, it was quite impossible, even for the Aryan genius, to bring into harmony with itself and assimilate each and every one of the practices, beliefs and myths of innumerable non-Aryan tribes. More and more of what was non-Aryan came to be not merely tolerated, but welcomed in spite of incongruities, as the non-Aryan element became increasingly predominant in the race mixture. This led to the formulation of the principle, that any religion which should satisfy the capacity of a particular sect was enough for its salvation. But in consequence, the organising force was reduced to the mere compulsion of some common customs, some repetition of external practices, which barely served loosely to hold together these heterogeneous elements. For the mind which has lost its vigour, all external habits become tyrannical. The result for India is, that the tie of custom which is extraneous has become severely tight, hardly leaving any freedom of movement even in insignificant details of life. This has developed in the people an excessively strong sense of responsibility to the claims of the class tradition which divides, but not the conviction of that inner moral responsibility which unites.

We have seen how, after the decline of Buddhism, a path had to be cleared through the jungle of rank undergrowth which had been allowed to run wild during the prolonged inaction of the Brahmanic hierarchy. At the latter end of its career in India the mighty stream of Buddhism grew sluggish and lost itself in morasses of primitive superstitions and promiscuous creeds and practices, which had their root in non-Aryan crudities. It had lost its depth of philosophy and breadth of humanity, which had their origin in the Aryan mind.

Therefore the time came for the Brahmins to assert themselves and bring back into the heart of all this incongruity some unity of ideal, which it had always been their function to maintain. It was now a difficult task for them because of the varied racial strains which had become part of the constitution of the Indian people. And so, in order to save their ideals from the attack of this wild exuberance of heterogeneous

life, they fixed them in a permanent rigidity. This had the reactionary effect of making their own ideals inert, and unfit for adaptation to changes of time; while it left, to all the living elements of the different races included in the people, their freedom of growth, unguided by any dictates of reason. The result has been our huge medley of customs, ceremonials and creeds, some of which are the ruins of the old, and some merely the anomalies of the living outgrowths which continue clinging to them and smothering them out of shape.

And yet the genius of India went on working, albeit through the tremendous obstacle of the shackled mind of the people. In the Vedic times, as we have seen, it was mainly the Kshatriyas who repeatedly brought storms of fresh thought into the atmosphere of the people's life whenever it showed signs of stagnation. In later ages, when the Kshatriyas had lost their individuality, the message of the spiritual freedom and unity of man mainly sprang from the obscure strata of the community, where belonged the castes that were despised. Though it has to be admitted that, in the mediæval age, the Brahmin, Ramananda, was the first to give voice to the cry of unity, which is India's own, and in consequence lost his honoured privileges as a Brahmin guru, yet it is none the less true that most of our great saints of that time, who took up this cry in their life and teaching and songs, came from the lower classes,— one of them being a Muhammadan weaver, one a cobbler, and several coming from ranks of society whose touch would pollute the drinking water of the respectable section of Hindus. And thus the living voice of India ever found its medium, even in the darkest days of our downfall, — the voice which proclaimed that he only knows truth who knows the unity of all beings in spirit.

The age in which we now live, we cannot see clearly in its true features, as from without. Yet we feel that the India of to-day has roused herself once more to search out her truth, her harmony, her oneness, not only among her own constituent elements, but with the great world. The current of her life, which had been dammed up in stagnation, has found some breach in the wall and can feel the pulse of the tidal waves of humanity outside. We shall learn that we can reach the great world of man, not through the effacement, but through the expansion of our own individuality. We shall know for certain that, just as it is futile mendicancy to covet the wealth of others in place of our own, so also to keep ourselves segregated and starved by refusing the

gift which is the common heritage of man, because it is brought to us by a foreign messenger, only makes for utter destitution.

Our western critics,— whose own people, whenever confronted with non-western races in a close contact, never know any other solution of the problem but extermination or expulsion by physical force; whose caste feeling against darker races is brutally aggressive and contemptuous,— are ready to judge us with a sneering sense of superiority when comparing India's history with their own. They never take into consideration the enormous burden of difficulty, which Indian civilisation has taken upon itself from its commencement. India is the one country in the world where the Aryan colonisers had to make constant social adjustments with peoples who vastly outnumbered them; who were physically and mentally alien to their own race; who were for the most part distinctly inferior to the invaders. Europe, on the other hand, is one in mind; her dress, custom, culture, and with small variations her habits, are one; yet her inhabitants, although only politically divided, are perpetually making preparations for deadly combats, wherein entire populations indulge in orgies of wholesale destruction unparalleled in ferocity in the history of the barbarian. It is not merely such periodic irruptions of bloody feuds that are the worst characteristic of the relationship between the countries of Europe, even after centuries of close contact and intellectual co-operation, but there is also the intense feeling of mutual suspicion generating diplomatic deceitfulness and shameless moral obliquities.

India's problem has been far more complex than that of the West, and I admit that our rigid system of social regulation has not solved it. For, to bring order and peace at the cost of life, is terribly wasteful, whether in the policy of government, or of society. But all the same, I believe that we have cause to be proud of the fact, that for a long series of centuries, beset with vicissitudes of stupendous proportions, crowded with things that are incongruous and facts that are irrelevant, India still keeps alive the inner principle of her own civilisation against the cyclonic fury of contradictions and the gravitational pull of the dust.

This has been the great function of the Brahmins of this land, to keep the lamp lighted when the storm has been raging on all sides. It has been their endeavour gradually to permeate the tremendous mass of obstructive material with some

quicken ideal of their own that would transmute it into the life-stuff of a composite civilisation; to discover some ultimate meaning in the inarticulate primitive forms struggling for expression, and to give it a voice. In a word, it was the mission of the Brahmin to comprehend by the light of his own mature understanding the undeveloped minds of the people.

It would be wrong for us, when we judge the historical career of India, to put all the stress upon the accumulated heap of refuse, gross and grotesque, that has not yet been assimilated in one consistent cultural body. Our great hope lies there, where we realise that something positively precious in our achievements still persists, in spite of circumstances that are inclement. The best of us still have our aspiration for the supreme end of life, which is so often mocked at by the prosperous people who hold their sway over the present-day world. We still believe that the world has a deeper meaning than what is apparent, and that therein the human soul finds its ultimate harmony and peace. We still know that only in this spiritual wealth and welfare does civilisation attain its end, not in a prolific production of materials, not in the competition of intemperate power with power.

It has certainly been unfortunate for us that we have neglected the cult of Anna Brahma,— the infinite as manifested in the material world of utility,— and we are dearly paying for it. We have set our mind upon realising the eternal in the intensity of spiritual consciousness so long, that we have overlooked the importance of realising the infinite in the world of extension by ever pursuing a path which is endless. And in this great field of adventure the West has attained its success, for which humanity has to be immensely grateful to it.

But the true happiness and peace are awaiting the children of the West in that tapasya, which is for realising Brahma in spirit, for acquiring the luminous inner vision before which the sphere of immortality reveals itself. If ever that time comes,— if the western world does not meet its catastrophic end under the trampling tread of contending commerce and politics, of monstrous greed and hatred,— then the world will owe its gratitude to the Brahmins for the faith in the infinitude of the human spirit, which they have upheld in the face of facts that spurned it, exultingly counting the skulls of their victims.

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I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons— Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma, Brahma is truth, Brahma is wisdom, Brahma is infinite; Santam, Sivam, Advaitam, peace is in Brahma, goodness is in Brahma, and the unity of all beings.

ब्रह्मनिष्टोगृहस्थः स्यात्तत्त्वज्ञानपरायणः ।

यद्यत्कर्मप्रकुर्वीततद्ब्रह्मणिसमर्पयेत् ॥

The householder shall have his life established in Brahma, shall pursue the deeper truth of all things and in all activities of life dedicate his works to the Eternal Being. Thus we have come to know that what India truly seeks is not a peace which is in negation, or in some mechanical adjustment, but that which is in Sivam, in goodness; which is in Advaitam, in the truth of perfect union; that India does not enjoin her children to cease from karma, but to perform their karma in the presence of the Eternal, with the pure knowledge of the spiritual meaning of existence; that this is the true prayer of Mother India:

यएकोऽवर्णो बहुधाशक्तियोगाद्

वर्णाननेकान्निहितार्थोदधाति ।

विचैतिचान्तेविश्वमादौसदैवः

सनोबुद्धयाशुभयासंयुनक्तु ॥

He who is one, who is above all colour distinctions, who dispenses the inherent needs of men of all colours, who comprehends all things from their beginning to the end, let Him unite us to one another with the wisdom which is the wisdom of goodness.

## Interview/ Ashok Mitra

The interview began with Dr. Ashok Mitra talking about the native place of the interviewer, which he was able to ascertain by his family name. It was continued in a similar vein.

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**Q.** The mainstream press had begun questioning the relevance of the Left, post its debacle in the general elections 2014. What is the relevance of the Left today?

Whether the Left will remain relevant in Indian politics or not depends primarily on the decisions the Left takes from here on. Even the rise of BJP in the centre, and an autocratic party of anti-socials in West Bengal being swept to power with a singular majority post elections, is due to the Left's own actions and misdeeds. It must also be said that the new policies on economic liberalism have problematized the course of collective resistance. Earlier whenever there were attempts to cut jobs in the name of modernization and technological improvement, almost all the workers' unions would rise in protest and the state apparatus would at least remain impartial. Nowadays, that isn't to be. It is not easy to protest even as corporations go about cutting jobs. Protests are leading to a violent clamp down. Therefore, collective movements have suffered.

But at the same time it must be said that the Left had remained immune to such things at one point of time. I was in the Rajya Sabha for a while. The Congress had just come to power back then. They would talk a lot about delivering on their promises from public distribution to other things. But the funny thing is whenever there was any bill which had to be passed on the opening up of the banking or insurance sector, or catering to foreign finance capital they would not even look at the Left as an option. They would readily use the BJP to get these bills passed. Even after witnessing all this, the Left had maintained their almost unflinching support for the Congress. In the 2004 general elections, their strength in the Lok Sabha was above 60 and it was impossible for the Congress to run the government without support from the Left. Except for the opposition to the Nuclear deal in 2008 and the subsequent withdrawal, the Left had blindly supported the Congress. And this, when there was ample scope in 2004 to point out the conditions on which they would support the Congress.

A section of the left also began to come to terms with what they saw as the changed reality of the world. Given that the scope for revolution seemed uncertain in the near future, they entered into tacit understanding with industrialists so as to provide some economic relief in their respective constituencies. This attempt actually led to the alienation of those who have stood by the left for the past four or five decades.

**Q.** The CPIM alone has managed 22.7 per cent of votes only in Bengal while the Left front together has got a mere 29 per cent of the votes. The BJP's votes has risen almost 10 per cent from the 6.14 per cent it received in the previous Lok Sabha elections. RSP moved out of the LDF to join the UDF in Kerala and rather than the BJP's eating into the Trinamool Congress' share it has actually made more of a dent into the vote share of the Left in Bengal. What is going wrong for the Left?

**Why** did RSP move out? Without sitting down for talks, a party decides to claim a particular seat for one of their politburo members, as if without it all hell would break loose. RSP obviously was not ready to accept this and moved into the Congress' fold. This resulted in us losing at least 4 to 5 seats. Yet popular support for the Left has not declined in Kerala like it has happened in West Bengal. The state leadership of West Bengal is not only suffering from an ideological crisis but a Zamindari mentality, which is reducing their support base, a little, every day.

**Q.** It is not the first time that the parliamentary Left has suffered a debacle. Previously it has always bounced back. You have identified corruption, high-handedness, to which many would add a certain degree of parliamentary cretinism. Should the party start with re-jigging its ranks or begin by being more responsive to criticism? What should be the roadmap going ahead?

**T**here are signs of irrational decision making and a lack of common sense. The novel policies that the Left had adopted after coming to power in 1977, nobody talks about them today. To give a few examples, the Left Front was the first to implement an unemployment wage benefit. It was also the first in the country to provide free education till the 12<sup>th</sup> standard. It had started the first three tier Panchayati Raj system. It was able to ensure that through elections, this system would disburse power, giving it back to the hands of the impoverished and the poor. And most importantly widespread land redistribution, which had in a sense, begun from the

days of Tebhaga. The laws it had adopted to implement this, revolutionized the agricultural sector, winning it widespread loyal support in the rural areas.

All of this was then forgotten. We worked so well for the first 10 years. With the Congress decimated, the Janata Dal fragmented, there wasn't a single party which could compare with all that had been achieved then. Within the party too, changes were taking place. Some leaders passed away, some moved on and newer faces were put in place. Amongst them complacency soon began to creep in that West Bengal is our bastion and no one would be able to dislodge us from here. They chose to forget that we work within India's constitutional framework. The central government can sack a state government even without proper reasons. They chose to forget that we are in the midst of a multi-party democracy. They had begun to think that in West Bengal one party rule would remain. That this was a misconception is probably something they realize now.

**Q.** In recent years many intellectuals sympathetic to the left or identifying themselves within the left fold, such as Javeed Alam, Prabir Purakayastha and Prabhat Patnaik, have critiqued the practice of Democratic Centralism. Even today that what was meant to be a process of building consensus and aiding the decision-making within the party, after assimilating views from the branch level, is often reduced to majoritarianism thereby stifling dissent and giving rise to factions. Do you think that instead of Democratic Centralism being the problem, perhaps it is the practice which reduces it to a form of centralism?

**L**enin had initiated democratic centralism at an important juncture in the history of the movement in Russia. The communist party was banned in Russia. Most of the leaders were in hiding or away from Russia in Europe. On the other hand the party was preparing itself for a revolution and they were carving their organization on these lines. Secrecy in this scenario became imperative and the need to have a discipline, indispensable. Therefore, it was necessary then. If we were to announce that this coming Thursday we would launch our revolution, enemies would obviously be better prepared. Secrecy and discipline is necessary in such contexts.

But then in the last 20 years, I have not heard 'Inquilab Zindabad' in a single convention or rally, at least not in this state. It is as if, revolution couldn't come, so forget it. When we have already forgotten about revolution, we are making it clear that we are partaking of parliamentary democracy and would like to come to power through electoral success in it. Now if we are to compete with the other parties in such a situation, it is important for us to know what the other parties are saying, what their supporters are saying, what our supporters are saying. But in West Bengal what is going on in the name of democratic centralism is a mere reconstruction of the age old Bengali Zamindari system. What Lenin had reiterated was that everybody in the party should be allowed to speak, decisions would be arrived at only after

everyone had expressed their opinion and a consensus reached. But after the decision is taken everybody has to accept it and this very decision would also pass on to the higher level, where the same process would be followed. This way it would finally reach the leadership at the highest level where the decision would be passed, and then everybody would have to abide by it. But this isn't what is happening in West Bengal.

The scope for dialogue at every level had begun to gradually reduce. I can cite many examples of the same, because I have been there and witnessed the same. A convention would be called, some leader would make a long lecture on what is to be done, and the moment questions were raised, pat would come the reply, "there is no time for it today, send in your letters". What has happened due to this is that people in the lower levels have lost their inspiration and their urge. They think that their leaders would work according to their whims whose decision has only got to be accepted. These leaders have their loyalists calling the shots at every level.

**Q.** Even with a pre-Independence history of communal violence, for the past few decades Bengal has been free from communal violence. In the Lok Sabha elections 2014 BJP has received a vote share of 16.8% and bagged two seats from the state. RSS has also widened its base through an increased number of sakhas and sammelans all over the state. Does this worry you?

**Yes,** but intricately connected with the rise of the BJP in the state is the dwindling fortunes of the Left. The person who was the Chief Minister of the state for 10 years suddenly announced at a public rally that if the need be they were prepared to support the Congress. But the problem is the economic despondency that common people have suffered from in the last 15 years, due to economic liberalization, such as inflation, subsequent shutting down of industries, is chiefly due to the Congress.

We used to support the Left because they opposed the Congress' economic policies. Now they are talking about supporting the Congress so as to pave the way for further assaults on us. We would rather vote for this eccentric woman or the Bharatiya Janata Party. There are many like this; many who vote for the Left front but have voted for the BJP this time around. In the elections of 2006 the Left Front had won almost 50% votes, the 43% in the Lok Sabha elections of 2009, in 2011 this was further reduced to 41% and in 2014 this has been further reduced to a mere 29%. There has been a loss of 12% votes.

**Q.** The previous BJP led NDA government had tried to further their ideological intentions of hindutva through its own version of history being taught in schools, and people supporting the same being approved as heads of state run

institutions. There are already reports from Gujarat that Dinanath Batra, associated with the network of schools run by RSS, has had his books prescribed as compulsory reading in schools there. Is this ominous?

**I**t certainly is. A judge recently said that had it been in his hands he would have made reading the Gita compulsory at schools in the primary level. People are angry. More than being angry on the Bharatiya Janata Party they are angry on the Left, because it is the Left they had placed their trust on, who got them on the streets.

**Q.** You have previously written on the flaw of misconstruing the secular narrative as embracing all religions, whereby somebody committed to the secular ethos like Nehru would not prevent religious rituals being linked with government's activities. In Bengal today, there is again a politics of pandering to religious sensibilities and the Sangh Parivar has always banked on this. Can this effect the government of the day?

**W**ell, this had begun in the Congress era. A ship was to set sail from the Kidderpore docks and a minister comes down to break coconut shells and mark it as a ceremony. Hindu customs soon began to dominate these occasions. Our constitution is clear on the terms of secularism. It simply means that the state is averse to all religions and would maintain equidistance from them. What Jawaharlal Nehru wanted was to embrace all religions. What happened as a result was that with majority of the people being Hindu, in most cases he ended up adopting Hindu ways and customs. There were visits to Mandir, Masjids, Girijaghars and Gurudwaras but at the end of the day Hindu ways and customs remained dominant.

Let me cite the example of Jawaharlal's grandson, who came to power as an heir of the dynasty after the death of his mother. He was educated for a year at the Doon School and then went onto Cambridge, had no relation whatsoever with Hindu religion, his father being a Parsi. After becoming Prime Minister he would visit Mandirs with a bare torso to receive the blessings of the priests. Those pictures later came out in the press. Therefore, the Congress has provided sufficient fodder to the BJP's politics.

In West Bengal there is no state, anti-socials are ruling the roost. Even judges of the High Court are feeling helpless.

**Q.** There have been a growing number of violent incidents being reported against women all over the country. Even in a state like Bengal whether it is with S alishi Sabhas ordering gang rape, women being raped while returning from work, insensitive comments by people in the state government, victim blaming, the situation seems to be spiraling out of control. We know the complex reasons behind this cannot be explained in a few words but how can the perpetuation of misogynistic patriarchal oppression be tackled?

**I**n most other states there is at least a law and order framework. In our state it is the criminal elements which are taking a call on what is legal and illegal. That is the reason why crimes against women have only increased. They feel that they can get away with anything. And they have as well, been spared that is.

**Q.** Even though the BJP and the Congress got 50 percent of the total vote share nationally, majoritarian democracy didn't provide much space for strengthening Indian federalism. Parties like the BSP received third largest vote share yet could not send a single representative to the Lok Sabha. The BJP has been able to win majority in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha with a vote share of mere 31%. Do you think it's time that a robust democracy like ours looks at proportional representation?

**W**e follow the Westminster system that is first past the post policy. The one who reaches the mark first is declared the winner even if one was to win by a margin 0.001% . It has happened here as well. In the previous elections the Trinamool Congress had won about 90% seats.

Proportional representation does remain a constant demand. It is clearly a better alternative than the present solution.

**Q.** India's foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel seems to be changing in recent years. Even though the previous government had also looked upon Israel as a potential supplier of military equipment, the government of the day has perhaps gone a bit further rejecting calls for a resolution and even a parliamentary discussion. They have, however, gone ahead and supported the UN Human Rights Council's resolution to probe Israel's military campaign in Gaza, and have also consistently maintained that they still favour a two-nation solution to the crisis. All this, while a recent Wall Street Journal article writes about the India-Israel Axis and how the new government's world views are

more in line with the Israeli state. Is this the result of a government furthering its ideological interests and catering to its own voter base? What do you think would be the repercussions of this globally?

**T**his duality was practiced by the Congress as well. One of Israel's biggest backers is the United States and it would not want India to oppose actions of the Israeli state. It is not in our nature to displease the United States. Neither did the Congress oppose it wholeheartedly nor will the BJP. Rather the foreign policy that BJP has adopted is more or less a continuation of its predecessors'.

**Q.** Universal health care is a burning issue yet accessibility to proper health seems to be the last thing on our lawmakers' minds. Shelling out for major health care emergencies can often push families well below the poverty line. Shouldn't we think of keeping aside a substantial amount of our Gross Domestic Product towards affordable health care for all?

**Y**es, and nobody talks about it. Not even those who believe themselves to be a part of the Left. The fact that such an exorbitant amount, almost 40% in our budget is allocated towards defense and internal security, is unjustifiable. How much of this is looted no one has any idea. But if someone was to so much as raise a question, he or she would be branded a traitor. Even the Left, wary after their stand in 1962 didn't receive popular support, steers clear of such issues. What if this very amount was to be spent for education, health and providing basic food for all? The country would have changed for the better. Now, the thing is that, there is no basic class difference between the Congress and the BJP. One might chant Rama's name a bit more than the other. Another might go to the extent of propping Rama and Rahim together. That is merely all that there is to separate them.

**Q.** There has been a marginal increase in the budgetary allocation towards education, drinking water and sanitation while Rs 200 crore has been allocated for the construction of Sardar Patel's statue. Does this defy all logic?

**E**ven in West Bengal 300 crores are being spent in building something akin to the London Eye. As if, a statue would bring liberation to our souls. From 120 feet one wouldn't get to see the garbage strewn narrow lanes where hunger resides, the water logged streets which breed diseases... These people simply do not have the intention

to fulfill the basic needs of the people, nor do they have the potential. You cannot hoodwink the masses with such gimmickry for long. For now, such tricksters unfortunately, seem to be having a field day.

**Q.** Increasing inequality has affected people the world over. This has given rise to the Occupy movements, the Chilean student movements, even though they are scattered across geo-political lines. Do you see a narrative of revolutionary politics emerging from these?

**No**, at least not in the Indian context. The revolutionary stage cannot come by itself but has to be brought about by sustained organized mass movement. At present there isn't any organization in India that can organize something on such a massive scale.

**Q.** Finally, with all that is happening around the world neo-liberals would like to side with Fukuyama's thesis. But there is still a lot of promise. Do you think Marxism is more relevant today that it has ever been?

**As** long as there is oppression in this world, Marxism is the only alternative. Marx has spoken the last word on breaking free from this oppressive structure – through class struggle that is. This class struggle can take various forms the world over. We have the example of Latin America where there is a clear trend towards a new paradigm even though we do not speak much about it. A land which was in the grasp of the US until a few decades back is politically independent today with a mind of its own. Today, except for Colombia the entire South America is against US policies. In most of these countries there were various political and social movements. The Communist Party did not lead in any of them. Even in Cuba, the Communist Party had opposed Fidel Castro branding him as insane. Only when he had successfully led the revolution did they accept his leadership. Venezuela, Bolivia and even Brazil provide brilliant examples of such social revolutions. In all these countries some other party led the movement while the Communist Party tried to latch on to them much later. At the time when oppression becomes unbearable if the Communist Party remains unmoved, resistance would take shape from parched soil.

[So, you repose your faith in Marxism]

I don't have that many days ahead of me. The few days that I have left, I will live them embracing Marxism.

This interview was carried out on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2014. Interviewed on behalf of JSHC by Rohit Dutta Roy.

### **Interviewee bio:**

**F**rom a stint as the Chairman of the Agricultural Prices Commission, the Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, to various tenured faculty positions including one at the Delhi School of Economics, Dr. Ashok Mitra had already reached the pinnacle of an academic career when he joined the elected Marxist government in West Bengal with the dreams of providing interim relief to the working classes. It was under his stewardship as the finance minister of the Left Front Government in West Bengal, post the victory of 1977, that Operation Barga - the land redistribution programme aimed at the landless tillers, began. His pre-eminence as a political ideologue and economic thinker ensures his standing as a luminary amongst people of all persuasion, besides those of the Left. Though unable to move about as freely due to age related problems, he still maintains his engagement with Leftist politics.

## Interview/ Tariq Ali

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**Q.** The decline of the Left seems to be a global phenomenon now even though we have examples from Latin America and the renewed interest in Marxism post the global recession. What is to be blamed for this? Is it the fact of fragmentation and a lack of dialogue across the working classes, the hijacking of the leadership by the middling class in the vanguards or the onslaught of neo-liberal economies the world over?

**W**hat we have to understand is that the victory of capitalism, its huge triumph in the 1990s, later the total collapse of the Soviet Union and China's turn to Capitalism, in many ways accelerated and propelled the decline of the Left. Their hold and grip over the masses and mass support declined because increasingly the neo-liberal capitalist mantra that "there no alternative, this is the only way" seemed strong to people, including those who had supported Left parties by and large. It seemed strong because they saw nothing changing, even where the left was in power, such as in India. In other parts of the world, with the exception of Cuba, there was a strong decline.

Interestingly enough, the latest New Left Review has an article on Cuba which shows that its standard of living and its rates in terms of the social index are either the same or higher than most of the former Eastern European countries, which embraced capitalism. There are very interesting counter narratives to the dominant narrative that takes place. But it was essentially this big defeat and the triumph of Capital that laid the material basis for the shift to the right, globally.

However, when I say globally I would exclude parts of Latin America from that map. The Bolivarian republics went in exactly the other direction and are still functioning. Even with all sorts of problems they are still there. But in Asia and Africa, not to mention Europe and America, this was the case.

To add to that, the decline in the industrial proletariat in North America and Western Europe was quite dramatic. From coal and steel, to a certain extent the car industry, went into decline because they had found a new workshop for capitalism in the People's Republic of China. The production of commodities at low prices by the Chinese Republic impelled its own capitalist development but also played a part in the decline of the industrial working class in the West.

The combination of all these factors political, ideological, economic has brought us to where we are now. So, ironically when the capitalist system has its first huge crisis since the 1930s, which is the Wall Street crash of 2007, no alternative emerges. Neither from within the system nor from the Left, because as the French president said, 'the poor are toothless and we not scared of them'. Apart from South America no alternatives to mount a challenge were offered.

But this doesn't solve any problem because a big vacuum exists. In this vacuum jump in the religious parties, whether in India, the Arab World or elsewhere.

**Q.** While you have been vocal against Russia's policy vis-à-vis Ukraine and the situation seems to be spiralling out of control, can the history of the removal of a democratically elected government in Ukraine before the escalation be brushed aside? Isn't this fallout part of the despair coming with failing dreams of Pax Americana and decreasing NATO support as much as a misreading of the situation by Russians?

**I** have been critical of Putin but much more vocal against US/EU machinations in the region. Gorbachev was extremely naïve to accept US assurances that NATO would not move eastwards instead of insisting as part of an agreement that a unified Germany should not be a part of NATO.

Of course, there was the removal this time and the West engineered that because they didn't like the government. But then it's what it does everywhere. Basically, when we talk about the West we mean the United States and one shouldn't at all assume that it plays with a pack of cards which is same for all. The pack of cards is

doctored. There are double standards and imperial interests predominate. Whenever they require something they do it finding one ideology or the other as a cover. The provocation in Ukraine, in my opinion, first came from the West. They had been determined for years now to somehow try and incorporate Ukraine into NATO. They were not succeeding in this. They felt that the regime was weak. So they toppled an elected government. And the results of this are before us.

Russia annexed Crimea. Eastern Ukraine is now in a state of total of instability. Instead of telling their supporters in the Ukraine to agree to a deal and accept a federal division of Ukraine within the same borders, they encouraged Poroshenko to become more and more assertive. He obviously does what he is asked. But he is under pressure from the Germans to agree to a ceasefire. But NATO has now decided to have a mobile force using which they can strike anywhere they want. This is a clever ploy. Instead of putting troops on the Russian border this agreement within NATO allows it to fly in troops to any country, provided it is a member country and seeks help. Whether they would go so far, as to incorporate their side of the Ukraine into NATO, remains to be seen. It would be a huge provocation.

Putin on the other hand is protecting Russian national interests. He is doing what he is doing. To attack him while ignoring what the West has done is unacceptable and illogical.

**Q.** The winner of the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize, Barrack Obama, has spelt out his stand to continue with military actions in Iraq. The US continues its aggression in Somalia, Libya, Yemen and through drones in Pakistan. Have our understanding of peace gone for a toss or are we just not on the same page as the Nobel committee?

**F**orget the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. It is one of the most discredited committees and shouldn't be taken seriously. Its record is clear. They gave a prize to Baker. They gave a prize to Sadat. They gave one to Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho refused to accept his. Giving it to Obama was really descending into the sewer. Even

Obama was a bit surprised because he had just decided to escalate American troop levels in Afghanistan. But they are shameless people and totally illogical. There is a lot of talk in Norway about changing the composition of the committee, making it more democratic. I don't know whether that will happen or not.

Let's forget about the Nobel and talk about Obama. Obama was the most clever apparition of the empire that they could find and he has played that role. A lot of people were taken by him. There was a lot of support and enthusiasm by liberals in the United States and people all over the world. I had argued at the time that he was the most inventive apparition of the empire. He would do so as any other President, effectively defend his interests.

Probably more intelligently than his predecessor. But his predecessors had the disease of speaking the truth. They didn't hide what they were doing. Bush Cheney was pretty clear that they did what they did because they were the dominant world power. Obama tries to cover that up. Going back to the policies of trying to keep the Europeans on the side, effectively sweet phrasing. But the policies have not changed since Reagan. There has only been continuity in American imperial politics. They are now with no big rivals in the world and feel they can do anything. Which is why they are so shocked that suddenly Putin has decided to respond, and he has been demonized.

I do not have much time for Putin but for him to be demonized by these guys who have done appalling things to the world. Only recently in Iraq, in Libya, people they armed and funded in Syria. The lesson that the Left has to understand is that the American military power is very dominant. American currency is very dominant and remains the prime currency. Therefore they can bully countries like Argentina. And this power can only be effectively challenged by groups who have an alternative social and economic programme.

Let us come back to Obama. He came with promises of ending the war but backed the Hawkish sign that we need a surge of troops, we need to send more troops, so he sent more troops to Afghanistan and that turned out to be a complete disaster. So it was a bit all too quick for him, and they are now negotiating a withdrawal from Afghanistan, but insisting that whoever is in power they want US bases in eternity, as a last resort. This is the latest development and I don't think it is going to work

either. Once you get a government which represents the bulk of the population you will have a big demand to get rid of these bases. So either they carry on having these puppet governments, tilt the unrepresentative electorate.

I don't know how long they can continue with that so it'll not be a happy ending in either Afghanistan or anywhere. If we look at the sort of new campaign in Iraq and parts of Syria due to the emergence of ISIS, we need to ask what is the Islamic State organization. This did not exist in Iraq or Syria prior to the Iraq war. All these extremist Jihadis entered Iraq with the American army. Not on their side but at the same time as them.

They have now taken advantage of the vacuum region and the appalling policies of the pro-American Iraqi government and the situation is a mess. It is such a situation that American intervention is not going to have any positive impact. ISIS has also alienated a large number of the people, globally and in the region. So it's the worst of both worlds.

**Q.** You have also put this supposed diplomatic aggression in contrast with the response to the situation in Chechnya. Do you look at it as a way of covering up for the skeletons in one's own closet, which in the US' case is a pretty big closet anyway?

**B**asically they are angry with the Russians, you know Putin is effectively a conservative figure. He is not a liberal leave, alone anything of a radical. He describes himself as a conservative. This conservatism leads him to defend the national interests of Russia as he sees it. It often takes on the form of nationalism. He has done that. In the course of that he he has promoted what he sees as the interests of Russia above those of the United States. That is the change with Yeltsin, whose was a pro American government. They could not do anything without asking the permission of the United States or its ambassadors. Putin has broken with that tradition.

This is essentially why they are angry with him because he will not accept their policies in the Middle-east; he sees the things from the point of view of Russia. So he has to be punished. Since they can't find any other way of convincing him, they used their financial power to impose sanctions, knowing perfectly well that the dollar is the global financial currency and they have some control over it. It is a brutal display of American power. And all this for what?

It is true what happened at Crimea was an annexation. But from what the indications are, that is what the people wanted, as they do in parts of Eastern Ukraine itself.

Either there is a compromise or there is not. The Americans are often open to compromise but they refused.

Effectively what they are doing is splitting the Ukraine. I can't see any other way out of it. Because if they do make the final decision and have this rump off the Ukraine, minus the provinces which are clearly in a state of rebellion and put them into NATO, the EU and all those structures, this might be the beginning of a new cold war.

**Q.** Let's turn our focus on Pakistan now. Just as we were thinking that a peaceful transition between two democratically elected governments has taken place in Pakistan, we see the Sharif government being challenged from the pulpits and streets. How do you look at the situation? Is Sharif's capitulation before US demands following the trend of his predecessors, a major reason?

**No,** I think that what is going on in Pakistan at the moment is largely internal. I don't think the Americans are really interested in removing the Sharif government. Why should they, it has not posed any problem to them? The internal situation in Pakistan is horrific. We have had for a long time violent attacks by jihadi groups in virtually every major city in Pakistan, whether they were targeting security people, Shia or other rivals. This has been discussed endlessly but infact this inevitability was

brought about by the inability of the government to contain such violence coupled with the fact that it's a really useless government in terms of delivering anything. All the election policies have been disregarded; no attempt has been made to mend to even implement them. The socio-economic crisis, the conditions of everyday lives, the power cuts, I mean, as I speak to you the telephone exchange and broadband facilities of a city as large as Lahore are completely disrupted because of a fire which took place several weeks ago. So this complete breakdown of the state on virtually every level, provoked the movement which was launched by Tahirul Qadri and Imran Khan and the aim of it was to topple the Sharif brothers. The movement I believe was thwarted because their aim of bringing the government down by a number of concerted attempts failed. Yesterday Tahirul Qadri, one of the leading figures of the movement packed his bags, immobilized his supporters and went back to Canada. So the movement is virtually coming to an end and they failed. It was a foolish thing because it was completely ineffective. It did attract some support at first but then people began to see through it. There are of course lots of people in Pakistan who believe that this was a preemptive strike by the ISI or Intelligence Office to warn the Sharif brothers that if they carried on tangling with the army, this is what will happen. The army in Pakistan is very angry with Sharif having promised them that he would not be pursuing the Musharraf case and let him leave the country then broke that promise and this enraged the army. Even people who have absolutely no desire to enter into politics within the Pakistan army, were angered by this. And so the story goes that they decided to teach him a lesson and unleashed these forces, cause the fact is that without received tacit support from the intelligence agency you can't have a cleric coming from outside coming, setting all this up and basically paralyzing parts of the capital city. So this phase has now come to an end but the more important thing about Pakistan is that the government is incapable of doing anything. It thinks in terms of grandiose plans, will build a train service from Islamabad, Lahore to Kashmir, all this rubbish which doesn't help people at all. The citizens are in despair, raging and this crosses political lines. Everyone is just fed up.

**Q.** Critiques of the Israeli state's policies vis-à-vis Palestine are often branded as anti-Semites. In hindsight didn't we bring this on ourselves when we supported the cause for a state based on the religio-identitarian principle? Was it logical that the creation of a quasi-religious state through UN intervention came to be justified on the supposed idea of Yahweh's biblical promise of a homeland to Moses in the place of modern day Israel?

This was a decision taken by the British Empire, rubberstamped by the United Nations. The UN proposal in 1948 was for two roughly equal states which the Arab government refused to accept that. Which makes me think in retrospect, it was a great thing, because had they accepted that offer in 1948 instead of waging war who knows what would have happened. That's one point. The other point is the debate amongst many Jewish settlers in Palestine from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, that we shouldn't create a special state but live in harmony as equals; they are not threatening us. But the Zionist wing of the movement gained predominance and without the British Empire that state would not have been created. But it's there now and what we are discussing is basically history. There is no way that state is going to disappear or go away; the question is what the Palestinians are going to do. In my opinion, the PLO leadership in accepting the Oslo Accords finds itself effectively in a position like the Vichy government in France during the Second World War, carrying out the orders from Jerusalem, using the ideas of their protectors. Wasting money and making the upper echelons of the useless, not doing much for the ordinary people.

Hence, the emergence of the Hamas in Gaza and the defeat of the PLO, which the European Union and the Americans refused to accept. They were desperate to have a war between the PLO and the Hamas which the Israelis finally succeeded in creating. The situation today is that there is no Palestinian state on offer which is why the Americans are happy with Netanyahu. He has no intention of backing off, settlements would carry on building, they are now encroaching on East Jerusalem. There are thousands of homes of settlers there and Zionists have effectively destroyed any hope of a meaningful independent Palestinian state. In this situation the Palestinians are still on their knees before the west, with the PLO leaders saying

we are prepared to have the NATO army here semi-permanently, to reassure the Israelis we have no bad intentions. When you have leaders like that the people get demoralized. However, at the same time the Israeli attempt to destroy any opposition to what they are upto, which led to the invasion of Gaza, and what we saw in the last year, has alienated public opinion in many parts of the world. There is no doubt about it. But unless it is opposed on the grounds, it doesn't mean much.

Edward Said and I, when we discussed it in the last year of his life, on where we go from here, we had agreed on what Omar Barghouti calls for now is a single state solution. Effectively, and a simultaneous campaign for equal rights sanctions as were put on South Africa, because what we have in Israel is an apartheid state. This is said by large numbers of people now who go and visit that state. The Israeli government from the second Intifada onwards pushed this policy via its embassies and supporters that anyone, who attacks us or criticizes us, should be labeled an anti-Semite. Similarly for the Jews who label these criticism as 'hating Jews'. Its their right to implement but is becoming increasingly ineffective because there are many young kids who are interested in history. It doesn't bother them at all. They say we don't care how you abuse us or what you call is. You can call us what you like but we are going to carry on. Therefore this kind of anti-Semitic charge doesn't have much purchase on young people who are fighting for their Palestinians or are with their cause.

**Q.** Isn't Zionism the same as Nazism or say Hindu communalism? Questioning Zionism is certainly not questioning Judaism since not all Jews would have a problem with harmonious living with other communities, irrespective of their identities.

**T**he Zionist project was very clear to create an ethnically Jewish state, at the place of a biblical homeland of the Jews. Leading Israeli scholars such as Shlomo Sand have poured scorn on this idea of biblical stories and biblical geography being taken

seriously. So the biblical past is a past but the Zionist's insisted otherwise. For a period it coincided with the aims and intentions of the British Empire, who though it would be quite good to have a 'secular' state in the Arab World... To be a local relay for the British. But the British Empire collapsed and the Americans after 67 in particular, took over this role. If the United States really wanted, to bring the Israelis to heel so to speak, all that they had to do is to stop subsidies and say that we would impose sanctions on you. That would have been the end of it and they would have withdrawn. They did not want to do that because their economy was good. Of course there is now a very large hardcore Zionist extremists, who think every governments is weak. They would like the Palestinians in Israel to be expelled and they would like to use force to wipeout this problem. And they are getting stronger, so it is something one has to watch closely.

But the big tragedy in my opinion is, that the Palestinian movement has no serious leadership. Hamas defends Gaza creditably. The PLO collapsed after Oslo and has not recovered anything.

**Q.** As a Pakistani born in 1943, moving to Oxford in the 1960s followed by what you have yourself termed as your street fighting years, were you ever made to feel like a fish out of water? Were you ever asked what a Pakistani was doing in the streets of London, protesting against the Vietnam War, when he should be planning a glorious career plotting military coups or joining hands with jingoistic fundamentalists back home? Why I ask you this is simply because integrated with this is also the question of those who are Palestinian and Jewish as well; Palestinian Jews who may have been residing in Palestine since before the birth of the modern Jewish State or have relocated there since. Which identity are they supposed to embrace?

**T**his is something which has become very dominant now since the collapse of any global alternative. This birth of identity politics can be identified with the collapse of socialism, communism, Marxism after the big triumph of Capitalism at the end of the 90s. Within this vacuum people now tend to fight for isolated causes. It is not merely identifying with religion or the increase in religiosity, which as we know is very

common all over the world. Today people would say I am a Muslim, I am a Hindu, I am Black, I am a woman. All this is true but in the past one could live with multiple identities. I remember in the 60s, 70s and the 80s people would ask me about my identity and I would say – I am an internationalist. I could live anywhere in the world. Of course I have some love for the parts of the world where I grew up, where I have friends, all that goes. But that doesn't influence me in the sense of determining what I think. Today's identity politics has become so narrow.

And we saw this being played out during the Obama election campaign. Because Obama is of mixed race, he is a non-white; large numbers of the African American community just ignored his politics and went for the bullshit. Even after he had been in constant power criticism towards his policies was virtually absent. Granted there has been a political movement to have a non-white at the white house so to speak but once he ceased to operate like any other politician produced by the Chicago democratic apparatus, what's the point of protesting anymore? Criticism was very slow in coming. Now it is there. But it had disarmed the liberals and the African American community in large numbers who had backed this.

We are probably going to see another version of this with Hillary Clinton. People will say 'oh she is a feminist'. A lot of old feminists would rush to support her. It is a sign of political suicide. You don't put politics in command when it's gender or race or religion. And that I think suggests that it's time to develop a new radical politics for this century.

**Q.** The lethal violence in Gaza this time around has left in its wake destruction of such magnitude that it would take decades to merely get it back to where it was, besides the lives lost, people left without a livelihood and an economy in tatters. Do you think the aggression and the disproportionate use of firepower by the Israeli forces was more because of the apprehension about the coming closer of Hamas and Fatah, and possibly the emergence of a consensus on the Palestinian position against Israeli war crimes and negotiations?

**T**o a certain extent, yes. But what is Fatah's strategic plan? They are still unsure about it? It is still premised on the two state solution. People tell me that a single state solution is utopian. Yes, it is to an extent. But the two state solution, is even more utopian today. Because all you would probably get is Gaza and a few dot sized areas. You would never get a proper state with conspicuous borders, or anything even approaching it.

**Q.** You have been vocal about your support for Scottish Independence. You have maintained your angst against the Westminster parties but you have also reiterated that you do not pin your hopes on the SNP but on the common people. Not a rosy picture, is it?

**I** thought the key thing was that the Scottish revolt was effectively a revolt from below in which the working class played a key role. The majority of the supporters of independence were from the Scottish working class. It was a revolt against the form of capitalistic economics affected by Westminster. And it was also born out of a feeling that they would be better off on their own. I agreed with that and I also felt that Scottish independence would be a severe blow to the potentials of this post-imperial United Kingdom. It would weaken Britain's standing militarily and reduce it to size, what it is, and not what it likes to pretend to be. So those were the reasons why I supported it. In the scale of things it may not seem global, but for those of us who live here it is the most important thing that happened and it isn't over. The labour party in Scotland is in a state of meltdown. This has been going on for some time and it is great that people decided to act. There was very little actual rationalism in the crude sense of the word during the campaign.

However, this new political space had come into existence due to the movement and there would have been everything for the Left to play for. I mean, the big political opposition would have come from the Left and not the right.

**Q.** You have often cited the problem with countries of all hues from the United Kingdom to Pakistan suffering due to their capitulation ending up as satellite states of the US. While certain sections in the Western press were wary of the Indian Prime Minister-elect's past record in being unable to contain communal discord, many celebrated his growth-orientated liberalized outlook. How much of this is born out of hopes that they would further the agenda started by the UPA at the centre of furthering World Bank- IMF dictated economic policies?

**I** think that is actually very pertinent issue. There are so many sections of the Indian bourgeoisie, if we can use that term, voted Modi because they felt that Congress had basically not been successful in pushing through the neo-liberal agenda as it should have been pushed through. They needed a more ruthless leader who also enjoyed popular support in some areas. They looked upon the Gujarat model as a popular model. They didn't think about the massacres that took place but only about the success of the economic model. So they went for him thinking he would be able to deliver. Whether he would be able to deliver or not remains to be seen. But I think that was the principal reason in pushing for Modi.

**Q.** Is the New Development Bank initiative by the BRICS economies a positive development? Do you see it challenging the economic order promoted by the World Bank-IMF clique?

**W**ell, not really. The order has been weakened by the crash in 2008 and I think no one believes that the solution which is state bailout or a bank is a permanent solution. But effectively the BRICS are part and parcel of that process. In Brazil they re-elected Dilma and did not vote for the neo-liberal guy, which is good I suppose.

But the Brazilian economy, based on all the economists' reports, is on the verge of a downturn. Russia has been isolated and imposed sanctions on.

The Indian economy is not in as great shape as it is pointed out to be and there is also the huge growth in inequality. In a country like India, this inequality would lead to the search for other solutions, sooner or later. I don't know what they will be because the Left is not in a position to lead. The creation of a huge middle class as the rock on which Indian capitalism is founded has been the dream for many years now. The gulf remains too deep and huge. We shall see where this leads us.

**Q.** Stuart Hall's work continues to guide many of us who research and work in the domain of cultural studies, in the interstices between traditional disciplines. Do you think his understanding of Thatcherism's popular appeal can somehow help us to understand how fundamentalism has gained steady ground in India since the days of our freedom struggle?

**Yeah,** I think Stuart Hall and his colleagues were much more astute on understanding Thatcherism in its early years than someone like me. I was more critical of them, but in retrospect they were right on the impact of Thatcher, how the division of the working class had created a new situation. And you know there are some similarities not just in India but other parts of the world where you have politicians who follow Thatcher, later Brown now Cameron, showing complete continuity in character. And Italy you have Renzi, in France you have Manuel Valls backed by Hollande. So, you have politicians, who do not believe in anything except staying in power and making capitalism work. It is a group of people whom I describe as the extreme centre. There is no centre left or centre right.

Who wage war on people at home and fight imperial wars abroad and operate through war as a monolith. So, democracy itself is becoming more and more authoritarian. You know you can often feel that one is living under the dictatorship of capital and some of his ideas certainly seem extremely important today.

**Q.** You have interviewed Julian Assange. Post the Wikileaks revelations and the Edward Snowden files our perception of geo-politics has changed drastically. Collecting information previously thought to be private is the new espionage now, with almost all countries falling prey to this. Does it worry you that imperialist nations are increasingly involved in a proxy war where nothing, not civilian lives, not the sanctity of their homes, no notion of the private, is safe?

**Yes**, it worries me obviously. What is not so well understood is that there is nothing new about this. Intelligence agencies' spying on their own people is something which has existed as long as the intelligence agencies have been there. I can give you an extreme example from Czarist Russia. During those years in Russia the Bolshevik Party was penetrated by the Okhrana, the Czarist secret police agents. An agent of the Czarist secret police was a member of Lenin's leading circles but still they couldn't stop it. They knew what these guys were planning but they couldn't stop it. Now what has happened is that the technology is far superior and the company doing surveillance has a set of new laws whereby they can arrest anyone; keep them in prison for sometime so the intimidation has also increased. The technology is frightening. This is all true. What Snowden has done is interesting, he has made all this public and a documentary on him has just being released, two Hollywood movies have been made and all that is fine, good; the question is this what have the revelations actually done? Has there been the growth of a huge movement within the mainstream or on its radical edges saying that this has to change and we cannot carry on like this. No, there has been expressions of anger and irritation by the European leaders who are annoyed that they were being spied on but essentially nothing much has been done. And the intelligence agencies of most of these European countries are working with the Americans, which is something often covered up. That's the world we live in you know, where we have effectively a growing attack now on democracy, democratic institutions, democratic accountability, etc.

So when you have revelations by Chelsea Manning or Snowden, and Julian Assange, and people like that, it's positive but its effects do not go deep as they should. And the

real question to ask is why? Why do we have these two months- three months, one year-two years sensations but in terms of real impact, life goes on as before?

**Q.** Hugo Chavez's passing away was a big loss the Latin American Left as well as Left sympathizers the world over. You had met him on many occasions. Why did Venezuela under Chavez hold such great promise? What do you think should be the Latin American roadmap ahead as Morales and Correa are slowly emerging as the game changers?

**I** think they are doing well. Morales has just won a huge victory again. Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela won against the opposition which backed by the US tried to destabilize the country. But they have not succeeded so far. The state in these countries has been used to benefit the poor and the indigenous people, who have not have much in their lives. For them it has been a real change. And they work on these issues together and don't just work as individual countries.

This is the important thing Chavez did by reinventing Simone Bolivar and saying that Bolivarianism means uniting the continent against these empires. This has had a huge impact and is much underestimated. It is still the only part of the world where there is still some hope. They have resisted the empire and they have resisted neo-liberal strategies. It hasn't quite worked anywhere else, but it has in that part of the world, with good results.

**Q.** For many amongst the Left you were a beacon of strength in the days of the Fourth International, in the days of their struggles in India. Today, at this juncture, when the Left in India has been decimated, how do you think it can still remain relevant? How can the Left bring the people back to the demand for collective resistance?

**W**ell I think globally today new parties and new movements come into force through social movements. This is the case of virtually the whole of South America. Movements against privatization, large campaigns, resistance to IMF- World Bank demands, these are the things that produce these movements. It is from these movements that parties have got to be built. The old style of party building in India, Europe and elsewhere is now defunct, and people are seeing it as defunct. It didn't have any new alternatives to offer. It wanted to carry on in the same old way but it couldn't because the world has changed. And unless you understand those changes, understand how they are meant to be fought, you fall into a rut and you don't know what to do. The CPI(M) in West Bengal is a classic example of this.

**Q.** Followers of Fukuyama's thesis often argue that the emancipatory maxim of Marxism does not hold merit, precisely because a socialist state is yet to fulfill its promise. They would like to believe that liberal democracies are the be all and end all of governance. Do you still dream of a socialist future?

**W**hatever it is called, socialism or something else I don't know, it will come back. As long as you have an oppressive system based on a deformity like Capitalism which is by nature exploitative, people will never stop the search for alternatives. They will form. But these alternatives cannot simply be something like occupying public squares. Politics ultimately becomes the key for people who think we can overcome. Even on a huge scale like Egypt, where people thought we could win by occupying public squares and applying pressure, ultimately brought out the politics and led to the Muslim Brotherhood winning the elections. It was the only relevant political movement in the mass movement, though they began at a later stage. So you cannot do without politics, however you structure your party. And they should be open, internally democratic, disciplined, voluntary, and break with this maxim of *guru shagird* which has dominated the subcontinent in particular, and not just the subcontinent. In other words, as Marx once said the emancipation of countries and peoples must be the task of people themselves. And that is extremely important in

today's world. So one has to not despair but think of how to rebuild movements and the best rebuilding will not necessarily be done in the old ways.

**Q.** Do you think Marxism is still relevant today?

**I** think it is. I think if it is treated as a school of thought and not a religion. Too many people including political parties have treated him almost as if he was a religious figure. Marx of course completely hated that as it was alien to his way of thought. He wanted original work to be done as he himself did. And when people argued with him or spoke in support of him, he would say that if you support me in that case 'I am not a Marxist' and he himself didn't like the 'ist' part of it. I think the school of thought on political economy which Marx inaugurated, and the way in which Lenin understood and analyzed politics, globally, nationally and even in small regions, these are a part of our heritage. We cannot give these up. But they have to be done properly and not simply used like religious people would, from the Vedas, the Quran or the Bible. This is what Marxism became. We have to break from that style. But in terms of who makes history and how history is made through the movement of social forces and social classes, is something one cannot give up on.

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This interview was completed on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2014. Interviewed on behalf of JSHC by Rohit Dutta Roy.

**Interviewee bio:**

**A**uthor, Journalist and Filmmaker, Tariq Ali is a political commentator and one of the foremost figures of the International left since the 60s. He is an editorial member of the *New Left Review* and a regular contributor to *The Guardian*, *CounterPunch* and the *London Review of Books*. His books include *Pirates of the Caribbean: Axis of Hope*, *Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* and *The Obama Syndrome*.

**Book Review / Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta.**

***Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies.***

Edited by Steven Tötösyde Zepetnek & Tutun Mukherjee, Foundation, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2013. Pp.528 ISBN: 978-93-82993-50-6. Rs. 695.

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The title of the volume *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures and Comparative Cultural Studies* brings forward a few conjectures – that it will deal with comparative literature, world literatures and comparative cultural studies within the same framework, that it has a particular stand on the debate on world literatures, emphasizing the plural form as it does, and that cultural studies within the framework would necessarily be comparative - and most of the essays do abide by them. Comparatists, particularly from certain parts of the world still feel that despite the path-breaking formulations of David Damrosch and others working in the area of world literature, the focus on world literature would be detrimental to the larger interests of comparative literature by shifting the focus from many other kinds of relational work in the field and also because there lingers in many cases the concept of two different world-orders and notions of centres and peripheries and their reiteration may reinstate hierarchies. Incidentally, to many practitioners the political project of comparative literature is important - political from a large perspective, as dealing with human rapport in accordance with the definition of the word by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*<sup>1</sup> and this despite the often expressed belief in a few of the essays in this volume that comparative literature with its roots in philology and its philological concerns is necessarily apolitical in nature. This however, is not the case and the call for comparative literature to go back to philology today, on the part of Edward Said for instance, is also made from the vantage point of an understanding of philological concerns as very deeply linked with world-orders.

The volume then brings forward the reassurance that there can be a realignment between the pedagogy and practice of comparative literature to world literatures on the one hand, and comparative cultural studies on the other. In India, as perhaps in

other parts of the world as well, literature departments that were moving towards comparative literature turned to cultural studies in the not so far away past. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek has been arguing for more than a decade now that it would be in the best interests of comparative literature to shift its focus to cultural studies and demonstrated through examples from various fields how a method based on empirical and systemic study would be beneficial not just to the discipline of comparative literature but to the humanities at large, suffering as it does from institutional neglect and financial deprivation. In this text he, along with Louise O Vasvári, argues more strongly in favour of comparative cultural studies, situated at the crossroad of many disciplines, more a “metadisciplinary idea”(11) than a unified field of study and hence with greater potential for removing the shackles of Eurocentrism and ‘nation orientation’ of comparative literature while also resolving the question of world literature studies without compromising the larger interests of comparative literature. Their focus in the area of comparative cultural studies is on new media and digital humanities to a large extent and in this context one has to mention Tötösy de Zepetnek’s laudable endeavour for free access to humanities scholarship through the more than a decade long sustenance of the open access online clc web journal. The articles, particularly in the section on theory, to a large extent, validate the shift to comparative cultural studies and most of them are revised versions of articles from the clc web journal.

The second editor of the volume, Tutun Mukherjee, goes back to the time-honoured principal of comparative literature, that of building relationships with other texts and contexts, where she emphasizes ‘ex-centric subject’ positions and the need for comparative literature to make space for them. She also sees a new future for the discipline as it moves into the global south. That the discipline had moved into the global south is a statement made again and again in the last decade or so and an attempt has also been made to corroborate the statement by taking up statistical data regarding, for instance, the number of books published in different places of the world, having or not having the term ‘comparative literature’ in the title during a particular span of time by Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise O Vasvári – but such statistics need to be studied against the large number of publications generated in the field of literary studies in the last few decades in some of the countries of the global south. Comparative studies in literature had been in existence in many of the

countries of the global south for a considerable period of time and there is perhaps a token increase in the number of departments that are focusing just on comparative literature. Also as Gerald Gillespie notes, “institutionally, apart from Mainland China, the discipline of comparative literature remains most wide spread in the U.S.- although mostly at Ivy League and thus private – universities and at a few state universities” (364). The point perhaps lies elsewhere, in the question of how an area of dialogue could be generated between work that is being carried out in the so-called global south and the so-called global north and then again, how a genuine core of interest could be created in the so-called global north regarding work in the field in the global south. Even in this volume for instance, as a reader from the so-called south, there is the lingering sense of an absence despite the varied fare that is offered. The reader for instance, gets to know what the Indian comparatists are not doing and not what they have been doing except in a few cases. This is not a comment on the very important article by Anand Balwant Patil on comparative literature in India in the volume, important because of his statement on literary caste politics beginning with the personal, and proceeding to local as well as global place-making (307), but a general statement on gaps of communication that continue to exist even in the globalized interconnected era as far as the voice of the global south is concerned.

The theoretical section begins with an essay by Dario Villanueva who makes a strong case for the systemic studies approach to comparative cultural studies along with a return to philological and interpretative aspects of literature to bring back meaning at the centre of humanities studies again. In order to make his point he takes to task Derrida, Hillis Miller and others on the one hand for having displaced meaning from the study of literature, and quotes Said on the other, to state that postcolonial studies and cultural studies had brought in their wake a plethora of jargons and hence to clear the space, he argues, it would be necessary to bring in a new comparative cultural studies based on contextual and systemic approaches practiced by Siegfried J Schmidt and others. Schmidt’s work, he states, also has affinities with the work of Itamar Evan Zohar, Pierre Bourdieu, Niklas Luhmann and Juri Lotman. While his call for a systemic and contextual approach has much relevance, the case would have been stronger without the denigration of certain important twentieth century schools of thought that struck at the roots of Eurocentrism and opened up various avenues of

thought, not the least of them leading to nuanced approaches to all that constitute otherness, an issue that Villanueva advocates has to be taken up with a certain "militant attitude" (59). Many of the essays that follow draw upon the works of deconstructionists, postmodern and postcolonial thoughts to move forward with new postulates.

The series of articles in the section on theory are written from diverse perspectives relating both to comparative literature studies and in a general sense to the study of the humanities and the social sciences and hence to cultural studies in an interconnected manner. There is an essay linking education and culture by Ronald Soetaert and Kris Rutten who advocate creating a rhetorical awareness through pedagogy in order to show how language constructs reality and also to introduce "perspectives on perspectives"(71) in the curriculum where different discourses, disciplines and ideologies are mediated thereby creating a space for comparative cultural studies in education related courses. There is again an essay by Rik Pinxten arguing for a comparative cultural anthropology as a complement to comparative cultural studies, showing the relevance of comparison as reflective thinking and practice and also upholding a model of multimedia performance as a basis for the study of literature and culture.

Comparative literary history, an important area that needs to be revisited as a core component of comparative literature, is taken up in two important essays. An essay by David Marno highlights the importance of the early comparatist Meltzl de Lomnitz's work in the context of literary history, and suggests that one again needs to link philosophy of history with literature where history, ontology and aesthetics would complement one another leading to a more comprehensive approach to literary history. There is a second article on comparative literary history by Slobodan Sucur who takes the reader through the different debates on the construction of a literary historiography and the problems involved in conceptualizing a history of literature on the basis of methodological frameworks and theoretical assumptions as many of them are being legitimately questioned - the notion of certain terms like modern, enlightenment etcetera related to period, or postmodern contention with historical evidence, for instance - and proposes the use of a geometrical model with its three-dimensional approach as a solution. The models, he suggests, " would

probably emerge from a subtle and self-conscious analysis that may deal with literature per se, certain textual features, or even the notion and nature of medium and communication" (96). There is a great deal of caution that he incorporates in his proposal and suggests that a preliminary beginning would have to be cautiously "verified or disproved within larger contexts" (96) - an important statement for comparative projects in constructing models in general.

Two essays in this section have a very specific focus. The first is by John D Pizer and he writes about a course offered by him on world literature where he works on the premise that an inbuilt dialectic between too much and too little familiarity enables an enhanced comprehension of 'otherness'. The second is by Roberta Capelli focusing on the composite and palimpsest nature of medieval literature that calls for multiperspectival as well as systemic approaches and therefore, argues Capelli, is a subject that could best be approached within the framework of the digital humanities. Capelli also calls for teamwork and cooperative alliances as do several other scholars in this volume, an urgency that had been felt at least since the time of Bernheimer's volume in the study of comparative literature, but that seems difficult to implement and therefore again calls for some serious soul-searching on the part of comparatists the world over.

Some of the other essays in the section take up traditional areas that comparative literature has engaged with for several decades now or since its very beginnings. One such area is that of comparative literature and interart relations where Anke Finger advocates the study of the comparative history of the arts on a global scale, tracing dialogues and communications between the arts and calls for a redefinition of the area by including new technologies and multi-media and questioning boundaries between each. She takes up Steve Tomasula's "multimedia novel" (133) *TOC* as an example to raise several questions related to what literature in electronic form is and opens up a horizon of thoughts in the area. Similarly Elke Sturm Trigonakis writes of a new Weltliteratur based on hybrid texts and their historical dimensions in contemporary world literature and her essay may be read as complementing the series that is being brought out under the auspices of the ICLA Committee on Mapping Multilingualism in World Literature by Alfons Knauth in collaboration with other members. Natalie Melas too in her essay on comparison and postcoloniality

foregrounds comparison as a mode of cultural relation, a space of inclusiveness and non-hierarchical transversality (202) and thus holding great promise, but at the same time underlines the generalized equivalence brought in by the ever-increasing factor of commodification that again renders the space of comparison ambiguous.

There are then essays on gender and translation in relation to comparative cultural studies. Ana Lozano de la Pola in her essay on gender and genre in comparative literature and cultural studies reads Judith Butler and Jean-Marie Schaeffer together to posit her thesis that comparative feminist studies in comparative cultural studies "consists of understanding gender as a constant 'work in progress' "(145) where repetitions and transformations contribute to an understanding of both continuity and rupture as also in the case of genre studies. In another essay, Paulo Bartolini addresses the field of translation studies and brings to the foreground the third space that he identifies as a "potential" zone, taking off from Giorgio Agamben's nuanced understanding of the "potential" where languages and cultures interact, where one has not arrived, but is still a wanderer, where "losing oneself, one might even find oneself" (159). As a critique of negative Western attitudes towards the wanderer, of erring, the essay touches upon issues that extend the area of translation studies to larger horizons and therefore towards fruitful comparative cultural studies.

Werner Wolf who has the last word in the section on theory goes into the definitions of mediality and (inter)mediality and looks at ways in which (inter)mediality may be integrated into frameworks of literary studies. In fact, literature, he points out, functions as an interface for all other media. While a stronger awareness of intermedial concerns present in literary studies is the call of the day, he suggests it would be misguided to compromise literary studies in favour of cultural studies. "After all, it is the study of literature that constitutes one of the best contributions to the elucidation of (inter)mediality as well as culture at large past and present" (214).

The next section gives an account of the state of the discipline of Comparative Literature in ten different regions and languages while an essay by Isaiah Ilo situates contemporary African Literature in the context of World Literatures. The regions are Latin America, Russia, Central and East Europe, United States and India while the languages are Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Iberian Spanish and Portuguese and Italian and the accounts are written by Sophia A McClennen, Alexandra Berlina and

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Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, Gerald Gillespie, Anand Balwant Patil, Marie-Thérèse Abdel-Messih, Xiaolu Wang and Yan Liu, Anne Tomiche, Oliver Lubrich, Maria Teresa Vilariño Picos and Anxo Abuín González, and Mauro Pala respectively. Apart from a rich source of information, the essays together showcase the wide range of possibilities of the discipline, its integrated link with histories of the regions and its moments of ambiguities, crises and success.

The last section offers examples of contemporary work in the area and deals with the universal of motherhood and African literatures and cultures (Remi Akujobi), a study of Joyce from the point of view of world literature and his reception, positive or negative, in India and in the works of Raja Rao and Borges (Bhavya Tiwari), the shifting hinterland in Roberto Bolano's work (Stacey Balkan), the motif of fleeing in Xinjiang Gao's work (Mabel Lee), Arab fiction and migration in the work of Yahya Haqqi and Tayeb Salih (Ikram Masmoudi), the role of translation in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender studies with reference to Edward Prime-Stevenson's work (Margaret S Breen), the notion of life in the work of Giorgio Agamben relating it to a tradition bordering on aesthetics (Carlo Salzani), aesthetics, opera and alterity in Werner Herzog's 1982 film *Fitzcarraldo* (Jacob-Ivan Eidt), an intermedial reading of Nina Paley's animation film *Sita Sings the Blues* (Ipshita Chanda) and a report on a course engaging with the connection between Balzac's understanding of representation in Dutch painting and his own realist representational work (Janet Moser).

The arguments made in favour of comparative cultural studies could be acceptable to all though not at the cost of comparative literature studies. However, as Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári clarify, the former is a field of study while the latter is a discipline with a history. The point again is well taken while questions related to institutional organization and the naming of departments remain. Further, cultural studies today is quite an institution in its own right with each region perhaps having its prerogatives in charting out its field of studies in keeping with its historical demands as also in the case of comparative literature. There is again a problem when Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári state "ideally, comparative cultural studies utilizes English as the contemporary *lingua franca* of scholarship" (17). This reviewer once had the experience of being a part of a debate related to the

replacement of cultural studies for comparative literature in the national test for eligibility for college and university teaching in India that fortunately did not take place. Students from hundreds of departments doing literature in their own languages, who now sit for the examination, would have been barred from doing so because English, and not only the language but whole knowledge systems in the language, would have been foregrounded and this would have been the case even with *comparative* cultural studies utilizing English as the sole language of scholarship.

Comparative literature has been doing cultural studies since its inception without mentioning it as such, but as the volume effectively suggests, there is a need for asking new questions related to literature and culture in keeping with historical demands and integrations and changes in systems of communication. The volume is a most timely and welcome addition to the series of books on the subject. One only wishes that there were less typographic errors in the volume. The multilingual bibliography at the end will also be of great help to scholars in the field.

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### Note

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes defines the word as "l'ensemble des rapports humains dans leur structure réelle, sociale et dans leur pouvoir de fabrication du monde" in *Mythologies*, (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1957), p.217.

**Review of** *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*. Edited by Steven Tötösyde Zepetnek & Tutun Mukherjee, Foundation, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2013. Pp.528 ISBN: 978-93-82993-50-6. Rs. 695.

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CIIL, Mysore (with EVRamakrishnan), 2006 and *Literary Studies in India: Genology*, Jadavpur University, 2004. Besides she has numerous articles in national and international journals.

## **Book Review/ Frank Jacob**

**John Bintliff, *The Complete Archaeology of Greece. From Hunter-Gatherers to the 20th Century A.D.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.**

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It is a large task to provide a single volume that deals with the complete archaeology of Greece, especially when it covers the period from 400,000 BC until the beginning of the 20th century. However, John Bintliff has taken on this task of examining the role of Greek culture in the establishment of a modern Western civilization. In the three parts of this comprehensive volume he describes the Landscape and Aegean Prehistory (9-206), Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman Greece in its longer-term context (207-378), and finally the Archaeology of Medieval and post-Medieval Greece in its Historical Context (379-497). The different chapters follow in the same pattern of presentation. Thematic introductions (e.g. material culture) are used as a starting point of the several subchapters, which is followed by case studies of a specific topic or place of archaeological interest. The chapters then conclude with an evaluation by Bintliff, who tried to underline the importance of the specific chronological period with regard to the whole image of Greek archaeology.

In his introduction to the book, he begins with a description of Greek landscapes and geography to ensure that the reader will understand the topography of the country. This introduction is especially helpful for those, who use the present volume as an initial approach to Greek archaeology. It also reminds the reader why specific areas tended to be more important than others were. Bintliff thereby underlines what impact the geological and geomorphological history had on the development of its archaeology. Anyone eager to understand Greek archaeology will begin by gaining an understanding of its geography, which the first chapter provides as a valuable introduction.

After the geographic introduction, the Hunter Gatherers of the Paleolithic and the Epipaleolithic (28-45) are described, followed by a survey of Neolithic Greece (46-

82), the Early Bronze Age (83-122) and finally, a detailed description of the Minoan (123-154) and Mycenaean civilizations (181-206). These sections will introduce the topics, which have been investigated by countless other works in different languages, Bintliff provides a valuable survey of these stages of Greek archaeology and attracts the reader to the history of the mainly unknown cultures of Greece.

The second part focuses on Greece in Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman times (207-378). After covering the Greek Early Iron Age and the so-called concept of the "Dark Age" (209-233), Bintliff describes the Archaic Era and its archaeology (234-251) and the buildings as well as the material culture of that period (252-264). In the next section, Classical Greek archaeology is discussed (265-284) and the change from a material to a symbolic culture is explained. (285-310). Next is the archaeology of the Hellenistic era up to the early Roman era (310-336) Bintliff describes the building environment (337-350) again to cover the archaeology of middle Roman imperial times until late antiquity (351-368), before finishing the second part with a description of a symbolic material culture in middle and late Roman and Greek times (369-378).

The last part of the volume focuses on the archaeology of Greece in Medieval and post-Medieval times (379-497). In this section, Bintliff describes the development of Greek archaeology from Byzantine Greece until the Ottoman, Venetian, and Early Modern era. Along with the archaeology of the built environment, the chapter also deals with industrial archaeology as well as the material culture of modern times as it is recorded by several museums. This chapter is also used to illuminate existing continuities as well as existing discontinuities with regard to the development of cultures in the geographical sphere of Greece. However, this section only deals briefly with many different specific topics and therefore is not able to cover all aspects of importance - e.g. the development of international trade relations and their influence on Greek built or material culture - it is a valuable introduction for those, who are dealing with these aspects for the first time.

When it comes to an evaluation of the whole volume, the final judgment has to be a result of the reader's personal academic background. Because the author has chosen

a personal approach to the topic, there are some points that express his own estimations rather than the actual discussions in the field. Specialists might disagree with regard to his periodization - e.g. the Middle Palaeolithic - or the ultimate determinism of the existing environment. In some cases the chapters leave out issues, which the reader would like to have further discussed, however, this problem is a consequence of the broad time span the volume covers.

In contrast to this research-oriented judgment, there is another level of appraisal. For a general readership, the volume is definitely valuable. It not only covers a wide period, it also covers a region that is mainly confined to the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman era. Therefore, an interested reader will gain insight into the multi-faceted history of Greek archaeology and thereby Greek history as well. Due to the geographical introduction and the mass of figures and tables (x-xxi) a rather unknown sphere of the history of human culture is examined for a wider public in one comprehensive volume. Due to this, Bintliff's attempt to create a one-volume work that deals with the complete archaeology of Greece is a successful one, even if some parts might generate a discussion of a specific research oriented readership. The general reader will definitely gain from this volume, because it is able to arouse the further interest of those who have picked *The Complete Archaeology of Greece* as their first attempt to deal with archaeology in general and Greek archaeology in particular. It will stimulate a further interest in the specific topic and thereby lead from a general survey to specialized readings in the future.

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**Review of** *The Complete Archaeology of Greece. From Hunter-Gatherers to the 20th Century A.D.* by **John Bintliff**; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

**Dr. Frank Jacob** completed his PhD in Japanese Studies from the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg in the year 2012. He was formerly a Special Research Fellow in the University of Osaka. He also serves as the editor of the journal, *Global Humanities. Studies in History and the serial Comparative Studies from a Global Perspective*. He is fluent in German, English and Japanese, besides having readability in Latin and French, and basic knowledge of Spanish and Dutch. He also has a considerable number of academic publications to his credit. Formerly Assistant Professor of Modern History in Julius-Maximilians University of Würzburg, Germany, he is presently Assistant Professor, History Department Queensborough Community College, City University New York.

## Acknowledgements

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**W**e are indebted to everybody who had encouraged us, in days when JSHC was merely an idea. But then ideas cannot be killed. This is the product of more than a year's work conceptualizing, tracing the way forward and setting out the contours.

Our editorial advisors couldn't be thanked enough. They were there when this was still on the drawing board.

All our peer reviewers and members of the editorial team, our editorial assistants, worked tirelessly to help us come this far. It has been a collective effort without which none of this could have been possible. With the inception of JSHC we finally hope to contribute in a little way towards re-conceptualizing disciplinary practices in India and aiding in the dialogic process between disciplines, still pretty much in a nascent stage.

We are most grateful to Subhadi (Professor SubhaChakraborty Dasgupta) without whom none of this would have been possible. Her magnanimity was one of the reasons why we never gave up. She has been a source of encouragement and support.

We would like to thank Malinidi (Malini Bhattacharya) without whose constant support our first issue might never have taken off. Both the special article section and interview were possible due to her. She has been kind enough in even writing the first JSHC special article, taking time out from her prior commitments.

We would also like to thank Samantakda (Professor Samantak Das) for having been there for us, ever responsive and appreciative of our endeavour.

We are grateful that Dr. Ashok Mitra agreed to sit through an interview, even when he rarely does so nowadays. Many of his views and opinions would seem to be a timely interjection today.

Tariq Ali made himself available for the two sessions which were required for the interview and we are thankful to him. Without it our attempt at addressing the issues threads to which we had only but picked up in our CFP, would have remained incomplete.

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The purpose behind re-printing Rabindranath Tagore's "A Vision of India's History" is to provide scholars of Modern Indian History or its intellectual traditions, insight into the historical outlook of one the greatest of Indian polymaths. One who towered over others both during India's nationalist phase and its shift to a much more flexible inwardness and internationalism, during the early decades of the twentieth century. We are indebted to Visva Bharati for having preserved much of Rabindranath's writings, without which it would not have been possible to publish the essay, out in the public domain now. While Umadi (Professor Uma Das Gupta) very kindly allowed us to reprint her essay "The Poet on the Past" and has egged us on throughout the process. Without her much of the reprint section wouldn't have been possible. Her essay would shed a more uniform light on Rabindranath's historical outlook, given that she has consulted Rabindranath's entire corpus in building up on her motif. Thanks are also due to the Visva Bharati Granthana Vibhaga and Dr.Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay for their kind consent in allowing us to publish the essay.

We are also indebted to our friend Bipratim Saha; without his aesthetic and technical support the journal would not look or function as it does today. We are likewise indebted to our colleagues Malepati Chandrasekhar and Rohith Reddy, for their vital contributions to the technical process of actually getting the journal online.

The cover photo is from Washington Area Spark's collection on [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) licensed under the Creative Commons license to Reading/Simpson. We are indebted to them for the photograph, which expresses all that we would have liked to in a concept note.

The Editorial Team