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MANFRED PRISCHING (EDS.)

Polarization in North America: European Perspectives

Waldemar Zacharasiewicz, Carmen Birkle & Manfred Prisching (Eds.)

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POLARIZATION IN NORTH AMERICA

European Perspectives

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Acknowledgements

The present volume contains essays read as papers at an international conference convened by the North Atlantic Triangle Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in November 2021. Twenty scholars from several disciplines – sociology, political science and history, literary and cultural studies focused on several countries and language communities, linguistics, film studies and philosophy – from both sides of the Atlantic dealt with the highly topical issue of polarization in contemporary societies and in the past and analyzed the factors which have in the course of time and in the present world caused divisions inside societies and between countries, prompting tensions and conflicts between segments of these societies, between ethnic groups and representatives of various regions, between affluent and poor groups and whole countries. While historians have pointed out the recurrence of such divisions and "cleavages" in earlier epochs, the current intensification of divisions in the United States has prompted the development of a focus on this country and its society. Therefore, the majority of papers address this alarming phenomenon and consider the manifestations of divisions between popular and populist attitudes and seemingly rational and scientific attempts to cope with the country-specific and global challenges faced today.

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Introduction

When the North Atlantic Triangle Commission decided to choose "Polarization in the North Atlantic Triangle" as the theme for its annual conference, it reacted to an awareness that the divisions in Western democratic societies had dramatically increased in the last few years. Since that decision a number of alarming events have created a sense of urgency in considering the reasons for this phenomenon and have demonstrated the immense topicality of this subject.

The appalling explosion of violence in the capital of the United States when a mob stormed Congress and threatened the lives of members of the government and elected members of Congress marked the nadir in the disconcerting divisions in the country in which the legitimacy of the newly elected president was denied and the myth of wide-spread election fraud was disseminated by advocates of conspiracy theories and shared by many Republican politicians. The perilous divisions in a country which had been regarded as a bastion of democracy by Europeans after the haunting experience of the Nazi and Fascist dictatorships seem to have been brought to an end in recent years any bipartisan cooperation in Congress. Since the inauguration of President Joe Biden in January 2020 the internal division in the United States has threatened to seriously hamper necessary measures in the country or even paralyze the government.

The unexpected return of war to eastern Europe with Russia's invasion of Ukraine is outside the sphere of the current interdisciplinary project but the consequences of this devastating act of aggression are significant, having an impact of global dimensions. (Many observers sense a threat of a major escalation involving the superpowers, while the NATO members try to diplomatically avoid a direct confrontation despite their substantial support for Ukraine in its defense.) The dramatic increase in the cost of living, the threat of widespread hunger and even starvation through the interruption of regular deliveries of grain, the drastic reduction in the supply of gas and electricity with the resulting rise in prices have endangered the stability of many societies, including those in the North Atlantic Triangle, which had just emerged from the

shadows of the pandemic. They are now also being confronted with an increase in the number of migrants, while necessary efforts to cope with climate change are delayed by the need to ensure the availability of energy for the economy and for the population at large. That the emergency measures taken by democratically elected governments encounter some skepticism, partly fed by conspiracy theories rapidly disseminated via social media, augments polarization in these societies.

While military and economic problems as well as migration issues are rooted in concrete conditions in the real world, other phenomena and events which have occurred in the last few years have led to extremely unusual social "cleavages." In the course of the COVID-19 pandemic acrimonious conflicts arose over lockdowns and mandatory inoculation, divisions which lacked any foundation in facts or any scientific basis, but which reflected rigid symbolic divisions in society. To explore this very interplay between real and imaginary, between empirically verifiable and fictitious cleavages and tensions is a particular concern of this volume.

The series of essays is opened by Manfred Prisching's careful and comprehensive analysis of "the deep structures of social polarization," which lays the foundation for the subsequent essays by differentiating between nine "cleavages" in contemporary societies. They range from the economic inequalities between the rich and the poor in the uneven possession of goods and in the resulting lifestyles, with a remarkable increase in general wealth in European welfare states - though not in the USA - prompted by processes of globalization, through the juxtaposition of the affluent advanced and the poor developing countries to the cleavages manifest in different ways in societies prompted by the factors of race, ethnicity, and gender. In his phenomenology of polarization, Prisching focuses on the increased importance of the factor religion, which has been a significant contributor to divisions at global and regional levels, not only through the intense involvement of radical Islamist activists but also in the North Atlantic Triangle through the mobilization of fundamentalist Christians. Prisching's analysis of opposed groups further includes the expectations and needs of different age groups, the differences between people in urban and rural contexts, the contrasted positions of ecologists and those questioning the negative influence of humans in the Anthropocene. He also juxtaposes the attitudes of advocates of a liberal and of an authoritarian society at variance with each other, and the (potentially related) stances of tribalists and cosmopolitanists. His ambition is also to describe and illustrate

largely through contemporary examples no fewer than seven mechanisms, whose dynamics are at work in the development of polarization, many of which exacerbate tensions in societies. Several illustrations in this essay with its very wide angle and far-reaching theoretical reflections come from the current mega-divide in the United States, while for the reinforcement of divisive trends earlier examples are also provided, including the fateful slide into the "Great War," which ruined Europe.

A recent working paper of the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace has offered the disconcerting diagnosis that among the advanced Western democracies the United States has suffered very high levels of polarization for a very extended period, that "polarization levels have in fact skyrocketed above those of other long-standing democracies." This alarming assessment seems to be shared by many observers, and thus the majority of the following essays in this volume are concerned with aspects of this phenomenon on the western side of the transatlantic divide. This impression is compatible with Tim Biocic's 2012 statement that "Democracies around the world are suffering from a new era of polarizing politics that have separate origins but similar patterns" (Biocic 2), but it also sharpens awareness of the fact that this pernicious phenomenon in North America has not just been an aspect of the Trump administration years but has gradually developed into its contemporary form in the USA. Two (later) essays in this collection offer corroborating evidence for this diagnosis.

While the articles collected in this volume provide in-depth analyses of various linguistic, historical, political, and cross-cultural phenomena that facilitate an understanding of the intricacies and mechanisms of polarization that does not simply develop but is often also deliberately triggered, enhanced, and manipulated for political purposes, they encourage the reader to reflect on the acrimonious debates and conflicts in the past, especially in the USA. One remembers, for example, the physical attack on Senator Charles Sumner in 1856 over the issue of slavery, and the catastrophic culmination of the social and political division in the US-American Civil War (1861-65), The insights of social psychology have shown that a significant factor in the sharpening of contrasts and conflicts between groups is the establishment of a tension between "us" and "them", the tendency toward a radical questioning of the rational basis of the position of the other (individual or group). In the early history of the colonies in North America such a polarization

provided the basis for the Salem witchcraft prosecutions and trials in the 1690s, and in the second half of the 20th century shaped Joseph McCarthy's notorious hunt for Communists in the administration in the 1950s. Arthur Miller famously enshrined the resulting binary world view in his play *The Crucible* (1953), in which he juxtaposes the irrational accusations made against people supposedly practicing witchcraft, on the one hand, and those made against alleged Communist spies in the post-World War II era, on the other hand. He has the character Deputy Governor Danforth explain that "a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. […] This is a sharp time, now, a precise time – we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world." This perspective of the Puritans in early America claims righteousness, and absolute superiority in their belief in being among the elect, and in their wish to establish and consolidate the "city upon a hill" that John Winthrop had set out as their main goal in his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" in 1630. Those who are not with the court do not see the light and are evil. The polar opposites between light and darkness and good and evil are emotionally affective and clearly categorize humans into 'us' and 'them'. This division in Miller's play also indirectly applies to the dissent in the modern political sphere. In this deliberate parallel a number of specific traditions of American culture manifest themselves, such as the heritage of the early Puritan belief in being the chosen people of God, in embracing American exceptionalism, in realizing their manifest destiny, and in viewing the world in dichotomous terms of good and evil, thus hardly leaving space for debate and rational conversation.

The tragic irony is that democracy by definition allows for polarization to happen because of the importance attached to freedom of speech, which means that everyone can express their opinions and attitudes provided that they do not hurt anyone or cross legal borders, which, however, are often hard to define clearly. It is an ironic fact that within a democratic country democracy itself can be criticized, questioned, and even undermined. However, no democratic society is easily ready to give up this highly valued freedom[1] and, therefore, has to

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[1] Cf. the regular reference to the freedom of speech protected by the first Amendment to the Constitution, and the difficulty of distinguishing between the legitimate exercise of this right and examples of hate speech, incitement to violence and threats.

come to terms with a multiplicity of attitudes and values and has to show its citizens how to live with uncertainty and ambiguity because of the complexity of hotly debated issues. Yet many people's desire for stability and certainty, in particular in times of crises, makes democracy vulnerable, as this need fosters an inclination to cling to certain ideas and concepts, and thus potentially leads to the summary rejection of other opinions and values. The resulting polarization may come not only from within, but often also from outside the national borders, possibly from totalitarian countries with one-party systems that may have an interest in weakening democracies in the neighborhood because those might become models for their own population, who are usually uninformed and deliberately kept ignorant. But there are also politicians inside democracies who are ready to blow up a crisis out of proportion and are eager to polarize a nation by creating the need for a supposedly strong leader who would fight the enemy inside and outside the country. These politicians in the USA claim to restore law and order, implying that the country is severely out of order that is, a state even preceding Danforth's "dusky afternoon," and they use what has been called "the American jeremiad", which goes back to Puritanism and Puritans' jeremiads that emphasized "declension and doom" (Bercovitch xiv), but simultaneously celebrated "America's mission" (11).

Despite these obvious shortcomings and disconcerting cross-currents in American political life fostering polarization with its multiple negative consequences the volume includes the personal perspective of a very experienced Austrian diplomat, Eva Nowotny, who has witnessed in her career changes and shifts in the for Europe's security and defense crucially important transatlantic relationship, with divisions culminating in the acute crisis under President Trump. His outright rejection of multilateralism, which had been beneficial to all parties concerned, resulted in a sharp polarization between the USA and Europe, and since the inauguration of his successor has led to a joint declaration on a "renewed transatlantic partnership" (June 2021), manifest in the agreement on closer cooperation in the joint struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic and with the challenges of climate change, but with differences concerning the appropriate treatment of the United States' major rival China in the spheres of trade and security. There have recently been distinct shifts and rearrangements in global relationships in the international sphere. The hegemony of the USA as the superpower of the twentieth century has been replaced by a multipolar international

constellation, which, however, does not seem to lead to a balance of power, but to new confrontations, new distributions of power, alliances, and conflicts.

After this essay with its focus on the desirability of practical political cooperation in an age of dramatically increased polarization after the temporary misrepresentation of Europe by advocates of unilateralism in the United States, a section with three essays deals with the perception and representation of polarization in literary and cinematic form and in music. The examples chosen reflect to some extent the preoccupation of writers, artists, and critics with the different situation or events on the other side of the Atlantic, and raise more general questions about the complex factors which nourish polarized projections and their specific functions. Wynfrid Kriegleder's article examines six (popular) narratives by Germanophone writers set in the United States reflecting real or alleged polarization there. Four of these authors were active before the twentieth century, partly with autoptic experience of the United States, partly mere armchair-travelers. Kriegleder's detailed analysis shows that some (for instance, Ferdinand Kürnberger in *Der Amerikamüde*) projected an awareness of disconcerting polarization on their home turf onto the society on the other continent, or expressed a conservative (and strongly ethnocentric or even chauvinistic) fear of the importation of undesirable trends from the more modern society of the United States. In some post-World War Two fiction their exposure of rampant racism in America and of the violence of the Vietnam War appears indirectly to extenuate the enormity of the crimes of the Nazis.[2]

Kirsten Krick-Aigner then chooses a different approach as she considers the many aspects of Ernst Krenek's provocative representation of Blackness in his "jazz" opera "Jonny spielt auf" (1927), in which the eponymous African American jazz fiddler was in the premiere played by a white actor using blackface. The study traces the immediate popular success of the stereotype depiction of this "animalistic figure" and the new music rooted in the composer's fantasy, and relates the following dismissal (and eventual banning) of the opera as a degenerate product under the Nazi regime, but also refers to the contemporary appeal of the opera and its subject to other artists, including the versatile Jewish Austrian painter and author of children's books Bettina Bauer-Erlich.

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[2] Cf. Uwe Johnson's narrator in *Jahrestage* in the criticism of a notorious anti-American statement by Hans Magnus Enzensberger.

From her work only an oil painting of a related "Still Life" of jazz instruments (1928) has survived, while Carry Hauser's comparable canvases reflect the contemporaneous interest and the heated controversies about such subjects in the 1920s. The essay finally considers the ongoing polarization in the reception of Krenek's work, especially the controversial use of blackface, which is retained in a new 2022 production in Munich, while such an ostensibly racist practice would now be totally impossible in productions in the United States. Krick-Aigner's complex essay thus illustrates the significant division between national cultures referred to in Prisching's typology of polarizations.

Despite all judicial and practical improvements, there is still controversy over the meaning of "racism" in western countries. "Open" racism has been replaced by "covert" or systemic racism, which does not mean that it does not have an effect. On the other hand, the accusation of racism has become a very useful tool to improve one's own position or to make oneself immune to criticism. As the fictional African American Reverend Carter says to the Chinese reporter Suzie Seeto in Elizabeth Wong's play *Kimchee and Chitlins* (1994), "[a] black man in America can never be a racist. To be a racist, you have to have power. And that, I most certainly do not have" (431). The changes in the perception and assessment of racial relationships and the attribution of racism are particularly obvious in the arts. What may once have been a totally unproblematic representation has meanwhile become inadmissible and considered racist. Clearly there are currently very different sensibilities and practices in this respect in Europe and the United States.

In his essay on polarization in the reception of cinematic art especially in France and the deeper reasons for conflicts Jörg Türschmann focuses on the perception of the celebrated work of Roman Polanski, although the allegations made against him overshadowed the recognition of his award-winning film *J'accuse* on the Dreyfus affair (2019) in the Pleyel Hall in Paris. The rejection by his (feminist) opponents and rivals for the Prix César ignored the distinction between the personal faults of the director and his work of art, though his antagonists were ready to exculpate another film director with a prison record, Ladj Ly, ostensibly being motivated by the priority given to radical identity politics and the emotional intensity linked to their self-declared avantgarde art. Türschmann alleges that the treatment Polanski experienced illustrates the strategy radical critics / opponents adopt in

order to defeat "their enemy" by fostering negative emotions and resentment Prisching lists as an effective tool, namely "symbolic charging". Ly's *Les Misérables*, set in the discriminated society in the banlieue of Paris, is shown to belong to the tradition of films exposing social grievances, and in its reception to benefit from the cult of indignation and unqualified emotional empathy with mortified segments of society, which has led to the dubious tokenism of physically challenged individuals in casting shows. The current insistence on retribution for the moral faults of film directors and problematic grandiloquent statements on serious issues by other film directors are said to be inadequate for the art of film, while Polanski's earlier filming of the Hungarian-French dramatist Yasmin Raza's play *The God of Carnage* (2011) as *Carnage* reveals the decline of originally rational disputes between adults into heated emotional conflicts. Their potential origin may lie in the intensified sensibility of politicized individuals from ostensible minorities who are inclined to project their accusations onto film directors and their cinematic products and vice versa. Just as the early Puritans did not distinguish between church and state, today political subjects do not keep life and art apart in the contexts of "woke awareness" movements and political correctness. Both have caused radical developments and have led to seemingly incompatible positions and positionings on both gender and race. Hashtags such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #AmINext have not only pointed to social, racial, and sexual inequalities and injustices but have also uncovered systemic forms of discrimination. These movements do not want people to simply go "about business as usual" (Bunyasi and Smith 11) but ask them "to engage in life in the United States from a different perspective" (12), a perspective which is, however, uncomfortable to many and threatening to some. The atmosphere has hardened; communication often fails because the socio-political systems in the United States and also Europe would have to change significantly, but they do not, so that Reni Eddo-Lodge publishes her book on *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* (2017; 2018), in which she explains the exhaustion of "a life-time of self-censorship that people of color have to live" (xii). In her historical look back to the origins of slavery, she delineates European involvement in this "international trade" (4) through colonization. As a British citizen, she reveals the network of imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism, as spanning Europe, Africa, and the Americas but also Asia. So even if Polanski's and Lady Ly's cases seem

to speak to developments in France, they take on a much larger meaning when viewed from the perspective of woke awareness and the links to polarization in the societies of the Atlantic world.

While these political factors inside France have fed the polarization in the world of the French cinema but have also been strongly influenced by political awareness movements in the United States, Martin Löschnigg's essay opens the following section which investigates the reflection of polarization in the construction of national identities, and the tension between exclusion and inclusion. Löschnigg offers a diachronic survey of the phases in the expression and motivation of antagonism on a national level toward the United States in Anglo-Canadian literature. The early defensive position, especially after the American Civil War, which led to the Confederation in 1867, already showed the function of anti-Americanism in Anglo-Canada, with its heritage of the Loyalists in the wake of the American Revolution, namely the assertion of a Canadian national and cultural identity. The polarization and power play in the face of economic interests which advocated a continentalist integrating vision of the country, are captured in late nineteenth-century fiction, life-writings and cartoons, often with a gendered representation of the two neighboring countries, and a growing awareness of Canada's position as a bridge between the United States and the British Empire and Europe. Löschnigg also highlights, after touching on the expression of the nationalist position by Hugh MacLennan, the lament both by Conservatives and Leftists about the loss of Canadian (cultural) independence, which continued despite some vigorous action supporting the arts in Canada. He demonstrates the heyday of polarization in the 1960s and 1970s when during the Vietnam War and the accompanying social unrest in the USA an alarming representation of a US military intrusion into Canada is imagined in a large number of poems, e.g., in the "Civil Elegies" by Dennis Lee. It appears in modified and significantly qualified form in the early fiction, poetry, and essays by Margaret Atwood, who, like other commentators, later described the employment of polarized concepts of the relationship between Canada and the United States as an inevitable technique to insist on Canada's distinctiveness in the face of the powerful neighbor.

While Löschnigg's essay traces the history of the polarization between Anglo-Canada – not Francophone Quebec – and the United States, Werner Sollors opens his article with an analysis of the origin of and shifts in the denotation of the umbrella term of "diversity," which

currently fulfills a key role in political discourse in the United States as well as Europe and the history, debates, and controversies Sollors has also delineated in his *Challenges of Diversity: Essays on America* (2017). Referring to its recognition and employment in the diversity index based on the latest Census, he takes note of its former marginality as the founding fathers and many early writers were keen to establish unity among the diverse ethnic groups of settlers, with the significant example of Walt Whitman's inclusion of them all. Drawing on Heike Paul's recent diachronic study of American "civil sentimentalism"[3] and its implicit expression of public feeling, Sollors reminds the reader of the long exclusion of African American slaves, American Natives, and women generally from active participation in *res publica* until amendments to the Constitution and the Civil Rights Act ended the exclusivity of white males, and affirmative actions were initiated. The opposition to these measures as unfair and increased fears of many have created a climate in which the emotional intensity of "ressentiment" currently shapes US society and makes the integration of the diverse segments of society desirable as well as challenging, as Walter Benn Michaels has argued in his study *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignored Inequality* (2006; 2016). Benn Michaels considers his book "an effort to move beyond diversity […] and to help put equality back on the national [U.S.] agenda" (16), which, as he claims in 2016 in a new Afterword, has not quite worked in a country that is even more diverse than it was then years ago" but one that "is also more committed to ending some of the discriminatory practices that then years ago seemed pretty firmly in place" (201). In this vein, Sara Ahmed offers diversity "as a narrative of repair" (17), as a praxis that sees knowledge and transformation intimately connected (173) and might ultimately break down the wall as "a barrier to change as well as to the mobility of some" (175).

The topicality of the cleavage in the society of the United States is mirrored in the following section with five essays which provide both a diachronic view of polarization fed by racist attitudes and an examination of contemporary social divisions (in the United States and globally) and of attempts at overcoming the acrimonious political debates. Carmen Birkle's essay examines the autobiography of Kamala Harris, Vice

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[3] Heike Paul, *Amerikanischer Staatsbürgersentimentalismus: Zur Lage der politischen Kultur der USA*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021.

President in the Biden administration, in the broader context of the ever-widening gap between the supporters of the former president Trump active in the ongoing dissemination of fake news and the triggering of fears and the increasingly radical left wing of the Democrats advocating challenging identity politics. This has prompted the pleas of rational observers to look for a shared vision for the United States, which is also Harris's goal. Birkle's preliminary remark concedes that the initial hope set in this US-American woman of Indian and Jamaican descent that she might overcome fear, mistrust, and hatred with the counter-image of a community sharing "truths" and realizing the foundational documents of the nation has not yet materialized. The fears of White men to lose what they regarded as their entitlement and the discrimination of women and immigrants reflected in Harris' narrative of her life and career have not vanished, and the hope to see in her an integrating agent with her declared mission has been dampened. In an in-depth analysis of Harris's *The Truths We Hold*, Birkle underlines the tightrope Harris has to walk when trying to reach both more conservative- and more liberal-minded citizens. Addressing the very foundations and so-called "founding fathers" of the nation triggers resentment and resistance in those who see the Early Republic as determined by hypocrisy and as instrumental in the production of cultural trauma for both African Americans and Native Americans and have by now instituted new debates on the US-American origin myths of, for example, 1619, Thanksgiving (renamed as "The National Day of Mourning"; Weiss), Christopher Columbus (Paul, *The Myths* 43-87), or the so-called Founding Fathers (Paul, *The Myths* 197-255). Harris's celebration of the strengths of female genealogy and ethnic resistance in her grandmother and mother might provoke those "angry white men" that Michael Kimmel discusses and that Birkle also refers to in her essay. Harmonizing these polar positions in the emphasis on the quintessential US-American family can potentially – but only partially so – bridge the gap. Yet, the ethnic and gender oppositions and, most of all, the fundamental political opposition that Prisching also refers to have risen by now to a Mega-Divide, as Prisching calls it, for which Harris's emphasis on the ideal of truth and family no longer seems to be a remedy because political party loyalty seems to overshadow any hope for reducing the divide to such a degree that rational negotiations become feasible again.

In her essay, Dawn Gartlehner sketches the divisions among politically active women on the issue of the suffrage for black women

since the mid-nineteenth century. Her focus is on the educated free woman of color Frances E. W. Harper, née Watkins, who consistently demanded the right to vote for black women and not only for black men, which had already divided the convention of around 240 advocates of far-reaching reforms of the suffrage laws at Seneca Falls in 1848. Gartlehner also traces the stages in the discord between early feminists prompted by racist reservations and ongoing practices of segregation, which resulted in competing feminist associations struggling to get the right to vote over several decades for and after 1900. From a twenty-first-century perspective, this discord may also seem to echo the 1960s emergence of a split between Black and White feminisms, as Audre Lorde states in her "Open Letter to Mary Daly" (1979): "The history of white women who are unable to hear Black women's words, or to maintain dialogue with us, is long and discouraging" (66). Moreover, "[t]he oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those differences" (70). Gartlehner, therefore, pleads for a genuine consideration of intersectionality thereby ensuring mutual recognition of the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination, and warns against the recent tendency to adopt an inverted hierarchy which would aggravate the polarizations in American society.

The fact that women, especially in the global South, bear the brunt of the growing gap between affluent and impoverished societies and are the victims of widespread poverty motivates Brigitte Buchhammer's discussion of the perspective of the feminist philosopher Alison Jaggar's analysis of the causes of the feminization of poverty. In tune with Jaggar's findings, Buchhammer rejects the frequent explanation of this phenomenon by liberal western feminists as being caused by the oppression of women in non-western countries by illiberal cultural traditions and local customs. Patriarchal structures contribute to the indigence of women, but there are geopolitical and geo-economic factors, such as the neoliberalism manifest in free trade and the possibility of the privatization of resources and their full exploitation by the wealthy nations of the global North, all of which aggravate the polarization insufficiently documented by indices of the World Bank. In line with Jaggar's references to the philosopher Thomas Pogge and his exposure of global justice deficits and his Kantian rejection of "instrumentalizing" the impoverished people of the global South, Buchhammer argues for aid payments from the North to the South to

reduce the dangerous economic polarization in the world. Her assessment of the global market economic system is thus much more negative than Prisching's reference to the the global division of labor which has the potential to help reduce global inequalities and the disadvantages experienced Third World countries.

In his contribution, Robert Brinkmeyer moves from the global to the regional North and South divide and juxtaposes two collections of essays published in the first half of the twentieth century which deal in contrasted ways with sharp divisions in contemporaneous American culture. The contrasting perceptions of the opposing camps focusing on race or region involved several manifestations of the social and political polarizations described by Prisching in his typology of this complex phenomenon. The essays published in 1930 by the Nashville Agrarians as I'll Take My Stand establish an opposition between the traditional society of the South, which in their view is threatened by the ruthless industrialists of the North and their ideology of progress, while they try to defend the stability of their regional culture with its ostensibly genuine humanism. It is significant that these (exclusively white) conservative intellectuals largely avoid touching upon the racial attitudes in the South with its practice of strict segregation, but direct their attention to their affinity with premodern Europe, rather than with the emerging fascist trends in the contemporary Old World. By contrast the authors in *What the Negro Wants* (1944) underline the racial polarization in the whole of the United States and demand a full share in US-American society in a global anti-colonial context. Extensive quotes from this book illustrate the martial rhetoric, which its contributors employ in the same manner as the contributors to the earlier volume defending the sectional culture in the South. This tone of criticism could not have been expressed otherwise in a collection published during World War Two, when many African Americans had to serve in the military and their spokespersons were intensely conscious of the paradox that they were expected to defeat the Axis powers and thus defend freedom while experiencing racial discrimination at home. The two volumes thus represent the profound polarization in US-American society between white conservatives advocating the preservation of dubious sectional practices and those demanding a restoration of the unrealized but seemingly universalist claims made at the origin of American democracy.

That the sharp economic, ethnic, and political divisions in the USA have continued until today despite some successes of the Civil Rights

Movement is dealt with in the essay by Tatiana Konrad. It considers the demonstrable fact that racial injustice is reflected in environmental degradation, with the increased exposure of people of color (who are more concerned about these developments than white Americans) to air pollution and the resulting higher rate of infection with COVID-19 in certain regions (and nations). A brief sketch of the political divisions concerning the anthropogenic factor in climate change during the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and especially Donald Trump, with his sweeping denial of this link and his prevention of progress in avoiding worsening the detrimental environmental conditions, refers to the partisan attitudes of members or sympathizers of the two parties in Congress. The essay cites plausible claims of the continuing racism in the apparent environmental inequalities in the USA and the polarization concerning climate change. The essay cites plausible claims of the continuing racism in the apparent environmental inequalities in the USA and the polarization concerning climate change, and, by implication, addresses the issue which ranks first in Prisching's typology of divisions inside societies, namely the inequaities in income and wealth.

The final section of the volume contains four essays, the first of which offers a linguistic analysis of the strategies used by those who promote and benefit from divisions and manipulate individuals and the public at large so that they are inadvertently "persuaded" or silenced in their criticism of apparent falsehoods or dubious arguments. The following essay illustrates this phenomenon by examining highly problematic contributions to the debate on scientific topics made by ostensible advocates of extensive discussions in the USA who question the insights of the overwhelming majority of scientists. The two concluding articles by historians argue that polarization has been a constant feature of American democracy, though their assessments of its role and impact differ considerably.

Considering the irrational fears disseminated by propaganda, Rolf Kreyer's contribution aptly analyzes, from the angle of cognitive linguistics, the various verbal strategies which are employed in recent and current US-American political discourse. The account of several experiments conducted by cognitive linguists illustrating the susceptibility of human reasoning to the phrasing of messages is followed by a demonstration of the impact of combinations of words and uncontested presuppositions which may undermine rational thinking. A

number of conceptual metaphors, which suggest allegedly incontestable facts but are merely claims (e.g. that the economy resembles a tide lifting all boats, or that it functions like a motor, etc.), evince the risks of accepting without challenge the application of such figures of speech; but the most dangerous strategy employed by politicians to manipulate individuals and groups are the frames which serve as substitutes for rational arguments and (like "the wall" as a panacea, or the endlessly repeated phrase of "the stolen election" or "the deep state") appear as particularly insidious devices to reach goals which seem incompatible with the rational function(ing) of a democratic society. A solution can perhaps only be found in the constant challenge of presuppositions and the training in the dissection of frames in every educational institution.

Taking into account / consideration Prisching's diagnosis of a growing cleavage between political opponents in the USA, Kreyer explores the question of the extent to which language use contributes to this polarization in US political divisions. Considering the irrational fears disseminated by propaganda, his contribution aptly analyzes, from the angle of cognitive linguistics, the various verbal strategies which are employed in recent and current US-American political discourse. The account of several experiments conducted by cognitive linguists illustrating the susceptibility of human reasoning to the phrasing of messages is followed by a demonstration of the impact of combinations of words and uncontested presuppositions which may undermine rational thinking. A number of conceptual metaphors, which suggest allegedly incontestable facts but are merely claims (e.g. that the economy resembles a tide lifting all boats, or that it functions like a motor, etc.), evince the risks of accepting without challenge the application of such figures of speech; but the most dangerous strategy employed by politicians to manipulate individuals and groups are the frames which serve as substitutes for rational arguments and (like "the wall" as a panacea, or the endlessly repeated phrase of "the stolen election" or "the deep state") appear as particularly insidious devices to reach goals which seem incompatible with the rational function(ing) of a democratic society. A solution can perhaps only be found in the constant challenge of presuppositions and the training in the dissection of frames in every educational institution.

The urgency of the need to counter disinformation through a careful examination of false claims, which have aggravated the political divides in US society, is shown / thrown into relief in the essay by Christoph

Irmscher. It focuses on the science skepticism spread in the United States by populist politicians and a minority of scientists who indirectly support campaigns antagonistic to science by stressing the very provisional findings of the vast majority of their colleagues. The rejection of protective measures against infection with COVID-19, like face masks and vaccines, and absurd conspiracy theories plus mountebank recipes seemingly advocated by politicians, as well as the opposition against needed measures against climate change with its disastrous global consequences have polarized society in a time of multiple crises. Particularly deplorable are the voices of some scientists delaying action by ostensibly advising waiting for complete evidence for the overwhelmingly persuasive hypotheses, for instance, of the anthropogenic factors in climate change, thus as outright science deniers offering ammunition for reactionary populist politicians and their ilk.

In his essay Mitchell Ash traces multiple lines of conflict in American politics from the problematical adoption of clauses in the Constitution which ran counter to the universalist rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence and limited fundamental human rights to owners of property, and excluded Black males from the suffrage. From the many variables along which polarizing conflict can occur - as discussed by Prisching, Ash focuses on racial (and gender) inequalities and acknowledges additional factors involved, such as loyalties shaped by religious convictions, the fear of losing social status, and the urban-rural divide.

Ash sees this division primarily as a tribute to the North – South divide and the respective economic interests, and highlights the fundamental polarity along racial lines which persisted beyond the Civil War and the Reconstruction until the mid-twentieth century. The federal reforms of the 1930s and in the following decades had some ostensible bipartisan support, but this ended in the era of the Civil Rights legislation with the shifts in the politics of the Republicans, who, with new strategies, won the South after the rupture within the Democratic party over racial issues, while the Democrats embraced ethnic identity politics and other issues. Support for the Republicans by conservative evangelical Christians ushered in an era of a radicalization in the polarized landscape of American politics, which was intensified by the unscrupulous populism of the Tea Party movement and eventually Donald Trump's supporters, who managed to win the votes of white

Americans afraid of losing out in a rapidly changing demography of the population, as also Arlie Russell Hochschild documents in her *Strangers in a Strange Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (2016; 2018), in which she confesses to be "alarmed at the increasingly hostile split in our nation between two political camps" (xi), a development which she had already noticed in the late 1960s (xii).

It is arguably fitting that in a collection based on an academic conference the final essay should approach the disconcerting phenomenon of increased polarization in democratic countries of the North Atlantic Triangle and especially in the USA from a different angle, and adopt an alternative position, a more optimistic stance rooted in history. Philipp Gassert distances himself from Barack Obama's nostalgic reference to the total loss of bipartisan cooperation on Capitol Hill which had formerly existed, an attitude echoed by historians and social scientists, such as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jill Lepore, Arlie Russell Hochschild, and others. He draws attention to other examples of this kind of American Jeremiad, and refers to the hidden presence of "cleavages" in earlier times despite the rhetoric of union from the time of the Founding Fathers onwards. He describes the development of a positive sociology of conflict, which may be traced back to the ideas of Georg Simmel and his mediator to American sociologists, Lewis Coser, a refugee scholar, who – like the German British scholar Ralph Dahrendorf – regarded conflict as necessary in democratic societies and as a promoter of progress. This model of society was developed against the background of the conformist 1950s and 1960s and the contemporaneous stress on cohesion. But Gassert is, of course, aware of the risks of excessive polarization and acknowledges, like Coser, the necessity of rules and regulations on which the antagonists in a conflict must agree, the need of the possibility of a "well-regulated" conflict-driven interaction, and eventually what Coser described as "realistic" rather than "unrealistic" conflict.

The essays contained in this volume demonstrate that in the course of time – which in this case means the last 200 years – social and global divisions, cleavages, and conflicts have always taken on new forms. Some fractures have been constant issues (such as material inequalities); other phenomena have increased (e.g., racial divisions) or decreased (e.g., bipolar gender constructions) in virulence. There are many potential approaches for tracing such divisions and conflicts in various parts of a society, ranging from the micro- through the meso- to the

macro levels, and such developments may also be examined on several levels of knowledge – because perceptions develop their own dynamic; they quite often do not coincide with reality. In all these divisions the central issue is the desire for an integrated society. What gives coherence to a society? What pulls groups or social environments apart? The same questions arise in the international sphere. Which links, alliances and associations exist? Which factors that lead to cleavages, animosities and enmities in the "concert of powers" may be found?

The main focus of this volume is on the factual existence of enmity and friendship, of distance and of a close relationship, but also on dynamic processes of polarization or rapprochement, of radical estrangement or reconciliation. Polarization has been shown to be both culturally contingent and a universalist (at least Western) pattern. A comparison between European and American social conditions and a comparison between different processes within the last two hundred years has possibly revealed the many facets of polarization, its opportunities for integration but also the risks of disintegration in Western societies.

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1. KEYNOTES

MANFRED PRISCHING

Resentment and Anger: Deep Structures of Social Polarization

In social contexts, *polarization* means: a noticeable drifting apart of relevant phenomena, variables, indicators, social groups or countries; predominantly with the consequence that system constellations or system stability are endangered and conflicts are looming. In the common use of the word, polarization in society is a phenomenon that is considered important and unpleasant – the concept is enriched by a moral undertone. Some preliminary remarks seem appropriate.

First: Polarization is a *formal concept*; many social variables can get into the relationship of increasing polarity. Polarization can take place in the material (economic) sphere (polarization of income and wealth between classes), in political ideologies (polarization between political parties or movements) or in cultural lifestyles (such as polarization between wide-spread misery and decadent luxury). It can have spatial dimensions (such as polarization between center and periphery of regions or countries). There can be polarization between social generations or between art styles, between the private and the public education system, between the legal and the administrative system of government. The opposite of polarization is convergence, bridging, reconciliation. The variables that move away from each other in the case of polarization come closer together in the case of convergence or reconciliation. Today's relations between France and Germany are considered the result of the 'reconciliation' between both countries after the Second World War, ending centuries of hidden or openly hostile relationship and the 'hereditary enmity' (*Erbfeindschaft*) of the countries on both sides of the Rhine.

Second: *Some polarizations are acceptable, most polarizations are considered undesirable or conflictious.* Differences, even rising differences, could, after all, be considered fair or acceptable conditions, and they will be the normal outcome of market systems. But polarization does not only mean that there are (material, social or cultural) differences; the term adds dynamics to an existing difference and has a negative connotation. As an example, differences may exist between newcomers and established residents; subsequently, either desired

convergence or dangerous polarization may occur. Since 2015, the migration situation in many European countries seems to lead to polarization. Migration teaches us that such processes can have thresholds, so that the attitude towards the problem is determined by the dosage of newcomers. Coexistence of people from different cultures, otherwise considered acceptable, can be disrupted if there is a perception that immigration has got out of hand. Then psychological processes of polarization may set in, and both the immigrants and the resident population are involved.

Third: Polarization is not a classificatory, but a *gradual concept*; certain variables can become less or more polarized. In many cases, it is necessary to find the threshold beyond which formerly acceptable dynamics or shifts turn into polarized hostility. Political competition, for instance, is the necessary input for a democratic process: When all parties and movements are located somewhere in the middle, so that different political programs are no longer detectable, democracy appears as a mere staging whereas its substance has been eroded. However, when mutual struggle becomes an end in itself, with the sole purpose of maintaining power at any price, when political forces are moving further and further away from each other and the political opponent becomes the disrespected 'enemy' – then we have a situation that poses a serious threat to democracy. It is the dynamics which we seem to have observed in the party system of the United States during the last decades.

MULTIPLE CLEAVAGES IN SOCIETIES

Polarization is a formal concept which may be charged in different ways; it has a moral undertone; and it is a gradual concept. It is appropriate to recall some important topics that represent long-term and topical polarizations in contemporary societies. What are these polarization processes? What are we talking about? I will outline nine cleavages (Lipset/Rokkan 1967, 1985; Hooghe/Marks 2018).

1 CLASS OR STRATUM, INCOME AND WEALTH

One of the traditional dimensions of polarization is based on material or financial inequalities – the classic field of discussions about the rich and the poor (Fullbrook und Morgan 2020). However, these inequalities refer not only to the distribution of property or goods. Rather, characteristics

of living conditions that combine to form lifestyles are connected with or derived from them: destitution versus luxury; pauperization versus abundance. The perception in the mid-19th century was the immiseration of the workforce: exploitation and impoverishment. The Communist Manifesto of 1848 provided a largely accurate description of the social circumstances. But already at the turn of the century, much had changed. The working class was catching up. And after World War II, the reformist welfare state fulfilled many aspirations that previously seemed achievable only through radical system transformation.

At the same time, a process of previously unimaginable growth in prosperity has taken place. One factor of this growth can probably be traced back to the process of globalization and to the process of marketization of many areas of life. The latter process is attributed to the rise of 'neoliberal' thinking; neoliberalism has become the term critics use to describe all unwelcome phenomena found in today's world. There is, however, some justification for saying that policies in many countries that can be described as neoliberal have contributed to a polarization of income relations and wealth distribution. (In less developed countries, however, polarization has not much to do with neoliberalism, but with the domination of the state by oligarchic and corrupt groups.) A consensus has largely emerged about the development in advanced countries: There is stagnation or even a loss of income in the lower social classes; there are extreme gains at the top of society, there are milieus with a different fate. In the middle layers of society, there are upwardly mobile groups that are comfortable with the new (digital) world; but the old, conventional middle class (with jobs in traditional sectors) is under pressure. It is descending; it worries that the fall may be even more rapid; or it has at least the feeling of dropping down. Overall, we see 'bifurcation'. The economic, political and social 'middle territory' is eroding. This is a dramatic result, since it was always the middle class that embodied system stability and transmitted social values.

Globalization has led to a substantial increase in prosperity in developed countries, without this improvement being fully visible in the statistics. The global division of labor increases efficiency and lowers costs; above all, minimal labor costs in low-wage countries translate into lower prices of products consumed in rich countries. Residents of rich countries benefit from low wages in the Third World, and for residents in poor countries a small income is better than no income. While the process of globalization has brought rich and poor countries somewhat

closer together by reducing global inequalities (although the process of equalization has not eliminated huge differences in the standard of living), conditions within countries have become more polarized during the last few decades. It is a remarkable characteristic of the last decades that it is not the traditional upper class that has benefited from these conditions; rather, it is the super-rich, the famous one percent at the top (or even less), who have left behind the rest of the population, even the top 10%. I will mention only two reasons. First, the polarization seems to be the result of the Matthew Effect: Money flies to those who have money – they have more lucrative investment opportunities and can take advantage of superior tax avoidance opportunities. The financialization of the economy (Windolf 2005) has promoted polarization. Second, there are special effects of the electronification of the world. The new corporations are fundamentally different from the old corporations. They need little capital. They create few jobs. Above all, they can produce with almost zero production costs: One has to invent a certain software once. If then millions of units are sold, production is practically free of costs. This means that the turnover of large companies is completely decoupled from the creation of jobs – and the question is whether this means that an essential potential for the legitimacy of private ownership of the means of production is going to be lost.

Depending on one's point of view, one can emphasize the advantages or disadvantages of a global market economic system. But there is not only one capitalism; there are different variations of capitalism (Schröder 2014). The differences between capitalism in the USA and in Europe are well known: European welfare states have brought about general life security for the people, impoverishment has largely been eliminated, health is taken care of. Countries like Austria and Germany are among the most egalitarian systems in the world. On the other side of the Atlantic, things are different: the American welfare state is underdeveloped, and the material distribution resembles more the unequal pattern of developing countries than the more equalized pattern of advanced economies. Furthermore, the distribution of income and wealth is worsening. This is one of the phenomena by which the difference in the economic and social culture of America and Europe becomes visible (Kaufmann 2013). Europeans stand on the shore of the sea and shake their heads at the fact that most people on the other side of the Atlantic find it reasonable that, at best, one has to sell one's house for stomach surgery. The common roots of European and American culture

may be acknowledged, but one must not overlook the processes of cultural polarization in recent centuries.

2 RICH AND POOR COUNTRIES

Inequality in the world can refer to individual or collective entities: differences between persons or between countries. The traditional difference is the cleavage between advanced and less developed countries: the First versus the Third World. Since the end of the Cold War, the 'Third World' has been a label for the group of developing countries. It comprises a group of about 130 economically underdeveloped states that have deficiencies in income, health, education, social services and infrastructure.

Third World countries have pointed to the period of colonization to justify their continuous state of underdevelopment. Their aim is to put pressure on possible donors to increase their payments by evoking feelings of guilt on the part of the rich countries. However, the argument loses force over time, especially since there are some once underdeveloped and colonized countries that have developed into high-tech industrialized countries, especially in South East Asia. China, which remained an underdeveloped country for long decades under communist rule, has developed a sort of brutal 'state capitalism'; creating good conditions for making the vast empire a hegemonic (and nevertheless authoritarian) power in the second half of the 21st century (Coase et al. 2013). India also shows above-average growth, but it has internal weaknesses. South American countries each have a checkered history, and electorates sometimes choose their own misfortunes. Most African countries, on the other hand, are hopeless cases, considering the incompetence and corruption of the political systems, a population growth that destroys all economic progress, and a deterioration of the ecological situation in the coming decades.

In the global perspective, the process of globalization (Ritzer 2009) has improved most social indicators in less developed countries. But the 'climate fight', the conflict about ecological transformation, will be one of the polarizing issues of the 21st century throughout the world. Europe sees itself as a pioneer, the United States are hesitating, Third World countries argue that it is not their business: First they want to increase their wealth to get closer to the level of the rich countries, afterwards they will tackle the climate questions. But time is running out.

While the rising inequality within the United States is obvious (Fullbrook und Morgan 2020), the economic development of the countries in the European Union has been disappointing if one considers the whole range of member states. In the 1990s, when the European Union was established, it was assumed that a rapid process of convergence would take place, even for the late-coming post-socialist countries and for all countries situated at the periphery of the Union (Baldwin 2016). But the rapid economic and social catching-up process of the post-socialist countries has yet to happen, and the prospects are bleak. If one compares, say, Germany with Bulgaria or Austria with Romania, increasing polarization can be found instead of convergence.

3 RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER

There are some divisive categories of cleavages that are understood partly biologically, partly culturally. They include *classical racism* and *anti-Semitism*. The black-white problem or the Hispanics problem are key issues in the USA, but beyond the problems imminent at the beginning of the 21st century American history also has enough stories to contribute which prove prejudice against other ethnicities (Glazer und Moynihan 2001). In Europe, nowadays, xenophobia is attached more to cultural than to biological differences; but after the peak migration year 2015, polarizing situations between immigrants and natives have heated up (Oltmer 2017). The intensification was partly effected by the connection of immigrants to the threat of terrorism (Buchta 2015), to the experience that 'parallel societies' have been established, and to the amplification of religious fundamentalism.

Well-known shifts have taken place in the area of *gender problems*: the definition of the most afflicted social problem groups in modern society has shifted. The most disadvantaged group are no longer unqualified working-class Catholic girls from the countryside, but unqualified urban male youths. They are considered the real losers of modernization and globalization (Heinsohn 2003). But the issues of family, children and gender pose many problems which have remained unsolved (Hochschild 2012). In a bestselling book, gender polarization has been condensed into the formula: "Men are from Mars, women are from Venus" (Gray 1992). Sometimes insecurity and disorientation in male-female relations are not only expressed in metaphors but also result in recoded figures; birth rates are decreasing; divorce rates are

increasing; the sexes have a hard time dealing with each other. In the USA, old conflicts have been reheated, such as the abortion issue.

But the feminist campaign has been quite successful. No organizer of a conference or talk show can afford to ignore the issue that women should have their share. There are fields in which the 'glass ceiling' still exists, just as there are others in which a 'glass elevator' seems to prevail. Nevertheless, it would be absurd to deny persisting inequalities, despite more successful women in the education system and despite the well-defined pathways into professional positions (such as justice, health, certain areas of management, politics, art). The gender frontline has moved on, into the (biological) 'in-between' area transcending the male-female distinction: In a certain sense one may call it de-polarization (or gradualization of the sexes), but the recognition of in-between conditions is accompanied by polarized discussions.

While the classic injustices associated with race, ethnicity, and gender are well known, entrepreneurs in the marketplace of 'injustice exploitation' or 'discrimination marketing' have now been very successful in their attempts to embed an *anti-racist racism*, an *anti-colonialist colonialism*, and an *anti-biologistic biologism* in the public consciousness. When a rigid 'identity policy' is pursued, there is no context in which whites can understand blacks or men can understand women; no context in which Europeans can free themselves from colonial arrogance; no context in which arguments can be assessed independently of person and life; no context in which 'dead old white men' can find recognition. Anyone who violates these and similar principles faces contempt (and sometimes danger) (Bruckner 2021). Evidence of relevant statements and hostilities abounds. In this situation, where polarization is driven forward strategically and new 'spirals of silence' are spreading (Noelle-Neumann 1996), many feel compelled to stand up again for something like freedom of speech and freedom of science; a cause about which one would not have thought that it would again become necessary to be fought for in the Western world.

4 RELIGION, SECULARIZATION, HOSTILITY

For some time, it has been a common understanding that *religion* has been overcome as a socially polarizing category. Centuries have passed since the process of polarization between Catholics and Protestants intensified to a degree that, in the end, almost half of the European

population fell victim to the conflict in the 17th century. After the process of Enlightenment and Secularization the general assumption was that no one would get excited about religious narratives any longer.

This expectation was wrong. Samuel Huntington, in his book on the *Clash of Civilizations*, has warned against expecting the vision of a religiously subdued and culturally pluralistic world (Huntington 1996). In his view, the civilizations which are predominantly shaped by their religions are resistant to a global process of unification, and it is in the contact zones of these civilizations that future conflicts are likely to take place. In fact, we now have some evidence that this description of the world was more realistic than the model of the *'end of history'* (Fukuyama 1992). It seems to be even worse: these conflicts cannot be found only in the contact areas of cultural zones; rather, they are also fought out within the civilizations, even in the large agglomerations of the Western world.

One of the strongest polarizations is obviously the fight of Islamistic groups against the West (Seidensticker 2014). Islam and Islamism have provided a revived justification for violent activities and wars, and polarization has taken place even in regions where different religious groups had, until then, lived peacefully together, as in certain areas in the Middle East. Most wars have several causes; the combination of the interests of rulers and faiths can be observed just as well in the Thirty Years' War as in the present Middle East.

Heating up also takes place in the Christian sphere. Evangelical movements are on the rise worldwide, as a special variant of Christian revivalist movements, especially in the USA. Even within Christianity, therefore, the ecumenical peacefulness of the European churches should not be regarded as the normal situation. In Europe, Christianity is in decline. Christians are leaving their church; new generations do not become familiar with the Christian belief; a Christian attitude to life can no longer develop. The vacuum is being filled with all kinds of esotericism. Faith has its strongest foundation in its folkloric indispensability. In general, the widespread expulsion of established gods makes (to use a formulation by Max Weber) all kinds of demons rise from the graves.

5 AGE GROUPS, LIFESTYLES AND GENERATIONS

The whole world, but especially the world of the developed countries, is undergoing an aging process (Yaukey 2015). Birth rates are falling, life expectancy is rising, populations are aging, the costs of medical services and care for the elderly are rising.

All this has the effect, first, of widening the gap in years (between young and old) and therefore in generation-specific culture. As there are more years of distance between living generations, socialization standards and life experiences are more diverse than in earlier times. At the same time, social and cultural change has accelerated. This acceleration plus the age gap would lead us to expect an increase of polarization and a lack of comprehension. But that is not the case. As a result of 'friendly' socialization ideologies of the last decades, the relationship between the generations has actually become more relaxed.

The second effect of aging is to increase costs for the older generations in the form of longer pension payments and a sharp increase in the expenses for care and health services. In health and care budgets, people are 'cheap' in their younger years, while the older population costs more and more. The traditional social systems can still bear the expenses, but in about a decade the financial situation will become strained. The clash of interests between old and young may be just around the corner. The old have good pensions while the young will not be able to be endowed in a comparable way. The old have ruined the global environment, so the livable world for the next generations is in doubt for the next generations. The old have accumulated debts; the young will have to pay them, under far worse circumstances.

Sometimes tougher ideas emerge. A few Darwinian touches have emerged in the epidemic: the proposal that one could let the old ones die, so that the young could enjoy work and pleasure without interruption (without lockdowns). But this polarizing discussion, promoted especially from the Swedish model of epidemic management, has found little resonance.

6 SPATIAL CLEAVAGES, URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

City and country, urban and rural life, cars and cows – this is a classic category of difference and inequality. In both cases we have positive (romantic) and negative (polemic) evaluations. The *positive urban*

perspective considers cities to be places of knowledge, modernity, art, luxury, progress and freedom, fashion and refined lifestyles. They represent modern life par excellence, whereas rural areas are underdeveloped, lagging, poor, behind the times. The *negative urban perspective* refers to the inconveniences of life in densely populated areas: anonymity, noise, stress, the general aesthetic unpleasantness of cities, bad air, unhealthy environment. People are arrogant and haughty. The *positive rural perspective* evokes romantic images and feelings about the landscape: friendliness, health, stillness, recovery of the soul, the true life, stronger bonds between family members, neighborhood assistance. There is the cultivation of traditional values, customs, religion. The *negative rural perspective* considers the 'idiocy' of rural life, backwardness, limited experiences, primitiveness, ignorance. In fact, all these perspectives are justified, probably at different times in different places (Berking 2005). There are many opportunities to cultivate polarizing views.

After World War II, the general expectation was that urban lifestyles would increasingly spread to the countryside, so that ultimately there would be no sharp urban-rural boundary, but rather an urban-rural continuum. The digital world has enhanced the idea that spatial dimensions could become meaningless. Many of these expectations have come true, at least in Western Europe. Living conditions between urban and rural areas have largely converged. Nevertheless, today there is talk of sharpened contrasts, and the empirical fact is that a massive *rural exodus* (Steinführer 2015) is taking place all over the world – people migrate from rural areas towards agglomerations, towards smaller cities and towards the megacities of the Third World (Sassen 1996). Regions have different capabilities in different circumstances, but the trend of our times is promoting the cities.

The same process takes place between countries. Immigration from less developed countries in Africa and the Middle East to Europe is growing, but the same individual motivations (longing for a better life) lie behind migration processes that lead from the countries of the European periphery to the economically strong areas of Central Europe. Romania and Bulgaria, the Baltic states, Hungary, even the Balkans – all of these areas have experienced a dramatic reduction in their populations over the last two decades. Within the European Union, there are no obstacles to spatial mobility – but while membership in the EU should have brought the countries closer together, increased polarization

processes have set in. Within the Western countries, we observe the same pattern: the peripheral regions are being abandoned. This is true in France, Spain, Italy and Britain.

The aestheticizing and romanticizing view of rural areas is one side of the coin; next to the idyllic images, a new image of abandoned and desolate landscapes is emerging: high migration losses, withdrawal of people from remote rural regions. Agriculture and forestry remain, but farming no longer requires a lot of human resources. Sometimes, tourism replaces the previous jobs: the countryside as a leisure park; at best, even as a wilderness used for certain kinds of tourism. In some places, the demand for agricultural and forestry biomass to provide energy helps; however, this also requires hardly any labor. The polarization of urban and rural areas ends with growing agglomerations with 'nothing' in-between except a few recreational facilities for urban vacationers.

The USA has always been characterized by the extraordinary mobility of its inhabitants (Jacobs 1961). The 'westward migration' in the 19th century is one of the 'grand narratives' of American history. In the time between the World Wars, the industrialized regions of the Northeast and Midwest, the 'manufacturing belt', experienced the strongest population growth. In recent decades, however, there has been a marked reversal of the trend. Population increases are now concentrated primarily in the West and South of the United States, fed by immigration from the south (Hispanics and qualified technicians for the IT industry) and immigration from the north (pensioners).

There are some limitations to these trends. First, urban growth has its particular problems in terms of environment, traffic and infrastructure; modern life does not fit into the architectural structures of medieval cities. In America, proud cities have been destroyed, anyway, in favor of urban sprawl; slowly, administrations are beginning to think about reviving them. Moreover, on both sides of the Atlantic, there are some neighborhoods that are equally disconnected from mainstream society. They develop into problem zones, with social unrest, or even become 'no-go areas'. It is an older problem in the USA, a new problem in European metropolises.

Second, the differences between urban and rural areas mean not only differences in life chances but also increasingly differences of world views. The declining rural regions, characterized by depletion and obliteration, feel underestimated, left behind and devalued. The polarization between periphery and center within a country finds its

expression in the strikingly different voting behavior of populations (Rodden 2019).

7 SUSTAINABILITY, ECOLOGY, ENERGY, RESOURCES

The climate problem has already been a polarizing topic, and it will become a 'hot spot' in the coming decades. The conflict is driven by environmental activists and climate change deniers – a rising front of emotional polarization.

The problems of energy, resources, emissions and climate already have a history of several decades, the first bestseller with mass appeal, *Limits to Growth*, dates from the early 1970s (Meadows 1972). Some progress has been made in the meantime, but far too little to achieve the necessary exit from fossilized fuels which would be necessary to stabilize the global temperature. In the meantime, there are many declarations of intent from governments and international organizations, but the realistic expectation is an increase in global temperatures by at least 3 degrees (Celsius) within the 21st century. The way out is clear: water, sun, wind, at best transformed into fuels. The war in Ukraine has underlined the necessity of such a transformation; ecological reasons can be supplemented by political reasons. Nevertheless, essential questions remain unresolved, especially energy storage in view of a very uneven electrical energy supply from sustainable sources. Moreover, if one considers the world climate as a global issue, it is difficult to imagine how the countries of this world can, on the one hand, meet an extremely increasing demand for energy and, at the same time, find a way out of a fossil fuel economy, through which more than 80 % of the energy demand is currently still met. At the moment, there is a boost of optimism about the approach to a sustainable economy, but expectations seem to be exaggerated.

Given a general consensus on the goals, the issue of sustainability does not seem to be a polarizing topic. The problems lie more in the details, in the concrete measures. The message that all social groups will gain and no one will lose in the course of such a profound transformation will not be believable in the long run. However, the climate issue is a great opportunity for young people to act out their protest tendencies, without risking social disadvantages, because the protest is almost universally received approvingly. However, in the global perspective,

spatial cleavages will arise. Some regions and countries will profit, others will be the losers – polarization may be expected.

8 MINDSETS OF LIBERALISM AND AUTHORITARIANISM

The fate of democracies depends on the support of committed democrats. Of course, institutions are important, the design of the constitution, internal and external crises of a country, and the competence of the political elite. But without a majority of democrats, a democracy cannot function. If the majority decides against democracy, the system will fail.

The current state of the USA is characterized by the fact that, without a doubt, the majority of Americans accept the democratic order; but those who put forward their authoritarian ideas do so under the heading of democracy. They acclaim measures that undermine democracy by misinterpreting them as measures to preserve democracy. In the USA, societal and political systems are considered 'fractured' (Levin 2016) or 'fragmented' (Brooks 2016). One must be concerned about the two-centuries-old American democracy, not only in light of the 'political accident' that was represented by Donald Trump's election, but also by the ongoing and diverse divisions in the American public. Fundamentally, the public is fragmented into two major groups that are hostile to each other. American institutions (administration, military, legal system) are still strong enough to resist the failure of the political system, but the ability of the political machinery to function seems increasingly to be in doubt. The fact that a peaceful change of governments takes place after elections is probably one of the minimal requirements of a functioning democracy. It is also one of the minimal requirements of a democracy that reasonably fair elections take place – and in many Republican-ruled states politicians are currently working hard to change the electoral system so that fair results will not occur. Commentators even say: "It's not 'polarization'. We suffer from Republican radicalization" (Rubin 2022).

Furthermore, the Trump years, but also the political polarization that has become obvious, are a long-term burden for the USA:

> Concerns about the nature and longevity of American commitments extend beyond Trump's legacy overseas. Allies of the United States are also reacting to its internal politics and, in particular, to a deepening partisan divide that creates uncertainty about the future of U.S. foreign policy. Observing the polarized politics on display in the run-up to the 2020 U.S. presidential election, former

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> Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland noted that many European leaders will 'no longer take for granted that they can trust the U.S., even on basic things.' (Myrick 2021)

Fareed Zakaria adds: "America's bitter polarization exacts a price on its credibility abroad" (Zakaria 2022). It is a different game in Europe. The war in Ukraine has shown Europeans that their conviction that there would not be a 'tougher' confrontation between liberal-democratic and dictatorial countries in Europe was only an illusion. A commentator rightly says: "Putin's war is Europe's 9/11. The continent has finally woken up to the necessity of hard power" (Gruyter 2022).

Enthusiasm for authoritarianism is not only found in the Trumpian design and in his areas of influence; the mood in some European countries has shifted from a democratic to an authoritarian orientation. Authoritarian tendencies are intensifying on the periphery of the European Union, from Poland and Hungary to the Balkan countries. Authoritarian populist parties also find a considerable following in Italy or France. Romania and Bulgaria still have a long way to go to reach the standards of Central European democracies. Authoritarianism falls on fertile ground when insecure people call for a strong leader. In some cases, autocratic proposals have become state doctrines, as in some Eastern European countries, combined with emotional nationalist and anti-European visions (Thumann 2020). Anti-polarizing middle-of-the-road civility seems to be on the wane.

Around the turn of the century, the general conviction was that we are in the epoch of the 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1992). Capitalism and democracy will triumph all over the world. In the meantime, populist movements have taken up certain concerns of the people that have been ignored or derided by 'progressive' intellectuals. The movements have nourished concerns and offered authoritarian solutions. The American ex-president has been the epitome of a populist and would-be authoritarian leader, but there are enough people of the same inclination.

Present-day authoritarian movements, unlike the authoritarianisms of the past, do not have a revolutionary plan for overcoming the existing order. Of course, there are also groups that are content to preach anti-capitalism and anti-Americanism or to prattle on about a diffuse 'new system' which they cannot describe in its essential features. The new authoritarians are more a hodgepodge of people, each with specific concerns, but ultimately merely united in their resentment of mainstream

society, of the elite, and of the alleged comprehensive world conspiracy. They rave about freedom and justice, but usually have no idea what they mean by these words. The enemies of democracy consider themselves its true defenders.

9 TRIBALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

People have lived in small social networks for most of humanity's existence. But they are capable of forming social associations in larger units, that is, villages and cities, states, nations and empires. They find their way in societies without knowing the other members – a capacity that is not possible for primates. But it is precisely the nature of large associations that they depend on common and familiar signals. Rules of the game must be followed. If one cannot rely on personal familiarity it has to be trusted that the behavior of individuals is rule-governed. Individuals who send out different signals remain strangers – and one has to be careful. Community must bridge difference: We keep our distance from people who behave differently because we depend on the functioning of the well-known rules. This situation can be understood as a certain kind of tribalism, and individuals depend on this kind of tribalism to be able to act and live. It is convenient when you know your way around and can easily decipher the behavior of other individuals – and it saves transaction costs.

There are two perspectives of the world that have become polarizing vantage points in the last two decades. Some analysts speak of *insiders versus outsiders*, others of *anywheres versus nowheres*, still others of *cosmopolitans versus localists* (Goodhart 2017). The first type of people is at home all over the world, very mobile, open-minded, with good feelings anywhere. They want openness, they love multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. The other type of person is regionally rooted, they look for home, community, embedding, they feel comfortable in familiar environments. They have strong bonds to accustomed practices, they have emotional attachments to their folklore, and they are afraid that the familiar environment will be destroyed. They are already unsettled by the turbulence of topical social developments, jumbling everything, and they foresee a destruction of residual securities to which they want to hold on. They are fearful. They prefer *Gemeinschaft* (community) (Tönnies 1991).

These two types of people have very different views of and desires for the world, they have become alienated from each other due to the opening of borders and the increase in immigration. Migration is possibly the issue on which the strongest polarization within advanced societies is taking place. In the European countries, the problem of immigration from Africa and the Middle East is prevalent, exacerbated by the Islamist threat. In the U.S., it is the southern border, the infiltration of Hispanics, who will soon overtake the number of traditional incumbents in the southern states. The racial tensions within the U.S. have not been solved: there are also gatherings, clusters, communities along racial lines, and even no-go areas. After 2015, a chasm, in the form of a strong "transnational cleavage" (Hooghe und Marks 2018), has opened up.

An example of one of the most irritating polarization processes was the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic was not only a decisive blow to the world orientation of people – what was annoying was the transformation of the pandemic into an issue that became a signal for two polarized world views (with strong connections to partisan camps, especially in the United States): a fast process of escalation, increasing immoderateness of the accusations, eventually readiness for violence. The hope that the shared experience of the epidemic would lead to solidarity was soon dashed: polarization prevailed.

MECHANISMS OF POLARIZATION

The list of 'hot' topics of polarization could easily be extended to smaller polarizing constellations: farmers against animal rights activists, vegetarians against steak lovers, smokers against non-smokers, cyclists against car drivers, believers in mainstream medicine against believers in homeopathy or esoterism, supporters of the European Union against opponents of the imagined 'European centralized dictatorship', mass tourists against local inhabitants, digital natives against digitally overstressed people, new hikers against alpine cows... Different views have always existed, but in the last few years the impression has been growing that the confrontation is becoming harder, more unforgiving, more emotional. Collisions exist in every society, but the polarizations that we have sketched in the preceding sections seem to be important for overall system stability and system legitimacy. The first part of my report was rather a phenomenology of dimensions of cleavages; there were only some remarks about the mechanisms that cause polarizations. Therefore

we will have to take a short look at some dynamics of polarization. How does polarization work?

MECHANISM I: THE ARBITRARINESS OF SYMBOLIC CHARGING

Almost any element of human life can be made the driving factor for the social polarization of persons and groups. Take an element, endow it with social relevance, charge it with symbolic meaning, imagine the opposing positions, assume bad intentions on the part of the people with different opinions – then a process may be started in which positions can be exaggerated and emotionalized, interpreted as an element of identity or reputation or as an irrefutable commandment of honor. The source of such processes of the 'symbolic charging' of phenomena can be found in people and social groups, in structural changes, in the spread of ideas, in the charisma of persons, in the élan of political entrepreneurs.

The problem of COVID-19 vaccination is a strange example from recent times: While anti-vaccination movements have always accompanied the invention of vaccines the general trend of medical development has been the acceptance of new possibilities for the avoidance of dangerous illness. For most people, vaccination is simply unproblematic. People who go to Africa get vaccinated against dengue fever, malaria and other diseases without personal resistance, otherwise they will not get across the border. COVID-19 vaccination, however, has become an ideological flag issue in many countries, and one does not really know why. It cannot be the nature of the object. Strong symbolic narratives have overloaded the trivial pharmaceutical fact. Attitudes towards the pros and cons of vaccination have led to rapid polarization, which, as many complain, cuts across families and friendships. It is an example of how no large-scale structural backgrounds are required to make hostile symbolizations effective.

The example of vaccination also shows how difficult it is to bridge polarized positions, through argument, kindness or reconciliation. Individuals who have tried to talk to vaccination opponents have reported that effective 'immunization strategies' (immunization not in the biological sense, but in the sense of the immutability and dogmatization of views) are used in the discussions (Salamun 1975): adherents do not want information because they are convinced that all arguments which are put forward are untrue or manipulated, anyway. Reconciliation

between the poles of opinion could only take place if there were at least a slight interest in bridging the trenches. However, if the existing rifts have become a core element of one's identity and personal orientation in life, people are not interested in giving up the mental safety that they have gained by placing themselves in the 'closed box' of a strange theory.

It seems to be a general perception that the major debates about politics and society are no longer conducted from the *political center*; they are fed by the right and left edges of the political spectrum (Ackermann 2020). The shades in between and the shades of gray are becoming weaker. It is precisely the weakness of the center that makes us fear for a democratic order. A second general thesis must be added, namely that in a liberal, pluralistic, individualistic society, *ambiguity must be endured* (Bauer 2018). For it is the essence of the political center to want to reconcile opposites and to reach a compromise. Those who want to avoid ambiguity and create unambiguousness contribute to political polarization and 'extremization'.

MECHANISM II: PARALLEL AND INTERSECTING SPLITS

If there are various divisions that are transverse to one another, societies remain more stable and peaceful, while the *parallelization of cleavages* exacerbates conflicts and tensions. A cluster of variables becomes dangerous when, for example, economic differences are charged with nationalistic and religious distinctions along the same social lines, or when cultural heterogeneity coincides with different ethnicities or languages.

A well-known case of parallelized cleavages was terrorism in Ireland: national, economic, social and religious differences ran parallel and resulted in bitter civil war. Even after several years of cooling down, not least because of the open border in the European Union, there is concern that a re-established border demarcation due to Brexit will cause the fighting to flare up again. Observers are also uncertain about the impact of the Sinn Fein party's electoral success in 2022.

Political polarization also seems to have entered a dangerous phase in the USA. Numerous cultural conflicts are gradually merging into a *major bipolar conflict*. Democracy needs ambivalence in the following sense: the worker may exhibit class consciousness, but at the same time be a religious man. He may defend the freedom to bear arms, but still

advocate ecological sustainability. He may be a member of different groups advocating different ideas. Of course, there are certain preferred correlations of opinions; but there are also contradictions, attachments to different groups, antithetical belief elements, and these fractures are important for mitigating or canceling each other – fractures in the mind of one actor and in his relation to other actors. But parallelization may lead to the development of a *mega-divide*, a cleavage that absorbs many other cleavages – the prerequisite for an unbridgeable divide in society. One of the differences becomes the decisive one and absorbs all other divisions.

The most interesting example are the supporters of the American ex-president (the 'eternal genius'). Economically hard-pressed ex-steel workers, suburban housewives who are concerned about drug dealers, evangelical fundamentalists, racists and supremacists, vaccination opponents, esotericists, climate change deniers, weapons enthusiasts who want to keep their machine guns – they have almost no interests in common, but they gather for a common protest or for an attempted coup d'état. It is a mega-divide in American society (almost a fifty-fifty ratio, according to the presidential election in 2020) that is in no small part shaped by political-aesthetic and symbolic differences – with serious political consequences.

When there is a dichotomy of two camps in which all identity categories are linked, *reinforcement* occurs (Lütjen 2020, 2021). The two positions become radicalized and end up being irreconcilable. Differences are melted down into the polarity of 'Us' versus 'Them' (McCoy et al. 2018). In the case of the USA the situation is especially worrying. There are different divisions that are quite incompatible with each other. Evangelical fanatics and 'gun nuts', for example, should not have much in common. In recent years, party affiliation has become the real dividing factor; there is a sort of pro-Trump and anti-Trump camp (even after the end of the former president's term). Voters on both sides have become strangers to each other, living in different worlds, and common ground is dwindling. It is not an interest-based polarization, but a purely affective one (Iyengar und Westwood 2015).

Recent years have shown that the decisive factor for the stability of democracy is *practice*: practices of political confrontation that are sometimes conducted more sharply, sometimes more gently, but which, in any case, take place within the framework of the democratic rules of the game. The acceptance of the rules of the game according to which

one sometimes wins and sometimes loses is the common basis. But polarization in the American case is no longer productive, but destructive. "The absence of an overtly anti-democratic ideology has saved the United States from worse. Trump was not a fascist party leader who, on his first day in power, would have been able to equip the U.S. state apparatus with his own people, recruited from a tightly organized cadre party with ideologically trained followers. There was little that pointed beyond him as a person. Thus, the attack on the institutions stayed erratic, not very well planned, always driven only by Donald Trump's sensitivities and instincts. That was America's luck" (Lütjen 2021, 14). But the luck is limited because the years of the Trump presidency have weakened American reputation and power. Stephen Walt maintains: "America's polarization is a foreign policy problem, too. The fact that Democrats and Republicans hate each other is making the United States weaker" (Walt 2019).

MECHANISM III: THE SLEEPWALKER-MODEL

Polarization processes have their own logic of moving forward; often it is a logic of *escalation*. One paradigm is the *sleepwalker model*: polarization that goes unnoticed or that is seen as rather irrelevant or harmless; a slippery slope into a conflict that is not seen coming or that is considered inevitable, but not earth-shattering.

The pre-World War I process was given the label 'sleepwalking' to describe the almost unconscious drift of the acting persons and governments into a situation of rising polarization that no one wanted. In his comprehensive study, Christopher Clark describes the network of diplomats, politicians, and crowned heads who had their own highly ambitious ideas about the course of European politics (Clark 2013). It was an aloof caste – self-confident, arrogant, insulated from the majority of the populations, and it regarded international politics as a kind of pastime. None of the great powers pursued a consistent policy before 1914. They were stuck in the logic of power and alliances of the nineteenth century. They slid altogether into polarization without noticing it, at least without finding the polarization a dramatic development. Even the war was initially seen as one of those skirmishes that had often been fought in the nineteenth century. But the skirmish was to change the face of Europe. It was the starting point for an internal

and external polarization that would almost inevitably lead towards the next war.

One may classify the situation in the interwar period as delusion. But one can also apply the sleepwalking metaphor to the developed nations of the present. In the spring of 2022, a 'turn of the times' ('Zeitenwende') was proclaimed in Europe, with great seriousness. President Putin may have miscalculated the Russian situation as well as the responsive power and unity of the Western world, but the Western European powers were stunned by their own failure to perceive and understand the development of the last two decades, which, in retrospect, turns out to have been a clear expansive and aggressive strategy by Russia. One can find many reasons for this development, which, in retrospect, is judged as naivety or blindness, but it is not far-fetched to call this development another example of 'sleepwalking'.

During the same years, a primitive nationalist agitation has been spreading in Western states, from Poland to Hungary, from Britain to America, among a population that had never had better living conditions. There are not only obscure political movements agitating against the 'system,' but also top politicians, such as the leaders of the Brexiteers in Great Britain. Perhaps this situation of frivolity has to do with the fact that while the majority of people had to deal with war as a normality throughout most of human history, the rational avoidance of war has become a diplomatic goal during the last 200 years – and even more so after 1945. But according to the historian Michael Howard, civil society and perpetual peace are '*boring conditions*' (Howard 2000). Militant movements, fascinating conspiracy theories, and radical revolutionary fantasies are attractive counter-images to the condition of boredom. When the state of peace and wealth is taken for granted, the rising processes of internal and external polarization are viewed with excitement or amusement – and one goes down the slippery slope.

MECHANISM IV: VICIOUS CIRCLES

Vicious circles are a different model. This can be applied, for example, to the processes of impoverishment of rural regions producing the rising polarization between urban and rural areas: a deterioration of living standards in the countryside where one element is driving the next element, in feedback loops combining to an inescapable downward trend. The desired goals would be: equal and fair living conditions in urban and

rural areas; but political programs to create equivalence fail. Therefore, radical proposals accept the unchangeable: There is no point in pouring a lot of money into rural regions because it does not effect anything. The same money should rather be used to create incentives for the rural remnant population to migrate even faster to the metropolitan areas: faster polarization as a positive political concept.

Structurally weak rural regions get caught in a vicious circle: They offer fewer and fewer jobs, so the next generation has to migrate away. Better education and qualification drive emigration even more, because highly qualified jobs are missing. This leads to a reduction in infrastructure, to a loss of legal and administrative units, to the outflow of many institutions. Stores, offices, courts and schools are closing. Further emigration sets in. The mood becomes depressed. Regional polarization increases: upward trends for the agglomerations, downward trends for the rural areas. The gap is growing. At the moment, there are no forces visible that could reverse these developments. The division emerging between the city and the countryside is associated with other polarizations: clear political differences and diverging electoral choices can be observed between urban and rural areas.

MECHANISM V: HOPE AND DISAPPOINTMENT

The Eastern European countries provide a good example of the mechanism that results from expectations and disappointments, from hopes and disillusionment, from longings and dampers. After the transformation of the political and economic system the populations of these countries expected a fast alignment with the living standards of the West. Capitalism seemed to guarantee success: wealth within a short time. Manna would fall from the sky; pictures from television would become reality.

People did not fully realize that the former political structures in their countries remained powerful, that bureaucrats and intelligence officers seized the opportunity to build a special system of wealth distribution and domination based on a corrupt system of confidants and oligarchs and controlled by the intelligence community (Belton 2020). Furthermore, the challenges of 'real capitalism' were unknown. In the countries affected, there was low productivity, and people were used to comfortable rules of working. (In Russia, in a peculiar mixture, forces worked from feudalistic tsarism, from Soviet communism and from

orthodox clericalism.) But in all Eastern Bloc countries, there were non-competitive products and firms that were bound to disappear from the market. And there were high levels of corruption at all levels of the system down to everyday behavior. The result was: internal polarization (extreme inequality within the countries) and external polarization (no convergence towards Western standards, no prosperity). The result was broad-based frustration and emigration from a hopeless situation.

The post-socialist countries saw their expectations of fast convergence and ascent disappointed. Quite the contrary happened: during the years of transformation, economic and social polarization increased. Compared to the level of high expectations, the fall was deep, and there are signals of rising emotional and political detachment, especially political polarization between 'Europe West' and 'Europe East'. Eastern countries are drifting into political authoritarianism. Nationalism serves as a consolation in a prolonged situation of poverty which is all the more unbearable because the visibility of Western wealth is provided.

MECHANISM VI: POLARIZING COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Polarization has its origins not only in the mind, it is also driven by factors in the outside world, namely technological and economic developments. The new electronic networks have disappointed expectations that they would provide an enormous boost to information, with the result that the level of rational discussion in the electorate would increase as a result of better knowledge and reflection. Instead, hostility and hate speech, dogmatism and fundamentalism have increased. The new media are pushing the old media to the periphery. This means first, the essential selection processes no longer take place, processes that weed out false information and emotional vulgarities. Second, the average quality of information is declining because trash and bullshit (!) are growing faster than solid information on the Net. Third, the news is broken down more according to individual preferences, so that the horizon of people is narrowed rather than broadened.

If one does not look at what people say, but at their actual practices, one cannot consider the internet to be a huge market providing comprehensive information. It has turned out to be not the instrument to get closer to the ideal of having access to all collected knowledge

treasures, or to the ideal that more information means more knowledge, more reason, more enlightenment, more rationality. Rather, *bubbles* have been formed in which people reinforce their opinions and dogmatic atmospheres are built up. It is not the realization of the dreams of the Enlightenment, but the playground of narrow horizons and conspiracy theories. The formation of closed groups in our pluralistic and globalized age is the response to the 'liquidization' of (collective and individual) identities (Bauman 2000). Globalism and universalism make people helpless. They are seeking cocoons. They try to find a balance between autonomy and connection, and they end up with polarization: there may be ideological, religious or nativist adherents, and they strive for the solidity and stability of belonging. They try to avoid the rootlessness and arbitrariness of the cosmopolitan class. But often they land in hate, aggression, and conspiracy nonsense (Barkun 2013; Brotherton 2015; Fenster 2008; Knight 2013). The epistemic abyss prevents serious discussion.

The *logic of algorithms* enhances polarization processes. People are primarily provided with those materials that correspond to their profile; they are thus offered views that are compatible with their inclinations and dispositions, a reciprocal process that results in reinforcement and escalation of views. A world of knowledge grows that is a *closed entity*: where thinking moves only within one's own categories, where one can no longer perceive any other reasoning. An assertion incompatible with one's own view can no longer be thought through but represents an object that must be fought and destroyed. Convictions are wrapped into the vocabulary of the highest values, namely freedom, but 'enemies' must not be allowed to enjoy freedom. Enemies must be fought. In the case of 'virus-generated polarization', especially regarding vaccination, not only two opinions but two irreconcilable world views have confronted each other. On the one hand, an acceptance of restrictions and medical measures based on the respective state of scientific knowledge and connected with a commitment to general welfare, on the other hand, the vulgar-anarchistic idea of self-determination that does not have to take any other person's well-being into consideration.

Beyond technical forces, it is partly also the logic of *discursive polarization* that creates problems. The widespread assertion is influential that people come closer through conversation and interaction, that they understand each other better by interacting, and that they develop more reasonable solutions by discussing their opinions.

Ultimately, the idea of 'deliberative democracy' is based on this assumption (Elster 1998). For many deliberating groups, the assumption does not hold empirically. According to Cass Sunstein, group polarization means that the members of a deliberating group come to more extreme views, in the direction to which the members already tended before the discussion (Sunstein 2002). There are 'hardening' processes, escalation processes, overbidding processes. When people meet more often, extreme views can result from repeated passages through such discussions (Myers und Bishop 1971). This is true for different deliberation groups: courts, terrorists, student councils, work groups, families, parties. "When people are hearing echoes of their own voices, the consequence may be far more than support and reinforcement" (Sunstein 2002, 177). Groups often make more extreme decisions than the average individual of the group would make. Under certain conditions, the strange result is that more interactive deliberation, more discussion, more reflection seems to tend towards a landscape of more polarized groups. The 'bubbles' of the electronic world are a manifestation of the mechanism. It is an 'agitated society' (Hübl 2020).

MECHANISM VII: POLARIZING ECONOMIC LOGIC

Some outbidding competitions are the result of technological features. Escalation processes take place on those social media platforms where agitators generate greater attention by exaggerations or radicalizations. Then a race of rising hostilities ensues, which eliminates any perspective of compromise and balance, any arguments and facts and which ends in conflict and hatred. But there are also opposite dynamics. An overload of incomprehensible and contradictory information can result in indifference.

Greater attention can also be drawn to consumerist messages and images, and whimsical phenomena like 'influencer markets' can sometimes generate significant revenue through advertising. Yet, of course, most young people who think they can follow those role models who rake in millions of dollars for some inexplicable reason, will fail. It is the old story of the American Dream: thousands of people are kept on track because one of them has succeeded (through work, idea or chance), and this exception is held up to them as a general model, with the fiction that it can be implemented for everyone.

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Network systems have a peculiar built-in polarization mechanism. They strive towards a monopoly situation, or at least towards oligopolies. Electronic communication devices are only useful if there are many other devices that can be connected. And it is not useful to use ten internet search engines. It is better if one search engine provides me with everything I need. One also does not want to look at ten different providers and compare their offers when a hotel room is to be booked. There are markets that need size or even comprehensiveness. Amazon, Microsoft and Google have conquered the top places of corporation rankings. Ideal-typical models assume that markets lead to full competition; in reality, there are mechanisms in which certain markets lead to monopolies and oligopolies – and therefore produce a polarized scenery with some giants and many dwarfs.

As digital technology allows customers to be added at almost zero cost, more and more *winner-takes-all markets* arise (Frank 1995). Larger markets, preferably world markets, produce profits of an order previously unknown. The economic rules that applied to an automotive company, for example, do not apply to these organizations. They need little capital, they offer comparatively few jobs, sometimes they have almost zero production costs. The outcome is economic polarization with large corporations absorbing all innovative smaller forms of production or creativity; and a couple of owners accumulating wealth in an unprecedented order of magnitude.

FINAL REMARKS: A MODEL OF RESENTMENT

One could add some other polarizing mechanisms: incremental processes that are not perceived because of their gradualness until a polarized state is reached; disruptions that lead to sudden system changes that one could not foresee or that have been pushed out of one's perception; tipping points (Gladwell 2002); black swans and grey swans (Taleb 2010), cycles and so on. I wanted to give a rough description of the landscape of polarization: current topics as well as mechanisms. There are long-term and short-term polarizations, classical and new cleavages, polarizations that are produced by technology, symbolizations, experiences, pampering or stupidity.

Considering the motley variety of motives driving the polarization of feelings and ideas, but especially enhancing the growth of negative emotions, resentment and aggressiveness, one can speculate about a

model that reverses causality: *for a number of reasons, there is a potential for resentment, anger and polarization that is ready to attach itself to any issue.* It is not the vaccination that effects the polarization of opinions; it is the polarization that drives people into different camps for and against vaccination. A possible explanation needs several steps.

First, the *polarization may be derived from widespread resentment*: discomfort, indignation, outrage, grievance, anger, bitterness. The feelings are documented in every newspaper blog (Koppetsch 2018; Jensen 2017). In many mainstream media blogs one can meet a gathering of opinions from the gutter. For many people, the only way to build their identity is by insulting well-known people (from the 'elite') in the vilest of ways. This seems to provide a feeling of strength. The polarization between those who feel dissatisfied in the wealthiest society of all times and those who are satisfied with their situation in life seems to be developing into the most essential democratic problem of late modernity.

Second, the sources of the hostile feelings are the *excessive societal demands* conveyed by the 'second modernity': complexity and self-ineffectiveness, uncertainty of values and weakness of action, loss of community and feelings of 'disembedding', fear of the loss of prosperity and security that have been taken for granted. There are certain polarization processes that are rooted in the structures and dynamics of society, but what is puzzling are those polarization processes that affect people's perceptions and world views, sometimes completely detached from real world processes.

Third, *postmodern society's logic of existence is to grow expectations and aspirations*. It is the age of freedom and entrepreneurship, of growth and consumerism. There are many more goods than can ever be acquired. There is more demand for status symbols and more demand for prominence than can ever be redeemed in a world of limited benefits and limited attention. There are more and more options for action that cannot be realized because time alone limits breadth and quantity of experiences. The more opportunities for self-realization are offered, the more goods are presented as life's dreams, the more experiences are assessed as realizations of the meaning of life – then we have a fatal result: the proportion of those options that can actually be implemented in one's own life becomes smaller and smaller. The wealthier the society, the smaller the share of successful appropriation of options, the greater the failures and frustrations. Rich countries are a machinery for the creation of disappointments. Since for very many people the option of

eternal life has been lost, there is no longer even the chance to make up for everything that one did not accommodate in this life (Prisching 2009).

Fourth, there are *unpleasant experiences that result in an aggressive mood and a readiness to protest* that can attach itself to any topic that comes its way: outrage in search of a topic, diffuse readiness to protest 'for its own sake'. The expression of anger and hatred alone already carries the reward. Some people have a high level of aversion throughout their lives, for others it remains the last possibility to feel aliveness and self-efficacy. Even a reasonable vaccination that would otherwise go unnoticed may serve as a valve, an arbitrary object, a random object for the articulation of dissatisfaction. Diffuse fears are mapped onto vaccination so that the helplessness in the world gets a name. It could equally well be the topic of climate. Or the topic of war. Or any other topic. *The real purpose of protest is protest:* the emotionally satisfying staging of a protest, acting out one's 'psychological overpressure'. It is a society overwhelmed by the good fortune of its situation.

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2022.

EVA NOWOTNY

Recent Developments in the Transatlantic Relationship

It is indeed an appropriate moment to look at the Transatlantic Relationship from a broader perspective. Equally appropriate and timely is the selection of the topic of this conference. Polarization is not only a societal phenomenon and an issue which fragments our societies. It is also a troubling and dangerous problem in international affairs and leads to a climate of confrontation, especially when it arises hand in hand with a militarization of language.

Having lived and worked in the United States for eleven years, and beyond that, I have dealt with transatlantic affairs and EU/US relations in different capacities throughout my professional life. There is an organized structure to the transatlantic relationship. It comprises regular summit meetings on the highest level, but also regular meetings between Parliamentarians, between civil servants and experts, and last but not least, between representatives of the civil society. But, like every other machinery, this needs to be taken care of, nurtured and sustained, and this is primarily the task of diplomats.

On 7 December 2020, the Council of the European Union issued Council conclusions on European Union and United States relations, beginning with the following words:

> The Council reaffirms the strategic importance of the European Union's partnership with the United States of America as the world's foremost and closest relationship, rooted in shared values and common interests, cultural and historic ties as well as geopolitical reality. A stronger transatlantic partnership is vital to ensure and to contribute to our common security, stability and prosperity. We also believe that transatlantic relations are the bedrock of the rules-based international order, reinforcing international peace and security, freedom, prosperity, human rights, gender equality, multilateralism, rule of law and democracy, not just for those living on our shores but also for the rest of the world.

This is, I believe, a political credo with which all of us here can be in agreement. In spite, however, of these beautiful thoughts, I have personally lived through and experienced a good number of ups and

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downs in this relationship. I remember, as I am sure you will too, the times of "Europessimism" and "Eurosclerosis." I remember the sentiment expressed with conviction and utmost certainty by many that Europe's days were past, that Europe had become irrelevant and a kind of cultural museum, and that the US had shifted all its interest to Asia and the Pacific region.

I lived in Washington between 2003 and 2008 and remember vividly the Old Europe debate and the Freedom Fries. I recall quite a number of symposia in which I participated and in which the demise of the euro was predicted as inevitable; and the gradual development towards a European constitution was branded a threat to the United States. I have often wondered about the ease and the gratuitous pleasure with those doomsday scenarios. If any of these really were to come about, the consequences would most certainly be seriously detrimental to the United States as well!

One may of course say that this was a bit of teasing and bullying between friends and that it did not damage the core of our relations. But things became more serious. The political relationship reached a new low in the years 2017-2020, during the administration of President Trump, when many of the fundamental concepts of our relationship were suddenly called into question.

For the first time in post-World War II history Europe was confronted with an American President who was openly hostile to the European Union and the whole concept of European integration, even branded Europe as an enemy. The slogan "America First" initiated a period of withdrawal and of concentration on the immediate national interests of the US. Consequently, this led to the rejection of many well-established positions: security cooperation in the frame of NATO was declared obsolete, the European Union was described as negligible, international organizations and multilateral diplomacy as harmful to the American national interest.

Not surprisingly, it was thus with unreserved satisfaction that the change in government brought about by the Presidential Election of 2020 was welcomed in Europe. The sentiment prevailed that a new impulse, a renewed sense of purpose for the transatlantic partnership might be possible. It is in this regard extremely important that regular negotiations and encounters between diplomats and experts have restarted. It was thus possible to solve two issues that have encumbered our relations for quite

some time – taxes on steel imports were lifted and the American objection to the Northstream pipeline was revoked.

As you know, the European Union works through meetings and documents, and the two most recent documents pertaining to our topic are the Council Conclusions on European Union-United States relations of 7 December 2020, to which I have already referred, and the second document, perhaps even more relevant, which contains the joint declaration of the EU/US summit of 15 June 2021, entitled "Towards a renewed Transatlantic Partnership." The emphasis here is on the term 'renewed' which recurs frequently throughout the text. "We, the leaders of the European Union and the United States met today to renew our Transatlantic Partnership, set out a Joint Transatlantic Agenda for the post-pandemic era, and commit to regular dialogue to take stock of progress."

Not surprisingly, a large part of the deliberations was devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic, which in its immediate impact as well as in its long-term consequences has hit both sides of the Atlantic in equal measure. It is evident that dealing with present and future global health challenges requires much greater cooperation. This not only among the transatlantic partners – although most of the stunning scientific breakthroughs originated either in the US or in Europe – but on the international level and in partnership with international organizations like the WHO, to which both sides have committed themselves. The American decision to return to the WHO and to subscribe once again to multilateral diplomacy was for Europe the confirmation that "America is back," "Diplomacy is back" were not empty slogans.

The same holds true for the second major crisis we are facing – climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. Europe has welcomed the return of the Biden administration to the Paris Agreement and has appreciated the role of the US government at the most recent Glasgow Conference – being fully aware, I may add, of the domestic political constraints the US government faces on those issues. In view of the magnitude of the tasks before us, an EU/US High Level Climate Action Group is to be established in order to channel all creative resources on transition towards a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy. For the development and deployment of green technologies a Transatlantic Green Technology Alliance is to be established.

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The renunciation of the INF Treaty as well as of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe has caused widespread concern in Europe – fueled mainly by the fear that we might enter another spiral of destabilizing arms race like that at the height of the Cold War. There are other issues as well which cause concern – such as the development of small nuclear missiles, the increasing utilization of drones as well as of cyber warfare, all of which change the nature of conflicts. It is thus not surprising that security policy and the management of conflicts figure largely as areas of cooperation in the renewed Transatlantic Agenda.

The start of comprehensive disarmament talks between the US and Russia in Geneva and Helsinki were welcomed in Europe. It is, however, apparent that there is no place and no role for Europe in these talks – although Europe as a possible theater of conflict between the two is massively concerned. It is an illusion to think that Europe will become an independent actor for its own security. There are some developments in the area of Common Security and Defense Policy which point in the right direction and are encouraging, but they go slowly and in small steps. For the foreseeable future, Europe's security will remain closely tied to the United States. It is incumbent on the EU to see where and in which area they can be a useful partner, be it through peacekeeping operations and the deployment of military, or other forms of crisis management, in which Europe can bring negotiating skills and diplomatic experience to bear.

With regard to relations with China – certainly one of the most burning and potentially dangerous issues – the Transatlantic Agenda stays rather vague: "We intend to closely consult and cooperate on the full range of issues in the framework of our respective similar multi-faceted approach to China, which includes elements of cooperation, competition and rivalry." Xinjiang, Tibet, Hongkong and the Taiwan Straits are singled out as areas of particular concern. It is ironic that, in this context, the US emphasizes the importance of respecting the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, one of the many conventions which the US has never ratified.

Let me sum up: From the European perspective, the transatlantic relationship has lost nothing of its relevance. 22 member states of the Union are also members of NATO and thus closely tied to the US in all issues of security. But also those members of the EU which do not belong to NATO have opened possibilities of constructive cooperation through the Common Security and Defense Strategy and the Petersberg tasks.

Europe continues to be the most important economic and trading partner of the US, and this in all areas, from trade to foreign direct investment to services and the digital economy. According to the data which are regularly provided by Johns Hopkins University, transatlantic trade alone surpassed $ 5 billion. We are talking about 15 million jobs which depend on this. More than 70% of America's foreign direct investment went to Europa in the last year, 72% from Europe to the US. This is no longer two sides of the Atlantic Ocean, but one huge economic area.

America is an island continent. It cannot be overrun or occupied by foreign troops. Its neighborhood to the south is a bit disorderly, but not really threatening. The US is less dependent on global trade than Europe, given its large internal market as well as its abundant natural resources. Europe is in a less favorable position. It is dependent on international trade, in particular on the import of raw materials. To the East and to the South, Europe is surrounded by instability, chaos and threats – from neo-imperialist Russia, from inherently weak autocracies like Egypt or Algeria, from failing states like Afghanistan, Libya or Syria, or further to the south in Africa from states that cannot fulfill their most immediate tasks and thus produce a massive migration problem for Europe. Much more than the US, Europe needs a cooperative and rules-based world order. To create and maintain such an order by far surpasses the influence and the power of Europe. This can only succeed in a close cooperative relationship with the US. In this respect, the US and Europe are indeed bound together by a common destiny.

2. PERCEPTIONS OF POLARIZATION ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC

WYNFRID KRIEGLEDER

Looking for a Scapegoat: Germanophone Novelists of the 19th and 20th Centuries Depicting a Polarized America

It is 2023 and there seems to be general agreement that the world as a whole – and the USA in particular – has never been as polarized as today. As an amateur-historian, I beg to disagree. It seems to me that the US was much more polarized in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the anti-Vietnam-war movement, violent protests in the streets and the National Guard firing into a crowd of students at Kent State University, Ohio. And the US was at least as polarized as it is today in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with the Great Depression. And there was polarization in the 1880s, with the closing of the frontier and social unrest like the Chicago Haymarket massacre. And, of course, there was enormous polarization before, during, and after the Civil War. And in the late 1820s, when Andrew Jackson's followers and opponents demonized each other. And during the Presidential Election of 1800, when Thomas Jefferson's and John Adams' followers were convinced their respective opponent threatened the very future of the US. And in 1776, when a large part of the American population opposed secession from Great Britain. My point is that the USA is and always has been polarized. And that is exactly how it was perceived from abroad.

In the following paper I will look at a number of Germanophone novels from the late 18th century to the present that depict the United States as a polarized country. It does not matter whether the authors of these books ever actually visited the USA, nor does it matter whether their image of the USA is "correct" or rather lopsided. What I am interested in is the kind of American polarization that these novels pretend to expose. I argue that these writers usually detected something in the US that they already knew from Europe. Often they were afraid that certain polarizing tendencies they attributed to America would spill over to Europe. They wanted to warn their European readers. Quite often they would designate certain European polarizing tendencies as American imports, thus absolving Europe from any responsibility for unsavory developments. And in some cases, they would just try to deflect

attention from European developments in an exculpatory act of what-aboutism: Sure, maybe there is anti-Semitism and racism in Europe, but what about the USA, where things are much worse?

My methodological approach is inspired by the field of imagology, which was established within the study of comparative literature – to analyze the image of a foreign country that a certain culture perpetuates through literature, film, the arts etc. These images were often important ingredients in the process of one's own nation-building. The "Germans" of the 18th and 19th centuries defined themselves to a large degree by pointing out what they were *not*. Most importantly, they were not French. Some of these stereotypes of foreign countries also contain a modicum of regret: Why don't we possess more of the positive attributes of other countries? Why don't we Germans have more of the French *savoir-vivre,* or American optimism? The German and Austrian image of Italy since about 1950 is a case in point. Italian politics are not at all considered exemplary, but the Italian way of life – whatever that is – is admired.

As far as the European image of the USA is concerned, we have to bear in mind another fact: from the very beginning, the United States has been considered a model for Europe's future, a future hoped for or feared. Therefore, European images of the USA usually sway between fascination and disgust.

Germanophone novels about the USA have always tended to portray a polarized society. There is a rather trivial narratological reason: In the 19th century, most German novels about America were adventure novels, quite often set in the Wild West. For this kind of literature to function, you needed good guys and bad guys, you needed polarization. But apart from that, the concept of polarization was written into the image of America from the beginning.

This is definitely the case with the very first Germanophone novel on the United States, David Christoph Seybold's *Reizenstein. Die Geschichte eines deutschen Officiers*. (*Reizenstein. The History of a German Officer*). This two-volume epistolary novel was published in 1779 and 1780. It relates the story of a group of young people from Germany, all of them typical representatives of the age of sentimentality. They experience much personal unhappiness in the Old World and ultimately emigrate to America, joining their friend, the protagonist Reizenstein, a young officer who is fighting in George Washington's army. (Historically, there were some German volunteers in the Continental Army, the most famous one being Friedrich Wilhelm von

Steuben). In Seybold's novel, they all find happiness in America, where they can lead the kind of idyllic life that German class-based society would not permit them in Europe.

Most interesting about *Reizenstein* is the fact that Seybold published the second volume in 1780 – long before the outcome of the American Revolution was decided. Seybold expected victory for the colonists, but he could not be certain. Nevertheless, his book ends with a utopian outlook into the future: The British colonists achieve their independence and draft a constitution.

Seybold's fictitious American constitution is quite different from what the American founding fathers would agree upon a few years later in Philadelphia. In Seybold's version, the USA becomes an agrarian communist utopia, similar to later actual projects like Johann Georg Rapp's "Harmony Society", which was founded in western Pennsylvania in 1805 and flourished in the 1830s.

In Seybold's novel the new constitution is the result of a power struggle within the ruling class. The members of the Continental Congress are the bad guys. After achieving independence, the American elites are eager to submit to French dominance, France being their military ally, after all. In order to prevent a return to colonialism, now with France as the colonial power, a few young officers stage a military coup d'état, dissolve Congress and organize a plebiscite which results in the new constitution described above.

Of course, Seybold's version of a possible American future is quite far-fetched: Why should the plantation owners of Virginia and the businessmen of Massachusetts accept a constitution that forbids private property? But Seybold simply exports the kind of polarization his characters experience in Germany into the New World. Back home, they all suffered because German society lacked moral strength and was restricted by class distinctions. Private interests dominated over the common good. In Seybold's America, the same forces of evil try to dominate – but he imagines a successful revolution across the ocean that brings about a new order.

David Christoph Seybold never visited the New World – all his information about the war in America, sometimes quite accurate, came from German newspapers. His novel has little to do with the "real" America. But my point is that his imagined America is dominated by the same controversies that he noticed in Europe a few years before the French Revolution.

A very different and yet similar case is my second author, Charles Sealsfield. He was born Carl Postl in 1793, the son of a local vintner in what was to become the Austrian Empire in 1804, in the village of Poppitz near Znaim/Znoymo in Moravia. His biography is quite remarkable. Postl became a priest in Prague and held a rather influential position within the religious order of the Kreuzherren vom Roten Stern. In 1823, for reasons unknown, he fled to the USA and reinvented himself as Charles Sealsfield, journalist and novelist. In 1831 he returned to Europe, settled in Switzerland and published a number of well-received novels about life in the New World. Sealsfield was considered an American, his former identity was not revealed before his death in 1864.

Most of Sealsfield's novels are set in the Old South, in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. He painted a rather positive picture of Southern plantation life. Since his novels are told from a decidedly American perspective, sometimes even with an American first-person-narrator, there has been some discussion whether Sealsfield should be considered an ideologue glorifying ante-bellum society and slavery[1], or whether his books actually expose the cruelty of the slave-owning society through the means of an unreliable narrator, challenging the reader to recognize the contradictions his first-person-narrators try to smooth over.[2] But no matter how we judge the ethical position of the narrators, Sealsfield depicts the United States as a deeply polarized society.

Sealsfield, who admired Thomas Jefferson's idea of agrarianism and the politics of Andrew Jackson, presents Southern society as a pre-modern idyllic way of life that is threatened by the encroaching forces of the modern world, chiefly capitalism. In the 1830s and 1840s, he became more and more disgruntled with the development of American society. In his penultimate novel, *Das Cajütenbuch* (*The Cabin Book*), he envisioned the newly-founded Republic of Texas as one last chance to preserve the United States as it should be: a republic of free farmers unencumbered by the forces of capitalism and urban mass democracy.

Charles Sealsfield's America is a country torn apart by the conflicting forces that would cause the Civil War 20 years later. It is basically a conflict between a pre-modern and a modern way of life. Obviously, this was not only an American conflict but rather reflected tensions in Europe in the mid-19th century, namely how to modernize and inject a dose of

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[1] This is the position held by Jeffrey Sammons and Wynfrid Kriegleder.
[2] This is the position of Walter Grünzweig.

energy into the stalemate political and economic situation while also preserving what was worth preserving. Charles Sealsfield reacted to this aporia by investing his hopes in the great republic across the Atlantic. But comparable to a number of other European visitors to America, his optimism ultimately changed into disillusionment and the United States became more of a nightmare than a promised land.

America as a nightmare is the topic of the most famous Germanophone anti-American novel of the 19th century, Ferdinand Kürnberger's *Der Amerikamüde* (*The Man Tired of America*) from 1855.

Ferdinand Kürnberger, born in Vienna in 1821, was a typical "1848er," a liberal and a rabid German-nationalist – no contradiction in those days –, who had to flee from Vienna to Dresden because he had been involved in the 1848 revolution. He wrote his one and only novel in order to establish himself within the field of German literature. Actually, he expected literary acclaim from his verse tragedies and considered his novel rather a hack-writing job, something that would hopefully result in money and fame.

Der Amerikamüde tells the story of the Austro-Hungarian poet Moorfeld, who emigrates to America in the early 1830s, full of hope, and is disillusioned from the moment he steps ashore. In 1832 the well-known Austro-Hungarian poet Nikolaus Lenau had emigrated to America and had returned to Europe within a year, completely disgusted. Lenau had died in 1850 and there was considerable public interest in his biography when Kürnberger published his novel, falsely insinuating that his book was somehow based on Lenau's experience.

Kürnberger's title also alludes to a widely read 1837 novel by Ernst Willkomm, *Die Europamüden* (*Those Tired of Europe*), which had painted a devastating picture of European life in the 1830s, just like Seybold's *Reizenstein*, and had ended with the protagonists emigrating to America. Willkomm had promised his readers a second volume depicting the happy life his figures would lead on the banks of the Mississippi, but this book failed to materialize.

Kürnberger's protagonist Moorfeld experiences an American dystopia in a somewhat tiresome series of episodes. The first half of the book is set among the New York City upper class, the second half in Ohio where Moorfeld struggles to succeed as a "Latin farmer". Whatever Moorfeld attempts is opposed by evil Yankees. And it is not only the Americans that displease the sensitive poet. American nature itself is

ugly and gross. The final verdict is unmistakable: America is evil incarnate, about to destroy the whole world.

One of Moorfeld's friends, the German expatriate Benthal, is certain: Salvation depends on Germanizing America. „Ganz Nordamerika wird deutsch werden [...] Aber was sag' ich ganz Nordamerika? Die ganze Welt wird deutsch werden" („All of North America will become German [...] But why do I say all of North America? The whole world will become German") (Kürnberger 203), he exclaims. It is difficult not to remember the infamous Nazi song, „Heute gehört uns Deutschland und morgen die ganze Welt" („Today Germany belongs to us, tomorrow the whole world") when reading Benthal's peroration. It is the ironic twist of the book that Benthal, who wants to Germanize America, becomes a Yankee himself in the end, though still believing he is fulfilling a German-nationalist goal. Adorno's proverbial "Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen" ("there is no correct life within the wrong one") comes true for any European trying to reform the USA: they are all corrupted.

Some critics have suggested we might read Kürnberger's book as a collection of absurd and exaggerated encounters, just like a Thomas Bernhard novel. I have my doubts because I do not see any trace of irony in Kürnberger's chauvinism.

But to return to my main topic: In an anti-American novel from 1855 one might expect to find allusions to the deep polarization troubling the US in those times. After all, the book was written five years before the start of the Civil War. But Kürnberger, who obviously knew very little about the USA, never touches the questions of slavery, abolitionism or the North-South-conflict. The main instance of American polarization that he dwells upon is American xenophobia, the prejudice against European immigrants.

In New York City, Moorfeld is introduced into the cozy community of "Kleindeutschland" (Little Germany), a district where the German immigrants try to preserve their pre-modern way of life, including an inn aptly named "Gasthaus zum grünen Baum". ("At the sign of the Green Tree"). Kleindeutschland is opposed to all the restless modernism that New York represents. The narrator is quite critical of the backwardness of this community. For Germans to conquer the world, they must imitate Yankee industriousness and energy.

Towards the end of the novel, Kleindeutschland is destroyed by an anti-German mob and Moorfeld flees back to Europe. The message of

the book is obvious. America either kills the German immigrants or it corrupts them.

The only instance of American polarization that Kürnberger notices is the anti-immigration impetus. Historically, as we know, ethnically motivated anti-immigration fervor has been part of the American psyche for a long time. It was definitely still a strong issue in the 1850s. But it was also the prevailing issue in Kürnberger's own country, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, after 1850. Nationalist conflicts would ultimately tear the Hapsburg Empire apart. The "Germans", the group that Kürnberger identified with, were right in the center of this strife, denying equal rights to other groups while at the same time being afraid of losing their position of superiority. Once more we may conclude: Ferdinand Kürnberger, when writing a novel about the United States, depicts a polarized society, but he exports a burning point of contention from his home country to a country he knew little about.

The most prominent German novelist of the late 19th century who wrote about the United States did not know anything about America either. He never visited the country before he was 65 years old. Nevertheless, his fantasies shaped the German view of America for generations to come. His name was Karl May.

Unlike Kürnberger, Karl May was never a member of the literary establishment. If noticed at all, he was considered an author of cheap adventure literature, somebody no serious literary critic or scholar would deign to engage with. Millions read his books from the 1880s into the 1960s, schoolchildren and adults, people from all walks of life, from the leftist philosopher Ernst Bloch to Adolf Hitler.

Karl May, born in 1842 into a poor family in Saxony, led a life of petty crime and spent eight years in prison before beginning his literary career in the 1870s with adventure stories that he claimed were based on his own life. Although he had never left Germany, he invented an alter ego, a German superman who had travelled the whole world and experienced amazing adventures in the American West, but also in China and Africa, in South America and the Ottoman Empire. We may consider Karl May a literary impostor, but even after his adventures had been exposed as fiction, he remained popular long after his death in 1912.

In his American novels, Karl May imagined himself as a German traveler named Old Shatterhand who is known all over the Wild West and is befriended by the most famous Native American, an Apache chief by the name of Winnetou. Together they fight evil and assist whoever is

in need, by their very deeds spreading a gospel of justice and European/Christian values. Their enemies are usually greedy Yankees and native Americans who are tricked into assisting the Yankees, but also belligerent Indian tribes who have not yet accepted the notion that for Indian culture to survive against the onslaught of white American expansion, the natives must unite and cooperate with white people of good will who, most of the time, just happen to be of German descent.

Karl May's novels are set in the 1860s and 1870s, usually west of the Mississippi, in an uncivilized wilderness that has very little to do with the "real" United States of this period. Nevertheless, Karl May's unreal fantasy left a deep mark on his European readers' image of the USA. What May imagined was a country deeply polarized: peace-loving noble savages and settlers on the one hand, bloodthirsty savages and greedy Yankees on the other hand.

Of course, this concept of polarization served Karl May's narrative strategy, for Winnetou and Old Shatterhand need enemies to fight against. But if we look closely, we find again that May exported a European issue of contention into the New World. His protagonists fight for a traditional world order, a pre-modern way of life, with solitary hunters and small farmers in an idyllic world. But modernity is encroaching: The American government is destroying traditional Indian culture by building railroads through tribal land and greedy Yankees are exploiting oil-wells and searching for gold.

The German political scientist Christian Schwaabe has pointed out that German anti-Americanism after 1870 was a reaction against the process of modernization. (Schwaabe, *Antiamerikanismus*) The German elites, eager to preserve – or rather to construct – a specific German identity established the "West" – France, Great Britain and increasingly the US – as a cultural opponent: selfish, materialistic, civilized but uncultured. In a way, Karl May was an advocate of this ideology, constructing an ideal, Germanized American West in opposition to capitalist East Coast society.

Schwaabe also shows that Germans tended to attribute to America tendencies they disliked about their own country. From around 1900 until the Nazi period, Germans were terribly afraid of being "Americanized", Americanization meaning a modern way of life and a modern way of organizing politics, where "Gesellschaft" would replace "Gemeinschaft". (These terms are difficult to translate – they mean that a pre-modern, patriarchal life based on personal relationships would give

way to a modern, anonymous and urban culture). America became synonymous with modern liberalism; it was a country where the traditional values of heroism, self-sacrifice and unconditional love for one's own country did not apply. After 1945, with Germany, at least West Germany, strongly embracing liberal democracy, critics fearful of Germany relapsing into an imperialistic and chauvinistic attitude started to view the US as an imperialist military power, criticizing exactly what their ancestors had believed the USA was lacking. In both cases, "America" was a scapegoat carrying on its shoulders the baggage of unresolved European problems. My own argument is similar to Schwaabe's. From 1776 onwards, Germanophone observers of the United States detected precisely what they feared in their own country. By foregrounding American polarization, they hoped to hide the inconvenient truth that the same kind of polarization was to be found back home.

To make my case, I will take a look at a little-known series of books for young adults written by the Austrian writer Gerta Hartl (1910–1993) between 1958 and 1978, six novels that form the "Kleines Herz" ("Little Heart")-series, with titles like *Kleines Herz – Weite Welt* (Little Heart – Wide World) or *Kleines Herz – frischer Mut* (Little Heart – Fresh Courage).[3] The books tell the story of a dark-skinned girl named Doris Dawes who grows up in Vienna in the 1950s and has to face the kind of every-day racism still prevailing after the Nazi period. Actually, there were quite a few dark-skinned children in Austria in those days, especially in the American occupation zone – children of African-American GI's and Austrian women. But Gerta Hartl, probably unwilling to have an "illegitimate" child as her protagonist, invents a rather far-fetched previous history: Doris' mother, the blue-eyed and white-skinned Marianne Braumüller, had fallen in love with Dick Dawes, an African-American doctor, while working as a nurse in a children's hospital in Switzerland 15 years before. They get married, the doctor returns to America, his pregnant wife planning soon to join him there, but unfortunately Marianne dies a few weeks after the child's birth and little Doris is raised in Vienna by her great-aunt, who has never really forgiven Marianne for marrying a Black man.

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[3] I am grateful to my colleague Susanne Blumesberger, who called my attention to these books.

We are never told when exactly the story is set but everything points to the late 1950s. Once a dilapidated mansion is called a "Bombenschaden" ("air-raid damage"). Therefore, the love story of Marianne and Dick Dawes must have happened in the early 1940s, during the Second World War – at a time when it was unlikely an Austrian nurse would have been able to move to Switzerland to work there.

The first volume, *Kleines Herz – Weite Welt* (*Little Heart – Wide World*) is situated in Austria. While there are many instances of relatively mild everyday racism that Doris is confronted with, neither the war nor the Nazi past are ever mentioned explicitly. When Doris transfers to a new school, she befriends a Jewish girl who is also discriminated against, but these passages are told through Doris' perspective, who does not understand at all what is going on. Finally, Doris is sent to America to join her father. The book ends with her sitting on deck of the ship and wondering about her future.

The second volume, *Kleines Herz – Fernes Ziel* (*Little Heart – Distant Goal*), published seven years later, in 1965, deals with Doris' American experience. There are some inconsistencies. The novel starts just where the previous one has ended, with Doris on board of the big ship. Therefore, she is still not even 15 years old and the time should still be the late 1950s. However, a few weeks later her American father remembers the Birmingham bombing that killed four young African-American girls some time ago – this notorious murder took place in 1963. Besides, Doris, not yet 15, is sent to an American "College".

The obvious purpose of Gerta Hartl's second volume is to show that American racism is much worse than its Austrian counterpart. Besides, the USA is generally an abominable country – "abscheulich" is a word frequently used. All the Anti-American clichés of the 19th century that Ferdinand Kürnberger had employed are resurrected, starting with the reproach that Americans do not take their meals slowly, but hastily shovel food into their mouths and then quickly rush off to make money. And American housewives do not know how to cook, they just open cans.

But much more serious are Doris' encounters with American racism. On board of the ship she shares her cabin with a young American woman who discovers only in the morning that her travelling companion is dark-skinned. The young woman is named Lynda Marshall – I wonder if this is some allusion to the Marshall plan. She throws a fit, yelling that she is

not prepared to share her cabin with a "Nigger". (Hartl, *Kleines Herz – Fernes Ziel*, 19). Doris' father, who lives in the fictitious Southern city of Doxville, knows that he has to prepare his daughter for life in a deeply racist country. So he sends her to a college in Illinois for the first half year. There she is spared racist encounters, at least to a large degree, and befriends black and white students. But when Doris visits her father in Doxville for the first time, she realizes that life in the college was completely different from the harsh reality of American life. In Doxville, she innocently enters a bus, sits in one of the front rows and is literally kicked out. Later, when ordering coffee at a segregated diner, the police beat her up because they consider her an anti-racist activist from the North. In the end, Doris decides to emigrate with one of her father's friends to Brazil, which has been touted throughout the novel as a country without racial discrimination.

Within the novel, the Brazilian paradise to which Doris moves is restricted to the state of Santa Caterina where, we are informed, everybody speaks German, even the dark-skinned people. The area where Doris lives is called "ein kleines Deutschland" ("a little Germany"). (Hartl, *Kleines Herz – Fernes Ziel*, 146) We may be reminded of Kürnberger's "Kleindeutschland". In any case, this is where German emigrants lead an idyllic German life.

To be fair, Brazil is not Doris' ultimate destination. Gerta Hartl wrote four more volumes, with Doris eventually settling back in Austria and marrying her American college-friend Jim Hoper, the descendant of a horribly racist Southern family. When Doris' daughters visit their American grandparents in the 1970s, they are again confronted with racism. Obviously, America is not a good place to live if your skin happens to be dark.

Gerta Hartl paints the USA as a polarized and racist country, thereby exculpating Austria. Of course, there is some racism in Vienna as well, but it is the result of individual people being unenlightened. In America, however, racism is the official policy. The racists are the police and the bus driver; a historical incident like the Birmingham bombing is mentioned, Abraham Lincoln is evoked as the "menschlichste aller Amerikaner" ("the most humane of all Americans"). Austria, on the other hand, is a land without history. The fact that an utterly racist regime reigned there until 1945 is never mentioned. Let us not forget – this is a book-series written for young adults who had no personal memory of the Third Reich!

The German (and Austrian) tendency to blame America for everything that was wrong at home was not restricted to conservative writers like Gerta Hartl. Christian Schwaabe deplores a "Selbstgefühl kultureller Überlegenheit" ("self-assured cultural superiority") and a "gesinnungsethisch grundierte Überheblichkeit" ("an arrogance based on the certainty of being ethically correct") prevalent among post-1968 leftist German intellectuals. (Schwaabe, 163) But I will close my paper with a look at a German novel that does not fall victim to this tendency. Uwe Johnson's monumental *Jahrestage* depicts a deeply polarized America while constantly keeping in mind the atrocious German history of the 20th century. Johnson's novel is looking for parallels, but not in order to exculpate one country and accuse the other.

Uwe Johnson, who was born in 1934 and died in 1984, is one of the three great West German post-1945 novelists, the other two being Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass. There has been an enormous amount of scholarship on Johnson in the past 25 years, with even a *Johnson-Jahrbuch* founded in 1994. *Jahrestage* was published in four volumes between 1970 and 1983. A complete American translation finally came out in 2018 under the title *Anniversaries. From a Year in the Life of Gesine Cresspahl.*

Jahrestage is a very complex novel that depicts 365 days, from August 20, 1967 to August 20, 1968, in the life of a young German woman, Gesine Cresspahl, who has been living in Manhattan for more than six years and works in a Manhattan bank. Gesine, a single mother, tells the story of her life to her ten-year old daughter Marie, beginning with the fate of her parents and talking about life during the Nazi period, the post-war years in the GDR and Gesine's ultimate flight to West Germany. In his very first published novel, *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* (1959) (*Speculations about Jacob*) Johnson had introduced the character of Gesine and hinted that she got pregnant from her lover Jakob, whose mysterious death is at the center of this novel.

The narrative situation of *Jahrestage* is quite complicated. Gesine's memories are sometimes told in her own words, but often they are filtered through a narrator, a "Genosse Schriftsteller" ("comrade author") by the name of Johnson. A lot of intertexts are quoted in the course of the novel, chiefly excerpts from the *New York Times*. On a day-by-day-basis, we get a very dense panorama of the situation in the USA. This is the year, after all, when Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated, when the anti-war movement and racial unrest dominated

America. Besides, through Gesine's memories, we get an extensive overview of German history from the 1930s to the late 1950s.

Gesine's memories concern her traumatic childhood and her realization that her parents, quite decent people, unwillingly contributed to the Nazi atrocities by not resisting enough. Gesine feels guilty about her heritage and ponders whether she should or could contribute to fighting injustice in her new home, the USA. But unlike her daughter, who considers herself an American, she has never mentally arrived in America and lives in a kind of third space, to quote the inevitable Homi Bhabha.

Gesine notices parallels between the rise of National Socialism in the polarized Germany of the 1930s and the polarized USA of the late 1960s. But she never uses the current American situation as an excuse for the horrible German past. Uwe Johnson's attitude towards leftist German critics of America becomes particularly clear in one chapter, "29. Februar, 1968. Dienstag", where he criticizes his colleague, the well-known German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger.

On this day, Enzensberger published an open letter in the *New York Review of Books* titled "On Leaving America". Enzensberger had been a fellow at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, for three months and had decided to leave the USA prematurely in order to protest against American foreign policy, especially the Vietnam War. Enzensberger did not return to Germany but spent the next year in Cuba. In his open letter, Enzensberger wrote:

> I believe the class which rules the United States of America, and the government which implements its policies, to be the most dangerous body of men on earth. In one way or another, and to a different degree, this class is a threat to anybody who is not part of it. It is waging an undeclared war against more than a billion people; its weapons range from saturation bombing to the most delicate techniques of persuasion; its aim is to establish its political, economic, and military predominance over every other power in the world. Its mortal enemy is revolutionary change.[4]

Uwe Johnson – or rather the narrator of *Jahrestage* – reacts to this letter in a 9-page rebuke with a mixture of irony and irritation. Within the

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[4] https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1968/02/29/on-leaving-america/

novel, the sarcastic comments on Enzensberger might be understood as the gist of a conversation Gesine has with her Jewish colleague James Shuldiner rather than a narratorial comment. The sarcasm derives from just quoting or paraphrasing Enzenberger's letter and letting the text speak for itself. The narratorial judgement is plain: Enzensberger, after having spent merely three months in the USA, does not know what he is talking about. He is a hypocrite and a plagiarist who only propagates ideas that have been uttered by other American critics before. He is mainly interested in putting himself in the limelight. Scathingly the novel comments on the paragraph quoted above:

> Weil Herrn Enzensberger dies vor drei Monaten noch nicht bekannt war, will er das Land nach drei Monaten öffentlich verlassen. (Because Herr Enzensberger was not yet aware of this three months ago, he wants to leave the country publicly after three months) (Johnson, 795)

But Johnson's criticism goes beyond making fun of a publicity-seeking writer. In two sentences he exposes Enzensberger's tendency to exculpate Germany from her past by foregrounding American evil:

> Die Deutschen hatten sich 1945 vor der Welt zu verantworten für 55 000 000 Tote, die sechs Millionen Opfer in den Vernichtungslagern noch dazu.
> In Herrn Enzensbergers Augen haben die Bürger der U.S.A. eine vergleichbare Schuld auf sich geladen.
> (In 1945 the Germans had to bear responsibility before the world for 55 million dead and also six million victims of the extermination camps. In Herr Enzensberger's eyes the citizens of the U.S.A. have incurred a comparable burden of guilt). (Johnson, 798, transl. Wynfrid Kriegleder)

A short dialogue between Gesine and James Shuldiner summarizes Gesine's view about Enzensberger's open letter. "Warum macht dieser Deutsche Klippschule mit uns?", Shuldiner asks, an idiom difficult to translate, it means something like „Why is he talking to us like a teacher in a school for less gifted children?" Gesine answers, "Er freut sich, daß er so schnell gelernt hat; er will uns lediglich von seinen Fortschritten unterrichten" ("He is glad he learned so fast; he only wants to tell us about his progress") and sums up: "deswegen mag ich in Westdeutschland nicht leben" ("that is why I do not want to live in West

Germany"). Because people like Enzensberger, "gute Leute", good people, after all, do nothing but "Wind machen" there, producing empty bluster. (Johnson, 803) In other words: Enzensberger, like people of his ilk, are glad to have found fascism in America, which relieves them of the need to talk about German fascism.

Admittedly, Johnson's attack on Enzenberger's letter is not quite fair. But he articulates the main reproach that could be made against the anti-Americanisms of German leftists in the late 1960s and 1970s: They accused the United States of crimes against humanity, eagerly equating questionable elements of American foreign policy with the murderous practices of the Nazis. If the Vietnam War was just as bad as Auschwitz, Auschwitz was not so bad, after all. Uwe Johnson's novel is, among many other things, an attempt to refute this tendency.

To conclude, we have seen that Germanophone books about the United States of America were quite often actually books about the situation back home in Europe. Before 1945, America was usually presented as an unstable and polarized country, a negative foil to an idealized Germany: Let us not become like this country across the ocean. After 1945, America became the scapegoat for German guilt: Sure, we are responsible for some horrible crimes, but the USA, the victorious power after the Second World War, is not better, maybe even worse than we are. So let us stop worrying about our own past and rather lay our own baggage of guilt at the door of the Americans.

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KIRSTEN A. KRICK-AIGNER

Polarizations at the Intersections of Jazz, Identity, and Blackness in Ernst Krenek's 1927 Opera *Jonny spielt auf* and Bettina Ehrlich-Bauer's 1928 Still Life *Jonny spielt auf*

The following examines Austrian composer Ernst Krenek's jazz opera *Jonny spielt auf* (*Jonny Strikes Up*), written between 1925 and 1926, while drawing upon Austrian artist Bettina Ehrlich-Bauer's 1928 oil painting by the same name as a springboard for discussion and to frame conversations about Blackness and otherness in the early part of the 20th century and as recently as 2022 on both sides of the Atlantic.[1] Krenek's work brings to light two polarizing themes within the opera that also influenced its mixed reception in the 1920s, both in Europe and the US. First, the polarization of political ideologies is reflected in Krenek's portrayal of an American liberal and democratic society that stood in stark contrast to the right-wing, antisemitic, and racist ideals of the rising National Socialist party in which Blackness, Jewishness, and jazz were deemed "other" and "dangerous" to society. The second most evident theme of polarization is one in which the modern, syncopated, and improvisational art form and music style of the jazz opera smacks against the traditional, more measured art form of classical 19th century music that preceded it. A summary of Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf* pulls together a wealth of previous research by scholars and contextualizes the opera's representation of Blackness. The German-language "Zeitoper" (opera of the time) premiered at the Stadttheater (city theater) in Leipzig on

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[1] The artist Bettina Ehrlich-Bauer, also known under the name Bettina, is the author of approximately twenty children's books. In scholarly works and in museum exhibits, she is also cited as Bettina Bauer, Bettina Ehrlich, and Bettina Bauer-Ehrlich. Ehrlich-Bauer is how she is cited at the Jewish Museum of Vienna where her paintings were exhibited in 2017. Ehrlich-Bauer's painting was first titled *Stillleben mit Negermaske* (*Still life with Negro Mask*) at the Sezession exhibit in 1928. The origin of the painting's current title, *Jonny spielt auf*, is not documented, however it is now referred to as such in exhibits, such as in "The Better Half: Jewish Women Artists Before 1938" at the Jewish Museum Vienna, which ran from November 4, 2016 to May 1, 2017.

February 10, 1927, and featured the main character Jonny, an African American jazz fiddler, performed by a white actor wearing racist blackface. The womanizing Jonny steals an antique violin from the classical virtuoso Daniello, equally a philanderer, who then meets an accidental death. Jonny then goes on to play the violin in a modern rhythm imagined as "jazz" to a new, industrialized and bustling world. Krenek's so-called "jazz" opera embodied music that captured the boisterous spirit of the Weimar Republic and was performed showcasing an assortment of sounds from sirens, horns, and other noise-inducing instruments. The opera, translated into 18 languages, toured throughout Europe and the United States, and was both welcomed and condemned by audiences and critics. It would be performed 421 times during the first season alone and was staged in 42 opera houses, including Vienna in 1928 and the Metropolitan Opera in 1929.[2]

Jazz scholar Heinz Steinert, who interviewed Krenek in 1985, states that Krenek "had not been aware of real jazz at the time, and that the opera is simply a fantasy about America and the technical and human progress originating there (such as the informality and openness of human relationships and the democratic lack of pretensions)."[3] Krenek's opera promoted ideals and stereotypes of Americanization, democracy, individualism, booming industrialism, and technological advances, rather than portraying an actual comprehension of American jazz, as he would later confess, "Real jazz was unknown in Europe. We gave the name jazz to anything that came out of America."[4] Krenek had not really been privy to much actual American jazz in Europe. In fact, the first African American jazz performed in Berlin was Sam Wooding's band as part of the *Chocolate Kiddies* Revue in 1925, Josephine Baker's performance that same year in the Harlem cast of La Revue Nègre at the Théâtre Champs Élysées in Paris, and the world's first jazz course offered at the Frankfurt Hoch Conservatory in 1927.[5] In Vienna, African American musicians and dancers had performed since the 1890s, the first being Edgar Jones in 1896 at the Ronacher Theater. The Four Black Diamonds performed in Vienna and throughout Europe for 17 years before they disbanded in 1922, as did the singer Arabella Fields, who

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[2] Rothstein, "Ernst Krenek."
[3] Steinert, "Adorno" 157, footnote 17.
[4] Grandt, "Colors" 74, (qtd.in Robinson1994:113).
[5] Grandt, "Colors" 84.

performed in Vienna multiple times between 1906 and 1913. Despite the freedoms that African American performers enjoyed in Europe, while not being able to experience those same freedoms in the United States due to racist laws and structural racism, scholar Wolfgang Fincha asserts that the reception of these performers in Europe was nonetheless steeped in imperial-colonial and racist discourse.[6] Beginning in 1903, the "Cakewalk" dance became a popular alternative to the waltz during the ball season, followed by the "Charleston" dance that "embodied the modern times."[7] Fincha states that it was Krenek's wife, Anna, one of Gustav Mahler's daughters, who introduced Krenek to jazz music and dance in Berlin, including the "Charleston" and "Shimmy" dances, as well as to the precision dance performances of the Tiller Girls.[8] In fact, Fincha asserts that Krenek was one of the first European composers to apply elements of jazz and American dance music in his 1924 opera, *Sprung über den Schatten*, in which the banjo and xylophone can be heard, associating jazz music with a "free" American culture, whereby the figure of the Black dancer is reduced to exoticized and so-called "primitive" sexuality.[9] Krenek's opera *Jonny spielt auf* premiered just weeks before Josephine Baker's provocative shows in Vienna, equally controversial performances that will be described more closely below. Jonny, with his so-called "animalistic sexuality," was said by opera reviewers to embody the "paradox primitivism of the modern era," thus fueling the new European imagination of America's "urban jungle."[10] The terms "animalistic," "primitive," and "jungle" reveal the racist rhetoric of the time associated with the Blackness of the opera character Jonny. The conclusion of the opera predicts the imminent modernization of Europe as Jonny triumphantly plays his violin atop a moving globe at a bustling train station. Fincha points out that Krenek had written the following lyrics into the chorus: "The crossing begins! Just like that, Jonny strikes up the dance. The new world is arriving over the ocean with splendor and inherits old Europe through dance" ("Die Überfahrt beginnt! So spielt Jonny auf zum Tanz. Es kommt die neue Welt übers

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[6] Fincha, "Überfahrt" 292-302.
[7] Fincha, "Überfahrt" 295.
[8] Fincha, "Überfahrt" 295-96.
[9] Fincha, "Überfahrt" 297-8.
[10] Blake, 38, qtd. in Fincha "Überfahrt" 298-9.

Meer gefahren mit Glanz und erbt das alte Europa durch den Tanz").[11] With this exclamation for renewal and innovation of the old Europe, the new world brings modernity through music perceived as American jazz, as well as accompanying dance movements that were more individualized, rapid, and sexual than social dances such as the waltz had been.

When the opera premiered at the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich in the spring of 1928, a review by a reporter named Niedermayer describes events during which a small band of Nazi sympathizers began to boo, throwing stink and tear gas bombs that left actors unable to continue for a time. Apparently, so much noise ensued that the audience could scarcely hear the actors, and several members of the audience fainted and had to be carried out. The author critically observes, "quite late police intervened and removed the ringleaders."[12] At the Munich premiere, Alfred Jerger from the Vienna State Opera played Jonny, with the review noting that "the musicians did their best to do justice to Krenek's atonal music, which was unfamiliar to them."[13] The author goes on to point out that "artists and the general public should take a stand against the unhealthy trend of disturbances and unilateral efforts to judge art, as is happening again and again not just in Munich but indeed in Bavaria as a whole."[14] He continues,

> It doesn't fail to leave a surreal aftertaste that the swastika-types see in *Jonny Strikes Up* a sort of foreign-political danger that, that [sic] they associate in this operetta […] with the so-called black shame on the Rhine. These hot-tempered lads should consider that, in the end, their behavior only serves to advertise the very work they're protesting.[15]

Niedermeyer's review was countered by renowned music critic Julius Korngold who "ranted against the intrusion of non-European jazz into Austria's high culture in a lengthy essay in the liberal bourgeois paper *Neue Freie Presse* with biased and racist comments that addressed controversial cultural and political discussions of the era."[16] Ironically,

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[11] Fincha, "Überfahrt" 300.
[12] Niedermeyer, "Jonny."
[13] Niedermeyer, "Jonny."
[14] Niedermeyer, "Jonny."
[15] Niedermeyer, "Jonny."
[16] Krick-Aigner and Schuster, eds., *Jazz in Word* 12.

Korngold's son Erich had produced his own Zeitoper *Das Wunder der Heliane* (*The Miracle of Heliane*) in 1927 that did not receive as much publicity. Instead, heated exchanges about art led to the production of two opposing varieties of cigarettes, the fancier "Heliane" and the cheaper brand "Jonny." Cigarette blogger Paul Pelkonen, who has raised awareness about the cigarette feud, writes that, like Krenek's opera, "the plebian taste proved more popular."[17] The more elegant brand is aligned with the former old-world monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while pitted against the more rugged brand that speaks to the gritty fast-paced, technological, and industrial age of modern Austria and cosmopolitan Vienna.

The growing negative critique of Krenek's opera prompted National Socialists to censor it in 1933, forcing Krenek to flee to the United States in 1938, the same year his opera was showcased as an example of "degenerate" music at the 1938 exhibit *Entartete Musik* in Düsseldorf.[18] It is of note then that when Krenek arrived in New York, he was invited in 1938 by Theodor Adorno, whom he had already befriended in 1924, to attend a jazz show in Harlem.[19] Krenek went on to teach at various universities and colleges in the United States and Canada, including Kenyon College, Ohio, in 1945, before settling in Palm Springs, California, where he passed away in 1991 and is now buried at the Zentralfriedhof (central cemetery) in Vienna. Krenek scholar Claudia Maurer Zenck maintains that Krenek felt at home in exile until the end of this life, evidenced by his mere six summer working trips back to Europe during his 53 years of exile.[20]

Under Nazism, Krenek's opera became one of the central targets of the campaign against *Entartete Musik* and its promotion of theories of musical "degeneracy." The exhibit was advertised widely with a poster featuring a Black musician with racist, grotesque, ape-like facial features, playing a saxophone, adorned with a Jewish star on his jacket instead of a traditional boutonniere.[21] On the cover of the brochure to the

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[17] Pelkonen.

[18] "Jonny spielt auf." *Music and the Holocaust*.

[19] Steinert, 157.

[20] "Er blieb zeitlebens heimisch im Exil, fremd in der alten Heimat [...]." Maurer-Zenck, 216.

[21] Poster of the "Entartete Musik" exhibit, 1938. Poster designed by Ludwig Tersch.

exhibit one can already observe the racist portrayal of Blackness aligned with Jewishness into a threatening "Other," one demonized by the Nazi party and its propaganda machine. The exhibit, organized by Nazi sympathizer and former director of the State Theater in Weimar, Hans Severus Ziegler, then superintendent of the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar, ran from May 24 through June 13, 1938. The exhibit then moved to Weimar, Munich, and Vienna, but the outbreak of World War II in 1939 prevented it from being further exhibited. Ziegler repeated antisemitic rhetoric in his opening speech of the exhibit to explain why music such as jazz was being censured, stating that "the decay of music was due to the influence of Judaism and capitalism."[22] In the brochure, Ziegler continued his antisemitic rant: "What has been collected in this exhibition represents an effigy of wickedness - an effigy of arrogant Jewish impudence and complete spiritual insipidness."[23]

An exhibit of censured music under National Socialism, such as the show on *Entartete Musik*, had not been considered until musicologist Albrecht Dümling reconstructed the exhibit in 1988, traveling to over 40 cities in countries including Israel and the United States. New scholarship on the Nazis' politicization of music, particularly of jazz, then allowed Dümling to expand the exhibit in 2007 with original objects and sound clips, under the title *Das verdächtige Saxophon. 'Entartete Musik' im NS-Staat* (*The Suspicious Saxophone. 'Degenerate Music' under the National Socialists*).[24] Similarly, the 1937 Nazi exhibit of *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) was reconstructed and exhibited multiple times since 1945, including in 1991 at both the Los Angeles County Museum and The Art Institute of Chicago, in an attempt to recreate the historical context of the exhibit in which the art and its artists were shamed and humiliated by the National Socialists. The 1937 art exhibit showed approximately 650 paintings, sculptures, and prints from the over 16,000 pieces that had been confiscated by the Nazis from German museums.[25] Many pieces were forever destroyed, lost, or stolen, and only photographs of the original exhibit made a reconstruction possible. During the forced exile of hundreds of Austrian and German artists who were persecuted under the National Socialist regime, works

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[22] "Jonny spielt auf," *Music and the Holocaust*.
[23] Berg, "The Nazis Take on Degenerate Music."
[24] Berg, "The Nazis Take on Degenerate Music."
[25] *"Degenerate Art." The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, 1.

by artists such as Bettina Ehrlich-Bauer, such as her 1928 *Selbstportrait* (self-portrait), went missing, and only a few of her paintings have been able to be reconstructed, using digital tools and technology of old photographs and images in exhibit catalogs.[26]

The interrelatedness of Blackness, Jewishness, and otherness referring to *Jonny spielt auf* in pictorial art, such as on the aforementioned exhibit poster of the *Entartete Musik* exhibit, can also be observed in Bettina Ehrlich-Bauer's contemplative still life in the style of "Neue Sachlichkeit" (New Objectivity), *Jonny spielt auf*, now one of her few remaining works preserved in a private collection in Salzburg, Austria. The work was painted after Ehrlich-Bauer had attended Ernst Krenek's opera *Jonny spielt auf* in Vienna, most likely at the close of 1927, prompting her to consider the opera's themes of jazz and Blackness. On canvas, Krenek's lively opera comes to a screeching halt, inviting viewers to consider the objects and imagery associated with the opera, such as Jonny's mask and costume, and some of the instruments used to play what was thought to be jazz music. The painting portrays a white harlequin-type clown cape with a gray collar hanging from a wall to the top left of the painting, a leaning full-length mirror, a saxophone, and an old brass hunting horn that carefully balances on a dark brown leather armchair. To the lower left of the painting, on the chair with the instruments, rests a round blackface mask, wide-eyed and grimacing, with large distorted red smiling lips, wearing a green felt hat. The mirror reflects the opening of the horn and a green curtain, perhaps that of a changing room for the actor who will masquerade in blackface. One might also interpret the painting as one in which the mask is removed from the performer and objectified in order for the viewer to contemplate its presence, rather than affixed to an actor who is performing Blackness. Like the instruments surrounding the mask, the mask without its actor is an object that reveals the potential of unmasking. The empty clown coat hung on the wall and the curtain behind which the actor transforms into the character Jonny is reflected in the mirror and points to the performative aspect of Blackness in the opera. The solitary mask articulates more strongly the superficial quality of the blackface performance. Following the imagery found on the cover of the 1926 "Universal Edition" vocal score from the opera *Jonny spielt auf,* which shows a Black musician in a jacket and plaid pants sporting a felt bowler

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[26] Winklbauer, "Weiblich, Malerin."

hat and playing the saxophone, Ehrlich-Bauer also makes the choice to omit Jonny's violin in her still life.[27] She does not fail to include an iconic blackface mask at the painting's center, emphasizing it, especially the top red lip, through its reflection in the polished saxophone to its left, highlighting the caricature-like nature of the American blackface bardic tradition reimagined in the 1920s.[28] Art historian Karen Goodchild observes that Jonny is a fiddle player yet is depicted on posters of the opera and in Ehrlich-Bauer's still life as playing the saxophone. Goodchild concludes that, in general, there is a strong tradition in the western world that "barbaric" people "blow" into instruments, while refined, intellectual musicians play stringed instruments (Apollo vs. Pan). She notes that "it is important that Bettina visually underscores the connection of Jonny to the decadent sax by reflecting the wide, grinning red mouth in the curving sax to the left of the face."[29] She adds that the Nazis believed the saxophone to be a pernicious jazz instrument, citing, for instance, the aforementioned 2007 "Degenerate Music" exhibit. Ehrlich-Bauer's still life captures the controversy surrounding the opera and was just one of the paintings that had brought her recognition in Vienna's art circles during the height of her career as a painter of the "Neue Sachlichkeit" style.

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[27] Stadler, "Jonny."

[28] For instance, see the 2007 exhibit "*Entartete Kunst,*" sponsored by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and the Tonhalle Düsseldorf.

[29] Krick-Aigner and Schuster, eds., *Jazz in Word* Footnote 4, 17.

Fig.1: Bettina Ehrlich-Bauer, "Stillleben mit Negermaske" or "Jonny spielt auf". 1928. Oil painting, private collection, Salzburg.

Ehrlich-Bauer, born in Vienna in 1903, was a versatile artist known as a painter, skilled textile artist, and printmaker. While completing her art studies in Vienna at the School of Applied Arts, she also trained and exhibited in Paris and Berlin. In Vienna she exhibited her works with other contemporary artists, such as Lisel Salzer and Lisl Weil, at the prestigious art gallery Galerie Würthle, the Sezession, the Hagenbund, and the Wiener Frauenkunst collective. Using her own printing press, she handprinted and colored at least two children's books known to have

been purchased from her by the Albertina Museum. After winning the Silver Medal for her handprinted and painted silk textiles at the Paris "Exposition Internationale des Arts et Industries" in 1937, she was forced into exile to London in 1938, joining her husband, painter and sculptor Georg Ehrlich, who had traveled there for work earlier that year. Both artists were persecuted under National Socialism for their Jewish heritage, and their careers were upended after the *Anschluss* in March 1938. Ehrlich-Bauer brought her husband's paintings, prints, and sculptures with her to London, leaving her own body of work and her cherished printing press behind in her apartment and atelier in the Taubstummengasse 13 in Vienna. Most of her work created before 1938 is now lost or destroyed, although a few black and white photographs of her work, such as her self-portrait, remain in Viennese museum and gallery exhibit catalogs. As Jewish Museum exhibition curator Andrea Winklbauer notes, "Since then it [her work] has been missing. Only a mixed lot of old black-and-white photographs from her estate still show how exciting these paintings in New Objectivity style looked. On the back of the photos the artist sometimes noted the title, date, colors and/or dimensions from her memory."[30]

Once in London, Ehrlich-Bauer left behind her career as an oil painter, instead continuing to design textiles and illustrate and write over twenty beloved children's books in English. From 1947 to 1949 she worked together with her husband in the United States, where she wrote and published her popular *Cocolo* children's book trilogy about a refugee donkey who leaves war-torn Italy for a safe haven on the East Coast of the United States. From then on, residing in London, she and her husband spent most holidays and summers in her family's villa on the island of Grado and in the Veneto region of Italy where she continued writing children's books, many of which take place in Italy and are reminiscent of her own childhood stays there. After her husband's passing in 1966, she endeavored to reproduce, exhibit, and promote his sculptures with equal craftsmanship and skill until her own death in London in 1985. Both Ehrlich-Bauer and her husband are buried at the Zentralfriedhof in Vienna, honoring their Austrian heritage and legacy predating their exile.

Ehrlich-Bauer's pre-exile painting *Jonny spielt auf* can be contextualized by examining the reception of jazz during the mid to late 1920s in Austria. While jazz took on differing cultural contexts in Berlin

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[30] Winklbauer, "Lost Pictures."

and Vienna, Felix Dörmann's 1925 Viennese jazz novel, *Jazz: Wiener Roman*, depicts the genre as "decline, hell, and damnation," "Mood of the times! Terror!" (Stimmung der Zeit! Terror!), in which "One becomes terribly snively with time and learns to fear everything that is coming" (Man wird gräßlich wehleidig mit der Zeit und lernt sich vor allem zu fürchten, was kommt)."[31] That same year, fellow Viennese painter Carry Hauser depicted three jazz musicians in a modern-realist style in his painting *Jazz Band,* his intention being "to produce an homage to the new musical tendency."[32] Furthermore,

> Against the backdrop of increasing racism and anti-Semitism in Vienna and Berlin, the advocacy on the part of these artists for this form of modern music seems courageous: Carry Hauser renders the multicultural origins of jazz highly apparent in his emblematic composition of three musicians from various parts of the world.[33]

It is of note that while Ehrlich-Bauer's work is still largely underrepresented, fellow painter Hauser continues to enjoy recognition, with a website exhibiting his work.[34] Hauser's portrait of three ethnically diverse jazz players highlights the cosmopolitan aspect of the production of jazz, especially in the cities of Europe such as Berlin and Vienna, and posits a counternarrative to the National Socialist ideology in which jazz was in fact part of the German and Austrian cultural fabric of the early twentieth century. When considering the discussion of the blackface mask, it is also provocative that Hauser painted a portrait of two African boys in 1977, one of whom wears a white mask, a possible commentary on the white colonial presence in Africa. In another painting of two masks from 1965, the left mask is an African wooden carved mask while the right mask bears the artist's resemblance.[35]

For Ehrlich-Bauer, Hauser, and other artists, Vienna remained a creative center of art, psychology, philosophy, and social science through

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[31] Husslein-Arco, ed., *Vienna-Berlin* 116-17.
[32] Husslein-Arco, ed., *Vienna-Berlin* 347.
[33] Husslein-Arco, ed., *Vienna-Berlin* 347.
[34] Website by the Gallery Widder in Vienna, carryhauser.at. Accessed May 2, 2022.
[35] Carry Hauser, "Zwei Masken" ("Two Masks"), 1977, and Carry Hauser, Title unknown, most likely painted post 1965.
https://blog.daum.net/kmozzart/5463. Accessed November 5, 2021.

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its growth in technology and industry, despite the crises of the interwar period.[36] Vienna's population increased from over a million in 1890 to over two million by 1914, developing the city into a multicultural and multilingual cosmopolitan entity.[37] The year Ehrlich-Bauer and Hauser painted their jazz paintings also saw demonstrations in Vienna that led to a fire at the Palace of Justice, costing 89 lives. A year later in 1928, Baker would begin her European tour after two successful years in Paris. Posters advertising her performances showed Baker almost nude, wearing a strand of pearls and feather jewelry. There were heated controversies concerning her performances that were discussed in the Austrian Parliament. While Baker was greeted at the train station upon her arrival, scholar Mona Horncastle describes how Baker encountered "racist hostility, her talent was questioned, her success was criticized, and she is accused of endangering public morality."[38] Eventually, Baker appeared in an "elegant evening dress" at her premiere in front of sold-out performances at the Johann Strauss Theater.[39] Baker, born in 1906 in St. Louis as Freda J. McDonald, seems to have performed a racist stereotype of the Black African American woman, "sexy, black and amusing," yet she displayed her "beauty and individuality boldly" in the face of racism in the United States. Horncastle reminds readers that the iconic dancer, often identified with her dance in the banana skirt, is unfortunately less recognized for her important work in the French resistance during World War II and as a civil rights activist.[40] Baker's activism in the United States prompted her to enforce the rule during her performances "that there would be no racial discrimination in the audience – for the first time in American history, clubs are open to all Americans."[41]

Despite Baker's activism to counter racism and segregation, the performances of Krenek's opera still stir up controversy, almost a century after its premiere and its censorship under National Socialism, for the most part due to criticism surrounding the use of blackface. A 2003 *New York Times* review of *Jonny spielt auf* at the Vienna State

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[36] Husslein-Arco, ed., *Vienna-Berlin* 21.
[37] Husslein-Arco, ed., *Vienna-Berlin* 20.
[38] Horncastle, "Raptured."
[39] Horncastle, "Raptured."
[40] Horncastle, "Raptured."
[41] Horncastle, "Raptured."

Opera demonstrates why this opera's reception is still highly controversial. The author, James R. Oestreich, states that the opera would be impossible to stage in the United States today and would be received with understandable outrage in the United States.[42] The opera saw its Latin American premiere in 2006 at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the actor playing Jonny portrayed the character in blackface. The review cites in English that "Luciano Garay made a brave shot at playing Jonny, […] done as it was in the premiere by a white in blackface."[43] The statement of having made a "brave shot" suggests an awareness that there is an act being performed that should in fact be an unacceptable practice.

When *Jonny spielt auf* was performed in Melbourne, Australia, in 2019, the music historian and conductor Peter Tregear, who founded IOpera in 2007, cited his motivations for staging running the opera despite past controversies, stating: "It is historically important, and also has all these contemporary resonances and relevances. […] It's also bloody good."[44] He says it has "profound Australian links since the heroine, opera singer Anita, "is based on Australian violin virtuoso Alma Moodie - with whom Krenek had an affair."[45] The author continues that while "cultural appropriation" today incurs implacable wrath, African Americans in New York at the time welcomed the white Krenek's interpretation of a Black jazz musician as a breakthrough due to the portrayal of [a] Black man interacting with several white women "without a hint of condemnation."[46] Tregear joins a group of musicians and musicologists dedicated to "restitutional musicology" who believe that it is their "duty to reclaim these musicians and their works from the historical damage caused by the Third Reich."[47] Tregear continues that another of the Nazis' legacies is the standoff today between art music and popular music, stating that the opera "*Jonny* addresses that directly. It's not a musical and it's not a strict, grand opera - it's neither, both and a mixture of everything."[48] "Restitutional musicology" should also take

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[42] Oestreich, "Opera Review."
[43] Bardin, "Jonny."
[44] Zwartz, "Jonny Strikes."
[45] Zwartz, "Jonny Strikes."
[46] Zwartz, "Jonny Strikes."
[47] Zwartz, "Jonny Strikes."
[48] Zwartz, "Jonny Strikes."

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into consideration current cultural discussions surrounding performances in blackface.

The latest endeavor in March of 2022 at the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich to stage *Jonny spielt auf* takes the opera performance full circle from its staging there in 1928. Despite controversy about the application of blackface in opera, the theater premiered Krenek's opera on March 11, 2022, presented in German with German supertitles. The opera's return is described in the theater's website as follows:

> In the Weimar Republic, perhaps the most successful play after the "Threepenny Opera," this fast-paced gangster comedy was denounced and banned by the Nazis after 1933. In his Zeitoper, Krenek, who was only 27, depicted the modern age of the time while at the same time protesting against it. To do this, he used jazz, foxtrot, and tango, fast-paced scene changes and spectacular locations. After the highly scandalous Munich premiere of 1928 at the Gärtnerplatz theater, accompanied by death threats, organized disruptive acts, vandalism, and brawls with police, "Jonny spielt auf" is finally returning to the stage.

> (In der Weimarer Republik das vielleicht erfolgreichste Bühnenstück nach der »Dreigroschenoper«, wurde diese rasante Gangsterkomödie ab 1933 von den Nazis gebrandmarkt und verboten. Der erst 27-jährige Krenek bildete in seiner »Zeitoper« die seinerzeitige Moderne ab und protestierte gleichzeitig gegen sie. Dafür nutzte er Jazz, Foxtrott und Tango, temporeiche Szenenwechsel und spektakuläre Schauplätze. Nach der skandalumtosten Münchner Erstaufführung von 1928 im Gärtnerplatztheater, begleitet von Morddrohungen, organisierten Störaktionen, Vandalismus und Schlägereien mit Polizeiaufgebot, kehrt „Jonny spielt auf"« endlich wieder ans Haus zurück.)[49]

Having emailed dramaturge Michael Alexander Rinz in the fall of 2021, raising the question as to how the director would adapt the opera to today's audience and address the issue of blackface, I received his response by email as follows:

> 1928 fand die Münchner Erstaufführung des Stückes in unserem Haus statt, die massiv von nationalsozialistischen Störaktionen begleitet wurde und einen großen Theaterskandal für die Geschichte des Gärtnerplatztheates bedeutete. Seitdem wurde das Stück in München nicht wieder gespielt. Wir möchten in unserer Neuinszenierung Bezug nehmen auf die damaligen Geschehnisse und

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[49]Gärtnerplatz Theater. Transl. Krick-Aigner.

sie z.T. in München des Jahres 1928 spielen lassen. Dabei soll der Akt des Blackfacing selbst als historischer Bestandteil des Stückes bzw. der Münchner Erstinszenierung live auf der Bühne gezeigt und zitiert werden um ihn infolge kritisch zur Diskussion zu stellen. Da wir zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt noch nicht mit der Probenarbeit begonnen haben, kann ich Ihnen noch nicht garantieren, wie es in der späteren Inszenierung tatsächlich aussehen wird. Wir rechnen auch ensembleintern mit regen Diskussionen dazu während den Proben.)

(In 1928 the Munich premiere of the play took place in our house, accompanied by massive National Socialist disruptions and became a major theater scandal in the history of the Gärtnerplatz Theater. Since then, the piece has not been performed again in Munich. In our new production, we would like to refer to events of that time and let them take place partly in Munich in 1928. The act of blackfacing itself as a historical component of the piece during the Munich premiere should be shown live on stage and be referenced in order to offer it up for critical discussion. Since we haven't started rehearsals at this point in time, I can't guarantee what the later production will actually look like. We also expect lively discussions with the ensemble during rehearsals.)[50]

Audience viewing experiences and critical reviews of the performance reveal much about how cultural discussions of Blackness and otherness have shaped an updated consideration of the character Jonny and the performance of Blackness. The director Peter Lund, after many conversations with his theater ensemble, made the decision to historically portray a white actor in blackface, "because it happened that way in the historical context," and states that it would have been a lie to have the role of Jonny be played by a Black actor since a Black actor would not have performed in 1928.[51] A further review in the *Neue Musikzeitung* comments that director Lund had dealt with the issue of blackfacing by adding a scene to the original opera during which a right-wing mob calls Jonny's triumph a "disgrace" ("Schande"). A further scene was added in which a "real" American dance troupe gives the blackfaced Jonny the middle finger. When Jonny then sings of returning to his "Swanee River," the makeup comes off, the reviewer deeming the opera a successful "Munich reparation" ("Münchner Wiedergutmachung").[52] In an interview from March 11, 2022, Director Lund explains that they "are playing the opera in its historical time and

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[50] Rinz. Email correspondence. Transl. Krick-Aigner.
[51] Maier, "Premiere."
[52] Koch, "Münchner Wiedergutmachung."

refer to the former premiere in 1928 at the Gärtnerplatz Theater."[53] Furthermore, he calls *Jonny* a "costume piece" ("Verkleidungsstück") and continues, "Krenek imagined a theater character who is white who paints his face black. That's why we do it, but not without commentary."[54] However, despite director Lund's intention to frame his decision to have Jonny wear blackface within a historical context, one critical review of the opera in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* from March 24, 2022, states that activists called the play racist and appealed to the theater to cancel future performances.[55] Additionally, a review from March 12, 2022, notes that the character Jonny's face is painted black and clearly states, "It's called 'Blackfacing' and should be out of the question today."[56] Still, the reviewer reflects on the actor's role, "Nonetheless, [the actor] Ludwig Mittelhammer stood on stage there as a white man playing Jonny wearing black makeup on his face. Why is that not shocking?"[57] This practice was indeed shocking to a further reviewer who asks in his review, "Does 'Blackfacing' really have to be?," arguing, "One could have let Ludwig Mittelhammer be without makeup […] without resorting to an obsolete theater practice, for good reason. One could have been farther argumentatively."[58] The idea to just refuse the practice of blackfacing has resurfaced in discussions in American media.

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[53] Braunmüller. "Wir spielen die Oper in der historischen Zeit, und beziehen uns auf die damalige Premiere im Gärtnerplatztheater von 1928. Damals wurde auch geblackfaced. […] 'Jonny' ist ein Verkleidungsstück" ([We are staging the opera in its historical time period and are referencing the premiere back then at the Gärtnerplatztheater in 1928. [...] At that time one also performed in blackface. 'Jonny' is a costume piece." transl. Krick-Aigner)

[54] Braunmüller. "Krenek hat sich eine Theaterfigur ausgedacht, und die ist ein Weißer, der sich schwarz anmalt. Daher machen wir das, aber nicht unkommentiert." ("Krenek thought up a theater character and he is a white man who applies black facepaint. That's why we are doing it, but not without commentary." transl. Krick-Aigner)

[55] Stallknecht, "Opernskandal."

[56] Jungblut. "Blackfacing heißt das und geht natürlich heute gar nicht mehr."

[57] Jungblut. "Trotzdem stand mit Ludwig Mittelhhammer ein Weißer auf der Bühne, mit Schwarzer Farbe im Gesicht. Warum war das kein Aufreger?"

[58] Schäufele. "Man hätte Ludwig Mittelhammer ungeschminkt lassen können, um zu zeigen, dass das Thema zur Disposition steht, ohne auf eine aus guten Gründen obsolete Bühnenpraxis zurückzugreifen. Argumentativ hätte man weiter sein können."

In American media, the representation of blackface continues to be rejected and its practice, even decades earlier, has ended political careers for white politicians who applied blackface as a racist performative act of privilege and authority. While the Republican secretary of the State of Florida, Michael Ertel, wore blackface in a 2005 Halloween party picture, Democratic Virginia Governor Ralph Northam wore blackface in a 1984 Eastern Virginia Medical School yearbook photo. Opinion columnist for the *New York Times*, Jamelle Bouie, in 2015 describes blackface as an "unambiguous form of racist mockery with clear origins in the virulent white supremacist history of the United States."[59] While he agrees that we should care about racist imagery, "we should care more about our still segregated society."[60] The racist cultural practice and institutionalization of blackface must be confronted thoughtfully. Systemic racism, "a system of unequal institutionalized racial power,"[61] by way of the history of enslavement of Africans and segregation in the United States, has led to opportunities to learn about racism and to make observations about its presence in the arts. Recently, a distinguished American medical scholar, Kafui Dzirasa, wrote about his daily experiences as a Black scientist and academic in the United States. Despite his successful career, he is most days "unseen and unknown."[62] He wears a mask of "wit" and "optimism" to mitigate his true feelings of sorrow about his lived experience as a Black man.

Jonny spielt auf in the context of American culture will be defined by its history on this side of the Atlantic, in the United States. Though positioned as American, the character of Jonny as performed in Europe is removed from the American culture by being performed in a European context that aligns Jonny's exuberant character with the birth of modernity and industrialism in Germany of the 1920s Weimar Era. Philosophy professor and author George Yancy, writing a commentary for the *New York Times* in 2019, describes blackface in the United States as a "product of a long history of whiteness and its attempt to make sense of itself through both the consumption and the negation of black humanity."[63] He continues, "Understanding blackface in this way can be

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[59] Bouie, "Blackface."
[60] Bouie, "Blackface."
[61] DiAngelo, "White Fragility."
[62] Dzirasa, "Black Scientists."
[63] Yancy, "Why White People."

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an important step toward starving whiteness of its need for the 'other,' its need to be what it is not, its need to masquerade, its need to project, […]" stating, "Blackface is not a black problem. It is a white one, and fixing it is the job of white America."[64] Therefore, the American tradition of blackface, reimagined in the German-language opera *Jonny spielt auf*, would be indeed a double masquerade in which blackface, indeed racist in both American and German-speaking cultures, would be ripped from its original Weimar context in which blackness is already imagined, and then reimagined in its context of American Blackness. Any performance of Blackness using blackface is not possible in the United States or elsewhere in the world for that matter. There is much work to be done to counter racism and a call to examine the issue and one's own stake in the task, one that diAngelo recommends to approach with "humility."[65]

This discussion on *Jonny spielt auf*, both on stage and as reflected in Ehrlich-Bauer's still life, raises the question of how one might responsibly perform such a controversial piece as Krenek's opera or whether it is even possible to do so. Most likely, it will not be performed for a long time, if ever, in the United States, where many initiatives within and outside of the arts have made it their mission to heal the country's racist past and present. The sociocultural and political framework for performing such an opera is clearly perceived and lived as uniquely different in both the German-speaking world, the United States, and other parts of the globe. Therefore, these artistic reflections of representations of Blackness raise the question of past and current discussions surrounding Krenek's opera and reflections of the opera in works of art such as Ehrlich-Bauer's. How then might one study and think with and about these ideas and pieces in their time of original circulation and today, weighing the importance of both honoring the need to revive culturally relevant once-censured works of art such as *Jonny spielt auf* while at the same time respecting the imperative to eradicate the practice of blackface on both sides of the Atlantic?

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[64] Yancy, "Why White People."
[65] DiAngelo, "White Fragility."

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JÖRG TÜRSCHMANN

"God of Carnage": The Representation of Suspicious Comrades in Screen Fiction

1 "THE GOD OF CARNAGE" – WHO SOWS PEACE, WILL REAP HATE

In her most famous play, *The God of Carnage,* the Hungarian-French author Yasmina Reza shows the encounter between the parents of two boys who have fought (Reza, *The God of Carnage*). Everyone wants peace; in the end, they fight like their children. The play was very successful internationally and was translated into many languages (Werner 314-30). It has been performed all around the world and is certainly the author's most successful and best-known work to date. The story seems to pick up on a theme that is very much on the minds of the audience, for it deals with the impossibility of escaping a quarrel, even if the parties involved try with the best intentions to settle the conflict. Reza's piece deals paradigmatically with the moment when the search for an understanding on the basis of constructive controversy turns into a destructive end in itself. This escalation into the negative corresponds exactly to what Manfred Prisching explains in his introductory chapter on the graded concept of polarization (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger"): "In many cases, it is necessary to find the threshold beyond which formerly acceptable dynamics or shifts turn into polarized hostility." Polarization is staged here in fiction as a self-referential dynamic beyond this threshold.

The bottom line is that parents who want to defend their children become adversaries themselves. It is certainly not surprising that parents defend their children, arguing as if it were about themselves. But to put it somewhat more abstractly, one could say that a general problem that causes outrage and affects becomes a personal problem. Of course, everybody experiences concern in his or her own body, or rather as a personal affect. But it is important not to confuse this personal feeling with its trigger. In order to avoid this confusion of object and perception, manners have been developed whose set of rules ensures the exchange of opinions without this leading to personal insults or attacks. In Prisching's words (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger"): "Rules of the

game must be followed. If one cannot rely on personal familiarity it has to be trusted that the behavior of individuals is rule-governed." Therefore, it is important to note "that politeness is not a repressive relic of a hypocritical society, but structures an overloaded and insecure public space" (Prisching, "Sentimentale Politik" 216).[1] Arthur Schopenhauer's oft-quoted formula fits this: "It is a wise thing to be polite; consequently, it is a stupid thing to be rude. To make enemies by unnecessary and willful incivility, is just as insane a proceeding as to set your house on fire. For politeness is like a counter – an avowedly false coin, with which it is foolish to be stingy" (Schopenhauer 36). Accordingly, in the play the audience is confronted with characters who develop from clever to stupid personalities. This does not imply any moral condemnation, but rather an almost fatal development from which the characters of the play cannot escape.

2 ROMAN POLANSKI – THE RESURRECTION OF THE AUTHOR

Of course, fiction and reality must be distinguished from each other. And yet the dispute about a work of art is currently often a dispute about the artist's biography and responsibility. It is no longer about an objective discussion of the quality and expressiveness of an artistic achievement, but about the failings of its creator. This shift can certainly be compared to parents no longer arguing about their children, but assigning blame to the other party. The filmmaker Roman Polanski is one of those artists who have been subjected to much criticism. This no longer concerns his films, but the accusation that he seduced a minor in the USA and raped two young women in Switzerland. For the gossip press, these accusations are spectacular material and *faits divers* that concern the private life of the director, whose notoriety means that he cannot escape the public debate. In this respect, the public judgment is similar to that on the French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline or the German Nobel Prize winner Günther Grass, both of whom have been criticized for their closeness to fascism, albeit to different degrees and in different respects. The title of the well-known essay "The Death of the Author" (Barthes) does not seem to apply in such cases. The author is very much present or is resurrected.

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[1] All translations are mine.

Yasmina Reza has been friends with Roman Polanski for a long time. She explains in an interview when asked what she thinks of accusations against Polanski (Reza, "C'est une chose énorme" 27): "I have nothing to add to this. I have known Roman for thirty years. I don't know the person who is being talked about in public." And she adds: "It is fascinating to observe how moralizing and penalizing our era has become. Who are the saints who allow themselves to judge?" According to Yasmina Reza, fictitious characters possess their own lives, do not obey their creator and are not their advocate. Finally, it is worth quoting from this interview again. Here Reza explains what she understands by fictitious characters:

> What I can say in my books or plays about society is only dictated by the temperament of the characters. [...] A fictitious character is not a spokesman for anything. That's what I like about writing, the preliminary non-conformity of the characters. […] Literature asks questions, it does not seek to reorder the world. (Reza, "C'est une chose énorme" 27)

The public uproar seems like a baroque spectacle. Reality and fiction merge; there is no longer a boundary between fantasy and truth. It seems as if the characters from Reza's play leave the stage and fuse with the audience, dividing it into several camps and leading to its polarization. Reza's statement that the characters stand for themselves overlooks the fact that their public image is a media event. They are not mummies that can be taken out of a coffin and studied. Polarization always takes place in the present, it never deals with the past, it is not interested in the canon of art. Polarization in this case makes history by neglecting cultural heritage. So, on the one hand, it is true that there is no end to history (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger"). On the other hand, the polarization takes place in the wrong place. True, the criticism of Polanski is intended to make the future a better present. But the critics leave the arena and disregard the cultural achievements of the past to paradoxically gain the power to inscribe themselves in tradition as new heroes. It is not their works of art that speak for innovation, but the attacks on recognized artists. This resembles a pecular irony in the history, or the "cunning of reason" with which the philosophy of history in Hegel's sense is concerned, that the creations of the self-declared avant-garde are possibly unwittingly only further links in a long chain of canonized works of art.

In times of polarization, celebrities are similar to fictitious characters, becoming media events and therefore subject to the judgment of their respective audiences. It seems like an irony of fate that Polanski already showed women's hatred of men in his film *Repulsion* (GB 1965). Here it is Catherine Deneuve in the leading role, playing a lonely young woman in a Parisian apartment who can no longer distinguish reality from products of the imagination. The clever staging suggests that she is beset by male figures, without revealing whether these images are merely her imagination. But it becomes clear that her fears and hallucinations turn her into a murderer.

3 "J'ACCUSE" AND THE FRENCH FILM PRIZE "CÉSAR" 2020

The public attention explains why an event is always necessary for protests to flare up. The awarding of the French film prize *César* to Roman Polanski as best director for his film *J'accuse* (F/I 2019), based on the novel *An Officer and a Spy* (2013), written by the British author Robert Harris, was such an event in 2020. Polanski had previously cancelled his participation.

In the sense described by Prisching, it is a typical example of "symbolic charging":

> Take an element, endow it with social relevance, charge it with symbolic meaning, imagine the opposing positions, assume bad intentions on the part of the people with different opinions – then a process may be started in which positions can be exaggerated and emotionalized, interpreted as an element of identity or reputation or as an irrefutable commandment of honor. The source of such processes of the 'symbolic charging' of phenomena can be found in people and social groups, in structural changes, in the spread of ideas, in the charisma of persons, in the élan of political entrepreneurs. (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger")

In fact, interest shifts from the award-winning film to the audience, where the real spectacle takes place, because when the award is announced the actress Adèle Haenel demonstratively leaves the hall. She is followed by Céline Sciamma, the director of the historical drama *Portrait de la jeune fille en feu* (*Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, F 2019), in which Haenel plays one of the leading roles and in which a lesbian love affair is shown. The film title seems to announce the scandal. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note something else: Sciamma is one of

the competitors for the best director award and does not win it because of Polanski's success. Nevertheless, the behavior of Haenel and Sciamma has not been discussed by the public and the media in this context, although the subject of the film, a lesbian love affair in a historical setting, fits well with the reason for the protest. The problem that arises is that French cinema about lesbian love affairs has long been dominated by male directors. Abdellatif Kechiche, for example, was awarded the Palme d'Or in 2013 for *La vie d'Adèle* (*Blue is the Warmest Color*, F 2012), thereby producing a remarkable new 'lesbian classic'.

It is a strange coincidence that Polanski's film, which depicts the Dreyfus affair at the end of the nineteenth century, juxtaposes *two men* instead of two women: an anti-Semitic officer and a suspected spy. Their relationship is not erotic, but political. The officer proves that the Jew Dreyfus was wrongly convicted of espionage. The relationship between the two men is grounded on a legal basis and shows that anti-Semitism can be a personal attitude that the anti-Semite puts aside in favor of the correct application of social justice. Comparing the films of Sciamma and Polanski, one finds an ecstatic and highly emotional love story between two women in the former and a distanced and institutionally mediated relationship between two men in the latter. The strange thing, however, is that on the evening of the award ceremony, this contrast was not noticed. The two film titles *J'accuse*, once the headline of Emile Zola's famous open letter, and *Portrait de la jeune fille en feu* take on a special meaning in light of the scandal. Of course, the point here is not to contrast the directors' political stances based on their films because this kind of 'analysis' would be a misleading example of positivism in the manner of *L'homme et l'œuvre*. Yasmina Reza would disagree, too, because this kind of interpretation negates the autonomy of fictitious characters, even if they are based on the biography of historical persons.

Instead of the competition between two films, the award ceremony is about the confrontation between an actress (Haenel) and a director (Polanski). The comments on the scandal vary. Some think that identity politics has nothing to do with an award ceremony, which must be about the films. Others consider the accusations made against Polanski to be proven and point to the signal effect that making the award to a rapist has on the public. Even the French Minister of Culture, Franck Riester, interfered in the public debate before the ceremony, saying that not only the work but also the author is honored and that giving the award to Polanski would be a bad sign in view of the fact that the crimes of the

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past were now finally being investigated (Le Monde avec AFP). However, historical events are not important for polarizing the public, as Polanski's film proves, in which the director deals with anti-Semitism and portrays the open-mindedness of officer Picquart, who is convinced of Dreyfus' innocence. Polanski seems to have sensed the situation and stayed away from the ceremony in the Pleyel Hall. And he was probably right, because the pictures of the demonstrations against Polanski during the award ceremony give the impression of a hunt and great violence (Paris Match).

4 SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH THE TRADITION OF SOCIAL COMMITMENT: THE APOSTLES OF REGRETS

But the evening of the award ceremony did not turn out quite so badly, for, once again, a significant coincidence occurred. While Polanski was honored for being the best director, the Malian-born director Ladj Ly received the award for the best film. Both awards are equal to each other. Ly entitled his film *Les Misérables* (F 2019) in an allusion to the famous novel by Victor Hugo (1862). The action takes place in the *banlieue* of Paris, where Hugo had already placed his characters. However, it is a typical example of *cinéma beur*, the genre in which the Arab inhabitants of the Parisian suburbs are presented.

The style of *Les Misérables* seems realistic, although the impression of authenticity is based on a sophisticated staging. In fact, the aesthetics resemble the clips of the rap group PNL (slang for "Peace and Lovés") whose performers also star in *Les Miserables*. Ladj Ly is one of the founders of the *kourtrajmé* collective (Lund), which consists of filmmakers of video clips and feature films, including Romain Gavras, whose film *Athena* (F 2022) is said to have helped trigger the riots in Linz in November 2022.

Adèle Haenel is a fan of Ladj Ly. But there are grave doubts about his moral integrity:

> The fact that he [Ladj Ly] spent a year in prison for kidnapping and physical violence was never an issue, and the feminists' indulgence all the more astonishing given that it concerns a Muslim woman who maintains an extramarital affair. The fact that Adèle Haenel, on the eve of the ceremony, described Ladj Ly, who had also been convicted several times for insulting public officials, as a role model and "an exception in racial cinema" in the *New York Times* seems strange. (Altwegg)

So while in Haenel's view, the film is very much important in Ladj Ly's case, in Polanski's case the biography is crucial. She herself combines both aspects, because she revealed the fact that she had been abused by a film director at the beginning of her career. The biography and the work of the artist are not separated from each other, just as fiction is not separated from reality. And in particular, the gender and skin color of the artists are responsible for acceptance or rejection. It is a phenomenon in which "parallelization may lead to the development of a *mega-divide*, a cleavage that absorbs many other cleavages" (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger").

However, Polanski can also prove enough catastrophes in his life that, according to this logic, entitle him to make a film about anti-Semitism. After all, he was born in Poland and is Jewish. He lived in the Cracow ghetto; his mother, pregnant again, was murdered in Auschwitz; his father survived imprisonment in Mauthausen. So the key question is: Who has the right to talk about what? And can someone lose this right if she or he misbehaves? Here, too, it can be seen that the issue in the debate is the righteousness of the person and not what the artistic achievement consists of.

At this point, the discussion veers in an unexpected direction. Polanski did not cite his past to prove himself worthy of making a film about the Dreyfus affair. The arguments of the feminists who leave the Pleyel Hall in Paris in a huff are different: they see themselves in a long tradition of the poor, the disenfranchised and the destitute. They argue in one case with the quality of films, in the other with the biography of the artists. Director and feminist Virginie Despentes, who also walked out of the award ceremony, criticizes the large budget Polanski had for *J'accuse*. Despentes emphasizes that Ladj Ly is an outsider and that the future belongs to women:

> Women are no longer muses, but avant-garde: Despentes' call for class struggle is against power par excellence, Macron's pension reform, and police violence: "Celebrate and humiliate whoever you want. Kill, rape, exploit, beat up. It's not the difference between the sexes that matters, but between the rulers and the oppressed. (Altwegg)

The violence Despentes calls for has already been staged by the director in her own film *Baise-moi* ("Fuck Me", F 2000): The film tells of two

women who are raped and then embark on a vendetta. "Convictions are wrapped into the vocabulary of the highest values, namely freedom, but 'enemies' must not be allowed to enjoy freedom." (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger") They kill every man who gets in their way. *Baise-moi* is probably Despentes' most successful film at home and abroad because it explicitly shows violence. In this respect, it is a product of its era and resembles the films of Oliver Stone (*Natural Born Killers*, USA 1994) and Quentin Tarrantino (*Kill Bill*, vol. 1, USA/Hong Kong 2002, and vol. 2, USA 2003).

Actress Jeanne Balibar, who stars in Ladj Ly's film, has made a film of her own called *Merveilles à Montfermeil* ("Wonders in Montfermeil", F 2019). Montfermeil is a well-known part of Paris because it is where the plot of Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* is set. Ladj Ly also shot his film there; he grew up in Montfermeil, where there were major riots in 2005 and 2006 because of poor housing, unemployment and lawlessness by residents, most of whom come from former French colonies. All in all, the film *Les Misérables* is part of a long tradition related to the art and history of social movements. That is why the film has nothing to do with the avant-garde role that Despentes proclaims for women, quite the contrary. It is a social romantic transfiguration that certainly does not show an idyll, but violence and crime, but which turns his material into a romantic crime plot typical of countless other films. This context brings to mind the lyrics of the song "Lalala le progrès," composed by the chansonnier CharlElie Couture and sung by a child's voice: "We can't live in the past/ you have to give up/ […] the old ideas […]/ When you are afraid of progress/ one becomes the apostle of regrets […]."[2] (CharlElie Couture)

So the question is, what is the message of these lyrics when the avant-garde clings to "the old ideas," although it claims to be committed to a better future? At least art, and in this case the cinema, has a long tradition of depicting social misery and the attempts of those people affected to improve their situation. But it is precisely an artistic tradition of literary texts, films, plays and even musicals, as the commercial exploitation of Hugo's novel itself makes clear. And the future is always also a matter

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[2] Cf. the original lyrics: "On peut pas vivre dans le passé/ faut abandonner/ tout c'qu'est périmé/ les idées reçues/ les pensées fanées/ les morales tordues/ et les tabous rouillés/ Quand on a peur du progrès/ on devient l'apôtre/ des regrets/ oui l'apôtre des regrets,/ lalala, lalala."

of the past, but polarization concerns exclusively the present. This is why Yasmina Reza refers to "the preliminary non-conformity of the characters." Seen in this light, the future consists in the autonomy of the fictitious characters and not in the morally justified negation of the present by a self-declared avant-garde. In this respect, Reza states: "Therefore, I could never write as a subject *about* this or that social problem" (Reza, "C'est une chose énorme" 27).

5 THE CRITICAL CRITIQUE OF THE IDEALISTS

Victor Hugo's novel was written in a time marked by industrialization. As a result of machine production and the emergence of large factories, the cities grew rapidly because more and more workers were needed. Thus many people moved from the countryside to the cities, but had to eke out a living under the most difficult conditions. Urbanization, illiteracy and great poverty forced many of them to accept any job that was offered to them. Single women were often forced to prostitute themselves in order to survive.

Against this background, Eugène Sue published his most successful feature novel *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842/43). And it is ironic that the publication of this novel marks the beginning of commercially popular literature in France and other countries. Sue depicted the misery of the Parisian underworld and created a literary model that was copied all over the world, so that mystery novels sprang up everywhere, their plots set in the metropolises of the respective countries. Sue makes proposals for social reform and subordinates his ideas to the motto "Si les riches savaient!" ("If the rich knew!"). This appeal is supposed to be an expression of pure philanthropy. For Marx, philanthropy is a paternalistic gesture on the part of the author Sue, which he condemns in his one single piece of literary criticism – based on a eulogy of Sue's novel, written by the Young Hegelian Zylinski – as a self-satisfied "critical critique", because in Marx' opinion, the hope for the insight and generosity of the rich does not change the social power relations (Marx; Zychlin von Zychlinski; Türschmann). And the revolutionary effect that this hope is supposed to have had in *Les Mystères de Paris* can ultimately be explained only by the fact that "ideas" take on a life of their own:

> The fact that the riot became ambiguous and falsified does not count, these are philosophical subtleties; for some, all that remained was the cry, Sue's finger-

wagging pointing to the scandal of misery. The ideas march by themselves, even if they are false, once they are only spread. One never knows exactly where they will arrive. (Eco 57)

"False ideas" detach themselves from the text; readers merely use it. "Considering the motley variety of motives driving the polarization of feelings and ideas, but especially enhancing the growth of negative emotions, resentment and aggressiveness, one can speculate about a model that reverses causality […]." (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger") The ideas are the result of the "idealizing tendency" that comes into play given the presumed significance of Sue, the bearer of secrets, against a concrete historical background that shapes the subject.

The empathy that characterizes the recent protest at the award ceremony in Paris can be explained in the broader context of a "cult of indignation" (Stephan; cf. Prisching) that arose perhaps for the first time during the process of industrialization and commercialization in the nineteenth century. It is a cult of sincere feelings and pure ideas which reality cannot reach. This sensitivity has meanwhile been eyed critically and has been shaping public debates for some time. The financial crisis has given the appeal to "Indignez-vous!" a sustained media echo, right up to the cinematic pamphlet *Indignados* (Tony Gatlif, F 2012). Stéphane Hessel, the author of the celebrated homonymous essay, provided the template for the film and contributed to Gatlif's film as the *spiritus rector* and interviewee (Hessel). The film

depicts a chapter of the history books very much still being written: the Occupy movement. *Indignados* (*The Outraged*) is loosely based on *Indignez-vous!* (*Time for Outrage*), an essay by Stéphane Hessel, a 94-year-old concentration camp survivor and former diplomat and ambassador. The slim volume, which urges readers to take action against the unfairness of modern society, was translated into at least 40 languages and has become the set text of the civilian movements that have occupied public spaces around the globe. […] So far *Indignados* has received a muted reaction from critics in Germany. The *Taz* said it veered into pretentiousness, while the *Tagesspiegel* said that, like the Occupiers, it identified a problem without offering a solution. (Pidd)

Emotive propaganda, of whatever shade, even in fiction, is, however, a questionable breeding ground for self-assurance, complacency, and self-righteousness when a film or a novel is merely the trigger for identity politics: the result is the loss of a once politically engaged "culturalism" (Storey 38-60) that has since given way to the search for emphatically

tuned self-actualization in the form of lifestyles, self-optimization, and consumerism. The "means of calamitous sensational exaltation" and "indignation enjoyment" reflect, admittedly, a sincere commitment to a good cause in the eyes of identity politics (Luhmann 66). Seen through this lens, any film that shows a grievance, by analogy with Sartre's concept of literature, belongs to a *cinéma engagé* and demands a passionate commentary.

This more recent variety of culturalism goes back to Johann Gottfried Herder and his notion of a homogeneous *Volksgemeinschaft* (Furedi 13-15). As a result, both shape the notion of a core cultural, religious, gender, or generational identity of self or other within a group of like-minded people. "Political issues are now negotiated as personal identity and attitudinal issues; we have arrived at the level of advice literature and intimate confessions [...]" (Manow 116). It seems that people create their personal security with the help of their self-chosen identity and the exclusion of others, as explained by Prisching in his chapter:

> However, if the existing rifts have become a core element of one's identity and personal orientation in life, people are not interested in giving up the mental safety that they have gained by placing themselves in the 'closed box' of a strange theory." (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger")

From this point of view, the films of Michael Moore and Erwin Wagenhofer seem to be cautionary tales in the tradition of *Struwwelpeter*. Political enlightenment and elected institutions of a representative democracy no longer count against discrimination. Instead, identity politics calls for individual diversity to be disregarded and therefore demands 'direct democracy' and full respect for such victim collectives who define themselves by their cultural heritage, national or regional origin, faith, sexual orientation, skin color, or age.

6 SEMANTIC HEALING

To be sure, empathy feels genuine. But it should not be an invitation to unqualified emotional empathy. For what appears to be genuine consternation is, at worst, naïve when it takes the place of personal experience. Even more: film experience becomes a refuge in flight from the mortification of one's own sensibility. Therefore, the cult of indignation is possibly a response to a lack of social guidelines:

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"Societies that have no political plan are obsessed with the principle of mortification" (Seesslen). And this lack of a plan goes hand in hand with the powerlessness of the person offended. After all, "sentience arises from a catastrophic disproportion between inner empowerment and outer possibilities" (Seesslen). The empathic exaltation of discrimination of all kinds is quite comparable to the absolute ego far from any social bond, a "cult of the single soul" (Seesslen). It is characterized by the idea that gender, for example, is a spectrum of infinite possibilities. Diversity here means individual uniqueness and incomparability.

The reference to the absolute ego also serves, as is well known, to provide consolation for the suffering resulting from personal idiosyncrasies that others might regard as weaknesses and as pretexts for exclusion. In a reevaluation, the deficits perceived as such are now regarded as predicate characteristics. These 'heroines' of everyday life are mocked when, for example, the gender star hypocritically stands for the low chances of success of 'starlets' in the person of non-normative models of a casting show, who are put on display for an audience of millions under the pretext of diversity on television. Predecessors have already been seen in the cinema: the 'elephant man' (*The Elephant Man*, David Lynch, USA 1980) or the *Black Venus* (*Vénus noire*, Abdellatif Kechiche, F/Belgium/Tunisia 2010). The basis for the satisfaction of being emotionally touched, and possibly the clandestine relief of nevertheless sufficiently conforming to body norms, are, as before with normative-repressive beauty ideals, "patterns of inclusion as an intersection of mass media forms and self-description techniques [...] whose validity they [the casting shows] have to make visible by means of their own bodies: as genuine feeling, as authenticity, as good representation" (Saake und Maier 178,183). The victims of this marketing, however, remain hollow and without essence: there is nothing behind them but the indignation or fascination of their gaffers and the paradoxical sincerity of their feelings.

For, "[t]he ego is not an object" (Wittgenstein 175). Or, to put it differently: the ego is a conceit. And those who imagine something about themselves, because they are or see themselves as something special, do not play the main role in daydreams and films by chance. They are the key motif in a narrative of the rise and fall of the 'little man' who struggles with dark forces for victory while remaining true to himself.

> In all this, the ego has been exalted by the most surprising change of fate – like the beggar who awakens as a king in the oriental fairy tales. Leibniz dares to call man a *petit dieu*. Kant makes the ego the supreme lawgiver of nature. And Fichte, immoderate as always, is content only with the outermost formula: the ego is everything. (Ortega y Gasset 84)

For hermeneutics, this short-circuit means that each individual absolutizes his idiosyncratic understanding of film and makes empathy the key of his self-understanding and perception of the external world. The paradox here is that he shares this experience with others.

7 THE FALLACY OF MORAL ART

The challenge of having to do justice to the inherent lawfulness of a film resembles the sometimes hard to bear contradiction between the morality of one's sense of justice and the legally binding nature of a judicial verdict. Similarly, when an offender's lenient punishment does not satisfy the victim's desire for retribution: the catharsis that a documentary, fictional, or essayistic model of reality can bring about is absent, and with it the therapeutic effect of releasing inner tensions in the subject. In this way, the cinematic stimuli may create turmoil or incite conspiracy. These passionate feelings call for the great themes of humanity, and through this pathos miss the purpose of art:

> Indeed, the pattern repeats itself too often to attribute it to simple coincidence: we see good filmmakers succumb to academism and grandiloquence for having criticized the 'big subjects' where they lost their sense of moderation and their identities as men and artists, if not their souls. Educators continue to love big subjects for reasons that are at times good in terms of general and civic education (initiating conversations about… war, racism, etc.), but these conversations do not necessarily do credit to cinema, nor, in certain cases, do they even simply respect it as an art. (Bergala 32)

Therefore, 'important films' are to be taken to be important only as films. "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe") the painter René Magritte wrote on his painting *La trahison des images* ("The Betrayal of Images"), which shows a pipe. For the picture is a picture and not a pipe. The nature of the reference cannot be separated from the point of reference, be it referential or emotional.

When director David Wark Griffith develops a montage form that elevates the medium of film to art in his racist epic *The Birth of a Nation*

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(USA 1915), considered by many to be one of the most important works of early U.S. film history, this must be taken into account. The same artistic ingenuity is evident in the subsequent pacifist film *Intolerance* (USA 1916) (Camporesi 37-42), despite a different subject, which appears as Griffith's attempt to appease the vehement criticism of the racist message of its predecessor. However, the director intended this film as a protest against the intolerance towards *The Birth of a Nation*. Both films identify a single 'big theme' in their titles. Its problematic nature is evident in the ambivalent attempt to celebrate the birth of a reactionary social system and deplore the *criticism* of white supremacy as intolerant, but also in the contradiction between the forward-looking artistic design and the obviously reactionary propaganda. The issue, then, goes beyond the supposed uniqueness of the film titles and the simple empathy or even sympathy for the white master race in *The Birth of a Nation* or the victims of capitalism in *Intolerance*.

8 "CARNAGE – TOUT COURT"

Polanski briefly called his film adaptation of Reza's play *Carnage* (USA 2011). He filmed it with Austrian and American actors and moved the plot from Paris to New York. Suspected of sexual harassment, he was no longer allowed to travel to the USA and therefore shot the film in Paris. *Carnage* is an all-star film: Jodie Foster, Kate Winslet, Christoph Waltz and John C. Reilly are all internationally known actors. There is no main character, all appear as equals, both as actors and as parents of two boys who have been fighting. It is inadequate to interpret this film as an allegory of polarization as well. For the question arises as to why Polanski and Reza, who collaborated on the screenplay, moved the action to the USA. Given the film's subject matter, perhaps one reason for this is that the presence of U.S. stars like Foster, Winslet, and Reilly is only believable in a narrative world set in the United States.

Waltz was known for his role in Quentin Tarantino's 2009 *Inglourious Basterds*, though there he plays a German Nazi officer in occupied France. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the reviews make a distinction between Waltz's role and the roles of the other three protagonists. Waltz remains calm, never gets angry, is cynical as in other films, but he does not raise his voice as the others do. Is it possible to interpret this difference in the context of Polanski's situation? Why are the Americans so indignant and why does the European remain so calm,

at least outwardly? Everyone may have some thoughts on this, and probably much of it is perhaps speculation that goes too far. But does this interpretation owe something to a conspiracy theory? And against whom is this conspiracy theory directed? Is Polanski criticizing hysterical Americans for their understanding jurisprudence in his own case? Is Waltz intended to act as the alter ego of Polanski? No one knows and no one can prove which reading is correct.

The wolf in sheep's clothing is the basic motif of all conspiracy theories. The suspicion that a benevolent intention hides a hostile act destroys trust in the other, because polite manners can no longer be relied on. In the examples of *J'accuse* and *Carnage*, the fundamental question concerns the relationship between a director and his film. The interaction between suspicions, generalizations and the search for a scapegoat leads to conspiracy theories and to a call for direct plebiscitary democracy and opinion leadership. The suspicious person loses the right to defend his or her own attitude. It is striking that this mechanism is a form of agenda setting in the current social situation. In this way, fiction is transformed into a kind of pamphlets – against its authors.

The criticism of Swedish film director Ruben Östlund, who won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017 and 2022, is that he does not morally evaluate or psychologically characterize the protagonists in his films. However, this 'deficiency' is not unusual:

> [...] if this is a crime of offending cinema, then we must eradicate the western, Chaplin, Griffith, Eisenstein, in short, we must eradicate [...] all genres and all directors who are not above decreeing [...] the ignominy of German characters, soldiers, bourgeois, bankers, cops, blacks, Indians, etc. precisely because they are Indians, blacks, cops, bankers, bourgeois, Germans, soldiers, etc. (Orengo 54)

The same can be said of Polanski's films. His adaptation of Reza's play shows the anger of the protagonists with the neutrality and sobriety of a sociological study. Östlund and Polanski are both suspected of being cynical, uncommitted and indifferent. Yet it is precisely in this way that they prove themselves, like Charles Chaplin, David Wark Griffith, and Sergei Eisenstein before them, to be the most important directors of their time.

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3. POLARIZATION AND ITS REFLECTION
IN NATIONAL IDENTITIES
IN CANADA AND THE USA

MARTIN LÖSCHNIGG

Them! Polarizing Depictions of US-Canadian Relations in Anglo-Canadian Literature

In a 2015 Canadian comic book series by Brian K. Vaughan and Steve Skroce, set in the 22nd century, Canadian guerrillas fight an American invasion. The series title, *We Stand on Guard,* quotes Canada's national anthem, while its cover shows a tattered maple leaf flag flying from the rubble of Ottawa's parliament building, laid to waste by a giant battle robot with stars and stripes insignia. *We Stand on Guard* reaches back to scenarios of an American military invasion in Canadian novels popular in their time, like Ian Adams's *The Trudeau Papers* (1971) or Ellis Portal's *Killing Ground* (1968), the latter imagining a US intervention in a civil war between Canada and separatist Quebec. Richard Rohmer's *Ultimatum*, the best-selling Canadian novel in 1973, depicted US-Canadian relations on the brink of armed conflict due to the energy crisis (see also Broege).

Sensationalist as all this is, it expresses fears of US aggression that are rooted in historical events like the 1812-14 Border Wars, and that have permeated Canadian political and cultural discourses. In literature in particular, the complexity of total relations between Canada and the US has often been reduced to polarized (and polarizing) oppositions. Constructing dichotomies of 'we' vs. 'they', works by Canadian writers have expressed anti-American sentiments or outright Anti-Americanism, and there is a pervasive tendency to expose US dominance or even aggression. Notably, this was the case in the 1960s and 70s when, mainly because of the Vietnam war, the suspicion and skepticism with which Canada's liberal elites had always viewed the US developed into outright (leftist) 'Yankee-phobia'. This period also marked the culmination of a cultural nationalism that emphasised 'Canadianness' in the arts, and of which the rejection of America and American culture was an integral element.

This essay discusses adversary depictions of Canadian-American relations, and negative portrayals of the US and of Americans, in Canadian literature from the nineteenth century to the present, with an

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occasional glimpse at the other arts.[1] Chronologically, the focus will be on the nineteenth century, when Canada's development as a nation necessitated defining its position *vis-à-vis* the United States, and on the nationalist 1960s and 70s. The texts discussed will be Anglo-Canadian, since it is here rather than in French-Canadian writing that examples of Anti-Americanism can be found. The reasons are obvious: linguistic and cultural 'kinship' was likely to produce points of friction for English rather than French Canadians as the gradual loosening of political ties with Britain caused Canada to drift ever more strongly into the political, economic, and cultural sphere of influence of the United States. In contrast, Quebecers have felt the need to resist Anglophone dominance within Canada rather than that of an external power. Adding to this the geographical (and economic) connections between Quebec and the New England states, and the traditional alliance between France and the US, it will not be surprising that, on the whole, the American image is much more favourable in French-Canadian than in English-Canadian literature.

'Anti-Americanism' is a notoriously vague term, referring comprehensively to fear or hatred of the United States and its policies, or of Americans in general (see Gibson; Hollander). According to James W. Ceaser, "it rests on the singular idea that something associated with the United States, something at the core of American life, is deeply wrong and threatening to the rest of the world." (online) In contrast to justified criticism, Anti-Americanism is prejudicial: it creates generalizing distortions or even hostile "caricature[s] of some aspect or behaviour or attitude" (Doran and Sewell 106). In the Canadian context, Anti-Americanism has projected visions of Canada as the victim of, first, the US as a political power; second, of the US as an economic power; and third, of US cultural appropriation: "The United States is cast in the role of an expansionist power seeking to subjugate and divide an enfeebled and overly compliant Canadian polity" (Doran and Sewell 115).

What must be emphasized about Canadian Anti-Americanism is how it has functioned primarily as an element in asserting a Canadian national and cultural identity. Polarizing projections of 'we' *vs.* 'they' have served as a means of staving off national and/or cultural integration. According to Benedict Anderson's well-known concept, nations are "imagined communities" that are constantly being 're-invented' in a process which

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[1] I am indebted to Dieter Meindl's fine essay on US-Canadian relations as reflected in literature for some of my examples.

includes reflections on what a nation constructs as its beginning, and that which it sees itself as becoming in the future. In the case of Canada, a systemic antagonism to the US has been an important element in this process. "[D]esigned primarily as a means to differentiate Canadians from Americans" (Nossal 8), it has produced polarizing projections of Canada as 'not American', 'not yet American', or 'anti-American', and as the 'other' or even 'better North America'. Indeed, it may be claimed that in this "fundamental sense Canada's very essence is anti-American" (Doran and Sewell 107).

The role of literature in this process of differentiation and/or polarization has been ambivalent: as Paul Goetsch has shown, it has reflected but also anticipated socio-political discourses, and it has (re)produced but also refracted or undermined stereotypes (Goetsch). Literature is invariably selective and tends to pinpoint, in an imaginative manner, the gist of historical and socio-political complexities. As vehicles of the construction as well as critical questioning of collective identities, "[n]ational literatures are not reflections of the national character, but manifestations of the 'invention' of the nation, of the strategies used to create national identities" (Corse 74).[2] Clearly, then, the fact that Canadian literature has dealt with the US much more often than *vice versa* indicates how much more important the giant next door has been for (Anglo-)Canada's nation-building process than the other way around. Indeed, Canada hardly seems to be a topic in US literature, a fact that expresses not only the political gradient between the two countries, but also a different history of the development and confirmation of national identities.

In the nineteenth century, "the entrenchment of anti-Americanism […] was crucial in the process of forming a unified Canada" (Nossal 13). Along with the US, there also developed resistance against attempts at expansion directed at the remaining British colonies in North America. This was fuelled by the fierce antagonism of the United Empire Loyalists who had come north in the wake of the Revolutionary War, a movement

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[2] Corse investigates correlations between national canon formation and nation-building using the example of apprx. two hundred American and Canadian novels, showing how these novels tend to support widespread assumptions about "American individualism […] and Canadian social identification" (63) by emphasising "autonomy/individualism" *versus* "connection/affiliation" (86).

repeated 200 years later by the influx of Vietnam draft resisters.[3] Confederation and the creation of the Canadian Dominion in 1867 also represent an effort to build a political society distinct from the United States, while accommodating both founding nations, the English and the French. As the new dominion was expanding along its east-west axis, however, there was also a strong southern pull exerted by geographical factors and regional economic ties.[4] Politically, Anti-Americanism had a vital function in counteracting that pull, and in keeping Canadian unification on track. In essence, this function continued beyond the nineteenth century. Paradoxically, therefore, "the United States has served repeatedly, if unwittingly, as the best friend nationalism could have in a country as culturally and sectionally divided as Canada" (Careless 132). As Doran and Sewell have pointedly put it, "As far as Canadian cohesion is concerned, if the United States did not exist, Ottawa would have to invent it" (119).

Depictions of Americans in nineteenth-century Canadian literature express some discomfort with US economic efficiency and expansion, yet so far, no pronounced or even militant Anti-Americanism. Thomas Chandler Haliburton's satirical tales as collected in *The Clockmaker* (1837) present a stereotyped 'Yankee' in the character of the wily Sam Slick of Slickville, Connecticut, who is all profit-oriented pragmatism: "We reckon hours and minutes to be dollars and cents" (13). The stories reflect the conservative Haliburton's distrust of the democratic system on the one hand, and his admiration for the economic success of the US on the other. There is no doubt, however, that the contrast between the backward 'Bluenoses', Haliburton's fellow Nova Scotians, and the agile and progressive Slick contains a humorous warning about the danger of

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[3] This is the theme of Joyce Wieland's 1968 experimental film *Rat Life and Diet in North America*. In the form of an animal story or fable, Wieland presents rats as jailed by cats in a "political prison," finally making a heroic escape to Canada, and a utopian vision of abundance and peace.

[4] In a late nineteenth-century cartoon from the US magazine *Puck*, the magnet which Uncle Sam uses to attract Miss Canada is "Common Business Interests". However, she is tethered by a strap labelled "Conservative Majority" to a post with the features of Sir John Alexander Macdonald, conservative – and anti-American – engineer and first prime minister of the Dominion. The caption reads: "It's Only a Question of Time. Old Fogyism may hold her back for a while, but she is bound to come to us."

a republican and aggressively capitalist appropriation. As Slick remarks to the narrator: "I tell you, if we had this country, you couldn't see the harbour for the shipping" (8).

Susanna Moodie's account of pioneering life and early settlement in *Roughing It in the Bush: or, Life in Canada* (1852), although published in London and directed primarily at an English readership, has become a Canadian classic. The book renders an ambivalent image of 'Americans', a term which Moodie tends to use indiscriminately for non-indigenous people born in the land, in contrast to newly arrived settlers like herself. On the one hand, it is often that the designation carries negative overtones. In chapter five ("Our First Settlement, and the Borrowing System"), for instance, the "lower class of Americans" (59) are marked as the most inveterate practitioners of a "pernicious custom" among Moodie's neighbours, namely that of 'borrowing' items with no real intention to return them. To this group also belong "odious squatters" on the land of absentee owners (59). Quite the English gentlewoman even in the Ontario bush, Moodie projects on the "Americans" her own helplessness and distaste for the anarchic tendencies of frontier egalitarianism, as she saw it. On the other hand, she often reveals a (subliminal) fascination with democratic principles. Thus, for instance, Moodie reflects that if the young of the British social elites were sent to the "United States, or even to Canada" rather than to the European continent as part of their education, "some of their most repulsive prejudices and peculiarities would soon be rubbed off by the rough towel of democracy" (159-60). In one of the few instances where she actually differentiates between Canadians and US-Americans, she is inclined to acknowledge that "the just claims of education and talent" upon which legitimate hierarchies may be based in a democratic society are recognized by the "Americans of the United States […] [rather than] the Canadians, because they are better educated and their country longer settled" (160).

In a memorable episode, Moodie is reproached with haughtiness by an elderly "American" woman because she does not sit down with her servant girl to take her meals – yet the woman herself would never sit down with Blacks, whose humanity she denies in the vilest terms (142-43). Moodie's condemnation of the American's racism aligns with a major nineteenth-century critique that pitched Canada as a land of freedom against the slave-keeping US and that has given rise to a well-cultivated image of Canada as a haven for Black loyalists and runaway

slaves. This image, one should mention, has been viewed rather critically in contemporary Canadian writing like Lawrence Hill's best-selling novel *The Book of Negroes* (2007).[5]

In the popular imagery of the later nineteenth century, American attempts at influencing or dominating Canada are often rendered in terms of a female personification of the country being courted, seduced, or pressured by a male US counterpart. One example is an 1880s cartoon by British artist Tom Merry (i.e., William Mecham), entitled "Trying Her Constancy, or, A dangerous flirtation", in which an ardent gallant in stars and stripes is making advances to young lady Canada, whose fur-trimmed skirt displays St. George's cross, while her guardian-husband John Bull is taking a nap (Fig. 1). Another is a 'family scene' dating from 1869, in which "Mrs Britannia" asks her daughter, "Miss Canada" (fur-clad here, too), a "pertinent question": has she "ever given [her] cousin Jonathan", slouching beside them in striped trousers and star-spangled waistcoat, "any encouragement"? The answer is "Certainly not, Mamma. I have told him we can never be united." (Fig. 2)

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[5] Published under the title *Someone Knows My Name* in the USA, Australia, and New Zealand. The original Canadian title refers to a British historical document of that name listing freed slaves who had supported the Crown in the Revolutionary War and were fleeing Manhattan for Canada in 1783.

Fig. 2: Tom Merry (i.e. William Mecham). *Trying Her Constancy, or, A dangerous flirtation*, ca. 1885-1890 (Public Domain)

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A PERTINENT QUESTION.

MRS. BRITANNIA.—"IS IT POSSIBLE, MY DEAR, THAT YOU HAVE EVER GIVEN YOUR COUSIN JONATHAN ANY ENCOURAGEMENT?"

MISS CANADA.—"ENCOURAGEMENT! CERTAINLY NOT, MAMMA. I HAVE TOLD HIM WE CAN *NEVER* BE UNITED."

Fig. 3: Anon. A Pertinent Question. *Diogenes* 18 June 1869 (Public Domain)

One is reminded of Kipling's personified depiction of Canada as the "[d]aughter" who will "*abide by [her] Mother's House*" in his poem "Our Lady of the Snows" (Kipling 181-83).[6] Canadian novelist Robertson Davies would later speak of Canada as the "Good Daughter Who Stayed at Home" rather than joining the "Naughty Daughter", the American colonies, in their insurrection against Mother England (Trueheart online).[7] These feminized conceptions of Canada *vis-à-vis* a

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[6] Written in 1897 on the Canadian decision to introduce preferential tariffs for British goods.

[7] However, Davies went on: "So what happened? Just what everybody with a knowledge of family behaviour might expect to happen: the Naughty Daughter prospered mightily and Mother, who always had a sharp eye for success, became very fond of her. And the Good Daughter Who Stayed at Home became, in the course of time, rather a bore." (Trueheart online).

'male' US render power relations in terms of traditional gender roles. As such, the image continued to inform depictions of Canada as 'passive' or 'compliant' or a victim of the masculine ebullience of Uncle Sam. Thus, in his 1949 essay "The Psychology of Canadian Nationalism", Hugh MacLennan argued that in spite of the "masculine" Canadian stereotypes involving mounties, trappers, and "raw-boned" sportsmen,

> Canada, *as a nation*, is not masculine at all. She is feminine. This feminine psychology has not arisen out of the lives of individual Canadians nor out of the kind of country they inhabit. It came into being because a country with Canada's peculiar history happens to share the major part of the North American continent with a colossus like the United States. Were it not for the United States, Canada would never have been a nation at all, much less the kind she is. (414)

Canadian attitudes towards the US, as MacLennan continues, may well be viewed in terms of 'wifely' passivity and acceptance:

> Canadians have always clucked their tongues at American flamboyance and recklessness, but they know that life would be drab without them. They watch with indulgent amusement, even while affecting disapproval, the delight Americans take in their own accomplishments, their freedom from inhibitions, their love of boasting, their penchant for getting into the kind of trouble a lesser people would avoid and their correspondingly noisy vigor in getting out of it. During the past 50 or 60 years, Canadians have enjoyed the United States much as a good wife enjoys the spectacle of a robust husband being himself. (415)

Clichéd depictions of the 'good daughter' or 'wife' wearing furs, as in the two nineteenth-century cartoons mentioned above, signify her 'northernness', in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imagology often associated with strength, solidity and order in contrast to southern decadence. In such a scheme of things, Americans could be cast in the role of invaders and destroyers of a northern idyll. Such a self-image could also attract anti-technological sentiments, however, and as in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe, aspects of progress that were regarded as negative often came to be equated with 'American'.

Stereotyped conceptions of national identities and characteristics are critically reflected in a major Canadian novel published in 1904, Sara Jeanette Duncan's *The Imperialist*. As Hugh MacLennan was to do around the middle of the new century, *The Imperialist* tries to ascertain Canada's position between Europe and the US. The protagonist, Lorne Murchison, is a proponent of imperialism in the sense of a closer, more

equal union of Britain and its dominions as against the reality of Canada's growing dependence on the US. As he and his fellow imperialists are aware, an integration of Empire countries, with a common fleet and a customs union would go against US interests: "'[…] now it's a question of the lead. The Americans think they've got it, and unless we get imperial federation of course they have" (124). There is in Murchison a sense of 'Canadianness' that makes him resent identification with the US. This is expressed in the description of his visit to London: "He felt a little surly […] when they asked him, as they nearly always did, if he wasn't an American. 'Yes', he would say in the end, 'but not the United States kind,' resenting the necessity of explaining to the Briton beside him that there were other kinds" (118). Canadians, as the following passage makes clear, represent a desirable balance between New-World democracy and Old-World loyalties: "They stood […] for the development between the two; they came of the new country but not of the new light; they were democrats who had never thrown off the monarch – what harm did he do there overseas?" (191) Duncan's version of the 'international theme' contains a perceptive assessment of the intricacies of the Canadian-American relationship, yet also numerous warnings, as voiced by the protagonist, against US expansionism: "If we would preserve ourselves as a nation," says Murchison, "it has become our business […] to keenly watch and actively resist American influence as it already threatens us through the common channels of life and energy." (232)

Anglo-Canadian Old-World loyalties resurged during the First World War. President Woodrow Wilson's refusal to join until April 1917 created much antagonism in Canada, and feelings of moral superiority in the face of a vehemently criticized wait-and-see attitude on the part of the US. Stephen Leacock's "The White House from Within" (1960 [1916]) presents a geographically ignorant US president who sends battle ships to all remote corners of the world but fails to support the allies against Germany. Around the time of the war, the 'continentalist' view that saw Canada's destiny as that of a North American nation (a view that was initially directed against British colonial domination) was increasingly interpreted – and criticized – as pressuring the country towards the role of an American colony. This is the issue behind Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising*. Published in 1941, during World War II, the novel is set in 1917, dealing with the self-discovery of the young Canadian nation in the First World War. The vision proposed by

MacLennan is that of Canada fulfilling a mediating function between Europe and the US, uniting the best of the old and new worlds. In contrast, and after the atomic bomb, MacLennan's 1948 novel *The Precipice* renders a disillusioned outlook: the commercialized, technology-oriented civilization of the US has created a spiritual and moral vacuum, and the question is now whether Canada could possibly provide a corrective.

After World War II, Canada became ever more closely tied to the United States politically and economically, and American mass media were dominating the country to a great extent (see Dickey). The Cold War brought home to Canadians their military dependence on a US-alliance, yet in the 1960s and 70s, Vietnam and the race riots in the States provided reasons for keeping a distance. This coincided with an attempt, on the part of Anglo-Canadians, at taking some of the pressure out of Quebec separatism by casting America in the role of the 'true adversary'. George Grant's seminal *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (1965), vituperated the nation's economic and cultural sell-out, supported by Canadian liberals, to the US. Among Canadian intellectuals, Northrop Frye stated with resignation: "Canada is in the American orbit and will remain so in the foreseeable future. Canadians could not resist that even if they wanted to" (64). The fact that Canadian academic positions were frequently filled by Americans triggered a heated debate on the Americanization of Canadian Universities (Granatstein, ch. 8: "Anti-Yankville: Robin Matthews versus the Americanization of Canadian Universities", 192-216).

Critique of US cultural imperialism was behind the report of the *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (1951), informally known as the Massey Report, after the head of the commission, Governor General Vincent Massey. The report led to the creation of the Canada Council and to vigorous government support of the arts. A new emphasis on 'Canadianness' was apt to make the fine arts crutches for Canadian nationalism. A prominent example is artist Greg Curnoe, whose panel inscribed "Close the 49th parallel etc."[8] as well as his several versions of a map of North America minus the US became widely known. Curnoe had a personal axe to grind with the Americans,

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[8] One of five in a series *The True North Strong and Free*, Museum London (London, Ontario). On the symbolic significance of the 49th parallel see also Brown; Dexter; Gwyn.

since his mural for Montreal's International Airport at Dorval was removed, upon American intervention, since it was viewed as Anti-American. According to the artist, it really contained a statement against the war in Vietnam. The sale of publishers, like that of Ryerson Press, Canada's oldest publisher, to McGraw Hill in 1970, and especially Hollywood's stranglehold on Canadian film (Clarkson 362) were grist to the mill of cultural Anti-Americanists. One of the few voices that did not join the Anti-American chorus was that of Mordecai Richler. Historian Jack Granatstein, whose 1996 study of Canadian Anti-Americanism has been the only monograph on the subject so far, cites Richler writing in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1971 about English Canada's "militant nationalism, its most vitriolic expression being Anti-Americanism". He was attacked with anti-Semitic undertones, as Granatstein further elaborates, by Farley Mowat, prolific writer of books on popular natural history and the Second World War and one of Canada's literary icons – and a notorious Anti-American (Granatstein 218-19). In his chapter on "Imagining Canada: Academics, Artists, Writers and the Culture of Anti-Americanism" (217-45), Granatstein claimed that "Still, no sector of Canadian life today [i.e., in the mid-1990s] is more overtly nationalist and anti-American than the arts" (220). This was notwithstanding many institutional and personal connections between Canadian artists and the US, or the fact that the *New Yorker* published the stories of two of Canada's most renowned writers, Mavis Gallant and Alice Munro, whose careers took off in the 1960s.

The new nationalism found its most alarmist expression in fears of being taken over or absorbed by the US, as manifested in the works mentioned in the introduction. Such fears are rendered ironically in "Cape Breton is the Thought Control Centre of Canada," the title story of a 1969 volume of experimental fiction by Ray Smith. The story is a conglomerate of anecdotes, sketches and dialogues that touch on Canadian attitudes to the US, also by drawing analogies to the situation of Poland in between Germany and Russia. Playfully, the story imagines an American invasion after Canadian Anti-Americanism has provided a "divine cause", and "*the fun you'd have in the Resistance*: It's a great subject for daydreaming: Be the first kid on your block to gun down a Yankee Imperialist" (60). The kid on the block-image is also used in the following dialogue in order to illustrate the Canadian predicament of being next-door neighbour to a super-power:

> SEE, the way I look at it, your problem is that Joe Yank is the biggest kid on the block. Now I know you're pretty friendly with him – him being your cousin and all – but someday he's going to say, "Johnny Canuck, my boot is dirty. Lick it." Now then are you going to get down on your hands and knees and lick or are you going to say, "Suck ice, Joe Yank"? Because if you do say, "Suck ice," he's going to kick you in the nuts. And either way, you're going to lick those boots. It just depends on how you want to take it.
> Of course, you can always kick him first. (73-74)

In retrospect, however (i.e., in a later introductory piece, "The Age of Innocence," added to a 2006 re-issue of the collection), Smith relativizes nationalist "misreading[s]" of the story, expressing a resigned acceptance of the Americanization of Canada in the face of the scarcity of a Canadian vision: "The dream of glorious nationalism expressed through the resistance anecdotes is […] undercut […]: the Canadian nationalist, with few home grown dreams, dreams in American terms" (6).

Canadian poetry of the 1960s and 70s protested US capitalism and imperialism as epitomized by the war in Vietnam. This applies for instance to Milton Acorn, a poet with strong socialist leanings, and his *Poems for People* (1972) and to poems by Raymond Souster ("Death Chant for Mr. Johnson's America"), George Bowering ("Winning") and Michael Ondaatje ("Pictures from Vietnam") in Al Purdy's anthology *The New Romans: Candid Canadian Opinions of the U.S.* (65-69; 116-7; 131). Purdy's collection (which also includes Smith's "Cape Breton …") assembles texts that render a wide range of positive and negative assessments of the US, together with much self-criticism regarding Canada's susceptibility to US influence. Most prominently, however, Dennis Lee, in nine "Civil Elegies" sought "a defense against […] the international threat of the United States" (Dobson 51), expressing anxiety about Canada's economic, political, and cultural sovereignty. Among the "bewildered nations" whose "boundaries / diminish to formalities on maps" (37), thus Lee, Canada stands out as a nation whose lack of spirit stifles its citizens:

> Many were born in Canada, and living unlived lives they died
> of course but died truncated, stunted, never at
> home in native space and not yet
> citizens of a human body of kind. And it is Canada
> that specialized in this deprivation. (33)

Critique of the US is expanded to criticize Canadian acquiescence regarding Vietnam. Evoking pictures of Napalm victims, Lee laments "the continental drift to barbarian / normalcy" (# 6; 49) and the role of "consenting citizens in a minor and docile colony" as "cogs in a useful tool" (#5; 47). Citing the motto in the Canadian coat of arms, "a mari usque ad mare", Lee draws a disillusioned conclusion of Canada as "a conquered nation: sea to sea we bartered / everything that counts". (#9; 56)

Lee's elegies illustrate the sense of victimhood which Margaret Atwood's study of Canadian literature, *Survival* (1971), regards as a theme that permeates Canadian writing (see also her "Survival Then and Now"). Commenting on "Animal Victims" in ch. 3, Atwood cites examples of texts in which Canadian wild animals are hunted down by Americans, including Alden Nowlan's poem "Hunters" and the stories in Dave Godfrey's *Death Goes Better with Coca-Cola* (1967). Significantly (and as in the prototypical Canadian animal stories of Charles G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton), these texts adopt the perspective of the animal rather than that of the hunter (76-79). The motif of Americans as hunters and killers of Canadian wildlife is also prominent in *Surfacing*, Atwood's own novel published in the same year as *Survival*. Here, new emphasis is laid on the environmental, with "Americans" ruthlessly exploiting Canada's nature. As it turns out, however, the "Americans" are really Canadians (or 'Americanized' Canadians in that sense) (122), which makes 'American' stand symbolically for a range of exploitative and destructive attitudes and behavior rather than for the US as such. David Staines has noted that "Again and again in her fiction, Atwood castigates Canadians for their willingness to blame the enemy, be the enemy American or any foreign nationality, rather than accept any responsibility" (359-60).

Although it must be taken into account that *Surfacing* is told by an unreliable first-person narrator, there still emerges an image of 'Americans' that is polarizing or verging on caricature: "We used to think they were harmless and funny and inept and faintly lovable, like President Eisenhower" (60). As the novel deals with themes of female self-determination and dependence, the contrast enacted by the characters between masculine assertiveness and aggression on the one hand, and feminine compliance and passivity on the other is also connoted, according to the familiar pattern, as 'American' and 'Canadian' respectively. The same applies to Atwood's poem "Backdrop

Addresses Cowboy", where the oppressor-as-male theme becomes 'Americanized' through the clichéd hero of the Western genre, a "star-spangled cowboy" riding towards the horizon, leaving behind him a "heroic trail of desolation" (*Selected Poems* 70).[9] In the same way, Atwood's story "Polarities" (1971) renders individual (or gender) conflicts as underpinned by nationalist cliché. In this story, Morrison, a young American teaching at a Canadian university, is about to be drawn into a vortex of capture and rejection by the Canadian characters, foremost among them Louise, a mental 'borderliner' with English affiliations. Morrison will extricate himself and stay in control, yet he will also remain the outsider; the vision of a mystic northern landscape at the end of the story (clearly identifiable as a symbol of 'Canadianness') has "nothing to do with him" (75).

In an essay on "Canadian-American Relations", Atwood comments on the obsessive nature that Canadian literary depictions of Americans have often had. "Americans don't usually have to think about [these] relations" (372), she argues, while Canadians had "become addicted to the one-way mirror of the Canadian-American border – we can see you, you can't see us – and had neglected that other mirror, their own culture" (385). Still, and in hindsight, she claims that "The cultural nationalism of the early '70s was not aggressive in nature. It was a simple statement: we exist" (385).

Americans and America feature only obliquely in Atwood's later work. *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), her feminist classic, was partly written in response to the neo-conservative backlash that came with the Reagan administration. The totalitarian theocracy of Gilead, as one knows, has been erected on the soil of the United States; the immediate setting of the novel is Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the bodies of those executed by the regime hang from the walls surrounding Harvard Yard. The role of Canada as a place of refuge as addressed in the novel is very strongly emphasized in the 2019 sequel, *The Testaments*, and in the Hulu series, in whose production Atwood took an active part. Here, one also learns that a truncated remnant of the 'old' (and, by implication, liberal) USA still exists on the North-Western coast.

Since the 1980s, systemic Anti-Americanism has largely dissipated, even though anxiety about cultural alienation has continued (see for

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[9] This interpretation in national terms is enhanced by the poem's inclusion in Al Purdy's *The New Romans* (10-11).

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example Thomson). Instead, one may note a "contingent anti-Americanism" (Garfinkle 317) incited by the dislike of policies or personalities. Such a "contingent anti-Americanism" flared up with the acid rain dispute of the 1980s, the US decision to test cruise missiles over Canada in 1982, tensions between the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien and the George W. Bush administration, and, most recently, the presidency of Donald Trump. (Even under the Trump administration, however, the renewal of trade pacts was negotiated, and Canada continued the close military cooperation that has characterized US-Canadian relations since World War II.) Economically, the free trade agreements of 1989 and 1994 tied Canada ever more closely to the US, yet critique of American economic imperialism has transformed into a rejection of globalized capitalism as such, even if the US can still be targeted as its flagship nation. This is the case especially in eco-poetry like, for instance, Larissa Lai and Rita Wong's *Sybil Unrest* (2008), where those "who can't see / by the dawn's early light" (81) turn a blind eye to the effects of their reckless exploitation of natural and human resources for short-term profit. Douglas Coupland, author of *Generation X*, reproduces a version of the stars and stripes in which the stars have been replaced by the logos of global American companies in *Souvenir of Canada* (2002), his satirical assessment of things Canadian (or thought to be so). The flag (designed by Shi-zhe Yung for Vancouver's adbusters.org) follows a spirited entry on Canadian attitudes towards Americans, laconically entitled "Them" (114-15). Tongue-in-cheek, Coupland speculates that the US have not (yet) taken over Canada because it is simply more economical to let the country run itself. However, the two matching photographs by Una Knox of the Canada-US border between Vancouver and Seattle, taken from the north and south respectively, that also accompany the entry contradict the polarization implied in its title. They also make one aware that the 49th parallel is a construct not only in the geographical and political, but also in the discursive sense. And it is an imposition of borderlines and national divisions on Indigenous spaces and communities that have long stretched across them. This is rendered very memorably in "Borders", a story by Thomas King, Canadian author of Greek, German and Indigenous descent who taught Native Studies at the University of Minnesota for many years: here, a First Nations woman repeatedly

crossing the border steadfastly refuses to declare herself either Canadian or American, but insists that her citizenship is "Blackfoot".[10]

In conclusion, I would like to finally cite a US-American writer, too: "Canadians and Americans […] are alike in so many ways, it's probably an unfair distinction to insist on," says the first-person narrator in Richard Ford's novel *Canada* (2012) (490). Contrary to this statement, Anglo-Canadian literature has tended to depict America and Americans in a manner that emphasizes difference, often expressing apprehension and rejection. Canada, it has been argued, "is the only political community in the world which exists as the result of a conscious rejection of the United States of America" (Nossal 9). As is documented also by Canadian literature, Anti-Americanism in Canada is old and enduring yet it is mild in comparison to other regions in the world. One may, in fact, speak of a "low grade anti-Americanism" that is due mainly to Canada's efforts to "cultivate an image of the kinder, gentler, more nuanced North American country" (Sapolsky), the "peaceable kingdom"[11] whose constitutional motto is "peace, order, and good government" rather than the individualistic "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". As such, Anti-American sentiment in Canada is mostly to be understood pragmatically, in terms of its past and ongoing utility rather than as a defining element of Canadian politics or cultural identity. In other words, the polarizing depictions of the US in the Canadian literature of certain periods as discussed in this essay are mainly expressive of a Canadian search for nationhood – a search in which the US has obviously been a major factor. As Canadian political scientist John W. Holmes has stated: "Coping with the fact of the USA is and always has been an essential ingredient of being Canadian. It has formed [Canadians] just as being an island has formed Britain" (10-11).

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[10] On Canada-US "border fiction" see Sadowski-Smith. On critiques of US (cultural) dominance in King's novel *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) and Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy* (1996) see Klein.

[11] Ultimately deriving from *Isaiah* 11:1-9, the currency of the phrase as expressing an idea of Canada as a tranquil, pacific and counter-revolutionary society goes back to Northrop Frye. Discussing what makes Canadian literature Canadian, Frye in his "Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*" refers to a painting of that title by American Edward Hicks (1780-1849), saying that "If we had to characterize a distinctive emphasis in [the Canadian literary] tradition, we might call it a quest for the peaceable kingdom." (249)

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WERNER SOLLORS

Challenges of Diversity in American Culture

Diversity has become a catchword in America. Hence a short semantic history might be helpful at the beginning of an essay that will then, inspired by Heike Paul's new book *Amerikanischer Staatsbürgersentimentalismus* (2021), look at scenarios of sentimentalization, trace exemplary cases of exclusion and inclusion, and finally, following Jeffrey Ferguson's lead in his book *Race and the Rhetoric of Resistance* (2021), touch upon affirmative action and the role of "ressentiment" in the United States.

1 THE TERM "DIVERSITY"

Derived from Latin *diversitas* and Old French *diversité*, the noun "diversity" carries etymological baggage, the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us. It ranges from the pejorative "oddness, wickedness, perversity" to the contrastive "contrariety, disagreement." Defined by the *OED* as "the condition or quality of being diverse, different, or varied; difference, unlikeness," *diversity* appears sporadically in American texts before 1900, often in such phrases as "diversity of sentiment" or "of opinions." In April 1780, the Maryland House of Delegates, for example, recorded a "diversity of sentiment . . . between the two Houses" and a conference with the Senate was needed. Henry Highland Garnet's 1843 "Address to the Slaves of the United States" found a "diversity of opinions . . . in regard to physical resistance." The word also was an antonym of "identity" or "sameness." One of the instances the *OED* cites is an 1848 definition of "diversity" as "a plea by a prisoner in bar of execution, alleging that he is not the same who was attainted; upon which a jury is . . . impanelled to try the collateral issue . . .[of] the identity of the person." *Blackstone's Commentaries* lists "diversity" as one of the possible reasons, next to pregnancy, for the King's pardon, and an act of grace, why a prisoner should *not* be executed (389). A sentenced person might thus say: "I plead diversity."

In early instances when the word was applied to ethnic difference, the sense of a two-way opposition still remained strong. In Hugh Henry

Brackenridge's satirical novel *Modern Chivalry* (1792), Captain John Farrago speculates about the "diversity of colour in the human race" and offers an "original theory on the subject," while believing that all human beings descended from Adam and Eve: "There is no fact that has proved more stubborn than the diversity of the human species; especially that great extreme of diversity in the natives of Africa" (139). The phrasing "great extreme of diversity" comes close to the figurative use of the word "polarization," coined in 1811 and adopted from the natural sciences in the second half of the 19th century, in the figurative sense of "accentuation of a difference between two things or groups" (*OED*). From Farrago's point of view, African "diversity" means "unlikeness" to whites. Adam must have been white and Eve black, is how he answers his question. Hence he argues with Lord Kames who had written about "diversity of race" believing in more than one origin of humanity (*Sketches* 19). When Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) observes "some diversity of hue" (284) at the Boston market-place, he is not referring to the inhabitants' skin color but to the difference between the "sad gray, brown, or black" attire of the English emigrants and the colorful "red and yellow ochre" of the "embroidered deer-skin robes" of the Indians. The sense of diversity as "quality of being varied" appeared with increasing frequency in the 19th century. Walt Whitman, the bard of America as "nation of nations," employed the word diversity in the various editions of his *Song of Myself* (starting in 1855). He places it in a catalogue of "crowds, equality, diversity" that "the Soul loves," ("A Nation Announces Itself", heading: "By Blue Ontario's Shore, section 5) in another catalogue in the plural, "geography, cities, beginnings, events, glories, defections, diversities" ("Poem of Many in One" stanza 16). And in a longer sequence the speaker of "every hue and trade and rank, of every caste and religion," "[n]ot merely of the New World but of Africa Europe or Asia," proclaims: "I resist anything better than my own diversity" (43). This may be the first use of the word in the sense of "diversity and inclusion," but Whitman's poetic first-person-singular is a multicontinental "I" that encloses people of the whole globe in himself. Whitman's speaker may not resist his own diversity, but he also creates unity, located within the self.

An addition to the online *OED* from September 2021 gives the current meaning of the word in the US as "the fact, condition, or practice of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds, and (more recently) of different genders, sexual

orientations, etc." (The *OED*'s appropriately open-ended "etc." is a space left open for further differences.) The *OED* cites a 1993 request in the *New York Times* that President Clinton "make racial, ethnic and gender diversity one of the principal factors in his selection of the next Supreme Court justice." A further *OED* addendum identifies the new use of "diversity" as a "a modifier, . . . as in diversity officer, diversity quota, diversity training, etc." The first example is a "diversity training coordinator" from 1988.

To this, the US Census added the "diversity index." Census 2020 overviews offer a breakdown of the population of 331 million by race and ethnic group: Almost 58% are "White Alone" or non-Hispanic White, 12% non-Hispanic Black, and 18.7% are Hispanic or Latino "who can be of any race," but many of whom classify themselves as white and some as black. The diversity index measures "the chance that two people chosen at random will be from different racial and ethnic groups," and for 2020 it is up to 61.1% from 54.9% in 2010. Hawaii presents the highest such chance (at 76%), whereas Puerto Rico has the lowest rate, 2.2%. The Puerto Rican figure must be due to the classification of 3.3 million Puerto Ricans as 98.7% Hispanics, which apparently overrules their internal racial self-description—that would have yielded a very high chance of randomly picking two people from different races. This example tells us that one challenge of diversity lies in the definition the term and of those groups that are believed to be diverse from each other.

2 CITIZENS' SENTIMENTALISM ("STAATSBÜRGERSENTIMENTALISMUS")

In the era of revolutions in the United States and France, when the feudal order was replaced by democracies, the big question was not how to promote diversity but rather how heterogeneous populations could be unified in the new political order in which many now had a say. Yes, there were the new declarations—of independence, of the rights of man—but could those documents and the constitutions that followed create a sense of "We, the People" that would be as thick as blood and resemble actual kinship?

Revolutionary France eradicated languages other than French, invented patriotic songs that made citizens feel like "children of the fatherland," and held *fraternité* rituals of public milk-drinking from a

maternal statue of the Republic that would instill a sense of siblinghood-by-lactation among the *citoyens*. The heterogeneity in the new United States was even greater and in his *Letters from an American Farmer,* Crèvcœur, without ever using the term "diversity," marveled at the "mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes" (68), but found that in the Americans, "the name of Englishman, Frenchman, and European is lost" (74).

How a sense of national belonging was produced in the new United States is a question that Heike Paul addresses in the opening section of her new book *Amerikanischer Staatsbürgersentimentalismus* (2021). It was "sentimentalism," then a most popular mode in bourgeois literature and arts, that inspired readers to receive works emotionally, to feel empathy with characters and human suffering more generally, and thus to distinguish themselves as cultural and political subjects from an "unfeeling" Old World aristocracy and royalty. Paul understands sentimentalism as an affective new mode of communication coinciding with the emergence of the public realm, hence as more than *larmoyance* or false sentimentality, as which sentimentalism is often dismissed. Literature and political rhetoric, Paul finds, employed a similar semantic of suffering, of sacrifice, and of redemption and thus were able to create a "public feeling," embodied in the activation of physical reactions (like tears) and cultural scripts (like the sacralization of the family in analogy to the state). For Paul, rituals like Fourth-of-July orations or singing the national anthem do not only contribute to Robert Bellah's notion of civil religion, but also exert a strong affective appeal, capable of producing a felt sense of affinity and intimacy.

Paul reads Jefferson's "Declaration of Independence" as a prototypical sentimental text, with numerous passages dramatizing the suffering to which the colonists had been subjected by the "repeated injuries and usurpations" (34 ff.) of the King of England. This story changes into one of generational conflict between a bad father and his sons who rightly overthrow paternal tyranny and become the new founding fathers.

George Washington created the new genre of an inaugural address that reinforced the sense of a "sacred union" (Paul 36 ff, esp. 38 ff.) Deflecting from his own person, he appealed to the feeling of connectedness among citizens and projected onto the concept of citizenship the structure of solidarity that had previously defined family membership and descent. Thus, Paul argues, Washington helped to

create American citizens' sentimentalism as glue, unifying people with different histories and clashing interests. In his Farewell Address, Washington used the word "union" more than a dozen times (Paul 38 ff.). In 1815, Thomas Jefferson believed, that "the tendency of small states to coalesce into great nations is peculiarly strong" and found that in Europe, "it is counteracted by the diversity of language, institutions & manners; all which form in this country new bonds of connexion" (*Papers* 375). Thus Jefferson used the word "diversity" to refer to Europe, whereas "new bonds of connexion" characterize America. The early American catchword was union, not diversity.

3 EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION

Paul (49-147) fleshes out a series of "scenarios" (a term from performance studies) that show American citizens' sentimentalism at work up to the present, including the public expression of grief in "marked by Covid," the mourning mothers of the "Black lives matter" movement, and Joe Biden's *via crucis* to the presidency through grief (98-112). Paul also stresses the well-known fault lines in the often-invoked union, ranging from an expansionist settler colonialism that removed or killed original inhabitants and expropriated their land to the fact that citizens' liberty was achieved only at the expense of slavery, so that liberty and slavery conditioned each other from the beginning. She reminds readers that empathetic citizens' sentimentalism like citizenship itself was reserved only for white male subjects. So what about the others?

The Declaration of Independence mentions Indians only among the grievances against the English king: "He has . . . endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions." The 1787 Constitution explicitly excluded "non-taxed Indians" from the citizenry of the country. Indian sovereignty ran against possible wishes for inclusion. The *Cherokee Phoenix* of 1828 printed the bilingual Cherokee Constitution rather than that of the United States. Only in 1924 did Indians get US citizenship, and as late as 1948 two states with large Native American populations had laws that withheld the right to vote from many of them.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848) addressed the "disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country"

and developed, by mimicry, her pitch for the inclusion of women. She followed the language of the Declaration of Independence but added gender-inclusive wording. "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal." (*Report* 7) She suggested a community of suffering women, living under "an absolute tyranny" of man who "has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise" (*Report* 8) And: "In marriage . . . he becom[es] . . . her master," can "deprive her of her liberty," and "administer chastisement" (*Report* 8) Stanton's sentimental scenario (to use Paul's term) challenged women's exclusion from citizenship.

By far the deepest rift endangering a sense of "union" was that between black and white. A section on slavery in the Declaration, another grievance directed at the king, was deleted from the final version. The Constitution not only preserved slavery and the slave trade but also created the US Census, with each slave counting as three-fifths of a person—the absurd result of a Northern-Southern compromise that reflected, in the words of *Federalist* 54, the slaves' "mixed character of persons and of property."

Frederick Douglass famously turned the disparity between the Declaration's "All men are created equal," and the continued existence of slavery into another sentimental scenario. Speaking in Rochester on July 5th, (NOT 4th) 1852, Douglass shamed his audience of mostly female antislavery activists. "WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS THE FOURTH OF JULY?," Douglass asked rhetorically and continued with more questions: "Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us?" He offered an answer: "I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! . . . This Fourth [of] July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, *I* must mourn" (*Oration* 15). He condemned slavery as "the great sin and shame of America" (17), yet ended on a hopeful note, looking forward to progress in the technological advances of the nineteenth century. His resonant comment, "I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary!" (15) was intended to provoke an empathetic, sentimental reaction among his listeners and may be considered a precursor of many later rhetorical pleas for "inclusion."

Lincoln's action in the Civil War abolished slavery, in defiance of the original Constitution, and thereby created, as Noah Feldman argued, a new Lincolnian Constitution that, once the 14th amendment had granted citizenship to all (male) persons born in the United States (except

Indians), opened the way to a multiracial America, further delayed, however, by a century of racial segregation (Feldman, *The Broken Constitution*). Other settler countries chose racial mixture as a national myth or interpreted figures embodying *mestizaje*, such as the Mexican Madonna of Guadalupe, as symbols of national unity. For the English Protestant colonies and later, large parts of the United States, however, racial mixing, especially that of black and white, became the central taboo of "miscegenation" (a word made up in America that not only denotes intimate contacts but also marriages between black and white), criminalized by many laws until the 1960s. And around this taboo there were thousands of laws and rules that regulated racial segregation in schools and universities, on public transport and at water fountains. There were even Coca-Cola vending machines with a black and a white side, one of which can be seen today in the Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro.

There were many other examples of legal exclusions. In the age of mass journalism, fears of Asian immigrants led to the adoption of Chinese exclusion in 1882 and the signing of the gentlemen's agreement with Japan in 1907. The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, explicitly in the name of American racial homogeneity, limited all immigrant groups to no more than two percent of their presence in the United States as of 1890, when the big waves of south and east European immigrants had just begun to arrive. It was established through "national quotas." Immigration from Latin America was not restricted. In 1927, a maximum of 150,000 immigrants total per year was set.

The long history of exclusions drew to a slow end in the 20th century, with women's suffrage in 1920 and Indian citizenship in 1924. Under President Johnson, the foundations were laid for a society free of legalized racial segregation and discrimination. From the first Civil Rights Act of 1964 to the Supreme Court decision in Loving v. Virginia from 1967, which declared prohibitions of mixed marriages unconstitutional, a new legal situation emerged. In 1965, the Johnson administration also abolished national quotas and immigration caps, and immigration figures grew dramatically in subsequent decades.

Jim Crow and other exclusionary laws did not just create individual disadvantages. For people who had been exposed to long and systemic discrimination by the state, special measures therefore seemed necessary. More than formal equal opportunity at the individual level, there needed to be "affirmative action" towards members of those *groups* that had long

been discriminated against *as groups*. But what groups were they, the Eisenhower administration wondered. Apart from "Negroes," they were at first identified as "Spanish-Americans, Orientals, Indians, Jews, Puerto Ricans," and over the decades, the races Black, American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islander as well as the cross-racial category "Hispanic or Latino" developed out of this list that took its firmer shape under the Nixon presidency. Women joined this catalog of disadvantaged groups, followed by people discriminated for their sexual orientation or physical handicap. Through affirmative action, government contractors and all employers who receive federal funds, among them most universities, now became obliged to consider applications from previously excluded groups when contracting business, hiring staff, or admitting students, and they had to be able to prove this step.

The result could be described as a success story. There are far more women in leadership positions than there were before the 1960s, and African-Americans and Latinos are far more fully represented in education, business, healthcare, media, and law; with black mayors, governors, and congressmen, a political class grew that was best symbolized by a black president who was re-elected for a second term. Discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation is now an offense. Hence one might expect that such a success story would be celebrated with pride, but one finds that affirmative action – the only known and tested method of achieving the outcome of diversity that was introduced and formalized by two Republican administrations – is under attack in the courts and rarely praised in public media. Conversations about this topic can get tense. Resentment against affirmative action threatens to become the cornerstone of a new white ideology. The sociologist Lawrence Bobo sees it as "laissez-faire racism" that has replaced the old racism (with its insistence on racial segregation and disgust for mixed marriages) (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, "Laissez-faire Racism"). Perhaps "diversity" appears as a more neutral alternative term?

4 RESSENTIMENT

Jeffrey Ferguson's thought-provoking book *Race and the Rhetoric of Resistance* (2021) offers a helpful approach to ressentiment. Ferguson pays particular attention to its role in American race relations. Drawing on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* and Max Scheler's book

Ressentiment he points out that in postmedieval societies "each person can look at the possessions of others and, at least in principle, regard them as potentially her own. Nevertheless, she may feel limited by personal weakness or external circumstance from gaining the desired objects or the characteristics necessary for attaining them" (Ferguson, *Race* 30). Hence ressentiment is rarely directed at the source of its emergence, but at other more symbolic targets. Ferguson finds this easy to recognize in the case of black Americans: "We can all see why African Americans who have never possessed the means to overturn white power would respond to it with a mixture of desire and disdain" (*Race* 32) But he detects it also on the white side when he writes in this important passage that I wish to quote fully:

> If Scheler is right, then the United States must have always been a hotbed of ressentiment in part because of the emphasis its culture has placed on an ideology of unfettered individual achievement. Of course, those who look to rise may also fall, and the progressive culture of the United States has never made much provision for failure, even though the vast majority must finish second or below in any competition. As Tocqueville points out . . . , the democratic political culture of the United States inclines individuals to make envious comparisons and to engage in a narcissism of small differences. Caught between the oblivion of falling and the difficulty of rising to sufficient heights, many white Americans have always found comfort in the idea of race, a social concept that places them in a natural aristocracy forever above another group that possesses every characteristic associated with failure. In other words, by allowing whites to project the ugly emotions that accompany the unlimited pursuit of happiness onto a despised other, race has played a key role in guaranteeing the American way of life. (*Race* 32)

It follows directly from the basic characteristics of ressentiment that white Americans would alternately despise, pity, and love black Americans, even to the point of imitation.

Should such feelings not have been attenuated by the changes in civil rights law and social conduct in the second half of the 20th century? No, Ferguson thinks, and he argues that

> it appears that ressentiment plays an even greater role in the atmosphere of the post–civil rights era than it did in the past. Greater acceptance of the principle of racial equality has occurred in the face of an ever-increasing gap in wealth that not only victimizes blacks disproportionately but causes a great fear of falling among all but the richest Americans. At the same time, the black middle class has made an unprecedented rise, even in the face of persistent racial barriers, mostly as a result of affirmative action policies that many whites

> regard as unfair. Yet, the collective acceptance of racial equality as an
> important principle makes racialized fears and anxieties almost impossible to
> express directly. (*Race* 33)

I think that Ferguson's emphasis on the United States as "a hotbed of
ressentiment" (*Race* 32) deserves a fuller consideration in reflections
about race, equality, and polarization.

Polarization, the "accentuation of a difference between two things or
groups" (*OED*) or the "extreme of diversity" in the old sense, is intense,
also because the country is now almost evenly split between pro-diversity
Democrats and resentful Republicans who find it harder and harder to
cooperate and cannot even agree on the outcome of a legal election or
the investigation of the riot of January 6, 2021. Social media have
intensified living in bubbles of conversations with people who think
alike, and the pandemic has added more contentiousness, with an
undertone of violence. We are still in the middle of that story.

Let me then end with questions instead of a conclusion. Does the
bureaucratic process that assigns all Americans to racial and ethnic
groups deepen group divisions? Do these divisions help to mobilize a
new "White Alone" ideology, based on the category the Census has
created and has shown to be decreasing? At a time when the rich are
getting richer and the poor poorer, has it become more difficult for the
poorer half of America to form cross-racial alliances? What would a
"diversity index" look like that measures the likelihood of randomly
finding people of diverse income groups in a town or a zip code area?
Finally, which new models of racial, gender, and economic integration,
besides the slogan of diversity, can academics and students imagine
today?

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4. POLARIZATIONS AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS

CARMEN BIRKLE

Overcoming Polarization? Kamala Harris and the Intersectionality
of Race and Gender in Politics

1 OF POLARIZATION AND TRUTHS

Vice President Kamala Harris needs to be more than just a cosmetic choice for the Biden administration. More than a year after the January 20, 2021, inauguration, Harris has yet to prove that she can set her own agenda and follow up on the promises she stands for, encapsulated in the term "truth." Her official visit of Guatemala and Mexico to address the root causes of migration to the United States resulted in her warning potential migrants: "Do not come, do not come." Similarly, her fight for the expansion of voting access in the Freedom to Vote and the Voting Rights Advancement Acts did not get the 60% majority in the Senate since they were blocked by Republicans. Several of her senior staff members have already left the Biden / Harris administration; her approval rate, as of March 1, 2022, has gone down to 39 % (Stiles, Murphy, and Martínez). For many Democrats, Harris was (and probably still is) a beacon of hope for the future of the United States with presidential elections in 2024, at which Joe Biden, as most people believe, might not run again, among various reasons because he will be 82 years old by then. But will Kamala Harris manage to step up and out of Biden's aura to find her own political agenda? Will it be enough to just be a counterpart to Donald Trump and attempt to prevent him from becoming the next president? Is prevention enough for a program? An assessment of what she will be able to accomplish needs to be postponed to the future.

In the following essay, I mainly focus on what and how Harris argues in *The Truths We Hold: An American Journey* (2019), those self-evident truths that, in the Declaration of Independence, are considered to be "political equality, natural rights, and the sovereignty of the people" (Lepore xiv). Her political autobiography both is and is not about Donald Trump. Trump seems to be the specter and trigger for the writing of this book (cf. Clinton; M. Obama). Harris begins with the shock of Trump's

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election in 2016, and in her readers' minds, in 2021 and 2022, it ends with Biden's election for president and Harris as his choice for vice-president. After the riot on January 6 and Trump being banned from Twitter and other social media channels, there was a few months of silence about and by Trump. But he is now up and running. So, are words of truth enough for Harris to fight him and win Americans' sympathy, respect, and votes?

Manfred Prisching offers a typology of polarization and mainly argues that those who want and offer simple explanations and solutions contribute to polarization. This is also what Kamala Harris shows when she talks about the former president Donald Trump. In any country, there are always differences or cleavages, as Prisching calls them, but it becomes dangerous if one party turns into the dominant one and results in a mega-divide, as he argues. This seems to be the case with the political divide in the United States. The two opposite camps, the Republicans and the Democrats, each embrace relevant identity categories and the tense debates about rights and wrongs in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender, which ultimately reinforce the divide so that the dichotomy becomes irreconcilable, even more so when technologies, such as the New Media, are instrumentalized by some people to spread fake news via the social media. Widespread resentment, excessive societal demands, growing expectations and aspirations, and aggressive moods due to failures and fears are factors that consequently contribute to polarization in the United States. Moreover, Donald Trump consistently triggers U.S.-American citizens' fear of economic loss, social decline, and political powerlessness.

In her preface, Kamala Harris describes Donald Trump and his government as basically un-American, criticizes many of the decisions he has made and actions he has taken, and suggests that it is now the time for "a battle for the soul of our nation" (xii). Quoting from lawyer, civil rights activist, and first African American Supreme Court Justice (1967-91) Thurgood Marshall's (1908-93) speech of July 4, 1992, she shows that this "battle" has to be fought against "'the fear, the hatred, and the mistrust'" (xiii) that Trump et al. have triggered in American people and have, thus, undermined democracy, liberty, and justice (xiii). This crisis of democracy, as Barack Obama claims, "has left the body politic divided, angry, and mistrustful […]" (*A Promised Land* xvi). Harris

seeks "to speak truth" (xiii), which is the opposite of what the Trump administration stands for with his more than 30,000 recorded lies. While Harris takes her criticism of the previous president as the starting point for her autobiography to clarify her oppositional position, she does not use the term polarization even if what she argues has to be read in this way. "Fake News" or outright lies are in a binary relationship to truth.

In addition to recent politics, her autobiography also points the finger at legal and social injustice in the United States. She emphasizes discrimination against minorities and women. As she points out, "[a] report in 2015 found that 95 percent of our country's elected prosecutors were white, and 78 percent were white men" (47). "The blunt truth," as Sheryl Sandberg, then chief operating officer of Facebook, maintains in 2013, "is that men still run the world" (5). Harris recognizes that becoming and being a lawyer will not be easy but necessary because as a prosecutor, she will not represent "the victim" but "'the people' – society at large" (28). For her, both law and her own status as a female American of Indian and Jamaican descent are the accessories in her attempt to overcome the increasing polarization in the United States.

Consequently, rather than labeling the current political and social atmosphere in the United States "polarization," Harris opts for words and communication to overcome fear, mistrust, and hatred of each other. Language is powerful and can also be used for manipulative and provocative purposes, as the attack of January 6, 2021, has shown. People who are deliberately pitted against each other will experience the world, or rather their nation, as polarized because polarization implies the extreme opposition of two seemingly incompatible poles or binaries. It is more than just a disagreement of people about an issue. Rather, it suggests two very different worldviews that do not seem to have any connections. Harris's "truth" is not meant to deny different positions in the country – be they political, social, cultural, etc. – but to send out an invitation to all Americans to take a seat at the "table of brotherhood," which Martin Luther King, Jr., suggested in his famous speech "I Have a Dream" (1963), which, today, we would change into the "table of humanity."

Rather than polarization, Harris sees the United States in a crisis of truth, that is, in a time of uncertainty, an idea also put forward by Morris P. Fiorina who argues that "Americans are closely divided, but we are not deeply divided, and we are closely divided because many of us are ambivalent and uncertain, and consequently reluctant to make firm

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commitments to parties, politicians, or policies" (ix). While Fiorina is certainly right about uncertainty, (too) many seem to be committed to Trump – after all, about 74 million people voted for him in 2020. Yet, Fiorina is right in assuming that there is a certain percentage of Americans who can be considered the "swing votes," thus oscillating between parties and politicians. However, for Ezra Klein, polarization can hardly be overcome since "the logic of polarization" – like a vicious circle – is that "to appeal to a more polarized public, political institutions and political actors behave in more polarized ways. As political institutions and actors become more polarized, they further polarize the public" (xix). Also, identity has become twisted and, according to Klein, seems to have become "something that only marginalized groups have" (xxi). As Francis Fukuyama, Jan-Werner Müller, and Mark Lilla show in their recent studies, identity has turned into identity politics – individualistic, exclusive, and extreme. There does not seem to be an identity any longer that unites but only one that divides. After all, as Jill Lepore has recently argued, "Americans have become so divided that they no longer agree, if they ever did, about what those [foundational] ideas are, or were" (xvi). Overall, in life and writing, Kamala Harris uses words – "[t]he value we place on our words – and what they are worth to others" (xiii) – to overcome polarization. She perceives life, history, and politics as a narrative not to passively suffer from but sees the means for "building a more perfect union" in people's "recognition that [they] are part of a longer story" and states: "We are responsible for how our chapter gets written" (63).

My analysis revolves around Harris's use of storytelling, of words, language, and communication as means of approaching and overcoming deep-seated gender and racial distrust believed to be triggered by fear. Words have been abused in the past and have resulted in conspiracy theories that often develop in times of crises and that have been cultivated by Trump and his government. Unraveling these conspiracy beliefs, their grounding, structures, and distribution, leads me to two identity categories that play a role in conspiracy beliefs and are constitutive of what Kamala Harris stands for: gender and ethnicity. The difficult task she has is to juggle traditional gender expectations and roles and, yet, to incorporate a form of female leadership (Sandberg) with which progressives *and* conservatives can identify or at least live. With her mother as a role model, Harris understands what Sandberg suggests: "Conditions for all women will improve when there are more women in

leadership roles giving strong and powerful voice to their needs and concerns" (7). Aside from conspiracy theories and identity, Harris is faced with the concept of the American Dream that is fundamental to U.S. Americans' understanding of how their nation works. As it is, failure in living the American Dream is considered an individual failure that people cannot easily accept and hence more easily triggers conspiracy theories and scapegoating. As she is the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, minorities look toward her as someone to open up more opportunities for them and also make the social and legal system less racist. However, she also has to take the concerns of White Americans about poverty, unemployment, and social status seriously to dispel Trump's populist label of "the forgotten men and women," to reclaim the American Dream for everyone, to dig up what Arlie Russel Hochschild calls "'deep story,'" "a narrative *as felt*" (xi; emphasis in original) of White men who feel betrayed. Hochschild depicts older White male Christians standing in line for the American Dream anxious to reach this "dream of progress" about each generation being better off than the one before. The line is long, and suddenly "[w]omen, immigrants, refugees," and Black people cut in and jump ahead of White men (136-37), who feel betrayed and become suspicious. What she found (and still finds) is "[o]ur polarization, and the increasing reality that we simply don't know each other," which make "it too easy to settle for dislike and contempt" (xiv). She opts for knowledge, a deeper knowledge of what has actually happened in all corners of the United States, but getting at this knowledge presupposes truth, speaking the truth, and opening up to those people who do not know this truth. She asks to not let the United States, or part of it, become an unknown "foreign country" (xiv), an "empathy wall" (5), which "is an obstacle to deep understanding of another person […]" (5).While individual effort is certainly necessary for economic or/and social success, people have to see the need for changes in the system, such as, for example, general health care that is based on a network of solidarity, or a gun reform that limits the number of weapons available to the population at large. People need to understand that the American Dream does not imply the binary of either capitalism or communism but a modestly state-regulated New New Deal that might revive the hopeful notion of the Promised Land or Barack Obama's slogan "Yes.We.Can." As part of the Biden government, Kamala Harris has a hill to climb (Gorman; Winthrop) to overcome fear,

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hatred, and mistrust within the nation in order to form "a more perfect union" (Constitution).

2 OF FEAR, HATRED, AND MISTRUST

In his study, Barry Glassner maintains that, "after four decades [ever since the Reagan administration] of nightly news full of dubious threats, we are fertile soil for fearmongers" (xi). He shows how "[p]oliticians, pluralists, advocacy groups, and marketers continue to blow danger out of proportion for votes, ratings, donations, and profiles" (xi-xii). George W. Bush's reference to a "'war on terror'" "stimulated the emergence of a culture of fear. Fear obscures reason, intensifies emotions and makes it easier for demagogue politicians to mobilize the public on behalf of the policies they want to pursue" (Glassner xii). Harris wants to undo the Trump administration's spreading of fear.[1]

With fear come hatred and anger. In *Angry White Men*, Michael Kimmel argues that "white men's anger comes from the potent fusion of two sentiments—entitlement and a sense of victimization" (x). These men, as Kimmel claims, feel entitled to "a great promise, the American Dream" (x) but it has turned for them into an "impossible fantasy" (x). They have "lost their sense of themselves as men. Real men. Men who built this country and who, in their eyes, *are* this country" (x; emphasis in original). The result of this White supremacist idea of America is anger at those who supposedly "stole" from them what would have been rightfully theirs. Obviously, these emotions make them easy prey for populism and populist leaders who enlarge the gap between those who seemingly lost and those who seemingly won. From here to polarization it is only a short distance. The terminology is that of restoration, reclaiming their manhood in an America that was once and is no longer; thus, Trump's "Make America Great Again" falls onto fruitful grounds (xiii). These men feel like "'the forgotten man'" (qtd. in Kimmel 284) President Roosevelt addressed in 1932 and Donald Trump has revived in the last few years. This anger is accompanied by a nostalgia for an imagined glorious past. When these men use "again" or the prefix "re" they hardly ever specify that what they actually refer to as populism "is more an emotion than it is an ideology" (7). Kimmel calls this sentiment "*aggrieved entitlement*" (18; emphasis in original), which leads to

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[1] For a further discussion of fear in the United States, see Nussbaum.

scapegoating the other, such as minorities, successful women, feminists or a larger force, which is only a few steps away from conspiracy theories and their mistrust. For Kimmel, hatred and anger lead to rage, which, again, is triggered by some media (conservative and social media in particular), and to protectionism, protecting "us" vs. "them." Mistrust is the feeling of not believing any more that those elected to power are actually representatives of the people. What follows is mistrust in the political system and in the so-called elite instead of following the idea of *Trust but Verify* (Norris). There is no denying that some in political power are really corrupt, many are not. Yet, this does not matter since distinguishing between those who are corrupt and those who are not becomes too difficult to do, too complex, too disruptive of the comfortable binary world view and one's own position on the "us" and, therefore, morally good side.

3 OF POLITICS, IDENTITY, AND VISION

The title of Harris's book suggests an American community ("we") identity that shares "truth." Her explicit references to the Constitution in "[w]e the people" and to the Declaration of Independence (1776), "[w]e hold these truths to be self-evident," and its promises of the "rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" emphasize facts: "To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world." She strongly rejects Trump's fake news and "post-truth politics" (Montgomery; Salgado). She, like Barack Obama before her, takes the foundational documents of the American nation to the present and future as a vision. For Obama, those founders as well as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr., struggled "in the service of perfecting an imperfect union" (*Audacity* 362). What Harris and Obama share are "collective" (*Audacity* 25) and "common dreams" (*Audacity* 362). Mark Lilla in his *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (2018) suggests that "[o]ur [liberals'] longer-term ambition must be to develop a vision of America that emerges authentically out of liberal values yet speaks to every citizen, as a citizen" (17). Although a liberal himself, he strongly criticizes the Democratic Party for their lack of vision. He emphasizes "an ambitious vision of America and its future that would inspire citizens of every walk of life and in every region of the country" (6-7). Unless liberals begin to have a vision for America, Lilla is convinced that "populist demagogues [like Trump] […] will still be able to stir up and

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exploit public anger" (54). In order to work toward this common goal, people need "a sense of *we*—of what we are as citizens and what we owe each other" (14; emphasis in original). For the New Left, as Lilla sees it, party politics have become almost exclusively identity politics turning into "a hyperindividualistic bourgeois society, materially and in our cultural dogmas" (29). So it is time that "[p]olitics is about seizing power to defend the truth" (14), which is what Harris attempts to do. Pursuing identity politics, for Lilla, is not the way to go because it makes the gap between people even larger. Lilla also emphasizes the need for grassroots politics, running for local and regional offices, campaigning, and doing the hard work to convince those people who are not already of the same democratic opinion. For Lilla, a convincing vision of a future United States that instills in people a sense of "we" that goes beyond party affiliations is desperately needed to lessen the effect of partisan polarization.

Can Kamala Harris overcome these identity politics and create a new sense of "we"? Will she be able to overhaul what Francis Fukuyama calls the "decaying" American institutions "as the state [is] progressively captured by powerful interest groups and locked into a rigid structure that [is] unable to reform itself"? (Fukuyama ix). Will she be able "to develop an inspiring, optimistic vision of what America is and what it can become through liberal political action"? (Lilla 102). Will she succeed in giving people the kind of recognition they need? Will she be able to restore people's trust in government to recognize people's "authentic inner selves," their "dignity," which they see disregarded by Democrats and Republicans respectively (Fukuyama 163)? Can she create a national identity that integrates rather than divides? In *The Truths We Hold*, she uses terms such as commitment, creates a new sense of community, evokes the values of the founding documents, and stirs up people's emotions—not in order to enhance fear but the necessity of coming together. In her preface, she shows herself ready to fight: "We had to be committed to bringing our country together, to doing what was required to protect our fundamental values [i.e., those of the Declaration] and ideals. […] 'Do we retreat or do we fight? I say we fight. And I intend to fight!'" (xii) However, her recourse to the fundamental values of the United States can be read from different perspectives. The Declaration of Independence was drafted, among others, by Thomas Jefferson. He wanted to undo the system of slavery while being a slaveholder himself. Yet, this rather abolitionist paragraph did not pass because those

responsible argued that "Africans do not belong to civil society, having never left a state of nature" (Lepore 96). Women, too, "existed outside the contract by which civil society was formed" (96). Obviously, women and the enslaved as well as Indigenous populations and poor Whites were not considered to be part of the claim that "all men are created equal." Harris does not address these critical issues included in the foundational values since those are still important values to uphold even if, at the time, they were meant to be exclusive but have, in the meantime, been amended and become inclusive, at least on a legal level. Moreover, Harris shows the necessary strength for a fight to make these original promises come true, a strength rooted in her family, her mother, and in women generally.

4 OF FAMILY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Family as a traditional value not only in the United States has frequently been used to relegate women to the domestic sphere as the ones who give birth to and raise children, take care of the household and husband, and do not aspire to any political and public activities. For the early Puritans, the family was believed to reflect God's view of the community, and misbehavior of women against family rules would be an act of resistance against God and the Puritan community. The early Antinomian Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) was banned from Massachusetts because she questioned the Puritan elders and spoke in public. Moreover, when she had a stillbirth, the then Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony John Winthrop considered the fetus monstrous and a punishment by God (Ulrich 132). Centuries later President Theodore Roosevelt in an address to a mothers' assembly in 1905 told his audience that the family was the nation in a nutshell and that, if something was wrong in the family, for example, when the wife desired a career, this meant that the nation was endangered, in particular the White part of the nation since other ethnic groups were increasingly multiplying. For Roosevelt, there "are certain old truths which will be true as long as this world endures, and which no amount of progress can alter. One of these is the truth that the primary duty of the husband is to be the home-maker, the bread-winner for his wife and children, and that the primary duty of the woman is to be the helpmeet, the housewife, and mother" (205).

Roosevelt puts the (White) average woman on a pedestal and depicts what she does as "quiet, self-sacrificing heroism" (205) and marriage as

"partnership" (207) but only as long as both husband and wife stick to their naturally given – as he assumes – spheres. For him, the mother is to blame if her weakness – that is, should she have left her sphere – leads her to bring up her son as selfish, which would also impact the son's relationship with his future wife. Limiting the number of children to two per White family would be equal to a "decrease in population," to "extinction," to "race suicide" (209), with the latter being a term adopted from Edward Alsworth Ross (212). Roosevelt's ideal family is pretty much the opposite of what Kamala Harris stands for. Her family is non-White; her parents divorced; she is married to a divorced Jewish man, and she has political and professional ambitions. Roosevelt would consider this form of Black and White miscegenation a contributing factor to a nation in decline. Obviously, more than a century lies between Roosevelt's statements and Harris's vice-presidency but his family ideal is still the dominant ideal in the American heartland – even though hardly ever practiced. Both Harris's parents and she herself have had to challenge this ideal, and she does so in *Truths* by depicting family and women's rights.

Harris picks up the value of a family by introducing both her current family – her husband and her two stepchildren – and her own mother and sister. She emphasizes authenticity when she tells her readers: "[…] I want you to know how personal this [the writing of this book] is for me. This is the story of my family. It is the story of my childhood. It is the story of the life I have built since then. You'll meet my family and my friends, my colleagues and my team" (xiv-xv). This preface emphasizes in a direct address to the reader that family (and friends and team are the extension of it) is of high importance to her. This strategy to appeal to her readers' emotions and what she believes to be core U.S.-American values, evokes what Lauren Berlant labels "a culture of 'true feeling'" (12) and could be described as a woman generating "an affective and intimate public sphere that seeks to harness the power of emotion to change what is structural in the world" (Berlant 12).

Harris chronicles the history of both her mother Shyamala Gopalan as an Indian Ph.D. student in nutrition and endocrinology at Berkeley and her Jamaican father Donald Harris as an economics Ph.D. student at Berkeley and later as a Professor of Economics at Stanford. She describes their marriage as one of love, with two daughters (herself and Maya). Even their separation and divorce when Kamala Harris was still a child did not seem to be painful, and its depiction reveals them as intellectuals:

"They didn't fight about money. The only thing they fought about was who got the books" (6). Harris emphasizes how her mother continued to work and raised her two daughters. Her mother, as she points out, "was the one most responsible for shaping us into the women we would become" (6). She gave them "a sense of justice" (7) and showed them how to be politically active, how to protest peacefully against the "Vietnam War and for civil rights and voting rights" (8). For anyone with such a family sense seeing images at the Mexican American border where families were torn apart and children, and sometimes indeed babies, in cages must have been more than shocking and, in the context of U.S. history, also reminiscent of auctions held during slavery that violently separated mothers and fathers from their children to be sold to owners in distant regions of the South. As Heike Paul explains, at the time of the border conflict, a movement of mothers emerged that, under the hashtag #familiesbelongtogether, addressed people's emotions and mothers' instincts to not let this happen. At least the official order was withdrawn by Trump even if many of the families have not yet been reunited. This form of civil sentimentalism (Paul), being both sentimental and political, was at work in the nineteenth century during the abolitionist movement and strongly supported by, among others, Harriet Beecher Stowe in her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), in which the narrator directly addresses mothers and sends a plea out to empathize and sympathize with Eliza, an enslaved mother, who is about to be separated from her little son Henry. In her despair, she escapes with him at night and famously crosses the (half-)frozen Ohio River to reach the North and ultimately make her way into Canada.

Family life is what Harris treasures later when she meets Doug Emhoff and his two children (from a first marriage), Cole (named after the American jazz saxophonist and composer John Coltrane [1926-67]) and Ella (after Ella Fitzgerald), and his former wife Kerstin, with whom Kamala Harris becomes friends (129). She continues to make very personal confessions, such as about Doug Emhoff "getting down on one knee" (134) asking her to become his wife (they got married in August 2014) and his children calling her "'Momala'" (134), a blend of "Mom" and "Kamala," in order not to interfere with the children's actual mother but still to express her own close connection to her new family. This decision, too, pays tribute to Americans' sense of family but also proposes that there is more variety to family than its traditional image. To still keep up tradition, Harris emphasizes the Sunday family dinner as

a psychological ritual: "I know that not everyone likes to cook, but it's centering for me. And as long as I'm making Sunday family dinner, I know I'm in control of my life – doing something that matters for the people I love, so we can share that quality time together" (136). Apart from keeping families together, family life was and is also everyday life. The daily cooking and eating together – Kamala Harris, her mother, and her sister – turned the private realm of the kitchen[2] into one of education and empowerment. Even if as a child she did not appreciate the household chores she had to take over, finally, and in retrospect, as she says, "I see that she was trying to teach me that I had power and agency" (15). Aretha Franklin's version of "To Be Young, Gifted and Black," "an anthem of black pride first performed by Nina Simone" (14), accompanied Harris's life in her mother's kitchen. In the context of women's rights and the women's and civil rights movements of the 1960s, Kamala Harris's mother turned the domestic space of the kitchen into one of politics, and in a way celebrated the slogan "the private is the political." Harris grew up with her mother, who was, for her, the embodiment of political activism and feminist aspiration. Women such as Shirley Chisholm, a Black Congresswoman considering to run for president in the early 1970s, Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple* (1982), Maya Angelou, author of several autobiographical volumes, of which the first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), is most famous, and Nina Simone were Harris's ideals. The Rainbow Sign, a community center, became, in a way, the extension of their kitchen because it fed, in Harris's words, her "brain […] by bringing together food, poetry, politics, music, dance, and art" (18). Her mother taught her that "to believe that 'It's too hard!' was never an acceptable excuse; that being a good person meant standing for something larger than yourself; that success is measured in part by what you help others achieve and accomplish" (18). Women's rights, women's aspiration and self-confidence, and women's genealogies are intricately connected to family life (cf. 112). Kamala Harris, by showing her mother's battle in her profession, as a single mother, and as an immigrant at the same time,

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[2] For the relevance of the kitchen in American literature, see Susan Glaspell's "The Jury of Her Peers" (1917) or *Trifles* (1916); Paule Marshall's "From the Poets in the Kitchen" (1983); Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991); Edwidge Danticat's "Caroline's Wedding" (1995), and others.

gives people insight into such constellations and reveals them as being as American as the traditional family.

Harris carefully broadens the presidential family images in the White House, if you think of the Kennedys, the Bushes, and even the Obamas (even though they were the first not to be White). Even George and Martha Washington, although they did not have children of their own, have always been shown as a family with children (not their own). Throughout her narrative, Harris quotes her mother with phrases that did encourage her at the time and still do so today: "One of my mother's favorite sayings was 'Don't let anybody tell you who you are. You tell *them* who you are'" (25; emphasis in original). These "sayings" became Harris's guidelines for life and are part and parcel of the women's liberation movement: "My mother inherited my grandmother's strength and courage. People who knew them knew not to mess with either. And from both of my grandparents, my mother developed a keen political consciousness. She was conscious of history, conscious of struggle, conscious of inequities. She was born with a sense of justice imprinted on her soul" (7). And she said: "'Focus on what's in front of you and the rest will follow'" (63). The most important statement is: "'Kamala, you may be the first to do many things. Make sure you're not the last'" (see images in the book n. pag.). This is exactly what she does in her pursuit of the American Dream.

Harris carefully connects family life, women's rights, and minority life with the idea of the American Dream that, again, appeals to most Americans. The almost innate belief that, as James Truslow Adams defined it in 1931, it is "that American dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank" (19) with opportunities for all according to ability or achievement (see Freese; Cullen). The belief in a better, richer, and fuller life according to ability or achievement is what Kamala Harris's mother was motivated by and what she instilled in her daughters: "It was about her earning a full slice of the American Dream" (75). The house her mother bought in Oakland was part of this dream. Harris, by using her family history, makes clear to her readers that she knows what owning your own home means and how devastating it was in and around 2010 in the middle "of a devastating foreclosure crisis" (76) to lose this home to a "major housing crisis" (78).

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5 OF RACE AND RACISM

As the depiction and discussion of Harris's family life emphasizes, their immigrant status on both her mother's Indian and her father's Jamaican side led to her experience of racism, discrimination, injustice, and segregation. As she argues, "[r]acism is real in America," "and police departments are not immune" (70). Yet, inspired by her mother's encouraging words and the opportunities she had studying at Howard University for her undergraduate years and then at UC Hastings College of the Law (24), she felt, in the words of Nina Simone, "young, gifted, and black" (22) and believed that she could achieve anything she set her mind to. A "capacity to be great," with "potential" and "talents," ready for "leadership" were the characteristics that college life instilled in her in order to "have an impact on other people, on our country, and maybe even the world" (23).

Yet, these psychological boosters did in no way mean that she did not see the racial and social injustice and misery in California and the nation as a whole. She aspired for "equal justice" (25), and, after the completion of her law degree, she became deputy district attorney in Alameda and later district attorney in San Francisco, who both represent "'the people'—society at large" (28). The statement "'Kamala Harris, for the people'" (28) is telling and maybe foreshadowing her future career. She deals with a dysfunctional bureaucracy, with crimes on all levels, such as sexual abuse, substance abuse, theft, homicide, etc. Throughout her career, she knows she represents more than just herself. As a model for other Black women, Harris confronts this double discrimination based on gender and race and develops her vision of "one community" (45), an "imagined" and, thus, constructed "political community" (6), according to Benedict Anderson, which stresses commonalities rather than differences.

The prison system was part of Harris's focus as attorney. The facts that the United States puts more people behind bars than other countries and that proportionally more Black men are imprisoned find expression in Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* (2010). As attorney, Harris contributes to the maintenance of this legal system, and she reflects on people's surprise how she, "as a black woman, could countenance being part of 'the machine' putting more young men of color behind bars" (52). By phrasing the situation in this way, Harris shows that people trusted her; otherwise they would not have told her. Moreover, the phrase also

reveals people's fear of something that is not human and acts automatically like a preprogrammed machine. This naturalistic image of the system as an unblinking, emotionless, and all-powerful machine seems to reflect inevitable human, or in their case Black, determinism. Harris, however, breaks this deterministic resignation and shows that, as part of the system, she can use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house (Lorde). Harris establishes reentry programs for people who are released from prison (55-60) as "Back on Track as a model program" (59). Her imagined community is one of "a longer story" (63), with each human being responsible for how a chapter gets written (63). She addresses women in prison, often as victims of violence (67); she supports BlackLivesMatter; she wants to turn the understanding of racism into action to tackle "the racial bias that operates throughout our criminal justice system" (68). She opens people's eyes to the many innocent deaths of Black men and women with carefully chosen examples that, in the manner of civil sentimentalism, appeal to her readers' empathy (70). While she acknowledges that racism is "systemic" and needs to be abolished (65), she hardly addresses different forms of racism, such as legal racism, which can be changed, or socio-psychological racism, which cannot easily be overcome. When in January 2011, she is inaugurated as California's Attorney General, she promises: "'Today, with this oath […], we affirm the principle that every Californian matters" (88). This was before the BlackLivesMatter movement emerged. In 2019, when her book was published, this phrase sounds like "All Lives Matter," which is, of course, a true statement but it veils the fact that Black lives are particularly vulnerable and threatened and should not simply be equated with all lives because then it becomes a truism and loses the political fervor it needs to effect change.

Harris later, in the context of the debate on same-sex marriages, proclaims by quoting gay African American civil rights activist Bayard Rustin,[3] "'[w]e are all one, and if we don't know it, we will learn it the hard way'" (121). Although roughly 60 years apart, Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb" (2021), written for and held at Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20, 2021, echoes Rustin's "we" when she plays on words: "We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to / one another. / We seek harm to no none and harmony for all. / […] We've

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[3] He co-organized the March on Washington. Obama awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously.

seen a force that would shatter our nation rather / than share it. / Would destroy our country if it meant delaying / democracy. / This effort very nearly succeeded."

6 OF POLARIZATION, POLEMICS, AND POPULISM

At the same time Harris ran for Senator in California, declaring her candidacy in January 2015, the Republican Party began to deteriorate and Donald Trump poisoned the public arena of the election campaign. Harris uses strong terms in her depiction of what Trump does. She talks about "infection," "anger," "blame," "the flames of xenophobic nativism"; she accuses Trump of crossing "every boundary of decency and integrity – bragging about sexually assaulting women; mocking people with disabilities; race baiting; demonizing immigrants; attacking war heroes and Gold Star families; and fomenting hostility, even hatred, toward the press" (143). Accusing him in this way, she exposes him as the monster he was and is who triggers fear. It is this "[f]ear of the other [that] is woven into the fabric of our American culture" (145), as she argues, it is visible in the nation's history of immigration that, with every new surge, has pitted "us" vs. "them," nativists vs. newcomers, old immigrants vs. new immigrants, the Statue of Liberty as "Mother of Exile" and "worldwide welcome" (Lazarus) vs. "unguarded gates" that should be guarded (Aldrich). Yet, Harris has just revealed her own history as typically American. Under Trump, immigrants had become easy "targets" and "scapegoats" (146) although immigrants such as well-known Arianna Huffington, Jerry Yang, Mike Krieger, etc. had built and economically enriched the country. Harris participated in and spoke at the Women's March on January 20, 2017. Yet, the Muslim ban came; the Dreamers feared deportation; families were separated; the medical system lost the Affordable Care Act (ACA); biases were re-enforced.

The final part of her narrative, "What I've Learned" (253-81), reads like a self-help manual through which she demands action from herself and her audience to follow what is true. The American Dream under Trump was no longer what it used to be (if it ever really existed). Harris continues, in the remainder of her book, to enumerate what went wrong under the Trump administration: tax cuts and tax increases for the wrong people; the health care crisis; the housing crisis; the environmental crisis; artificial intelligence leading to job losses and the need for better education. She asks those people who can afford it to pay fair taxes

because, "[i]t's necessary, it's moral, and it's wise" (229). All subsequent subchapters' titles read like recommendations or commands of what to do. The eight commands, like "Test the Hypothesis" (254-57), "Go to the Scene" (257-61), etc., suggest to work like a scientist, try out your ideas, be ready to fail, but continue to fight for what you think is worth fighting for. Although these commands reflect what she has learned and what she is ready to do, the use of the imperative also addresses the reader, who might feel empowered to actually follow her words that do matter because she, as she maintains, will always speak the truth.

To show how Kamala Harris does try to undermine and reverse all forms of polarization fed by fear, hatred, and mistrust, I use Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser's analysis of populism. Populism, as the term indicates, refers to "the people" and includes "a critique of the establishment" (5). Harris, too, evokes "the people" but does so as part of her profession as a lawyer and attorney. Her job asks her to represent and speak "for the people" in court, to become the embodiment of *vox populi* (20). Yet, "the people" is an imagined community, a construction, and an "'empty signifier'" (Laclau qtd. in Mudde and Kaltwasser 9) so that it can be used for many purposes. In the United States, "the people" always also implies "the nation" (Mudde und Kaltwasser 11). Similarly, the construct of an "elite" is considered the opposite of the nation, thus referring to it as an un-American element. While Harris might qualify as part of an intellectual elite, she is careful in constructing the image of her family as poor, hard-working immigrants who have lived the American Dream. In this way, she does not have to deny her membership in the political (as Senator of California) and intellectual elite, but shows that the boundaries are blurred and can be overcome. One of the aims of populism is the empowerment of "the people." Kamala Harris, too, uses the idea of empowerment. For her, it is the empowerment of women, and Black women in particular. Her empowerment is rooted in female genealogies, based on her grandmother and mother as models of strong women that motivate imitation.

She passionately appeals to people's sentiments: "In the years since, we've seen an administration align itself with white supremacists at home and cozy up to dictators abroad; rip babies from their mothers' arms in grotesque violation of their human rights; give corporations and the wealthy huge tax cuts while ignoring the middle class; derail our fight against climate change; sabotage health care and imperil a woman's right to control her own body; all while lashing out at seemingly everything

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and everyone, including the very idea of a free and independent press"
(xii-xiii). The most recent example of an infringement upon and refusal
of women's right to control their own bodies is the new Texas legislation
that makes abortion illegal after the first six weeks of a pregnancy even
though, as is very well known, some women do not even know at this
point that they are pregnant. Even more so, anyone who helps women
looking for an abortion is to be punished, including doctors, nurses,
friends, parents, even taxi drivers who take the women to a clinic. Even
worse, anyone who tells state representatives about such an attempt is to
receive 10,000 dollars. This regulation turns the new Republican-driven
state law into a form of headhunting that clearly denies a woman the right
to decide about her own body in spite of the 1973 Supreme Court
decision *Roe vs. Wade*. As Judith Butler in *Undoing Gender* shows,
women's autonomy is severely restricted because social and legal
support has been taken away, here with the justification that at six weeks
the fetus is alive because a heartbeat can be noticed. This regulation is
absolute and does not allow any exceptions such as cases of incest and
rape. This attempt at saving human life and claiming it as a human act is
inhuman. The question here is one of power: who decides what and when
there is human life that needs to be protected. Both Harris's use of the
vocabulary of war and the emotional accusation against Trump use what
Heike Paul in her study *Amerikanischer Staatsbürgersentimentalismus*
(2021) calls civil sentimentalism. She appeals to people's emotions in
order to achieve a change in politics.

What successful populism needs is a strong leader, who is associated
with masculinity and a "potentially violent figure" (Mudde and
Kaltwasser 63), thus a "strongman" (63), who casts himself as "a man of
action, rather than words, who is not afraid to take difficult and quick
decisions, even against 'expert' advice. […] he will argue that the
situation ('crisis') requires 'bold action' and 'common sense solutions'"
(64). Although Harris also portrays herself as a woman of action, her
emphasis lies on words. She uses strong words but never "vulgar
language, a so-called *Stammtisch* (beer table) discourse," as Trump has
been known for, thus presenting himself as "'one of the boys,' a man's
man, talking sports and women rather than politics and policies" (65-66).
Most populists, as Jan-Werner Müller argues, are also "*antipluralist*" (3;
emphasis in original) because they "claim that they, and they alone,
represent the people" (3). And they make it a moral issue so that the "us"
seems to represent the moral standard, and "them," the "political

competitors [are seen] as part of the immoral, corrupt elite […]" (Müller 3). The competitors, in this sense, are labeled the "'enemies of the people'" (4). This language is simplistic, populist, and Trumpist. The dichotomy of "the people" vs. its "enemies" is too simplifying and depends on the perspective you take, as Rudyard Kipling's[4] poem "We and They" (*Debits and Credits* [1926]) convincingly shows: "Father and Mother, and Me, / Sister and Auntie say / All the people like us are We, / And everyone else is They. / And They live over the sea; / While we live over the way / But – would you believe it? – They look upon We / As only a sort of They!" Harris never makes the mistake of saying that there is a simple solution to problems. She maintains complexity, and she never claims—as populists do—that she is the one and only representative of "we the people." When she fails in what she does, she resiliently gets up and tries again. She does not put the blame on someone "behind the scenes" (Müller 42).

In appealing to emotions, Harris applies populist strategies but embraces all Americans, does not use scapegoating, gives "the people" a new meaning, and embodies strong, self-made female leadership. In her book, she comes across as a "charismatic leader," addressing people in a respectful, humane, and empathic way. To those who reject dichotomies, she seems to be authentic because she does not perpetuate the binary worldview of "us vs. them." She does not pretend to be an outsider in politics but rather uses her insider knowledge to actually listen to and represent *vox populi*, one that is not homogenous but heterogeneous and pluralist.

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[4] Kipling (1865-1936) has been considered a controversial writer. On the one hand, during the time of the British empire, he was one of the most popular British writers, receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907 and being considered the poet of the British Empire. On the other hand, more recently, he "has been variously labelled a colonialist, a jingoist, a racist, an anti-Semite, a misogynist, a right-wing imperialist warmonger; and – though some scholars have argued that his views were more complicated than he is given credit for – to some degree he really was all those things" (McGrath). In spite of these depictions, I do consider the poem "We and They" so wonderfully fitting into populism (and its critique) that I simply have to use it.

7 OF ROLE MODELS AND GLASS CEILINGS

Harris ends her book with encouraging words that take her readers back to her mother. She invites young women to her Role Models Club; she puts emphasis on female genealogies. Although she has addressed quite a plethora of people, her particular concern are women of all stages in life and backgrounds. She never portrays life as easy but as a battle, a fight that might eventually "break through a glass ceiling" with cuts, hurt, and pain (279) but never alone because of women's solidarity. Even more so, and quite patriotically, she makes a final attempt to overcome polarization since, as she says, "we are still one American family, and we should act like it. We have so much more in common than what separates us" (280). By depicting her own immigrant family and her own intersectionality, including her own marriage to the American Jew Doug Emhoff and their patchwork family as well as her own parents' divorce, Harris humanizes the very people that the former president dehumanizes. She gives immigration a positive and familiar face; she appeals to people's emotions and empathy (see Rifkin) when families are torn apart; she applies civil sentimentalism to motivate her readers to act. She uses, as I argue, some tools of populism but without its simplification, and that, to quote Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken," "has made *all* the difference" (223; emphasis added). She invites people to join her as "joyful warrior[s] in the battle to come" (281) for the sake of their "children and […] grandchildren" (281). The American journey, for her, is one of progress, from one generation to the next, inspired by the promises of an American Dream which is so deeply ingrained in U.S.-American people's psyches even if scholars begin to talk about the time after the American Dream (Lamont). By undoing or at least loosening the grip of a scapegoating, xenophobic, racist, and sexist discourse, which many people have internalized and identified with (Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* 85-86), Harris appeals to both reason and emotions to fill the vacuum that has emerged due to the sudden collective insight into a sorcerer's fake magic. She sends out a powerful wake-up call to actively confront the nightmares the country has seen over the past years (and continues to see). She continues what Barack Obama encapsulated in his slogans "Yes.We.Can." and "the best is yet to come," and moves across class, ethnic, religious, and gender barriers and sends out a plea for unity, for *e pluribus unum*. Whether she can maintain her original charisma and the energy of this book, time will show. In early 2022, her

acceptance rate is so low that it seems to be impossible for her to pick up speed and restore the popular image she had when elected as vice-president, an office which John Adams once depicted as "'the most insignificant office that ever the Invention of man contrived or his Imagination conceived'" (qtd. in Ellis). Whether Harris can overcome this "insignificant office" and become president remains to be seen.

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DAWN GARTLEHNER

United We Stand. Divided We Fall: Frances E. W. Harper and Struggles for Equality in a Nation Torn Asunder

In 1860, had Frances Harper had a to-do list, the items would have included: abolish slavery; grant universal suffrage; ban the sale of alcohol; and federally-fund universal education. Frances Harper's work as a writer, lecturer, and activist would have been difficult in the best of times. As an unmarried woman with non-white skin traveling through a country wreaked by racism and gender discrimination, she would have been a constant target of abuse. This, despite the fact that the nation should have been ripe for hundreds of like-minded women and men, Northerners and Southerners, black people and white people, to join hands and raise fists to forge a new, brighter tomorrow. The season had arrived to plant the seeds of a nation of the people, by the people, for the people. Because United we Stand! Divided we fall!

Theoretically, that is how it could have been.

But it was not.

In 1825 Frances Harper was born immediately south of the Mason Dixon line as Frances Ellen Watkins in Baltimore, MD. Like the millions of others who were enslaved at the time, she had non-white skin; unlike millions of others, she was born free. Orphaned by the age of three, Harper was raised by an uncle whose activism greatly influenced her. Watkins not only learned how to read and write at her uncle's academy for black youth, she also learned about the importance of civil engagement through her uncle's abolitionist sermons and friends. While Watkins was in her late twenties and teaching in Philadelphia, her home state of Maryland began enslaving free Black people. A recently passed fugitive law stipulated that any free Black person who travelled to Maryland could be subject to fines, and if unable to pay, enslaved. The tragic story of Edward "Ned" Davis, a free Black man who had been lured to Maryland by a job opportunity and was subsequently enslaved, riled abolitionists throughout the nation. Had Frances Ellen Watkins returned to her home state of Maryland, she too could have been enslaved. Something had to be done, and Watkins saw herself as just the

person to do it. Her prompt application to become an Underground Railroad conductor was rejected, so she concentrated her efforts on initiating change as a lecturing activist. Like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, Watkins advocated universal suffrage and the end of slavery. Unlike her Black contemporary advocates, however, Watkins, as an educated black woman who had never been enslaved, did not fit the stereotype of an oppressed black woman. Efforts that began as a united initiative to realize mutual goals, would soon dissolve into an ugly dispute of two sparring factions, each side equally confident in the legitimacy of their cause.

THE GREAT DIVIDE: 1848 SENECA FALLS CONVENTION

Women's struggle to secure voting rights in the United States is largely viewed as beginning with a two-day convention in July 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. Two hundred mostly white middle-class women convened in a village chapel along with forty white men and one black man (Frederick Douglass) to advocate a wide range of women's issues and reform demands. Everyone in attendance could agree with Elizabeth Cady Stanton that the equality of all men and women was a self-evident truth. They could not agree, however, on how to ensure that a God-given right would be recognized and protected by a man-given rule of law.

Sojourner Truth knew first-hand the depth of suffering by black women. Born into slavery, Sojourner Truth escaped from her enslavement to the North together with her infant daughter and was even able to successfully secure her enslaved son's liberation through legal means. Three years after the Seneca Falls Convention, in Ohio in 1851, Truth weighed in on the suffrage controversy with an impassioned response that has since become known as the "Ain't I a Woman" speech. Cutting through all the arguments downplaying women's entitlement to the same rights as men, Truth repeatedly demanded to know "What's dat got to do with [it]?" During her fiery oration, she pointed a finger at a minister demanding to know why Jesus Christ's gender played a role in the question of women's vs. black men's rights: "Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothin' to do wid Him."

The campaign to sideline women to a secondary role in advocacy groups was painfully apparent at a temperance conference in New York in 1852. Organizers refused to acknowledge the credentials of the women delegates and refused to let them speak. Undeterred, the small group of

women, which included Susan B. Anthony, promptly held a women's mini-conference in a nearby chapel, where Susan B. Anthony gave one of her first speeches. If women wanted a voice and a vote, they would have to form their own advocacy groups. In 1856, Stanton became the New York state agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society. The first markers of success included state reforms of women's rights to own property and to retain self-earned wages.

Then in April 1861, all hell broke loose when the first shots of the Civil War were fired and, for a brief time, activists united in their abolitionist efforts. When Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed only those who were enslaved in the Confederacy, Susan B. Anthony collected nearly 400,000 signatures to petition the government to put a *universal* end to slavery. By November 1863, the winds of war were turning and President Lincoln, looking over a Pennsylvanian field of bloodied corpses in Gettysburg, promised that the deaths of the war would not be in vain and that the postwar Union [would be a country] "of the people, by the people, for the people."

When the brutal war that had torn the nation asunder finally ended in May 1865, Lincoln's promise of a united postwar nation representing all people, materialized as a men-only club. The burning questions of the day revolved around what would happen with the four million newly liberated people and how the South would be reintegrated into the Union. As Jim Crow measures spread like a virus throughout the former Confederacy, racial tensions worsened throughout the nation. Hundreds of thousands of those who were legally free but in reality persecuted in the South, migrated to the North in the hopes of jobs, a secure life, and a better future elsewhere.

Against this backdrop, Anthony and Stanton initiated the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) in 1866 advocating the rights of all people, regardless of race or gender. Frederick Douglass was included as one of three vice-presidents. One of the speakers at that founding meeting was Frances Harper, formerly Frances Watkins, a widow and single mother after four brief years of marriage. But the battle between Lincoln's pro-Union Republican party and the pro-Southern Democratic party to procure votes and determine the path of the postwar nation, would drive a long-lasting wedge between the nation's women campaigning for suffrage.

Lincoln's pro-Union Republican party, which had freed the slaves, strategized that they could increase their party's voting power by

granting black men the right to vote. Granting women the same right, however, could counterbalance this advantage. Those in favor of granting black men the right to vote argued that the initiative would, at least theoretically, place the black and white communities on an equal footing. Black women, like white women, would have to rely on the votes of their male family members to represent them. Many white people, however, viewed the voting question through a racial lens as increasing the political power of the black community while decreasing the voting power of the white. Later some women's advocates would even try to leverage these fears to motivate white Southerners to support white women's right to vote. Many women, however, regardless of race, feared that granting only black men the right to vote would simply increase the number of men holding the power to rule over civically incapacitated women. Susan B. Anthony did not mince words: "I will cut off this right arm of mine," she declared, "before I will ever work or demand the ballot for the Negro and not the woman."

Speaking in 1867 at AERA's first anniversary meeting, Sojourner Truth echoed Anthony's sentiments:

> If colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see that colored men will be masters over their women, and it will be just as bad as before … I want women to have their rights. In the courts women have no right, no voice … You [men] have been having our rights so long, that you think, like a slave-holder, that you own us…"
> (qtd. in Cullen-DuPont, *Encyclopedia of Women's History in America*, 12)

In 1868 the 14th Amendment was ratified granting citizenship to all persons, including those formerly enslaved, born or naturalized in the United States.

The differences seemed to become irreconcilable when Frederick Douglass took his stand at an 1869 AERA meeting convened to debate the association's position on the 15th Amendment. As a staunch advocate of women's rights who had even attended the Seneca Falls Convention and served as one of AERA's first three vice-presidents, Frederick Douglass's position mattered. Douglass's path to popularity had begun in 1838 when he had escaped from slavery at the age of twenty-one and then published a memoir at the age of twenty-eight. He lectured throughout the country and supported the abolitionist cause through the publication of a newspaper entitled *The North Star* after the star he

claimed to have followed to freedom. The paper's masthead declared, "Right is of no sex – truth is of no color – God is the father of us all, and we are brethren." Often when Douglass, a sought-after public speaker, appeared, controversy followed. The 1868 AERA meeting was no exception.

According to Douglass, the rights of women was all well and good but there was no question that the rights of black men clearly outweighed the rights of all women. For black men, so Douglass, voting rights was a question of life or death because black men were the ones being

> hunted down through the cities of New York and New Orleans; … dragged from their houses and hung upon lamp-posts; … their children … torn from their arms, and their brains dashed out upon the pavement; [and were] …. objects of insult and outrage at every turn; … in danger of having their homes burnt down over their heads; [and] … children [who were] not allowed to enter schools. (Frederick Douglass Papers qtd in Sundstrom, "Frederick Douglass",)

Not until women had to contend with the same atrocities, Douglass argued, would they "have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal" to that of black men.

The women in attendance challenged Douglass with the obvious question, "And what about black women?" Douglass conceded that black women suffered too, *but*, he said, they suffered, not because they were women, but because they were black. Lucy Stone's diplomatic attempts in the organization to re-establish common ground by arguing that there were oceans of wrongs for everyone were in vain. AERA officially withdrew its support for the 15th Amendment and the "great schism" in the women's movement was forged.

In 1869, Frances Harper, throwing her support behind the proposed 15th Amendment, broke away from AERA, stating that "when it was the question of race" she was willing to "let the lesser question of sex go."

Despite the protests from Anthony & Co, the Fifteenth Amendment granting all men of all skin tones the right to vote came into force in 1870. For women the suffrage struggle would continue for more than another generation and a half.

After a relatively short life of only four years, AERA disbanded in 1870 and Stanton, Anthony, Sojourner Truth, and other former AERA members founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), while Frances Harper, along with Lucy Stone, Frederick Douglass, and others formed the competing organization, the American Woman

Suffrage Association (AWSA). AWSA supported suffrage for black people as well as women and took a state-by-state approach to initiate the changes they demanded. In the closing remarks at the 1873 AWSA convention, Harper stated, "much as white women need the ballot, colored women need it more."

Finally, in 1878 Senator Aaron A. Sargent from the state of California, who was a woman's suffrage advocate, was the first congressional representative to introduce a suffrage amendment that would become the subject of decades of nail-biting and hand-wringing before finally evolving into the 19th Amendment.

In 1890, after successful negotiations spearheaded once again by Lucy Stone, the American Woman Suffrage Association and National Woman Suffrage Association finally reconciled and merged into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) after two decades of discord. What was united on paper, however, was often divided in practice. Although the national organization did not officially exclude African American women, many local organizations did. Conventions held in Southern cities like Atlanta in 1895 and New Orleans in 1903, were segregated. Again recognizing the need to organize their own group to have their voices heard, Frances Harper, along with many well-known black women activists such as Harriet Tubman, Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, founded The National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896. They hoped to give Black women a national platform to advocate their causes, including suffrage.

During these long decades, women − divided in their efforts, united in their cause − struggled to advance the 1878 proposal, which was repeatedly reintroduced and rejected in Congress. The racist divide amongst the advocates became painfully and visibly evident in the Woman Suffrage Procession in New York City on 3 March 1913. When black women declared their intention to join the march, white southern delegates threatened to boycott the event. A so-called compromise placed the black suffragists in a separate section of the parade and thus (ironically) imposed a Jim Crow-like segregation on a march protesting discriminatory practices.

Then in 1919, after *five* (!) excoriating decades after all men had received the right to vote, the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote successfully passed and could be submitted for state ratification. A sad side note is that even after the bill's passage, it still took over six

more decades for all states to finally ratify the 19th Amendment in their state constitutions. Mississippi was the last to do so on 22 March 1984.

CURRENT DIVISION AMONGST WOMEN

Time and again, efforts to evolve the United States into a place that is of, by, and for *all* people, and not just certain kinds of some people, have been a struggle. A great part of this struggle can be found in our failure to recognize the key role that intersectionality plays in the great experiment which never was, nor should ever have tried, to be a melting pot. No, the United States of America is, was, and is bound always to be more a smorgasbord.

Historically, dividing and conquering any groups who strive to initiate long-lasting change to the prevailing systems and power structures has never been difficult. If the ties that bind those groups are fragile, divisiveness can easily be sown on the basis of any one of a many differences. The Frances Harpers of the nation have long struggled with the fall-out from the failure to stand united. What started in the 1800s continued even into the Civil Rights Era in the 1960s.

In 1981 southern black feminist and activist bell hooks, in her book *Ain't I a Woman? Black women and feminism* articulated the long problematic history of US feminism and the need for black women to create a (separate) space for themselves in both the women's as well as the civil rights movements. hooks argued for the need to recognize and address the forces of oppression for *all* women and not just a select few. Years later this need would enter the public discourse under the label of intersectionality.

Efforts to right past wrongs can, however, when mismanaged, cause even more destruction. Many current scholars argue that historically, the women's movement in the US was plagued by a racism and ethnocentricity that was not a matter of blind ignorance, but rather an intentional effort to maintain a racial hierarchy in which white women strove to achieve equal rights with white men while ensuring that non-white people remained in the lower social and political tiers. This has motivated some scholars to rebrand historical feminism efforts as "white feminism", which has been equated to a kind of white supremacy version of feminism.

Social media have celebrated this anti-white woman sentiment through the creation and spread of so-called Karen Memes. The horribly

racist women featured in the memes are supposedly stereotypical of all white women. They vividly, albeit anecdotally, illustrate how BBQ Becky, Golf cart Gail, License Plate Linda, and all the others are the problem. Why else would the majority of white women vote for somebody like Donald Trump?

Just as Critical Race Theory attempts to re-examine the troubling racial history of the United States and ascertain how we have gotten where we are now, so too does women's historical struggle for equal rights need a re-examination. However, shame on us all if this re-examination, re-evaluation, re-envisioning, ends up catering to the same destructive forces that got us where we are now in the first place. A closer look at the evidence reveals that the majority of white women did not, in fact, vote for Trump, despite the headlines. Further review has shown that that reporting was simply false.

In a recent interview on intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who originally coined the term in 1989 to address concerns about the law's application to black women, for example, expressed surprise at what the term intersectionality had come to mean at the age of thirty after going mainstream. For Crenshaw, intersectionality was not about inverting the hierarchy in place at the time in favor of another hierarchy, but rather in wrecking the existing power structure altogether to establish a level playing field and more egalitarian system. But like Critical Race Theory, ignorance in regard to intersectionality, its meaning, and its intention, has turned a tool meant to better society into a weapon to polarize it. So perhaps it is best to forget about white feminism or even intersectional feminism and opt for something like universal feminism, which would be more difficult to weaponize in the current volatile social climate of extreme polarization in the US.

CONCLUSION

In 1920, almost all women in the US secured the right to vote. But Frances Harper never got to see that day. She had died nine years earlier in 1911, but her struggle lived on. From the beginning, Frances Harper's judgment had never been clouded by some idealized vision of joint efforts and responsibility in the women's movement. In fact, in her first AERA speech she stated, "I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life…. I do not believe that white women are dew drops just exhaled from the skies. I think that

like men they may be divided into three classes, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. The good would vote according to their convictions and principles; the bad, as dictated by preju[d]ice or malice; and the indifferent will vote on the strongest side of the question, with the winning party." ("We are all Bound Up Together," Black Culture Database, 217-219)

Yet, in her temperance literature of the 1870s (*Sowing and Reaping: A Temperance Story,* for example*),* Harper continued to advocate a universal mission of all humankind by utilizing "deracialized discourse", which excluded racial markers in order to emphasize the universality of what we face because "we are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity" (*Brighter* 217). Such a vital task could not be trusted to "[t]he hands of lynchers …too red with blood to determine the political character of the government for even four short years" or "the unsteady hands of a drunkard" ("Women's Political Future"). Instead, Harper placed her hopes for a better future in a racially united women's front, "to demand justice, simple justice, as the right of every race" ("Women's Political Future").

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BRIGITTE BUCHHAMMER

Alison Jaggar's Research on Polarization at the Intersection of Gender and Poverty

1 INTRODUCTION[1]

"Does poverty wear a woman's face?" ponders Alison M. Jaggar. "The United Nations has certainly promoted the idea that poverty is 'feminized' in many publications up to the present."[2] This essay undertakes the task of outlining key aspects of Alison Jaggar's theory of the feminization of poverty.

Addressing the demand for intersectional criteria of analysis, Jaggar emphasizes that "my interest is especially in women who are on the less privileged side of the various divides, in both the global North and the global South."[3] Her dedicated and vigorous work focuses on "arguing that conceiving injustice to poor women in poor countries primarily in terms of their oppression in 'illiberal' cultures provides an understanding of the women's situation that is crucially incomplete."[4] Firstly, it is helpful to briefly outline Jaggar's examination of various standards for eradicating poverty and gender-specific aspects of poverty. With reference to Thomas Pogge, to whom Jaggar also frequently refers, different levels of responsibility are elaborated from a philosophical perspective. With key theses from Kant's practical philosophy and their innovative accentuation by Herta Nagl-Docekal, moral-philosophical aspects of the question of responsibility with regard to poverty and the oppression of women worldwide are briefly addressed. The paper concludes with a sketch of Jaggar's proposal of debt relief for the Global South as a philosophical proposition for overcoming the most grievous poverty.

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[1] All citations from German works in this text were translated into English by the author.
[2] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 240.
[3] Jaggar, "Globalization" 301.
[4] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 56.

Brigitte Buchhammer

2 JAGGAR'S CRITIQUE OF POLARIZATION IN VARIOUS FEMINIST PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES

Alison Jaggar highlights, in particular, the problem of the prevailing concept of injustice towards poor women in poor countries as a result of their oppression in 'illiberal' cultures, as often occurs in Western feminist and philosophical contexts. This explanation of poverty and oppression, merely as a result of traditional cultural practices, is severely incomplete. This inadequate understanding distorts our comprehension of our moral relationship to women in other parts of the world and limits our assumptions about the cross-cultural dialogue that is necessary to promote global justice for women. She briefly outlines the polarizing debate within (feminist) philosophy between moral universalism and cultural relativism. Susan Moller Okin and Martha Nussbaum are representatives of a liberal feminism. These two authors criticize post-colonial feminists for downplaying or ignoring the blatant injustice against women in non-Western countries. Like Nussbaum, Okin sees women in non-Western countries as having a problem of 'false consciousness' created by internalized oppression. In many cultural contexts, men control women, but cultural relativists ignore that fact. Okin's and Nussbaum's work, as Jaggar emphasizes, has done much to elucidate how local cultural traditions contribute to women's oppression and poverty, and this is eminently worthy of consideration. However, Jaggar criticizes lopsidedness in their work: "I argue that Nussbaum's and Okin's representations of the injustices suffered by poor women in poor countries are lopsided, reflecting some preoccupations while obscuring others."[5] Jaggar suggests "that a focus on certain aspects of the global political economy, hitherto largely neglected by Western philosophers, can help to present a fuller and fairer understanding of the injustices suffered by poor women in poor countries."[6] Nussbaum and Okin both take the plight of women in poor countries very seriously, emphasizing the threat that poverty imposes on women's autonomy, making them vulnerable to a range of other grievances, such as violence, sexual exploitation, and overwork.

But wherein does Jaggar see the problem in the work of these two theorists? In their work, they convey the impression that women's

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[5] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 60.
[6] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 60.

poverty is primarily caused by cultural traditions and local cultural customs, especially traditions of female seclusion.[7] Thus, both theorists come close to widespread theoretical analyses of the situation of poor women in poor countries. Jaggar takes a critical look at four biased theses of feminist (Western) theorists in particular, namely:

1) The "justice by culture"-thesis, which means, "the major cause of suffering among women in poor countries is unjust treatment in accordance with local cultural traditions – traditions whose injustice is not necessarily recognized by the women involved."[8]

2) The "autonomy of culture"-thesis: This thesis assumes the separateness and closedness of cultures, which is, nevertheless, to be critically questioned.

3) The "West is best"-thesis: this thesis claims that Western culture is emancipating for women, while non-Western cultures are typically more unjust to women.[9]

These three theses lead to a fourth and very problematic one, which maintains that it is the responsibility of Western theorists to problematize the injustice of non-Western local traditions forced on women by their local cultures, and to scrutinize the rationalizations of these injustices. Jaggar's dedicated and vigorous work focuses on "arguing that conceiving injustice to poor women in poor countries primarily in terms of their oppression in 'illiberal' cultures provides an understanding of the women's situation that is crucially incomplete."[10]

The polarization between Western women and the 'Third World Women' is highly problematic (Western women as "educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions," while "depicting non-Western women as victimized and lacking in agency, sexually constrained, ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, family-orientated, victimized"[11]).

Feminist philosophers should problematize this polarization and point out the danger of such confined perspectives that women's poverty in poor countries is merely a consequence of traditional patriarchal

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[7] See Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 60.
[8] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 61.
[9] See Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 61.
[10] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 56.
[11] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 57.

structures. The problem of women's poverty needs to be examined much more precisely. "The poverty and associated abuses suffered by poor women in poor countries […] cannot be understood exclusively in terms of unjust local traditions. To understand such poverty and abuse more fully, it is also necessary to situate these traditions in a broader geopolitical and geoeconomic context."[12]

3 A RELIABLE POVERTY STANDARD

One area of Jaggar's committed work on the topic of feminization of poverty is to develop a standard which does not practice cultural blaming (Western countries judge non-Western countries on their standard of living, without including those who are being judged).

How can poverty be measured? Various standards have been suggested, which are not very helpful for a careful investigation. Jaggar, with a view to Adam Smith, highlights that "the claim that someone is poor has an irreducibly moral dimension. […] Smith famously defined poverty as the want of life's 'necessaries' and he said that these included 'not only the commodities that are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but (also) whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without'."[13] Jaggar summarizes Smith's argument: "For Smith, avoiding poverty required not simply access to the things necessary for physical survival but also access to the commodities necessary for a decent life, including those required to ensure self-respect and the respect of one's fellow citizens."[14] One significant desideratum is a criterion to elicit "the gendered aspects of poverty."[15] And perhaps poverty has very different implications for men and women.[16]

The shortcomings of the World Bank's International Poverty Line (the 'dollar-a-day-standard') are obvious. Here, income or purchasing power or the value of consumer goods becomes the determining category for poverty. With the global spread of the market economy:

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[12] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 62.
[13] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 241, with reference to Smith, *Wealth of Nations* 691.
[14] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 241.
[15] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 241.
[16] See Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 241.

money becomes a multipurpose means for obtaining what Smith called the necessaries of life, which increasing numbers of people must pay rather than foraging for them, growing them, or making them. With money, people can purchase food, health care, and even leisure time, and reduce vulnerability and stigmatization. However, even in societies with an extensive market sector, earned income may be only one of several resources lacked by impoverished people or by specific groups of poor people. Even if people have sufficient income at any particular moment, they may be vulnerable to poverty if they lack liquid assets or other forms of social protection.[17]

People can be sexually vulnerable, politically marginalized, and subject to tremendous hardship. This is especially the case for women. Poverty is experienced differently in societies where there is a developed state welfare system. Measuring mere monetary value is not enough. Jaggar criticizes the gender bias of the International Poverty Line. "There is reason to think that the International Poverty Line obscures and likely undercounts specifically female poverty."[18] Taking household consumption as an example, Jaggar explains that "all members often do not have equal access to the available resources; for instance, more money is often spent for boys' education than for girls' and on health care for men and boys than for women and girls. Treating households as single units of consumption inevitably obscures inequality within them."[19] Jaggar emphasizes that women's poverty is not just a consequence of income, but also of

> […] hardships related specifically to their gender, such as sexual vulnerability, political marginalization, and excessive burdens of work. It is also possible that women's culturally assigned caretaking responsibilities mean that, in societies, where money income is a crucial resource, women may require more income than men. When poverty is measured primarily by the International Poverty Line, it is impossible for such gendered inequalities to come into view.[20]

The threshold of one dollar a day is morally problematic in principle and in practice. It can be argued that the current International Poverty Line is anti-poor, simply because it is set so low. A single income-based threshold inevitably fails to consider people's different needs and the different costs of obtaining goods. For this reason, an income-based

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[17] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 242.
[18] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 243.
[19] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 243.
[20] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 243.

approach will always have a greater impact on those whose needs and costs are higher. An income-based perspective has an anti-poor bias. Jaggar refers to several alternative categories to demonstrate poverty, for example the United Nations Human Poverty Index, influenced by Amartya Sen's work on capabilities.[21] The United Nations Human Development Index, which "includes not only access to overall economic provisioning (as measured by access to improved water sources and the percentage of underweight children), but also two so-called quality of life indicators, namely longevity and literacy."[22] The United Nations Development Program is now an alternative Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), "which has three dimensions: health, education and standard of living."[23] Poverty includes deprivation of rights and social exclusion, as Jaggar highlights. The different standards all share one common feature: "they are all decided by officials and experts who do not live close to any poverty threshold, and they are not supported by a clear rationale justifying the selection of some indicators over others."[24] Arbitrary standards are problematic in many ways: they do not appreciate the reality of life for most people living in poverty. "Poverty is a stigmatizing term. Misattribution of poverty can be insulting if they refuse to recognize the value of the wealth that people take themselves to possess."[25] External standards can be quite hurtful. In the later half of the 20th century:

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[21] Amartya Sen's core demand is: Enabling development as an extension of freedom. What forms of lack of freedom prevail in the world? Malnutrition, famine, lack of health care, not having clean drinking water, no access to education, culture, and well-paid jobs, no gender equality, sexism, racism, classism, discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious affiliation, etc. In what life-spheres is extension of freedom essential for a prosperous life? Economic, political, social freedom. Sen's concept of development as a process of expanding freedom is broader than conventional concepts of development. In his study, Sen looks at five aspects of freedom: political freedom, economic benefits, social opportunities, guarantees of transparency and social security. These different types of rights and opportunities promote the development opportunities of individuals. See Sen, *Development as Freedom*.

[22] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 244.

[23] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 244.

[24] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 244.

[25] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 245.

many non-Western countries were characterized as poor on the basis of their low GDP; this characterization was used to justify radical attempts to 'develop' these countries, destroying environments and sustainable ways of life while creating enormously profitable 'development industries' and a huge transfer of wealth from (now) poor to (now) much richer countries. Today, it is arguable that some metrics operate to rationalize an unjust economic order, insofar as they are overly optimistic and misleading about the extent and trends of global poverty.[26]

When political measures, rules and norms are implemented by unelected experts without involving those affected in the discourse, this is a blatant democratic deficit. "It is authoritarian and antidemocratic to guide policy by metrics that initially were decided and continue to be monitored by unelected and unaccountable economic 'experts' and academics whose reasoning is opaque and who report little or no consultations with poor people."[27] The manner in which poverty is to be measured should be the subject of public discussion, especially by those who are most affected by poverty and by the standards used to identify poverty. "How to measure poverty in a particular context is a proper topic for open public discussion, among all those concerned, including especially those whose situations will be assessed by the resulting measure."[28]

Poverty is quite a diffuse concept. How do people in different parts of the world experience poverty, how do they perceive it? The differences in the understanding of poverty are not only individual, but also depend on the social standards of different social spheres. Generating a single standard for the evaluation of poverty that is valid for all times and places does not make sense. What constitutes health, democracy and justice? "Different poverty standards must be developed in different contexts to measure poverty among diverse populations for different purposes."[29]

A poverty measure should be as transparent as possible so that the assumptions and results can be critically evaluated.

My argument so far has emphasized that morally acceptable poverty metrics must be credible to those people whose material situations they will be used to assess. No metric will be plausible to people if it is not responsive to their conceptions

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[26] Jaggar, "Does Poverty"245, with reference to Pogge, *Politics as Usual*.
[27] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 246.
[28] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 246.
[29] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 246.

of what constitutes a decent life. Therefore a morally acceptable metric cannot disregard the cultural values and conceptions of material necessity and social decency that prevail in diverse communities. At the same time, a metric cannot be used to measure poverty on a transnational scale if it is restricted to items that are associated with poverty in only a few cultural contexts. In order to be both plausible and practical, a global poverty metric must have a sufficiently universal meaning that people across the world recognize it as continuous with their understandings of poverty and do not dismiss it as relativist, subjectivist, or not poverty at all.[30]

A reliable measure of poverty must be able to show the full extent of poverty and must also be able to identify systematic inequalities in material wealth. Above all, the most deprived in the world must be made visible. People suffer from very different hardships, and even similar kinds of privation do not mean the same thing to every person affected, depending on his or her situation. "People's needs vary according to innumerable factors such as gender, age, and health, and also according to the economic context in which they live. The metric should, so far as possible, take account of differences in people's particular needs and in their social/economic situations."[31] Jaggar and her team worked on the development of a standard which is gender-sensitive:

> […] revealing aspects of poverty that are related systematically to gender. However, gender is always lived out in the context of particular other social groups, so as genuinely gender-sensitive metrics must recognize the ways in which gender disparities in material well-being are affected by other systematic factors such as age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, and disability. It is important to reveal disparities along these dimensions both for their own sake and for the sake of achieving a poverty metric that is genuinely gender-sensitive.[32]

Poverty measures that merely examine the average poverty level of groups obscure the inequality among individuals in these groups. Especially for the analysis of gender-specific poverty, it is important to start with individuals and not primarily with groups (countries, ethnic groups, or even households).[33]

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[30] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 247.

[31] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 248.

[32] Jaggar, "Does Poverty" 248.

[33] Clemens Sedmak emphasizes that when analyzing poverty, it is not enough to work merely with very general standards. He demands that the "experiences, the

The World Bank's International Poverty Line, the 'dollar-a-day'-standard, is incomplete. It is important to pay attention to the fact that women's poverty is generated on the one hand by traditional patriarchal structures, but the prosperity of wealthy industrialized countries and neoliberal economic practices also generate poverty on a massive scale in the countries whose resources are exploited. However, we ought not to lose sight of women's poverty in industrialized countries. More subtle criteria are required to get a better grip on poverty, and also gender-related poverty, women's poverty, and also child poverty, worldwide.

4 "ARE MY HANDS CLEAN?"[34]

This is one of the questions which Jaggar explores. To what extent are people in rich countries, in the Global North responsible for poverty in the Global South through neoliberal economics? Jaggar pleads with feminist philosophers to make the issue of feminization of poverty, this enormous injustice, a priority topic of their research. To what extent does the severe poverty, especially of women and children, in the Global South result from economic and political decisions in the Global North? Philosophers should examine how our own countries are complicit in the impoverishment and political marginalization of women in the Global South. The feminization of poverty is a global and ever-growing problem – to which the COVID-19 pandemic has now contributed significantly. Seventy per cent of the world's poor are women, and their poverty is exacerbated by violence, sexual exploitation, and political marginalization, she points out.[35]

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narratives of hope and suffering, the stories and fates" of people living in poverty be taken into account. It is important to listen to what people living in poverty have to say. Essential aspects of poverty, as Sedmak explains, are: lack of scope and opportunities: can people in poverty savor the fullness of their lives, put a life-plan into action, realize their potential, choose between alternatives? Another criterion is lack of access, access to services, to health care, to the education system, to the labor market and to the laws. It is important that people have a legal right and do not have to depend on the charity of donors. See Sedmak, *Dichte Beschreibungen* 7 & 25.

[34] Jaggar, "Are My Hands Clean?".

[35] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 585.

It is problematic when feminists see the cause of women's poverty merely in the traditional, patriarchal structures of the poor countries of the Global South.[36] It is crucial not to lose sight of the larger geopolitical and geo-economic context. "Contemporary processes of economic globalization, regulated by the Western-inspired and Western-imposed principles and policies of neoliberalism, have significantly affected the situation of many poor women in poor countries."[37] The majority of poor women in impoverished countries lived from agriculture and the land, but this has become unprofitable due to the neoliberal global economy.

> Most poor women in poor countries have traditionally made a living in small-scale and subsistence agriculture […]. The impact of neoliberal globalization, however, has made small-scale and subsistence agriculture increasingly unviable. […] As neoliberalism compels poor countries to open their markets, locally grown agricultural products are unable to compete with the heavily subsidized foods dumped by richer countries. The decline of small-scale and subsistence agriculture has driven many women off the land and into the shantytowns, that encircle most major cities in developing countries.[38]

What are the roots of women's poverty worldwide? Violations of human rights are found in national, traditional social and family structures, but are also caused by neoliberal economic interconnections. Jaggar states that human rights are violated much more frequently from the non-state side within the non-state sphere: through "family forms […] that provide for the sale of the bride and the strict control of female sexuality, clothing, language and freedom of movement by father and husband, […] forced labor within the home and prostitution."[39] However, the acceptance of such family forms by the state is problematic, as Jaggar points out. A redefinition of the concept of slavery must therefore be demanded, "so that forced labor within the home and prostitution are also included."[40] While that is one aspect, another essential facet is the problem of neoliberal globalization. The peculiarity of the current system of globalization, according to Jaggar, is "that it integrates many local and national markets into a single world market regulated by the World Trade Organization (WTO). This organization, established in 1995 to set the

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[36] See Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 56.
[37] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 63.
[38] Jaggar, "Saving Amina" 63.
[39] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 594.
[40] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 594.

rules for global trade, also counts many impoverished countries among its members." The rules of the World Trade Organization can override national laws of the respective signatory countries.

> The WTO, which establishes the rules for global trade and functions as a sort of international court for adjudicating trade disputes, construes trade matters so broadly that they include not only tariff barriers but also many matters of ethics and public policy. [...] Because the WTO regards ethical and health standards only as barriers to trade, it prevents countries from making their own decisions on ethics and food safety. The WTO is formally democratic in that each of its [...] member countries has one representative or delegate, who participates in negotiations over trade rules, but democracy within the WTO is limited in practice in many ways. Wealthy countries have far more influence than poor ones, and numerous meetings are restricted to the G-20-group, the most powerful member countries, excluding the less powerful even when decisions directly affect them.[41]

It is important to distinguish between these two aspects. The impoverishment of women caused by global neoliberalism should not be interpreted as a consequence of 'traditional forms of violence against women and cultural disregard for human rights' in poorer countries. It is of utmost importance to carefully distinguish between culturally-traditional gender stereotypes that are the basis of violence against women and, on the other hand, those forms of discrimination against women that are 'imported' from wealthy industrialized countries into the poorer countries.

What are the main features of neo-liberalism? Neo-liberalism suggests "that it is something new, but in fact 'neo-liberalism' only stands for a retreat from the liberal social democracy of the post-war period."[42] Jaggar identifies four main characteristics: Free trade, rejection of state regulation, rejection of social welfare, and privatization of resources.

> Trade is supposed to be free. Neo-liberalism advocates the unimpeded flow of traded goods by removing import and export quotas and tariffs. It also removes restrictions on the flow of capital. However, it does not demand that the third crucial factor of production, labour, should also flow freely, but seeks to actively control this flow. [...] The neoliberal one-sided interpretation of 'free trade' allows relocations of production to the lowest cost areas of the world, often

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[41] Jaggar, "Globalization" 308.
[42] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 596.

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because of lower wages, lower labour or consumer protection, and lower health or environmental protection requirements. At the same time, the movement of labour in search of higher wages is controlled.[43]

Neo-liberalism "pushes governments to abandon the welfare state commitments they made during the 20th century,"[44] such as housing subsidies, health care, and education.

> State regulation should be kept to a minimum. Neo-liberalism is opposed to state regulation of aspects of social life such as wages, working conditions and environmental protection. Laws protecting workers, consumers or the environment can be attacked as unfair trade restrictions. In the neoliberal world market, weak workers', consumers' and environmental rights can even be a 'locational advantage'.[45]

As Jaggar underlines, neoliberal globalization has "increased inequality both within and between countries."[46] Those who have suffered the most harshly from neoliberal economic conditions are women.

"The increasing privatization of natural resources such as land, forests, minerals, and water has led to increasing exploitation, depletion, and pollution of the environment and to the further impoverishment of women." Global patents claimed by corporations on seed and medicines, including indigenous seeds and medicines, have to be criticized. They have "especially adverse consequences for women." Jaggar urges feminists: "Neoliberal globalization has had injurious consequences for the life circumstances of all poor people but especially for women […]. Global neoliberalism is therefore a feminist issue, and developing alternatives to it should be a priority of feminist moral and political philosophy."[47]

How can feminist philosophers offer a critique here, based on what yardstick? In this case, Jaggar points out that human rights are the tried and tested yardstick. In doing so, she often refers to the work of Thomas Pogge.

5 LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY

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[43] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 596.
[44] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 596.
[45] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 597.
[46] Jaggar, "Gegen die weltweite Benachteiligung" 597.
[47] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 126.

Who is responsible for global poverty, especially global poverty among women? Is there a moral yardstick by which to measure massive injustice? The starting point for Pogge's analysis of global justice deficits are human rights "as the internationally recognized minimal standard of our age."[48] He explains that, "an institutional design is unjust if it fails to realize human rights insofar as is reasonably possible. In fact, an even weaker assertion suffices: any institutional design is unjust if it foreseeably produces massive avoidable human rights deficits. Such an institutional order, and participation in its creation or imposition, harms those whose human rights avoidably remain unfulfilled."[49] One can see from Pogge's formulation that he focuses on negative duties (in Kant's sense) and relates responsibilities to institutions. The central elements of human rights, as interpreted by Pogge, are as follows: 1) human beings as persons are the ultimate moral basis; 2) the status of ultimate moral importance applies equally to all human beings; and 3) the generality of obligation: "human beings have ultimate moral importance for all others, not only for their fellow citizens […]."[50] Pogge distinguishes different levels of responsibility: legal cosmopolitanism, global order, moral cosmopolitanism, all humans, institutional cosmopolitanism and responsibility of institutions.

6 MORAL-PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

For Kant, human beings are conceived as autonomous persons capable of making decisions and acting. The formula of humanity of the categorical imperative expresses the obligation of respect for the human dignity of every human being. Respecting other people in their human dignity means being morally obliged to be benevolent towards them. From the point of view of morality, it is not enough merely not to harm people. Morality demands much more than negative duty. Here Kant refers to the duties of love owed to others:[51] to make the ends of others mine and to support other people in the attainment of their self-chosen ends in a non-paternalistic way; to help other people in need and to

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[48] Pogge, *World Poverty* 25.
[49] Pogge, *World Poverty* 25.
[50] Pogge, "Kosmopolitismus" 126.
[51] Cf. Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten* 450; Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* 569–70.

support them vigorously in the attainment of their bliss, insofar as this does not contradict morality. The categorical imperative implies a commandment and a ban. The ban (negative obligation) states that people must never be instrumentalized. The commandment demands the active benevolence to support other people vigorously in their self-chosen goals.

If people are instrumentalized against their will, they are deprived of their very own competence – to determine their own lives. On the other hand, not providing possible and permissible help means that the persons concerned are denied the means that make their self-determination possible at all. Acting morally also implies an increasing awareness of harmful asymmetries between people.[52]

This is eminently significant with regard to the question of active solidarity with people living in hardship and distress.

Herta Nagl-Docekal focuses on one problem with great emphasis, namely that in the current debate on normativity and autonomy a contractually narrowed view which focuses on the dimension of right alone can be diagnosed. This does not mean that the dimension of law should be crossed out. But Kant offers a "remarkable alternative […]. His proposal for the mediation of right and morality starts with morality. For this, it is crucial that individuals are first regarded as 'human beings' and only secondarily as 'citizens'."[53] In terms of self-legislation, it should be noted that the categorical imperative "affects every single one of our actions. This means that an orientation on the moral law also implies obligations that affect our position in relation to the state and politics. From the categorical imperative derives, among a number of other moral obligations, that we should commit ourselves to justice or an increase in justice."[54]

Every person is not only a citizen, but also a human being and therefore has two different criteria for judging normatively relevant actions. In relation to one's own actions, it is important to apply both.[55] The decisive factor is "that law and morality represent different perspectives: While the citizen's focus is on the social order as 'external

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[52] See Nagl-Docekal, "Autonomie" 322.

[53] Nagl-Docekal, *Innere Freiheit* 28.

[54] See Nagl-Docekal, *Innere Freiheit* 29.

[55] Nagl-Docekal, *Innere Freiheit* 29.

freedom', the moral perspective is concerned with one's own motivation in each case, i.e. with 'internal freedom'."[56]

Are people overwhelmed by this moral demand? In accordance with common sense, one often hears that it is enough to act according to the 'golden rule', i.e. not to harm other people. Nagl-Docekal argues against a widespread view of the supererogatory in contemporary philosophical discourse with reference to Kant.[57] She brings into view the limitations of such an understanding of morality. In his theory of virtue, Kant shows that we also have duties of love regarding other people. "As Kant makes plausible, the 'broad duties' are also veritable duties, although all individuals must decide for themselves whom they will help and support and to what extent."[58]

The categorical imperative gives rise to a twofold community obligation: on the one hand, human beings are morally obliged to found a legally structured state, a legally structured community, and in a cosmopolitan dimension, a league of states, and to cooperate in the active increasing of justice. We are morally obliged to actively participate in the enhancement of justice. The moral obligation to enter the realm of law merely highlights the legal-political problem. The state can only regulate the external actions of people. The only way out, as Nagl-Docekal states, to prevent moral aberrations in the modern state is therefore a moral union of all people in a publicly regulated community ('ethical community'). It is important that those people, "who need help or support can articulate their particular needs and concerns without fear and make their voices heard."[59] From a moral perspective, no one is allowed to leave even one person alone in distress and need. From a moral perspective, every human being is called upon to provide help, in the sense of wider obligations.

Why do people still tend to polarize along the lines of hierarchy, exclusion, humiliation, and de-humanization, instead of engaging in solidarity? What can philosophy contribute in developing principles for a gender-just coexistence of people, without polarization, but also without homogenizing differences? To recognize the individual differences, but without polarizing?

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[56] Nagl-Docekal, *Innere Freiheit* 29.
[57] See Nagl-Docekal, „Film als Tugendlehre" 207–10.
[58] Nagl-Docekal, „Film als Tugendlehre" 211.
[59] Nagl-Docekal, „Philosophische Reflexionen" 137.

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Kant, in his quite realistic view of humans, outlines in his *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* the antagonism, the '*unsociable sociability*' of human beings. Kant understands by 'antagonism' the human being's "propensity to individualize (isolate) himself, because he simultaneously encounters in himself the unsociable property of willing to direct everything so as to get his own way, and hence expects resistance everywhere because he knows of himself that he is inclined on his side toward resistance against others."[60]

> [The human being] has an inclination to become *socialized*, […] but he also has a great propensity to *individualize* (isolate) himself. […] Now it is this resistance that awakens all the powers of the human being, brings him to overcome his propensity to indolence, and, driven by ambition, tyranny, and greed, to obtain for himself a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot *stand*, but also cannot *leave alone*.[61]

This tension of 'unsociable sociability' is, however, in a dialectical respect the driving force, so that people form communities and develop legal systems, nationally and internationally. The 'unsociable sociability' is also the reason why it is necessary to found an ethical community. Kant's idea of the ethical community would perhaps be a starting point to develop philosophical principles on how to overcome hierarchizing, humiliating, and dehumanizing polarization along the lines of gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and so on.

7 A PHILOSOPHICAL PROPOSAL FOR OVERCOMING THE MOST GRIEVOUS POVERTY

Jaggar questions the sums of debt that poor countries in the Global South allegedly owe to international credit institutions and to some rich countries in the Global North. Many of the supposed repayment obligations are not morally binding. The neoliberalist global economic form has forced many countries in the Global South to borrow by overexploiting their resources. Prior to the neoliberal economic form, during the colonial era, many countries in the Global South had so much of their wealth and resources seized that they no longer had the capital to invest in new infrastructure. Therefore, they were forced into foreign

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[60] Kant, "Idea" 111.
[61] Kant, "Idea" 111.

debt. "The people who bear the overwhelming burden of paying the Southern debt are the poorest citizens of the poorest countries in the world – especially Southern women. These citizens are held economically responsible for debts undertaken by their governments, often before they were born."[62] Yet it is precisely in the most heavily indebted countries that electorates "were uninformed about the meaning or even existence of foreign loans."[63] "Many of the debtor countries were run by autocratic rulers supported by wealthy First World Countries as a bulwark against popular insurgencies regarded as 'communists,' and they often used borrowed funds on the military repression of their own populations."[64] "Third World rulers in the 1970s and 1980s by wealthy First World states not only did not support economic development but in fact undermined it by subverting democracy."[65] Based on this history, it can be argued that the poor of the Global South have no responsibility to pay back money that they did not ask to borrow, from which they enjoy no benefits, and through which they were even repressed."[66] In any case, from a feminist perspective, the debt calculation system should be critically questioned because it largely disregards the contribution of women from the Global South, leaving women with a far greater burden to bear: "Southern women as a group receive even less food, health care and education than Southern men."[67] This debt calculation does not take into account the legacy of colonialism. "Colonialism drained massive resources and wealth away from the colonies and destroyed their economic self-sufficiency."[68]

Jaggar sees a parallel between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of Southern countries, and she argues that the entire debt imbalance and disparity between North and South can be seen as a construct of a "systematic biased global accounting system." "This system fails to count much of the value contributed to Northern economies by the Global South, especially by Southern women. It simultaneously ignores the economic costs imposed on Southern

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[62] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 128.
[63] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 128.
[64] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 128.
[65] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 128.
[66] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 128–29.
[67] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 129.
[68] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 128.

economies by Northern military activity, industrialization, and patterns of consumption."[69] Jaggar emphasizes the dependence of the Global North on the South – "for Southern resources, Southern labor, Southern markets, and Southern debt service."[70] And, the Southern dependence is not

> [...] caused by any defects in the energy, enterprise, or initiative of Southern people [...]. Instead, the dependence of the global South can be seen as a product by a history of violent exploitation and as maintained by an economic system that keeps Southern countries subordinated to Northern development models while preventing them from pursuing their own, self-initiated visions of development.[71]

We have to take into account the damage caused by slavery and colonialization. With this in mind, the aid payments from the North to the South are less charity and more like reparations.[72] "When the ongoing economic contributions made by the South, especially by Southern women, are taken into account, then so-called aid from the North looks less like a gift and more like [...] remuneration for hitherto uncompensated Southern goods and services."[73] In this context,

> talk about debt 'forgiveness' seems quite inappropriate and even misleading. It now appears to be the North rather than the South that ought to be seeking moral if not economic forgiveness. From this perspective, indeed, even cancellation of the South's alleged debts may stop well short of economic justice. If the global debt were more fairly calculated, it is arguable that huge payments would flow in the other direction, as the global North struggled to repay an overwhelming debt to the global South. [...] Southern debt is not morally due. It is primarily for this nonconsequentialist reason, and only secondarily because of the extreme hardship that debt repayment imposes on the world's most vulnerable people, that I contend that much alleged Southern debt should be formally cancelled.[74]

8 CONCLUSION

This essay sought to provide a brief outline of Alison Jaggar's concept of the feminization of poverty, addressing her critique of the polarization

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[69] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 134.
[70] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 134.
[71] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 134.
[72] See Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 134.
[73] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 134.
[74] Jaggar, "Feminist Critique" 135.

so often prevalent in Western feminist debates between Western women (enlightened, autonomous, etc.) and the average 'Third World woman' (victimized, lacking autonomous decision-making and agency, sexually constrained, uneducated, etc.). Set against the background of Kant's moral philosophy, the question emerges as follows: Why do people still tend to polarize along the lines of hierarchy, exclusion, humiliation, and dehumanization, instead of solidarity? This question leads to Kant's philosophical anthropological theorem of 'unsociable sociability', and the solution to this problem lies in his concept of establishing an 'ethical community', which is a useful connecting point for feminist philosophers to overcome the upsetting injustices arising from polarization. With reference to Thomas Pogge, this paper considered the various levels of responsibility with regard to the problem outlined.

The conclusion consists of Jaggar's crucial proposals for debt relief in the Global South as a philosophical proposal for overcoming the most grievous poverty.

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ROBERT H. BRINKMEYER, JR.

Race and Region: Polarization in *I'll Take My Stand* and *What the Negro Wants*

During the 1930s and 1940s, with the rise of European fascism and then later the outbreak of World War II, many American cultural critics focused their eyes on the South, seeing the region as dangerously anti-democratic, an exception to the rest of America and a region that in some ways, particularly with its system of racial segregation and its ironclad one-party politics, seemed to have more to do with Nazi Germany than with the rest of the United States. The idea that the South was in but not a part of America—that is, was polarized from the rest of America—circulates freely in the period's cultural commentary, as for example in Margaret Mead's analysis of America's democratic national character, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America*. In a footnote, Mead clarifies the parameters of her discussion, essentially writing the South out of her discussion and of the nation: "The generalizations in this book should be regarded as based primarily on the North, Middle West, and West, and should not be called into question because certain elements of Southern culture differ from this, as this is inevitable" (24).

Two very important essay collections from this period, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (1930) and *What the Negro Wants* (1944), draw upon the idea of a polarized nation and specifically the place of the South within—or without—the rest of America. Intriguingly, many of the contributors contextualize their analysis by looking to Europe, both past and present. The differences between the two collections are profound. Almost all of the white conservative writers of *I'll Take My Stand* (who came to be known as the Nashville Agrarians) embraced the conception of a nation polarized by region, and they called for the South to defend its traditional culture and resist what they saw as Northern industrialism and imperialism. Most of the Black intellectuals, on the other hand, while noting regional polarization and the South's difference from the rest of America, nonetheless downplayed a nation polarized by region and, instead, pointed to a nation polarized by systemic racial prejudice that separated whites and Blacks socially, economically, and politically. How the contributors to these collections

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build their arguments and reach their conclusions are what this paper explores, ultimately pointing to a polarized question within the cultural dialogue of the period: What fundamentally defines the American nation—race or region?[1]

As John Crowe Ransom notes in the introductory essay of *I'll Take My Stand*, "Introduction: A Statement of Principles,"[2] the contributors, despite their differences in interests and perspective (some, for instance, espoused an agrarianism centered on the yeoman farmer while others looked toward an aristocratic, plantation model), "all tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; and all as much as agree that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, Agrarian *versus* Industrial" (xxxvii). For Ransom and the other Agrarian contributors, Southern traditionalism was grounded in place, tradition, and history. Ransom observes in his signed essay, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," that the Southerner (and by that he and the other Agrarians always meant the white Southerner),

> identifies himself with a spot of ground, and this ground carries a good deal of meaning; it defines itself for him as nature. He would till it not too hurriedly and not too mechanically to observe in it the contingency and infinitude of nature; and so his life acquires its philosophical and even cosmic consciousness (19-20).

Industrialism, on the other hand, associated with the rest of America and particularly the North, was driven by ruthless pragmatism, unending pursuit of wealth, and round-the-clock mass production, its energies, as Lyle H. Lanier writes in "A Critique of the Philosophy of Progress," directed "toward an endless process of increasing the production and consumption of goods" (148). It is against such a way of life—and the threat it poses to traditional Southern culture—that the Agrarians are taking their stand.

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[1] The choice between race and region, as I will discuss, involved a number of the social and political polarizations discussed by Manfred Prisching in his essay from this volume, including between urban and rural, whites and Blacks, democracy and authoritarianism, localism and nationalism, modern and premodern, and mobility and community.

[2] Although unsigned, the introduction was written by Ransom, who no doubt drew from discussions with and comments by other contributors.

Not surprisingly, the Agrarians often look back to the Old South and the Civil War to locate the origins of the conflict between Southern agrarianism and Northern industrialism. But that gaze back at the same time often involves a look across the ocean to Europe, typically by associating the South with premodern Europe and the rest of America with the Industrialization and the modern industrial state. Ransom and Allen Tate were most forthright in asserting the South's European foundations and its ties to premodern Europe. "The South is unique on this continent for having founded and defended a culture which was according to the European principles of culture," Ransom writes in "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," explaining further:

> I have in mind here the core of unadulterated Europeanism, with its self-sufficient, backward-looking, intensely provincial communities. The human life of English provinces long ago came to terms with nature, fixed its roots somewhere in the spaces between the rocks and in the shade of the trees, founded its comfortable institutions, secured its modest prosperity—and then willed the whole in perpetuity to the generations which should come after, in the ingenuous confidence that it would afford them all the essential human satisfactions (5).

With its European foundations, the Old South—and more generally, Southern traditionalism—created a culture imbued with what Ransom terms in the introductory essay a "genuine humanism" which "was deeply founded in the way of life itself—in its tables, chairs, portraits, festivals, laws, marriage customs" (xliv). Tate goes even further than Ransom, arguing in "Remarks on the Southern Religion" that while New England was interested in the surface niceties of European culture, the South remained largely "ignorant of Europe because it *was* Europe; that is to say, the South had taken root in a native soil. . . . Its position was self-sufficient and self-evident. It was European where the New England position was self-conscious and colonial" (171).

Other contributors look to more recent Europe for modeling and affirming traditionalist principles, focusing on agrarian practice in the face of the rising tide of industrialism. Herman Clarence Nixon in "Whither Southern Economy" finds much to admire in what he sees as the stability of France and the general happiness of its people, asserting that France's population was properly balanced between urban and rural; and he finds even more to admire in Denmark, a country in which, he observes, "the farmer's will prevails in public policy" (196). (Ironically, given the Agrarians' racism, Booker T. Washington had years before

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praised Denmark's social and agricultural policy in *The Man Farthest Down: A Record of Observation and Study in Europe*.) Stark Young, more sympathetic to the landed gentry than to the yeoman farmer, finds the ideals of traditional Southern culture visible in the European nobility, particularly that of Russia, Spain, and France. For Young, as he writes in "Not in Memoriam, But in Defense," "the defining point of Southern culture is mirrored in the provincialism and social graces of the European upper class. "It all comes down to the most practical of all points," he observes, "—what is the end of living? What is the end of living that, regardless of all the progress, optimism, and noise, must be the answer to the civilization of the South?" (358).

Young's words "progress, optimism, and noise" point to the forces at work that he and the other Agrarians see threatening to undo the stability of the traditional South. If the South for the Agrarians represents settled provincial Europe, the North represents the ceaseless movement and expansion that first disrupted Europe and then America. Several of the Agrarians locate the origins of American progressivism in the restless spirit of the continent's early pioneers, seeing industrialism as the pioneering spirit's contemporary manifestation, with its evolutionary endpoint found in Soviet Communism, which the Agrarians equated with the modern industrial state. "It must be insisted that the true Sovietists or Communists—if the term may be used here in the European sense—are the Industrialists themselves," Ransom writes in the introductory essay, adding

> They would have the government set up an economic super-organization, which in turn would become the government. We therefore look upon the Communist menace as a menace indeed, but not as a Red one; because it is simply according to the blind drift of our industrial development to expect in America at last much the same economic system as that imposed by violence upon Russia in 1917 (xli-xlii).

Ransom's words here suggest why several of the Agrarians, ultimately outvoted, wanted to name their manifesto not *I'll Take My Stand* but *Tracts Against Communism*.

As depicted in *I'll Take My Stand*, America is deeply polarized, a nation of competing sections, with particularly the South (and, to a lesser extent, the West), fundamentally at odds with the other sections, and particularly the dominant North, expressed characteristically in a series of oppositions: premodern versus modern, agrarianism versus

industrialism, stability versus restlessness, provincialism versus expansionism, place versus time, conservativism versus progressivism. National polarization is not decried but embraced by the Agrarians—if there is polarization it means that the South is maintaining its culture against the onslaught by industrialism. The Agrarians' great fear is not polarization but homogenization, that industrialism will eventually transform and absorb the traditional South, not only economically but also, more importantly, socially and culturally—or as Herman Clarence Nixon puts it, that industrialism will lead to "a conquest of the spirit" (200). None of the Agrarians were particularly optimistic about the future, but Ransom in "Reconstructed but Unregenerate" held out some hope by suggesting that the South might eventually achieve a place in America like that of Scotland in the United Kingdom—

> a section with a very local and peculiar culture that would, nevertheless, be secure and respected. And Southern traditionalists might take courage from the fact that it was Scottish stubbornness which obtained this position for Scotland; it did not come gratuitously; it was the consequence of an intense sectionalism that fought for a good many years before its fight was won (24).

The Agrarians' turn to Europe to contextualize America's sectional divide, thereby rotating the characteristic Southern cultural perspective from north/south to east/west, was part of their strategy to avoid the matter of Southern racial attitudes and the South's segregated system, issues that were deeply concerning to many Americans, including, of course, Southern Blacks.

Indeed, other than the essay by Robert Penn Warren, who was assigned to write specifically on race (and ended up angering most of the group by calling for expanded economic and educational opportunities for Blacks), the contributors barely mention racial matters, the inferiority of Blacks and the necessity of segregation unstated givens. The only prominent Black cited in *I'll Take My Stand* is Booker T. Washington, whom Warren finds reasonable in his emphasis on agrarian and vocational principles. Slavery is occasionally mentioned, but usually only to point out what the Agrarians argue was its humane practice in the Old South or to discuss the contemporary threat of industrialism in terms of enslaving the South. Clarence Herman Nixon goes so far as to claim that the Southern experience with slavery will help in its fight against industrialism:

> If Southern farmers can be saved from exploitation and serfdom, it is possible for the South, which has had experience with slavery, to subordinate industrial processes to the status of slaves, not masters, and, thus escaping industrialism, to exemplify a cultural emergence from a too acquisitive society" (199-200).

If the contributors to *I'll Take My Stand* endorse sectional conflict while eschewing matters of race and racial polarization, the contributors to *What the Negro Wants* characteristically do just the opposite, foregrounding America's racial polarization while downplaying sectional differences and conflict. Although differing in approach and emphasis, particularly in their proposed solutions to the social and political inequities created by racial codes and prejudice, all the contributors share a fundamental belief: that what Blacks want is to be full participants in American society and its democratic system. Speaking of this unanimity in the volume's preface, Rayford W. Logan writes that contributors of all political stripes

> want Negroes eventually to enjoy the same rights, opportunities and privileges that are vouchsafed to all other Americans and to fulfill all the obligations that are required of all other Americans. Americans who profess to believe in democracy will have to face the dilemma of cooperating in the implementation of these aspirations or of limiting their ideals to white Americans only (vii-viii).

While many white cultural critics of the time, as I noted earlier, viewed race as an exclusively Southern problem, with the South as an anti-democratic wasteland in an enlightened America, the contributors to *What the Negro Wants* are almost uniform in their belief that race is a national and not merely a Southern problem. The first sentence of Rayford W. Logan's lead essay, "The Negro Wants First-Class Citizenship," drives this point home: "The Negro problem in the United States is today a national problem spawned from two hundred forty years of slavery and the northward migration of Negroes incident to two world wars" (1). While contributors repeatedly echo Logan's perspective, at the same time, most do not ignore the South and its legacy of race. Contributors frequently note the virulence of Southern racism while adding that that virulence is endemic across America. Langston Hughes, for instance, after discussing the extremes of Southern racism, comments in "My America" that "any consideration of the current problem of the Negro people in America must concern itself seriously with the question

of what to do about the South," goes on to emphasize racism's national scope: "I live on Manhattan Island," writes Hughes. "For a New Yorker of color, truthfully speaking, the South begins at Newark" (301).

As do the Agrarians, the Black contributors typically contextualize their arguments in an international context, frequently that of Europe and often even more broadly. The outbreak of World War II is the most crucial event in this contextualization, with the war highlighting for many of the contributors the national and international scope of American racism, together with the deep flaws of America's democratic system. Most telling and damning, as numerous contributors note, is the terrible irony that Blacks were being called to fight to restore the Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—in foreign countries while they lacked those very freedoms at home—and not just in the South. "Right here in our own country is one of the great issues of the war," proclaims A. Philip Randolph in "March on Washington Movement Presents Program for the Negro": "SHALL WE HAVE DEMOCRACY FOR ALL OF THE PEOPLE OR FOR SOME OF THE PEOPLE?" (159). Several authors, including Mary Bethune, voice the logic of what came to be known as the "Double V" campaign—victory abroad and victory at home. Others alter that configuration, stressing the necessity of first defeating the Axis powers (because Blacks would suffer worse under Hitler), and then, with victory, of working for justice in the war's aftermath, envisioning a new, radical national and global Reconstruction. Still others focus most prominently on victory at home, a controversial view, of course, during wartime and one that Sterling A. Brown nonetheless finds widespread in Black communities. "Time and time again," notes Brown in his essay "Count Us In," "I heard the anecdote, which spread like a folk tale, of the new sort of hero—the Negro soldier who having taken all he could stand, shed his coat, faced his persecutors and said, 'If I've got to die for democracy, I might as well die for some of it right here and now'" (315).

Circulating throughout *What the Negro Wants* is the conclusion that Hitler's master race ideology exposes a similar if less virulent racist ideology structuring American life, a perspective Gordon B. Hancock voices forthrightly in "Race Relations in the United States: A Summary." "The race integrity ideal of the white man the world over no less than in the United States is bound up with a Master Race complex that has reached its logical expression in Hitlerism," Hancock writes. "One of the indirect benefits that must surely come of Hitlerism is this bringing of

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the Master Race idea into boldest relief" (226). For many of the contributors, the bold relief that Hancock mentions not only highlights the South's master race ideology (as argued by many cultural critics of the time, who viewed the South, but not the rest of the United States, as given to fascist tendencies) but also America's. Evidence of America's fascist underpinnings emerged in plain sight for many of the contributors. "Discrimination in industry, labor unions, education, the Jim Crow pattern for the Army and Navy," Charles H. Wesley writes in "The Negro Has Always Wanted the Four Freedoms," "are based upon fascist racism" (107). Jim Crow is a national, not a regional issue, A. Philip Randolph observes, and "the fight against Jim Crow is the fight against fascism" (155). "Democracy is going to wreck itself if it continues to approach closer and closer to fascist methods in its dealings with Negro citizens," Mary Bethune comments in "Certain Unalienable Rights,"

> — for such methods of oppression spread, affecting other whites, Jews, the foreign born, labor, Mexicans, Catholics, citizens of Oriental ancestry—and, in due time, they boomerang right back at the oppressor. Furthermore, American Negroes are now Democracy's current test for its dealings with the colored peoples of the whole world of whom there are many, many millions—*too many* to be kept indefinitely in the position of passengers in Jim Crow cars (307).

Bethune's comment points to a broad interpretation of World War II taken by several contributors: that World War II was, in the words of A. Philip Randolph,

> a war to maintain the old imperialistic systems. It is a war to continue 'white supremacy,' the theory of *Herrenvolk*, and the subjugation, domination, and exploitation of the peoples of color. It is a war between the imperialism of Fascism and Nazism and the imperialism of monopoly capitalistic democracy (135).

By drawing sharp attention to colonial oppression, World War II offered a rallying point for oppressed people not only in the United States but also across the globe. In their analyses contextualizing the fight for civil rights in a global perspective, many of the contributors present a polarized America in a polarized world, the fate of the former integrally connected to the fate of the latter. Charles H. Wesley, one of the strident supporters of this position, poses these questions:

> When it is said that we are fighting for freedom, the Negro asks, "Whose freedom?" Is it the freedom of a peace to exploit, suppress, exclude, debase and restrict colored peoples in India, China, Africa, Malaya in the usual ways? Is it to be a freedom of racial arrogance, economic hardships, and social differentiation in the post-war era? Will Great Britain and the United States specifically omit from the Four Freedoms their minorities and subject peoples? (111).

Wesley goes on to suggest that the fate of civilization depends on how these questions are answered:

> And now, the colored peoples throughout the world wait for the answer to the question whether or not the struggle of World War II is one of freedom everywhere in the world or of freedom limited only to white people in the world and measured in broken doses to colored peoples. The answer to this question determines, on the one hand, the future status of the Negro, but on the other hand, it may sound the tocsin of another of civilization's advances or the death knell of democratic western civilization (112).

In the context of this paper, Wesley's apocalyptic perspective calls to mind similar ones many of the Agrarians voice in *I'll Take My Stand*, in proclamations that the fate of Western civilization, not just that of the South, was at stake in the war against industrialism. "One wonders if industrialism is the inevitable destiny of Western civilization?" Lyle H. Lanier writes, his gaze stretching far beyond the South. "By 'industrialism' is meant not the machine and industrial technology as such, but the domination of the economic, political, and social order by the notion that the greater part of the nation's energies should be directed toward an endless process of increasing the production and consumption of goods" (148). That the Agrarians frequently look to Europe to contextualize their discussions points to their defense not only of Southern traditionalism but also, more broadly, of the Western tradition.

The apocalyptic tone in both volumes underscores both works' martial spirit and strident call-to-arms rhetoric. If the wartime rhetoric of the Agrarians emphasized the need to put up walls and defend traditional ways, the Black contributors saw their fight as the means to challenge and move beyond entrenched social practices. Both groups of contributors understood that war challenges people to make choices, to interrogate their lives and their nation's ideals and practice. "As a general rule, the horrible impact of war, both economic and military, has a tendency to force individuals, communities, and even nations to re-

examine their past ways of life and to search for new methods and ideas to solve and overcome old problems and prejudices," Willard S. Townsend writes in "On American Problem and a Possible Solution," his contribution to *What the Negro Wants*. "War, for the most part," he adds, "acts to accentuate the need for change and to hasten the process" (163). Indeed, the title *What the Negro Wants* comes from a speech of that title delivered in 1865 by Frederick Douglass, who in it declared, as summarized by Charles H. Wesley, "that the Negro has been a citizen three times in the history of the government, in 1776, 1812, and 1865, and that in time of trouble the Negro was a citizen and in time of peace he was an alien" (96). Wesley and the other contributors to *What the Negro Wants* vowed that the same cycle back would not happen after World War II; they were committed to seeing the war as a catalyst to remake America and more widely the world, putting an end to the polarizing schism of race, making the Four Freedoms universal, applicable not only to Black Americans but to all the world's peoples. Their progressive agenda was at the same time fundamentally an effort of restoration—of restoring American democracy to its origins, making its theoretical foundations real and applicable in the here-and-now.

For the Agrarians, in contrast, their conservative agenda, their war with industrialism, was less an effort of restoration than of preservation (though some of their critics argued that the Agrarians wanted to restore the Old South), an effort to preserve what still survived of traditional Southern—and European—culture in the face of industrialism's onslaught. Their declared war against industrialism—the title of their symposium has martial origins, drawn from the song Dixie, one of the battle anthems of the Confederacy—accentuated not the need for change but the need for resisting change. Proponents of racial segregation, the Agrarians in a larger sense wanted to segregate the South from the rest of the nation, creating a balkanized nation polarized by sectional loyalties. In this vision of polarization, they stood apart from many other regionalist groups of the time, most of whom believed that localism would promote a healthy democracy, with regions embracing their local folkways while also working seamlessly with the other regions, in the end creating a national unity based on difference, a vision that Waldo Frank, in his beautiful term, expressed as a symphonic nation.

The Agrarians' vision of a polarized nation would be challenged by most American cultural critics of the 1930s and 1940s, particularly after the onset of the Great Depression and then of World War II, events that

demanded national unity rather than regional responses and directives. The contributors of *What the Negro Wants*, though rarely specifically naming the Agrarians, were nonetheless responding to issues central to them, most particularly their support of segregation and sectionalism and their denial of universal human rights. One comment by W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, in his essay "My Evolving Program for Negro Freedom," seems directly aimed at the segregationist vision endorsed, even if often unstated directly, by the Agrarians:

> Modern thought and experience have tended to convince mankind that the evils of caste discrimination against the depressed elements of the mass are greater and more dangerous to progress than the affront to natural tastes and the recoil from unpleasant contacts involved in the just sharing of public conveniences with all citizens. This conviction is the meaning of America, and it has wide and increasing success in incorporating Irish, and German peasants, Slavic laborers and even Negro slaves into a new, virile and progressive American Culture (67).

Taken together, *I'll Take My Stand* and *What the Negro Wants*, profoundly different in message but often broadly similar in rhetorical strategy, stand poised at two extremes, presenting two competing visions of American nationalism: one based on region and the other on race. Many years later, in an era of increasing social and political discord and polarization, legacies of these opposed ideologies continue to circulate within the American imaginary and to shape the American political landscape.

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TATIANA KONRAD

Air Pollution, COVID-19 Pandemic, and Climate Change: Environmental Racism and Polarization in the United States in the Era of Crisis

Climate change is a *global* issue that does not know any borders. It and environmental degradation in general pose a threat to every individual, every nation, and the planet as a whole. The unity that would be expected within nations as well as among nations in times of crisis is, paradoxically, not there. Climate change is one of the issues that is conspicuously polarizing in many countries, including the United States. There are several ways to probe the issue of climate and polarization in the U.S. This essay uses race as a lens through which one can understand how the climate crisis and environmental degradation are perceived there. It argues that racial injustice is the direct cause of environmental inequality in the U.S. Denying people of color access to environmental and climate justice, racism continues to segregate the nation as well as to divide the country into healthy regions, and unhealthy ones where toxic waste and pollution accumulate. The essay explores the intricate relationship between environmental (in)justice and racial (in)justice and claims that recognizing and fighting against environmental racism is one way to stop polarization on climate change in the U.S.

The title of this essay includes several important terms that I will use to analyze environmental racism: air pollution, the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change. While I will often refer to climate change and through it examine the ongoing oppression of people of color, with a particular focus on the U.S., I will use air pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic as specific examples to illustrate how environmental racism operates. Whereas climate change does not deliberately target race or specific territories (although the Global South has been experiencing climate change much stronger than the Global North, due to, among other things, racist ideologies that were born in the colonial era and many of which remain in place today), air pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic have been conceptualized as regional phenomena, with certain territories being recognized as more polluted and certain nations having higher rates of infection than others. Moreover, these are the phenomena that

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dramatically intersect with race. As I will demonstrate in this essay, the fact that, in the U.S., air pollution and the coronavirus disproportionately impact people of color reflects racist politics that remain dominant in the era of environmental and health crises. As I investigate racism through air pollution, the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change, I seek to emphasize how wrong it is to sustain racist ideologies, according to which some individuals, groups of people, nations, and territories are perceived as disposable bodies/objects, whereas others are given a chance to survive. This kind of thinking is dangerous not only because it promotes and intensifies the ongoing racial oppression and discrimination but also because it fails to recognize that today the *us*-versus-*them* narrative is detrimental, for all these issues – air pollution, the coronavirus, and climate change – are *global* problems that, in the end, (will) impact every one of us.

In this essay, I review polarization from the perspectives of American studies, race studies, and the environmental humanities. Polarization is a complex phenomenon that can manifest itself in a variety of ways (see also Manfred Prisching's elaborate analysis of the concept of polarization). To put it simply, polarization occurs when there is extreme opposition in the views of people from different sociocultural, political, and/or economic groups. This diametrical opposition inevitably leads to consequences that will be detrimental for either one of the groups, or, importantly, for both groups. Disagreements regarding climate change and environmental degradation more generally, especially when viewed through the lens of race, are harmful to both groups that find themselves at opposite poles.

In the twenty-first-century United States, there has not been significant attention to the problem of climate change on the governmental level until the election of Barack Obama (Dunlap, McCright, and Yarosh 4). The administration of his predecessor, George W. Bush, is considered "the most anti-environmental administration" in the history of the U.S., for it failed to recognize the danger of anthropogenic climate change and, as a result, did nothing to minimize its effects (4). In 2008, when Obama was elected, more Americans in particular became concerned with climate change – a problem that became impossible to ignore. Media coverage was one of the venues that made climate change and environmental degradation visible. For example, Al Gore's influential environmental documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* was released in 2006, and the Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) supported the main claims made in the film in 2007, emphasizing that it is indeed humanity that has caused climate change (4). How important these messages were can be seen in the fact that both Gore and the IPCC were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; in addition, Gore's film received the Academy Award for Best Documentary Film (4).

From the very beginning, Obama's administration, however, faced considerable difficulties due to what scholars term "partisan polarization," initiated by the Republicans in order to weaken Obama's presidency (Dunlap, McCright, and Yarosh 5). The consequences of such polarization were dramatic: not only was it difficult for the Obama administration to proactively work to minimize the effects of climate change, but the very problem of climate change was skillfully served up to Americans as a minor issue that did not deserve attention and financial investment (6). This is perhaps one important moment that is worth remembering when trying to understand the growing polarization on the climate change issue in the United States.

The second is, of course, the politics of climate change denial during the Trump presidency. To be more precise, Donald Trump had engaged in various populist discussions regarding climate change prior to becoming the 45th President of the United States. Thus, in 2012, he announced in his Twitter account that "[t]he concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive" (n.p.). Well into his presidency, in 2019, Trump forbade using "climate change in press releases" (qtd. in Waldman n.p.). Via his populist positioning, Trump largely impeded progress in issues related to the environment and to climate change in particular, and generated dangerous myths about the real-life issue that poses a threat to the existence of humans, nonhumans, and the world as we know it. Trump also attempted to undermine the agency of science and scientists, making claims that put scientific research on climate change in doubt. His politics of denialism have literally sparked "the war on science" (Mann and Toles 69). It is fair to note, though, that Trump was not the first to begin "the war on science," neither has it always been exclusively related to climate change; but such a war has doubtlessly informed climate change discourses in the (post-)Trump era.

When looking at the population and their role in climate change debates in the United States, however, it is not only political identity (i.e. an individual's association with this or that party) but also race that

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becomes conspicuous. Statistics show that people of color are much more "concerned" about climate change than white people (Ballew, et al. n.p.). Moreover, representatives of this minority group tend to be less polarized on climate change (Ballew, et al. n.p., Schuldt and Pearson 495). It is interesting that people of color more rarely call themselves environmentalists compared to white people, despite their clearly pro-environmental views (Schuldt and Pearson 495). Deborah Lynn Guber notes that climate change has gone beyond the boundaries of the science-only question and has indeed become largely politicized (94). I would add to this that climate change has also become racialized. With a much stronger support of Black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC), it has turned into one of the largest concerns of the non-white population, both in the United States and worldwide.

One of the major reasons why climate change has never led to sufficient global action is because its effect on the planet is not imminent and, thus, we cannot immediately comprehend the transformations that occur due to a changing climate. Naomi Klein provides a good visual metaphor for climate change and its speed: "Climate change is slow, and we are fast. When you are racing through a rural landscape on a bullet train, it looks as if everything you are passing is standing still: people, tractors, cars on country roads. They aren't, of course. They are moving, but at a speed so slow compared with the train that they appear static" (qtd. in Morton 25). Rising sea levels, transformations of regions into deserts or flooding of other areas, species extinctions, destruction of ecosystems, these are some of the effects of climate change that we cannot perceive immediately. For this reason, climate change is frequently imagined as a "distant problem" rather than a "personal threat" (Dunlap, McCright, and Yarosh 11). And this, in many cases, becomes a decisive factor in the climate change politics of every individual.

The United States belongs to the list of countries where "climate science skepticism" is very high (Lejano and Nero 83). In addition to that, or, perhaps, as a result of that, climate change has become one of the most controversial political problems in the country. When asked what issues they expected the president's administration to address after the 2020 election, Americans responded as follows: "[C]onservative Republicans put global warming last out of 29 issues. Liberal Democrats placed the issue third, behind only environmental protection and

healthcare" (Milman n.p.). Climate change has polarized the nation even more than such issues as abortion and guns (n.p.).

When it comes to climate change, the polarization of Americans can be grasped on two levels: first, political identity, and, second, racial belonging. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us how deeply racism remains embedded in political, social, and institutional structures in the United States. Peggy Shepard, a co-founder of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, argues:

> The disproportionate rates of [COVID-19] infection, hospitalisation and deaths are linked to lingering and persistent health, social, economic and environmental inequities facing black Americans, conditions which are rooted in oppression, discrimination, medical apartheid and structural racism […] and which today have created a perfect storm. (qtd. in Lakhani and Watts n.p.)

Robert Bullard, distinguished professor of urban planning and environmental policy at Texas Southern University and co-chair of the National Black Environmental Justice Network, makes a similar claim: "Racism is built into America's DNA, and since 1619, black Americans have had to endure this violent and oppressive system […] COVID-19 exposed our nation's racial divide" (qtd. in Lakhani and Watts n.p.). Yet the coronavirus pandemic is only one of the many crises that humanity has been facing or might face in the future, depending on the choices we make now. The climate crisis reveals a similar type of inequality when it comes to those who most suffer the effects of environmental degradation and a changing climate. In the United States, African Americans and Native Americans are dying from COVID-19 at higher rates than white people, which explicitly shows racial inequality in the country (Thomas and Haynes n.p.). Similar to the ongoing pandemic, however, people of color experience environmental inequality more than white people, which, again, reflects the racial dynamics of these crises in the United States.

Environmental racism has a long history in the United Sates as a form of racial discrimination that manifests itself in unequal, environmentally poor or even hazardous conditions in which people of color find themselves. Frequently a consequence of other forms of racism, environmental racism not only violates the human right to live safely but also leads to the gradual or even immediate deterioration of the health of those who inhabit environmentally precarious areas. Environmental

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racism has been a mechanism of oppression "at least since the 19th century when newly freed Black men were funneled into convict leasing programs and were forced to work in coal mines and supply the Confederacy with coal" (Allen n.p.). The distribution of polluting industries in the United States reveals that African Americans continue to face environmental racism, with Black neighborhoods being much more polluted than other ones (n.p.). It is important to note, however, that class is another category on the basis of which environmental oppression can be exercised (Taylor 33). Among multiple health issues that result from direct exposure to pollution are reproductive problems experienced by Black women, from stillbirth or premature birth to increased maternal mortality (Allen n.p., Thomas and Haynes n.p.). One reason why so many people of color might die from the coronavirus is directly connected to the quality of air that they breathe: air pollution can cause respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, which, in turn, might be why some patients in highly polluted areas have severe coronavirus symptoms and a longer recovery, or even die, unable to suppress the virus (Lakhani and Watts n.p.).

One of the reasons, therefore, why Black people are actively calling for climate action and emphasizing the deadly effects that further environmental degradation might have is that many of them directly experience environmental racism. In post-slavery U.S., Black Americans have been segregated to areas where pollution causes health deterioration and premature death. Scholars emphasize that climate change only further worsens life in such environmentally hazardous places: "Climate change intensifies the health impacts of pollution in these communities. For example, higher air temperatures due to global warming traps [sic] air pollutants close to the ground, further reducing air quality and exacerbating existing health issues" (Thomas and Haynes n.p.). It is vital to minimize the effects of climate change and environmental degradation in order to help those communities that are already affected and save the human and nonhuman world in the long run. In order to eradicate environmental racism, ecosystems inhabited by humans should be equally healthy. To save the planet, humanity must do away with its colonialist attitude toward nature and preserve the health of those areas that are not inhabited by humans, too.

Scholars also emphasize that many of the locations where high concentrations of Black people live are much more prone to be impacted by natural catastrophes that happen due to climate change, including

floods and hurricanes (Thomas and Haynes n.p.). In addition to that, these people do not receive sufficient financial support from the government, as illustrated, for example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (n.p.). This is not, however, an exclusively American problem but rather a manifestation of the still powerful colonialist ideologies around the world. In postcolonial nations that already suffer the effects of climate change, race remains conspicuously visible in environmental matters.

On Twitter, the oceanographer and founder of the Ocean Collective, Ayana Johnson, emphasized the following: "To the white people who care about maintaining a habitable planet, I need you to be actively anti-racist. I need you to understand that our inequality crisis is intertwined with the climate crisis. If we don't work on both, we will succeed at neither" (qtd. in Lakhani and Watts n.p.). Eradicating racism is a crucial step toward saving the planet. Perceiving every inhabitant – human and nonhuman alike – as equally deserving to live in a healthy environment is decisive in how we view the world around us and, ultimately, how we treat it. The media have done much to draw attention away from various kinds of environmental inequalities that people of color experience (Seymour 36). But it has also done enough to illustrate the dramatic, life-threatening conditions in which certain individuals, groups of people, and nonhumans find themselves. To deny climate change means to choose the gradual death of the most vulnerable, unprotected, and abused representatives of the human and nonhuman populations. Denialism works against the future. A polarized society, where some people act to save the planet while others refuse even to acknowledge the problem, may offer some hope. The absence of polarization, meaning the eradication of denialism and establishment of pro-environmental interests, would offer us a future.

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5. PROTEST, POLARIZATIONS, AND POLITICS

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Make Political Discourse Rational Again. Language and Polarization

1 INTRODUCTION

Prisching (this volume) describes 'polarization' as "a noticeable drifting apart of relevant phenomena, variables, indicators, social groups or countries; predominantly with the consequence that system constellations or system stability are endangered and conflicts are looming." One of the areas in which polerization can occur is that of politics, a prime example being the increasing polarization between liberal and conservative powers in the USA. It can be argued that, in the words of Prisching, "political forces [… have been] moving further and further away from each other and the political opponent [has] become[…] the disrespected 'enemy'." In the USA, this situation has resulted in one of the most "serious threat[s] to democracy," when Trump supporters attacked the Capitol Building on January 6th.

The present paper explores the question to what extent language use contributes to this polarization in US political discourse. More specifically, it is argued that the loss of rationality one of the major contributing factors. In an interview with Paul Rosenberg, cognitive linguist George Lakoff draws a bleak picture in this respect:

> That what makes us people is we're all rational animals, and therefore we have the same reason, because we're all human beings. So it follows from that: If you tell people the facts, that will lead them to the right conclusion. And, it doesn't work. The facts mean nothing […].(Rosenberg n. pag.)

In light of Pizzagate, Q-Anon, fake news, alternative facts and the so-called stolen or rigged election with the ensuing Capitol Attacks we might find it hard to disagree with that statement. However, the fact that this statement is from November 2014 indicates that there must be another aspect in which Lakoff deems facts as irrelevant in political discourse.

Based on (cognitive-)linguistic research-), the paper will explore in which sense rationality can be regarded as overrated in discourse in general and in political discourse in particular: it is "difficult […] to bridge polarized positions […] through argument" (Prisching, this volume). It will show that our self-image as "rational animals" is not as accurate as we would like it to be. In addition, it will show how typical language use exhibits features such as conceptual metaphors, presuppositions or frames, that can make it easy to undermine rational thinking. The paper will provide numerous examples from authentic political discourse, illustrating how these features are exploited, thus contributing to further "polarization between political parties or movements" (Prisching, this volume). Finally, the paper will make suggestions as to how we can help to make political discourse rational again.

2 ZOON LOGIKON – THE RATIONAL ANIMAL?

The quote from George Lakoff above makes reference to the idea that has figured prominently since at least roughly 2400 years ago, when Aristotle pointed to the special position that humans have in the animal kingdom:

> Now, other animals live chiefly a life of nature; and in very few things according to custom; but man lives according to reason also, which he alone is endowed with; wherefore he ought to make all these accord with each other; for if men followed reason, and were persuaded that it was best to obey her, they would act in many respects contrary to nature and custom. [Aristotle 1332b]

For Aristotle this special status derives primarily from the ability to use language:

> The gift of speech also evidently proves that man is a more social animal than the bees, or any of the herding cattle: for nature, as we say, does nothing in vain, and man is the only animal who enjoys it. Voice indeed, as being the token of pleasure and pain, is imparted to others also, and thus much their nature is capable of, to perceive pleasure and pain, and to impart these sensations to others; but it is by speech that we are enabled to express what is useful for us, and what is hurtful, and of course what is just and what is unjust: […] [Aristotle 1253a]

Given this centrality of the language faculty it is particularly interesting that human reasoning capabilities are particularly vulnerable to 'attacks' through language. Numerous examples can be found. For instance, Loftus reports on an experiment in which she showed two groups of subjects a video of a car crash and asked them one of the following two questions (among others):

(1a)   Did you see **the** broken headlight?
(1b)   Did you see **a** broken headlight?

She found that "witnesses who received questions with *the* were much more likely to report having seen something that had not really appeared in the film" (191), i.e. 15% as opposed to 7%. In another experiment, Loftus showed her subjects films of traffic accidents and asked to estimate the speed of the cars involved in that accident. Again, a difference in wording, "About how fast were the cars going when they hit/smashed into each other" led to a difference in estimated speed, namely 34.0 mph and 40.8 mph, respectively (191-92).

While these experiments provide insights into the extent to which our assumed memory of events can be influenced by language, the following experiment shows how the choice of words alone apparently can lead to different conceptualisations of the same event and, as a consequence, to different outcomes of the decision-making process. Tversky and Kahnemann (453) described the scenario below to two groups of participants:

(2)   Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease, A and B, have been proposed.

The consequences of the two programs mentioned in this scenario were described as follows:

(2a)   If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved. If Program B is adopted, there is 1/3 probability that 600 people will be saved, and 2/3 probability that no people will be saved.

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(2b)   If Program A is adopted, 400 people will die. If Program B is adopted, there is 1/3 probability that no people will die, and 2/3 probability that 600 will die.

The group that was given (2a) chose program A in 72% of all cases and program B in 28% of all cases. If the possible consequences of the two programs were described as shown in (2b), subjects decided for A in 22% of the cases but chose B in 78%. If the decision for A or B had only been based on logical reasoning, there should not be any difference, as both, (2a) and (2b) describe exactly the same situation. However, the wording, i.e. phrasing the consequences in terms of people being saved or people dying, seems to have a drastic impact on the decision-making process.

While the previous experiments focused on the influence of lexical items, a study by Langer et al. (1978) shows that the mere presence of linguistic structures can have an impact, too. Their experiment involved a queue in front of the photocopy machine and a researcher who wanted to jump the queue. The experimental conditions were varied along two dimensions. Firstly, the extent of the favour, namely either 5 or 20 pages. Secondly, asking for the favour either involved no excuse at all ("Excuse me, I have 5 (20) pages. May I use the Xerox machine?"; 637), an excuse with placebic information ("…, because I have to make copies?"; 637) and an excuse with real information ("…, because I'm in a rush?"; 637). Interestingly, if the favour was only small (5 pages) it did not make a difference whether a placebic or a real reason was offered: 93% and 94%, respectively, allowed the researcher to jump the queue, as opposed to 60% if no reason was given. In case of the 20 pages, the situation was reversed. If a real reason was provided, the participants would allow the researcher to go ahead in 42% of the cases, as opposed to only 24% if no or placebic information was given. This suggests that to some extent at least grammatical structures (here: a causal subordinate clause) are processed automatically: as long as the sender 'provides' a reason (marked by the causal clause structure) we assume that this reason is valid. It is only in case of high costs to the addressee that full semantic processing takes place.

Not only do these experiments show that language does have an influence on our reasoning, they also make clear that this influence can be located in different subsystems of the language system, ranging from grammatical meaning (*a* vs. *the*), to lexical meaning (*hit* vs. *smashed into* and people *dying* vs. people *surviving*) and grammatical structures. All

in all, there is ample evidence of the susceptibility of our reasoning to influence through linguistic means. Or, in the words of Nathaniel Hawthorne: "Words – […] how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them." The next section will explore different ways of 'combining words' in more detail.

3 HOW TO COMBINE WORDS

Although the linguistic means of manipulation explored in the following are quite diverse, they are similar with regard to their influence on our mental processes. In some cases we are completely defenceless against them. In others the influence is subliminal and it takes conscious and deliberate effort to become aware of this influence before we can oppose it, which also require effort. Either way, human reasoning is very vulnerable to 'attacks' through language.

3.1 DON'T THINK OF AN ELEPHANT!

The heading above is the title of a book by cognitive linguist George Lakoff, who chose this title because it is a task that he sets all of his first-year students: "Don't think of an elephant!" Of course, the obvious outcome of this little experiment is that students cannot help but think of elephants when they are told not to. This result shows a simple truth about human cognition: we cannot negate X without thinking X. If I am asked not to think about X, I cannot help but create or activate a mental representation of X. If I am told that Y is not true, I cannot help but create or activate a mental representation of Y. If I am asked whether Z is true, I cannot help but create or activate a mental representation of Z.

This feature of human cognition is exploited in the 'Just asking questions' technique, as exemplified in the following example taken from Tucker Carlson. In it the host of the show muses about possible reasons for the cancellation of traffic connections as a consequence of Joe Biden's strategy on COVID-19:

(3)   We can tell you that the shutdown of Southwest Airlines over the weekend was a direct consequence – it was a reaction to Joe Biden's vaccine mandates. […] At least two Amtrak train routes in the Northeast were cancelled over the weekend, and so is a regularly scheduled car ferry in Washington state […].

> **Were these also protests against the Biden shot mandates?**
> We can't say for certain. It certainly wouldn't surprise us.
> (Carlson 8:36-9:14; my emphasis)

Questions like the one in bold print are often not just mere questions, even though that is what Carlson wants his audience to believe: "We're allowed to ask questions and demand answers. That's why we live here. That's your birthright." (Carlson, *Questions* n. pag.) As pointed out above, any *yes-no* question will lead to a mental representation of the proposition it contains. In the example above, this is a representation of the idea that the mentioned train route and car ferry cancellations are in fact protests against Biden's vaccination strategy. This way, a question can serve to spread disinformation as the journalist Nick Harper from the *Minnesota Reformer* points out:

> "Just asking questions," to the uninformed observer, might seem serious, informed, or based in common sense. But in reality, the questioner simulates curiosity in order to plant seeds of doubt in the minds of others. The questioner provides an opportunity for uninformed listeners to be radicalized in pursuit of an ulterior motive. The conversation becomes a Trojan horse for spreading false information, rather than a method for fighting it. (Harper n. pag.)

Another problem, according to Harper, is that the burden of truth is shifted away from the person asking the question. It appears, "he or she can be persuaded if you would merely answer the question." (n. pag.) However, while posing his or her 'innocent' question, s/he actually rejects the truth implicitly. In addition, Harper convincingly argues that

> the biggest reason that "just asking questions" can be so insidious is because it can go under the radar unchallenged. By smuggling the propaganda into the minds of observers in an open hearing, people who are "just asking questions" are wolves in sheep's clothing. By not explicitly endorsing the disinformation, they can deny affiliation with it while still spreading it. (Harper n. pag.)

The fact that content "can go under the radar unchallenged," as Harper says, is also relevant for the exploitation of presuppositions in manipulative language use, as we will see in the next section.

3.2 MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN – PRESUPPOSITIONS

Human communication not only consists of the propositions that are actually expressed but, to some degree, depends on the recipient's ability to infer additional meaning on top of the meaning that has been put into words. Presupposition is one feature of human languages that leads to these kinds of inference. The term can be defined as "[…] the phenomenon whereby speakers mark linguistically information as being taken for granted, rather than being part of the main propositional content of a speech act" (Beaver et al. *n. pag.*). The standard example provided in linguistic circles is the sentence *The King of France is bald*. Irrespective of the (un-)truth of this statement, it presupposes the existence of a king in France. Similarly, Trump's claim in (4) presupposes the existence of forgotten men and women. (5) presupposes that many Obama democrats voted for Trump. Trump's campaign slogan (example (6)) presupposes and, hence, leads the recipients to infer that America once must have been great. Otherwise, it could not be made great again.

(4) **The forgotten men and women of our country** will be forgotten no longer. (Trump n. pag.)
(5) The Democrats are most angry that **so many Obama Democrats voted for me**. (Trump, Twitter, 01/15/2017)
(6) Make America great **again** (Trump Campaign Slogan)

Presuppositions may be nested within one another, as example (7) shows.

(7) Do you notice **the Fake News Mainstream Media never likes covering the great and record setting economic news** […]. (Trump, Twitter, 01/16/2018)
(6a) the Fake News Mainstream Media never likes covering the great and record setting economic news
(6b) there are great and record setting economic news
(6c) the Fake News Mainstream Media exists

While it is usually difficult to identify presupposed material in everyday conversations anyway (see below), embedded presuppositions like the ones above are even less likely to be challenged. The first presupposition

in (6) is what can be noticed (at least according to Trump), namely that "the Fake News Mainstream Media never likes covering the great and record setting economic news". Embedded here is another presupposition, i.e. that the mainstream media never likes covering a particular kind of news (6a). Obviously (or maybe not that obviously), this presupposition contains another one, namely the existence of "great and record setting economic news" (6b). Finally, the tweet presupposes that something like "Fake News Mainstream Media" does exist (6c).

Even if presuppositions are not as craftily nested one inside the other as in example (6), the recipient is usually not likely to challenge the content of presuppositions. Presuppositions are very common in everyday communication, as it would be very tiresome if every bit of information was spelt out explicitly. A simple statement like *I had to take my dog to the vet* contains at least one presupposition, i.e. that the speaker owns a dog. There would usually be no need to state that explicitly, as it is not the main message of the statement. Instead, the speaker encodes this proposition in a presupposition, marking it as taken for granted. From the perspective of the addressees there is no need to challenge this proposition and they accept it. Similarly to the "Just asking a question" technique, content encoded in presuppositions is likely to go under the radar and sneak in, as it were.

Another important feature of presuppositions is that they remain under negation. The sentence *The King of France is not bald* still presupposes that France has a king. Similarly, if statements containing a presupposition are challenged or negated, the presupposition will still make its way into the recipient's mind. For instance, media outlets that were rather critical of Donald Trump and his presidency still supported his concept of forgotten men and women when challenging his positions and policies.

(8)   Reporting on Trump's 'forgotten men and women' (King n. pag.)

(9)   With his tax plan, Trump forgets 'the forgotten men and women' (Benen n. pag.)

(10) Under Trump 'the forgotten men and women' are still forgotten (Sargent n. pag.)

This feature of presuppositions makes them particularly useful tools to keep a concept active in the mind of the public, even though arguments related to this concept might be challenged or criticised.

3.3 A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS – THE POWER OF METAPHORS

Traditionally, metaphors are regarded as a feature of poetic language. Cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson challenge this view in their seminal book *Metaphors we live by* from 1981. They claim:

> Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. […] We have found […] that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. (Lakoff and Johnson, 3)

A particularly striking example of the relevance of metaphor in everyday life is discussed in Lakoff's 2002 book *Moral Politics*. He starts off by exploring puzzles for liberals and conservatives:

> It appears to liberals that 'pro-life' conservatives *do* want to prevent the death of those fetuses whose mothers *do not* want them (through stopping abortion), but *do not* want to prevent the deaths of fetuses whose mothers *do* want them (through providing adequate prenatal care programs). (Lakoff, *Politics* 25)

Correspondingly, conservatives find it difficult to understand the positions of liberals, such as the following:

> Liberals support welfare and education proposals to aid children, yet they sanction the murder of children by supporting the practice of abortion. (Lakoff, *Politics* 26)

Without going into too much detail, Lakoff suggests that at the heart of such inabilities to understand the position of the other lies the metaphor THE NATION IS A FAMILY and two very different approaches to parenting, namely 'Nurturant Parents' on the side of the liberals and 'Strict Fatherhood' on the side of the conservatives. Both concepts of

parenting lead to different ideas of how a family, and hence, how a nation should be run.

> […] it is natural for liberals to see it as the function of the government to help people in need and hence to support social programs, while it is equally natural for conservatives to see the function of the government as requiring citizens to be self-disciplined and self-reliant and, therefore, to help themselves. (Lakoff, *Politics* 35-36)

Just like the nurturant-parent approach to parenting focuses on supporting their children, so should the state support its citizens, hence the liberals' support of welfare and education programs. In contrast to that, strict-fatherhood parenting emphasises the importance of teaching self-discipline and self-reliance in an inherently bad and dangerous world. From this perspective, an unwanted child will often be seen as the result of a lack of self-discipline, the provision of prenatal care to mothers in need works against the idea of self-reliance. Just like children that have to suffer the consequences if they do not heed their father's advice, so should the citizens.

In the context of the economy, sea-related metaphors play a central role. One of these is THE ECONOMY IS THE SEA with a sub-metaphor ECONOMIC GROWTH IS THE TIDE THAT RISES. A famous instantiation of this metaphor is found in John F. Kennedy's famous *Remarks in Heber Springs, Arkansas, at the Dedication of Greers Ferry Dam* from October 2, 1963.

(11)   As this State's income rises, so does the income of Michigan. As the income of Michigan rises, so does the income of the United States. A rising tide lifts all the boats and as Arkansas becomes more prosperous so does the United States and as this section declines so does the United States. (Kennedy n. pag.)

In this metaphor, obviously, the sea is the economy and the boats are the firms and corporations but also every household and citizen in the United States. It follows that a growing economy will lead to an increase in welfare for every entity that is part of the nation. Conversely, a declining economy will result in a decrease in everyone's living standards.

Recent years have seen many people challenging this view. Gene Sperling writes in the *Washington Post* on December 18, 2005:

(12)   This formulation has taken on new meaning today. The tide of the American economy is still rising, but it is lifting fewer boats. Faced with international competition, technological advances and the outsourcing of jobs, managers and college graduates, as well as workers, are increasingly worried that their boats may be capsized by the fierce waves of globalization, even if U.S. overall growth and productivity are rising […]. In other words, the rising tide will lift some boats, but others will run aground. (Sperling n. pag.)

Similarly, New Zealand's current Attorney-General, David Parker, states in an interview in 2014: "We believe that a rising tide of economic growth should lift all boats, not just the super yachts" (Small n. pag.).

If we take Lakoff and Johnson's idea that our thinking "is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (3) seriously, the rising-tide metaphor makes it difficult to conceive of increasing living standards (the lifting of the boats) without previous economic growth (the rising tide). It could be argued that this is what we find with Sperling's and Parker's critique of the present situation. The problem is that not all of the boats are lifted to the same extent or that boats may capsize in the stormy sea. The underlying conceptualisation the metaphor provides remains valid – it is through economic growth that living standards are increased. Governments have to make sure that everyone can partake in the blessings that result from economic growth, but economic growth is inherently good. The more growth, the better. Obviously, this does not mean that we cannot think about problems relating to economic growth but the use of this particular conceptual guardrail suggests particular interpretations of economic processes. Take, for instance, as a different way to conceptualise economy the metaphor THE ECONOMY IS A MOTOR. Here, too, more means better, a faster motor is a better motor. However, the metaphor provides more room for criticism regarding unlimited growth. Just like a motor may get too hot and collapse, so may an economy that is too focused on growth. So, even though metaphors do not determine our thinking, they provide a background against which some interpretations of a given event come to mind more readily than others. This way they play a powerful role in the shaping of public discourses.

The importance of metaphors becomes particularly apparent in discussions about the suitability of particular metaphors. An example is an article by Keith Hennessey, former White House staff under George W. Bush., who argues that "[t]he pie metaphor for the economy is misleading and damaging" (n. pag.). One point of criticism concerns the question of how to divide the pie.

(13)   because dividing a pie is zero-sum, the flawed metaphor assumes that if one person's slice grows larger, it comes at the expense of others. The inapt metaphor and its accompanying flawed logic lead one to conclude that when rich people have a larger share of a bigger economy, they do so 'at the expense of' others lower on the income scale. Using this metaphor, 'the rich are capturing/taking a larger share of economic growth,' presumably from everyone else. (Hennessey n. pag.)

The pie metaphor lends itself particularly easily to a particular view on justice, namely that everyone's slice should be the same size. Most humans can relate to the feeling of injustice that arises from the fact that 'goods' are not equally distributed. For most of us this is an early experience dating back to our childhood days when our siblings or friends got more cake or sweets than we got. This experience is powerful, even to such an extent that it is difficult to conceive of a fair dividing of the pie in any other way than equal-sized slices: to each woman/man the same!

Hennessey (n. pag.) does not concern himself with a 'correct' or 'more fitting' interpretation of the pie metaphor. Instead, he suggests THE ECONOMY IS A FLOWER GARDEN as "a better metaphor for looking at economic growth and income distribution".

(14)   A flower's growth depends on the individual characteristics of that type of flower and that particular seed. It also depends on common factors shared with other flowers in the same garden (e.g., the local climate, pests, the skill and diligence of the gardener) as well as its particular advantages relative to other flowers (better sunlight, soil, and water in this part of the garden than that part over there). Although there is some interdependence, the rapid growth of a sunflower at one end of the garden largely does not come at the expense of a struggling

tulip at the other end. The sunflower may have advantages the tulip does not, even unfair ones, but the fast-growing sunflower is not "taking growth" from the slow-growing tulip. (Hennessey n. pag.)

In this view, it is only natural for some flowers to grow faster than others. Consequently, some flowers might take up more resources than others but this does not necessarily mean that they take resources away from others. A gardener (i.e. the policymaker) should not strive for equal growth of all flowers, indeed this would even be unnatural. Instead, the gardener has "to maximize the growth potential of the entire economy/garden and to maximize the opportunities for those individuals/flowers struggling to succeed/grow" (Hennessey n. pag.). Justice of distribution looks different if the economy is a garden and might be best described as 'to each woman/man their own'. If the economy is conceptualized this way, a worsening of "the distribution of income and wealth" (Pirsching, this volume) can be regarded as a mere consequence of the nature of the 'economic garden.'

3.4 THE POWER OF FRAMING

The metaphors explored above can be understood as a special instance of framing. Frames, according to Lakoff (*Elephant*) are "mental structures that shape the way we see the world". He suggests that frames have a physical correlate in our neural circuitry, which leads him to a claim that "facts mean nothing …" (Rosenberg n. pag.):

> It is a common folk theory of progressives that 'The facts will set you free!' If only you can get all the facts out there in the public eye, then every rational person will reach the right conclusion. It is a vain hope. Human brains just don't work that way. Framing matters. (Lakoff, *War* n. pag.)

This assessment seems pretty bleak, particularly in the context of rationality and political discourse. Lakoff, in this context, talks of "[t]he [t]rap of Enlightenment Reason" (*Environment* p. 72).

> The old view claimed that reason is conscious, unemotional, logical, abstract, universal, and imagined concepts and language as able to fit the world directly. All of that is false. Real reason is: mostly unconscious (98%); requires emotion;

> uses the ''logic'' of frames, metaphors, and narratives; is physical (in brain circuitry); and varies considerably, as frames vary. (Lakoff, *Environment* p. 72)

A necessary consequence seems to be that political discourse should dispense with rational arguments. And indeed, we can find numerous examples that support this conclusion.

President Donald Trump came under heavy criticism from retired Admiral William H. McRaven in an opinion piece in the *Washington Post*. McRaven writes:

> President Trump is actively working to undermine every major institution in this country. He has planted the seeds of doubt in the minds of many Americans that our institutions aren't functioning properly. […] And if Americans stop believing in the system of institutions, then what is left but chaos and who can bring order out of chaos: only Trump. It is the theme of every autocrat who ever seized power or tried to hold onto it. (McRaven n. pag.)

In an interview, Fox News' Chris Wallace (W) confronted Trump (T) with McRaven's accusations, leading to the following exchange:

(15) W: Bill McRaven, retired Admiral, Navy SEAL, 37 years, former head of US special

       operations

   T: **Hillary Clinton fan**

   W: … special operations …

   T: Excuse me, **Hillary Clinton fan**

   W: … who led the operations, commanded the operations that took down Saddam

       Hussein, and that killed Osama bin Laden, says that your sentiment is the greatest

       threat to democracy in his life time.

   T: Okay, he's a **Hillary Clinton backer**, erm, and an **Obama backer** … and … frankly

       …

   W: … He's a Navy SEAL …

   T: wouldn't it have been nice if we got Osama bin Laden a lot sooner than that …

       (njnewsfeed 21:08-21:40)

As we can see, Trump shows no interest in entering into a rational debate about McRaven's person and his claims. Instead, he focuses on reframing McRaven. While Chris Wallace lists the many achievements of the admiral, Donald Trump is keen on shifting the focus to his (possible) political affiliation: a person so deep in the Democratic camp, obviously, would want to criticise Trump. Framings of this kind, of course, furthers the fragmentation of US society into "two major groups that are hostile to each other" (Prisching, this volume).

Another example of framing can be seen in the public 'discussion' of the wall to Mexico that Trump has promised to build and renew. To Trump the wall is "part of border security. You can't have very good border security without the wall."

(16) [...] we need a WALL! In 2018, 1.7 million pounds of narcotics seized, 17,000 adults arrested with criminal records, and 6000 gang members, including MS-13, apprehended. A big Human Trafficking problem. (Donald Trump, Twitter, 01/05/2019)

(17) The damage done to our Country from a badly broken Border - Drugs, Crime and so much that is bad - is far greater than a Shutdown […] (Donald Trump, Twitter, 01/13/2019)

(18) […] without a Wall it all doesn't work. Our Country has a chance to greatly reduce Crime, Human Trafficking, Gangs and Drugs. […] (Donald Trump, Twitter, 01/24/2019)

As can be seen from examples (16) to (18) Trump backs this framing up with claims about the threats that Central and South America pose. Rational political discourse would concern itself with these claims, e.g. the amount of narcotics, the number of gang members, etc. Kamala Harris chose a different approach on the ABC talkshow *The View*. The show was recorded at day 18 of the shutdown of the Trump administration, which, in part, was due to Trump's attempts to enforce funding for the wall as part of the US-American budget for 2019. In this context, co-host Joy Behar asks Harris: "What if he's effective? What if he actually convinces people of these lies?", to which Harris replies the following:

(19) […] there's plenty of empirical evidence that that [sic] there are statements that are being made that are just simply not the truth and are frankly […] propaganda and we have to call it

what it is. […] We have enough problems, one doesn't need to create a problem, one does not need to create a problem. This issue is about a vanity project for this president. (ABCtheView 0:55-1:26)

As can be seen, Harris does not engage in a rational argument against Trump's wall project. Harris avoids the "trap of Enlightenment Reason" and instead resorts to reframing the wall project as a project that merely serves one man's vanity. This reframing appears to be deliberate, as Harris uses the same or similar wording in other interviews:

(20) […] the President's vanity project (CNN, *Vanity* 1:08-1:09)
(21) […] this President's medieval vanity project called a wall (CNN, *Medieval* 4:16-4:20)

Another framing that has a lot of traction in US-American political and economic discourse is that of a trickle-down-economy. The basic concept goes back at least to 1896 when William Jennings Bryan in his *Cross of Gold Speech* distinguished two main approaches to government and the economy.

> There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, that their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class that rests upon it. (Bryan n. pag.)

Former Secretary of Economy under Bill Clinton, Robert Reich (*Deregulation* n. pag.), calls into question the validity of the frame of trickle-down-economy, "where the gains go to the top, and nothing trickles down except risks and losses". More specifically, he challenges dichotomies such as free market vs. government or deregulation vs. regulation. The so-called "free market" according to Reich is the product of government since any civilization is "defined by rules; rules create markets, and governments create the rules" (Reich, *Capitalism,* "The Prevailing View"). It follows from this that true deregulation cannot exist, as some set of rules is always in place. For example,

> '[d]eregulation' of the financial sector in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s […] could more appropriately be described as 'reregulation.' It did not

> mean less government. It meant a different set of rules, initially allowing Wall Street to speculate on a wide assortment of risky but lucrative bets and permitting banks to push mortgages onto people who couldn't afford them. (Reich, *Capitalism*, "The Prevailing View")

Following the crash in 2008, this kind of regulated market was substituted by another set of rules, "subsidiz[ing the largest banks] so they would not go under [… and] enforc[ing] other rules that caused millions of people to lose their homes" (Reich, *Capitalism*, "The Prevailing View"). There is always some set of rules that regulate the "free market".

According to Reich, the frame of the free market is a useful myth for those in power, as it leads us to accept things as they are. It keeps us from trying to identify and understand the rules by which the market is actually governed and from trying to find out who benefits from these rules. Reframing the market in the sense described by him, according to framing theory, opens the minds and discourses of the public to ask those questions and to look for answers.

4 RATIONAL THINKING, LANGUAGE AND POLARISATION

Part of human identity vis-à-vis the rest of the animal kingdom is grounded in the fact that humans are at least capable of rational thinking and usually make use of rational thinking. Section 2 of this paper presented research which, to some extent at least, challenges this view. In particular, it was shown how words and structures can have a major influence on the decision making process of humans. Section 3 discussed features of human language with regard to their potential for hostage taking or undermining rational thinking. Firstly, I described how humans cannot but help create a mental representation of something they read and hear. "Do not think of an elephant!" will make us think of elephants, and we cannot help it. When Richard Nixon said "I am not a crook!", people could not help but establish a connection between their mental representation of Nixon and their mental representation of the concept 'crook'. Secondly, presuppositions are pervasive in everyday language use and we are not likely to challenge information presented as presupposed. Just the opposite, we are 'trained' to trust content that is presented as presupposed. Similarly, metaphors are a part of ordinary language use and our conceptual system is largely based on metaphors.

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So, we think in terms of metaphors and may not always (or rather mostly) be aware of it and, hence, not always aware of the way in which a currently active metaphor interferes with our rational thinking. Finally, frames are usually subconscious, more important than facts and can override these.

   To make things worse, the undermining of rational thinking is furthered through modern communication technology. Firstly, the mere amount and frequency of language input makes it difficult to give all of this input the attention that is necessary to prevent a subconscious processing. As a natural consequence, even more extreme, more polarising input can go under the radar and find a mental representation in our minds. It is true, not every piece of information will go unchallenged, but the likelihood of this happening is increased. "The logic of algorithms" (Prisching, this volume) further contributes to this process since users are provided with more and more extreme versions of their own views. Instead of enjoying unlimited access to relevant information, modern media have led people to interact in bubbles where they "reinforce their opinions and dogmatic atmospheres are built up" (Prisching, this volume). Of course, we are not defenseless victims, we can (and do) go beyond what language input offers, but to do this. we constantly have to be aware of the concepts that are actualised in our mind, we constantly have to identify and challenge presupposed content, we constantly have to be aware of the "metaphors we live by" and of the ways in which they channel our cognitive processes, and we constantly have to identify the frames that frame our thinking and actively look for alternative frames. All of this can be done, but all of this takes awareness and mental effort. And it is here that polarisation can find its way in.
   At the same time that modern technology undermines rational debate, politicians are becoming more and more familiar with the ways in which language can be used for manipulative purposes and they are getting better at doing it. Effective communication, according to Lakoff (*Environment*), depends on activating the desired frames. If such frames do not exist, they have to be created carefully, and this takes perseverance and time (even up to years and decades). A recent example is the narrative of the stolen election. As is well known, Trump talked about rigged elections and thereby creating/activating the concept a lot earlier than election night 2021. According to Spring (n. pag.), Trump started the narrative at least as early as April 2020 when he tweeted "GET RID

OF BALLOT HARVESTING, IT IS RAMPANT WITH FRAUD. THE USA MUST HAVE VOTER I.D., THE ONLY WAY TO GET AN HONEST COUNT!" However, this narrative does not exist in empty space, it thrives within the more general idea of the 'deep state'. The term had been around in US-American political discourse before, but it gained traction in 2016, with the publication of Mike Lofgren's monograph *The Deep State*. While the term is used by the author to refer to "America's governing classes [that] are selling their souls to entrenched interest", the term, according to Abramson, has recently been narrowed down in conservative and Trump-supporting circles: "[t]o allies of Trump in the conservative media and on Capitol Hill, it is an organized resistance within the government, working to subvert his presidency". (Abramson n. pag.) The understanding of the term is particularly prominent in right-leaning and right-wing media outlets. One example is Breitbart, where Robert Barnes claims in 2017 that "Obama went to bed with the deep state" (n. pag.). He goes on (note the presupposition in the first sentence):

> Is it any surprise then that Obama could possibly use the deep state to undermine the election, spy on his political adversaries […] and likely eavesdrop on Trump […] What is unique is Obama trying to use the deep state, in collusion with the media, to create a de facto shadow government. (Barnes n. pag.)

Another right-wing icon, the late Rush Limbaugh (n. pag.), claims in November 2019: "Whatever you want to call it, the deep state, the elites, the Washington establishment, there's no question that it exists."

In the words of Arlie Russel Hochschild the deep state frame is a 'deep story,' i.e. it "is what you feel about a highly salient situation that's very important to you." (Tippett n. pag.) It is this framing, this deep story which creates more than fertile soil for the seed of voter fraud, rigged and stolen elections to take root in. Interestingly, both Lakoff and Hochschild emphasise the irrelevance of facts: The former claims that "[w]hen the facts don't fit the frames, the frames are kept and the facts ignored". Similarly, Hochschild maintains: "There are facts. I believe in the reality of facts. But the deep story — and again, we all have a deep story — it repels certain facts that don't fit it, and it invites other facts that do." (Tippett n. pag.) Admittedly, these seem to be strong claims to some of us. However, it appears that January 6, 2021 has shown the accuracy of these observations in a very drastic way, as does the fact that

the majority of Republicans still believe that Donald Trump won the 2020 election (Lane & Theodoridis, n. pag.).

5 CONCLUSION – THE WALK UPHILL

In light of these disheartening insights into the influence of language on our rational thinking, what can we do to make political discourse, and indeed public discourse as a whole, rational again? The discussion above has shown that the undermining influence of language on our rational thinking is potentially all-pervasive. Whenever we communicate we run the risk that propositions may sneak into our minds under the radar. However, the discussion has shown that we are not completely defenceless: we can become aware of mental representations triggered by language, we can challenge presupposed content, we can identify metaphors beyond the obvious ones in literary works and we can dissect frames and look behind the scenes that they try to create for us. The good news is that all of this can be done; the bad news is that it needs to be done by each and everyone of us every day. This takes continuous and sustained effort and, because of this, can be likened to a walk uphill. The hill is not a steep one, but each step takes a little more effort than if we were walking on level grounds.

If we widen the perspective from ourselves to the people around us and to the many conversations at home, at the work place, in the gym etc. we need to draw attention to potentially (though not necessarily deliberately) manipulating language. We need to challenge presuppositions, we need to discuss underlying metaphors and frames. For those of us who work as teachers in schools or universities, there is the opportunity to educate young people about the many ways in which language can influence our thinking. This concerns the way that we interact with our students in our courses and seminars. Too often, at least that is my impression, we as teachers are too afraid to really analyse, dissect and criticise comments our students make, lest they feel discouraged to contribute in our seminars. Where if not with us should they learn what it means to think critically and to argue logically and soundly? On a related note, wherever possible in our university curricula we should introduce courses in critical thinking. In Germany, for instance, more than half of all young people start a study program of one kind or another. If all of these were taught the basics of critical thinking,

if all of these were made aware of how language can undermine rational thinking, a lot would be won. In addition, the topic should be part of any teacher training program and it should be made part of the curriculums in our schools.

All of these measures would contribute to making political discourse rational again and then we might stand a fair chance that something like January 6th will never happen again in any modern democracy.

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Polarizing Science under Trump[1]

If there is one thing we know for sure about the recent pandemic that continues to hold the world in its grip, it is this: never before in American history was there a larger and more appreciative national audience for science skepticism. And never before had science skepticism such a deadly impact. The blatant disregard for science shown from the highest quarters of policymaking, the missed opportunities and garbled messaging, the sidelining of public health experts that allowed non-credentialed pundits to dominate the discussions might not have killed anyone outright. But it prevented an organized and coordinated approach to a public health emergency that, at the time of this writing, has cost the lives of more than one million Americans. And it sent the American economy into a tailspin.

"2020 was the year that American science denial became lethal," wrote Michael Hiltzik in the *Los Angeles Times*. One would be hard put to decide when the great denial began or when it reached its sad zenith. When then-President Trump touted antimalarial pills as a panacea for COVID-19? When he suggested Americans try bleach or sunlight to get rid of the coronavirus? When US senators, despite studies that had shown the opposite was true, discredited the efficacy of masks? Disinformation campaigns, initiated and fueled by propaganda efforts from the top, did not disappoint their managers.[2] A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation and a joint project by Harvard, Northeastern, and Rutgers universities revealed that nearly eight in ten Americans believe, or are unsure about, at least one common false statement about COVID or vaccines. These false statements contained such gems as: "The COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to cause infertility"; "You can get COVID-19 from the vaccine"; "The COVID-19 vaccines contain a microchip";

[1] For a shorter version of the ideas advanced here, see my "Recycling Science Denial," https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/12/10/recycling-science-denial/. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[2] Hiltzik, "2020 Was the Year That American Science Denial Became Lethal," https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2020-12-13/anti-science-gop-lethal. Accessed June 12, 2022.

"The COVID-19 vaccines can change your DNA."[3] None of this will come as much of a surprise to those who still remember the infamous 2012 Gallup poll, which found that 46% of Americans deny the evolutionary origins of human beings.[4] Or, for that matter, to those who recall that, even under Obama, the Republican-led House Science committee held more hearings on space aliens than on climate change.[5]

And things got worse quickly after Trump's election. Former vice president Al Gore, in the immediate aftermath, tried to calm Americans down by calling on climate activists to work with Trump ("there is no time to despair").[6] But political reality soon confirmed everyone's fears. Apart from a few areas of growth (Trump and Pence did indulge their Star Trek fantasies by continuing to sponsor space exploration),[7] science took some of the worst hits. A year after Trump took office, a high percentage of scientists in federal agencies—according to a survey conducted by the Union of Concerned Scientists—reported grievances, ranging from direct interference and censorship to limited resources.[8]

[3] Hamel, Lopes, Kirzinger, Spark, Stokes, and Brodie, "KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor: Media and Misinformation,"
https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-COVID-19/poll-finding/kff-COVID-19-vaccine-monitor-media-and-misinformation/. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[4] Newport, "In U.S., 46% Hold Creationist View of Human Origins,"
https://news.gallup.com/poll/155003/hold-creationist-view-human-origins.aspx. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[5] Roller and National Journal, "The House Science Committee Has Held More Hearings on Aliens Than on Climate Change," *The Atlantic*,
https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/05/the-house-science-committee-has-held-more-hearings-on-aliens-than-on-climate-change/455556/. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[6] Millman, "Al Gore: Climate Change Threat Leaves 'No Time to Despair' Over Trump Victory,"
https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/05/al-gore-climate-change-threat-leaves-no-time-to-despair-over-trump-victory. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[7] Macias, "Trump Just Revealed the Logo for the Space Force, and It Looks Like the 'Star Trek' Symbol,"
https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/24/trump-space-force-logo-looks-like-star-trek-starfleet-symbol.html. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[8] Union of Concerned Scientists, "Science Under Trump: Voices of Scientists across 16 Federal Agencies,
https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/science-under-trump#.W3LM18IpA6Q, accessed June 12, 2022. See also the comprehensive report released by the

More than 1,600 government scientists are estimated to have quit in the first two years of Trump's presidency alone.[9]

Trumpism has never left us, and Trump himself, having survived all efforts to hold him legally accountable, might yet be back, which raises the stakes for all current attempts to make science central to policy discussions. A variety of recent books have addressed the question of how one should argue with someone who believes that human beings were created the way they are today or that vaccines will make you infertile. Science, most recent commentators agree, bears part of the blame for the current situation. The most common recommendation is the obvious one: "mo' better science," and there is only one way this can be achieved. We must get science out into the communities, project a better image of how scientific insights are won, teach schoolchildren not just scientific facts but also how science works.[10] "We need to do a better job of communicating the rational basis of science," urges philosopher Marc Lange, pointing out that "whether an American believes that climate change is taking place is highly correlated with that American's party affiliation."[11] And Naomi Oreskes, the leading scholar of science denial in the US, believes that scientists need to stress more forcefully that science is not something that happens apart from the rest of society. "A portrait of science as a communal activity of experts" will be, she thinks, capable of inspiring trust again, especially when it emphasizes the importance of the social vetting of scientific claims: "We can ask: Is there a consensus? Is the community undertaking the studies diverse, both demographically and intellectually? Have they considered the issue from a variety of perspectives? Have they been open to diverse methodological approaches?"[12] In his recent contribution to the debate, *The Constitution*

Union of Concerned Scientists, *Science in the Trump Era; Damage Done, Lessons Learned, and a Path to Progress*, https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/state-science-trump-era. Accessed June 12, 2022.

[9] Gowen, Eilperin, Guarino, and Ba Tran, "Science Ranks Grow Thin in Trump Administration," https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/science-ranks-grow-thin-in-trump-administration/2020/01/23/5d22b522-3172-11ea-a053-dc6d944ba776_story.html. Accessed June 12, 2022.

[10] See, for example, Sinatra and Hofer, *Science Denial*.

[11] Lange, "What Would Reasons for Trusting Science Be?" 181-90; 191.

[12] Oreskes, "Afterword" 245-55; 246, 250.

of Knowledge: In Defense of Truth, Jonathan Rauch, too, sees the solution to the rampant incapacity of many Americans to distinguish fact from fiction in the establishment of a network of "truth-seekers," a collective of people, scientists and science allies, who investigate the world and compare notes with each other. "It takes a group to stop a group."[13]

That idea of science as a network involving different kinds of—as we would now say—"stakeholders" is nothing new. In *Silent Spring* (1962) Rachel Carson also advocated for such a community of truth-seekers, which she felt should include all of us, non-scientists as well as scientists. Her target were the scientists, not the science deniers. "This is an era of specialists," she lamented. The specialist—and one would think she chose the masculine pronoun advisedly—"sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits." The solution: ask questions. Challenge the specialists. "We urgently need an end to…. false assurances." The goal: "full possession of the facts."[14]

Ironically, Carson's plea itself has been the subject of a persistent disinformation campaign, too, culminating in the often-repeated claim that she killed millions of little children in Africa by getting DDT banned.[15] For the record, she did not ask for such a ban, and that ban never ever completely happened anyway. Here is what she wrote: "It is not my contention that chemical insecticides must never be used. I do contend that we have put poisonous and biologically potent chemicals indiscriminately into the hands of persons largely or wholly ignorant of their potentials for harm." Note Carson's brilliance in associating experts with ignorance, planting the seeds of doubt in the minds of her readers.[16]

I am deeply sympathetic to attempts to revive community participation in scientific work, and I share Carson's sense that scientists might not be blameless for the problem we face today. But good communication and skill in relating to larger audiences does not equal good science, as I learned in my own work on the Swiss-American biologist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), one of the first and most important popularizers of science and a hero to many, including Henry David

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[13] Rauch, *Constitution of Knowledge* 55, 242.

[14] Carson, *Silent Spring* 13.

[15] Swartz, "Rachel Carson, Mass Murderer?"
https://fair.org/home/rachel-carson-mass-murderer/. Accessed June 12, 2022.

[16] Carson, *Silent Spring* 12.

Thoreau. Agassiz used his position and influence as a professor in Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School to peddle deeply retrograde ideas to the public, including an early vision of a segregationist post-Civil War America, which he shared in a series of letters to Lincoln's Freedmen Inquiry Commission.[17] Let us face it: in the current situation, will those who regularly confuse fact and fiction, who are convinced that vaccines come equipped with spyware or that the coronavirus was deliberately sprung upon us by the Chinese, be receptive to, and have their beliefs swayed, by "mo' better science"? Could the infamous self-declared shaman who, adorned with a horned fur hat and brandishing a spear, yelled his thanks to President Trump from within the Capitol he had just illegally entered be persuaded to join in a network of truth-seekers? One fears not. Past assessments of the reading competence of American adults, as well as of their ability to process even simple health information, such as what is found on an ordinary medicine bottle, are dispiriting. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), half of adult Americans cannot master a book written at the eighth-grade level.[18]

But I think the problem is a larger one and that the nature of science polarization in the U.S. has been misunderstood. By which I do not mean that science should not hurry and get its act together and do a better job of speaking to the public—or that the public, in turn, should not strive to be more informed about science. But the polarization that has affected the status of science in American society is not between science on the one hand and ignorance on the other. And the antidote to science denial is not mo' better science.

In fact, science denial, gone mainstream under Trump, is not about science at all. Rather, its ideological basis may be found in Steve Bannon's famous claim that the way to win against the Left—by which he really means the media—was to (pardon the profanity) "flood the zone with shit," shit that is not immediately recognizable as shit, except to

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[17] See Irmscher, *Louis Agassiz*.

[18] "Fast Facts: Adult Literacy," National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=69, accessed June 12, 2022; Strauss," Hiding in Plain Sight: The Adult Literacy Crisis," https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/11/01/hiding-in-plain-sight-the-adult-literacy-crisis/, accessed June 12, 2022.

those who produce it, since it is delivered in settings and contexts that make people think of it as "not-shit." [19]

And shit was being produced when, during a national press briefing, the sitting American president described sunlight as a cure for the coronavirus. Ostensibly, he was referring to work being done by his Department of Homeland Security. "The whole concept of the light, the way it kills it in one minute, that's pretty powerful," Trump said and then raised the possibility of hitting a human body with, and I quote his original, incoherent statement, "a tremendous — whether it's ultraviolet or just very powerful light." Even Trump's own acting undersecretary for science and technology in the Department of Homeland Security who was present (not a scientist, incidentally) began to fidget and mumbled that none of this had been peer-reviewed and that "it would be irresponsible for us to say that we feel the summer will totally kill the virus." But Trump was not dissuaded: "I think you said that hasn't been checked but you're going to test it. And then I said supposing you brought the light inside of the body, which you could do either through the skin or in some other way, and I think you said you were going to test that, too. Sounds interesting." Note how Trump is adopting the language of scientific experiment: hit the body with light, see what happens, "test" it (twice). He also invokes one of the hallmarks of scientific investigation, openness, by calling the whole endeavor "interesting."[20]

This is nonsense, of course. But Trump is no fool. His antics at the press conference are a dumbed-down version of a more complex game denialists have been playing for years and then learned to perfect under Trump. That game has become an especially handy tool now that we have a president who is officially "pro-science" (a term that has gained a new, sad popularity, as if scientific truth depended on individual approval). Look at a recent article, "In Defense of Misinformation," by

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[19] Iling, "'Flood the Zone with Shit': How Misinformation Overwhelmed Our Democracy,"
https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/1/16/20991816/impeachment-trial-trump-bannon-misinformation. Accessed June 12, 2022. See also Rauch, *Constitution* 163.
[20] Ehley, "Trump Promotes Theory Suggesting Sunlight Can Kill Coronavirus,"
https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/23/trump-coronavirus-sunlight-205969. Accessed June 12, 2022.

Brandon Purdy, published in the conservative *City Journal*, which alleges that science—especially when used by health authorities to justify public health measures such as the wearing of masks—has become ideological and authoritarian. The author, according to his byline, is a polymath, holding degrees in philosophy, mathematics, the mathematical behavioral sciences, and data sciences. An abundantly credentialed scientist himself, he blames the media for a perceived decline of scientific culture.[21]

Purdy's prime example: Senator Rand Paul, who was temporarily banned from YouTube for recommending against the use of "cloth masks,"[22] since there was no scientific evidence that they worked. Purdy then goes on to complain that others were not banned when they called ivermectin, which enjoys some currency on the right as a miracle cure for COVID, a "horse dewormer." But this is a false analogy based on a falsehood. In the video in question, Rand Paul did not limit his critique to "cloth masks," as Purdy claims, but referred to masks in general, which the best evidence shows do help reduce the spread. And ivermectin is in fact a horse dewormer, though it is used on humans, too (it treats parasites, not viruses). Investigating all this stuff—researching Rand's video, looking at tweets about ivermectin etc.—means that you are immersing yourself precisely in the "shit" Bannon mentions, distracting yourself from more important things. Bannon would be delighted.

At the end of his piece, Purdy hastens to assure us that, of course, *nothing* should be banned—he is no authoritarian and of course he believes that everything should always be freely available. And so the essay ends with a perfectly acceptable statement, one that, collective truth-seekers that we are, we cannot but agree with. And as we agree, we might just forget that this final display of reason appears here in the service of legitimizing shit. (I do not think it is a coincidence that the online version of Purdy's essay features a Brown person holding up an

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[21] Purdy, "In Defense of 'Misinformation,'"
https://www.city-journal.org/in-defense-of-misinformation-restrictions-of-scientific-free-speech. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[22] Victor, "YouTube Suspends Rand Paul for a Week Over a Video Disputing the Effectiveness of Masks,"
https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/11/business/youtube-rand-paul-covid-masks.html. Accessed June 12, 2022.

informational brochure about misinformation, the current Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy).

So what do we do with anti-science that presents itself like science, that looks and quacks like science yet is not science? Purdy is at pains to represent the "science deniers" (not his term but mine) as underdogs. They are not the polarizers; rather, they are the ones being polarized. But that is far from true. Science deniers publish books that sell well, command large fees when they lecture, and enjoy powerful institutional support. Here is a recent example, Steven Koonin's bestselling *Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters*. Note the chummy subtitle. Koonin is a trained physicist, a former chief scientist for BP, who subsequently served for two years as Under Secretary for Science under Obama, a detail that is displayed prominently in advertising for *Unsettled* and the talks Koonin has given to promote the book. Koonin invariably represents himself not as a climate skeptic, but as a "dissenter" who admits that carbon dioxide has a "slight warming effect and that humans bear some responsibility" for the planet's current predicament.[23] This essay is not the place to engage with Koonin's claims and methods in detail except to say that they involve parsing and disaggregating a large number of data, though the conclusion of *Unsettled* might be taken as representative of the book's overall purpose, which is to show that "the impact of human influences on the climate is too uncertain" and too small to justify the measures the world would need to take to prevent climate change:

> I would wait until the science becomes more settled – that is, until the climate's response to human influences is better determined or, failing that, until a values consensus emerges or zero-emissions technologies become more feasible – before embarking on a program to tax or regulate greenhouse gas emissions out of existence or to capture and store massive amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.[24]

Here it is again, the science denier's bid to be perceived as the voice of reason. Note how Koonin personalizes his recommendation ("I would wait…"), deliberately presenting himself as a fully vested member of the

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[23] Cashill, "Will Obama Deny the 'Obama Scientist' at Glasgow Summit?", https://spectator.org/will-obama-deny-the-obama-scientist-at-glasgow-summit/. Accessed June 12, 2022.
[24] Koonin, *Unsettled* 254.

collective of truth-seekers, in which dissenting opinions play a key role on the path toward "consensus." What Koonin does not say—though as a physicist he is perfectly aware of this—is that things in science are never ever completely settled. Scientists simply become less and less uncertain or "unsettled" about scientific propositions as more conclusive evidence becomes available. All consensus is temporary—what we work with is a growing body of evidence that points into one direction rather than a number of other directions.

That is one of the main arguments made in the exhaustive point-by-point refutation of *Unsettled* offered by the Indiana University physicists Steve Vigdor and Tim Londergan on their blog "Debunking Science Denial." They describe Koonin's method as cherry-picking, an attempt to separate out and disassociate developments (climate data and impacts) that, taken together, would seem to point to anthropogenic climate change. The confluence of all these correlations does not provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt that human burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of serious global warming and climate consequences. But together with the still imperfect global climate models, they do provide a preponderance of evidence supporting serious, though still quantitatively uncertain, human influence on Earth's climate. And "proof beyond a reasonable doubt" is not a standard we can afford to apply in the formulation of public policy when the potential consequences of waiting until there is quantitative precision are as serious as they are from warming continuing throughout this century.[25]

Note the carefully calibrated language in Londergan's and Vigdor's response: "still imperfect," "preponderance of evidence," "still quantitatively uncertain," "continuing throughout." Employing the language of process, Londergan and Vigdor expose the irony underlying a book whose title is *Unsettled*: despite his assertions to the contrary, Koonin, expecting finality where there will only be provisional truths, is not a friend of open inquiry.[26]

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[25] Londergan and Vigdor, "Debunked? A review of Steven Koonin's book *Unsettled*?,"
https://debunkingdenial.com/debunked-a-review-of-steven-koonins-book-unsettled/. Accessed June 12, 2022.

[26] Londergan and Vigdor characterize the question mark in Koonin's title (prominently displayed in the book's cover) as a "ruse, intended perhaps to convey that each reader can decide for himself/herself, on the basis of what

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The hidden subtext of Koonin's book—which was published by a boutique press in Texas and did not undergo peer review—is fully dragged out in a *Washington Post* op-ed about his work written by Mitch Daniels, the former Republican governor of Indiana and current president of Purdue University. Daniels had invited Koonin for a lecture at Purdue and faced backlash from scientists both at his own university and elsewhere. His op-ed is instructive. Daniels, who is not a scientist but a lawyer, openly admits that the substance of Koonin's book is not his concern: "his contrarian views might be completely wrong." Although masked, superficially, as disinterested concern about the rule of scientific orthodoxy, Daniel's commentary is a blatant piece of propaganda. While he does not list a single, original contribution to science Koonin has made or an original hypothesis he has advanced, Daniels represents Koonin as a kind of new Galileo, a brave fighter against mainstream academic science, which is "anti-intellectual" and "dogmatic," the way the Catholic church was in Galileo's day.[27] The links he provides are mostly bogus or, to use Bannon's term, "shit." For example, he guides those looking for a "detailed" summary of Koonin's book not to a review published in a creditable venue but to another op-ed by the former Rumsfeld speechwriter and American Enterprise Institute fellow Marc Thiessen, who, like Daniels, has no scientific training.[28] The only surprising thing about Daniels's op-ed is that Daniels is not even trying extremely hard to hide his agenda.

So whom does this "flooding the zone with shit" benefit? Corporations and politicians, and frequently both at the same time. Sixty years ago, Rachel Carson was as clear-sighted about this part as she was about many other things, when—referring not to science denialists but to a science unconcerned about human survival—she talked about the

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Koonin believes is his balanced and fair-minded presentation, whether the science of human-caused climate change is, in fact, so unsettled as to delay any government choices about mitigation policy."

[27] Daniels, "This Climate Change Contrarian Gives Us an Important Reminder about Science in General,"
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/10/12/steven-koonin-climate-change-theory-reminder-science/. Accessed June 12, 2022.

[28] Thiessen, "An Obama Scientist Debunks the Climate Doom-Mongers,"
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/05/14/an-obama-scientist-debunks-climate-doom-mongers/. Accessed June 12, 2022.

desire "to make a dollar at every cost."[29] This is not my topic here, but it is well known that the tobacco industry successfully withheld, for five decades, information confirmed by its own scientists on the cancer risks associated with smoking, creating a perfect model for the fossil industry, whose campaign to cast doubt on scientific analyses of the climate crisis is ongoing.[30] We also know that the centrist Democrat who went to great lengths to defang or erase much of the climate provisions in Biden's recent budget has personally profited, to the tune of millions of dollars, from his ties to the fossil industry.[31]

My task here, however, was a more limited one: to challenge the idea of science polarization as a binary opposition between science and not-science or bad science, as a rift that could perhaps be bridged by renewed efforts to bring good science, in more effective ways, to those who reject it. I do agree with Naomi Oreskes that we must continue to think of, and aggressively advertise, science as knowledge that is being produced and constantly revised by a diverse collective of truth-seekers. But we also need to be aware that the science denialists have long learned how to borrow this rhetoric and make it their own. Their assault on science still relies on familiar propaganda tools—ad hominem attacks (with Tony Fauci often serving as the whipping-boy) and cherry-picking (Koonin's *Unsettled*), and the fallout from these attacks does trickle down to the MAGA crowd, where the results, stripped of any rhetorical sophistication, become particularly noxious. But such more identifiable strategies are now conspicuously framed by something else: science denialists masquerading as science *allies*, insisting that all they want is an open debate (recall Trump's comment that thinking of sunlight as a cure is "interesting" and must be "tested"), insisting, too, that they are not the polarizers, that polarization is in fact being done to them, as they are doing what scientists should have been doing all along—bringing science to the people. It is a battle not over ideas and substance but for power and profit, with science serving, for the denialist side at least, as little more than a pretext. A 2021 report published in *Nature Scientific*

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[29] Carson, *Silent Spring* 13.

[30] That story is told, in copious detail, in Oreskes and Conway's now classic *Merchants of Doubt.*

[31] Flavelle and Tate, "How Joe Manchin Aided Coal, and Earned Millions," https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/27/climate/manchin-coal-climate-conflicts.html. Accessed June 12, 2022.

Reports, based on the analysis of a large corpus of claims made by climate contrarians, found that dismantling the scientific consensus as such is "going out of fashion" and is giving way to attacks on the integrity of the scientists themselves. In a way, the science deniers have become "scientist deniers."[32] As I have argued here, we need to take a next step beyond critiquing the content of such attacks and instead look at the *form* they take—how a fake version of scientific discourse is employed to discredit the work of credible science. Therein lies, in my view, the real and imminent danger of science denialism or scientist denialism, which might very well be the only thing used by its proponents that is fully, and infinitely, recyclable.

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[32] Coan, Boussalis, Cook et al. "Computer-Assisted Classification of Contrarian Claims about Climate Change," https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-01714-4, accessed June 12, 2022; Yoder, "Climate Change Deniers Are Over Attacking the Science. Now they attack the Solutions," https://grist.org/politics/study-charts-show-rising-attacks-on-clean-energy-and-climate-policy/., accessed June 12, 2022.

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Hasn't America Always been a Polarized Country?
The Persistent Renewal of Polarization in American Political Culture

1 INTRODUCTION

Accounts of just how long polarization has been a central feature of American politics vary considerably. One might argue that in a two-party electoral system polarized dualities are not a deviation, but the norm. Yet at the same time it is well known that in such two-party systems, in the United States and elsewhere, it has often been more difficult to achieve unity within each party than to achieve compromise among the parties (Pildes, "Political Fragmentation") – a phenomenon the Democratic Party is currently living through. Debates on such issues among historians go beyond party politics to focus also on social and cultural politicization, and have involved making a fairly clear choice – whether to accept a conflict or a consensus model of American history. Currently the conflict model clearly has the upper hand, although works that try to outline a path to consensus continue to appear. To me, the major disagreements appear less about conflict versus consensus, but rather about how to interpret the multiple lines of conflict that now dominate, and arguably have always dominated, American politics. Manfred Prisching lists many of these divisive issues in his wide-ranging descriptive survey of the "variables" along which polarizing conflict can occur, and has occurred, in many countries (Prisching, "Resentment and Anger"), but he also acknowledges a point I will also emphasize below - that race has been more salient in the United States than elsewhere.

I am not a specialist in American history, but follow these issues as a concerned citizen who happens to be trained in historical thinking. In this chapter I propose a number of dates marking *the persistent renewal of polarized conflict in American political culture*, ranging over three centuries. I begin not with 1776 and the famous proclamation of universal (male) equality – the iconic date of the consensus approach –

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but rather with 1787 and the document now often portrayed as the original sin of American racial and gender inequality.

1787

Of course I refer to the Constitution, the preamble of which begins with "We the people" and continues in similarly exalted tones, while the body of the document undermines that grandiloquent rhetoric by instituting a self-selected elite at the helm of the new republic. In addition to limiting the suffrage to white males and among them to those holding a minimum amount of property, the so-called 'grand compromise' and the 'three-fifths clause' that was its main component installed the division between slave-holding and so-called free states at the core of American political culture. The minimum property requirement for voting was based on a quite conscious rejection of universal suffrage. As John Adams wrote in a letter, if "the qualification of voters" were to be changed, "there will be no end of it. New claims will arise, women will demand a vote … and every man who has not a farthing, will demand an equal voice with every other, in all acts of state" (quoted in Franks, *The Cult of the Constitution* 30). The three-fifths clause (Art. I, Sect. 2) specified that the enslaved people in the Southern states would be counted to that extent in determining the number of representatives each state would have in the House of Representatives. This was actually not a compromise but an arrangement agreeable to both parties. As Justice Thurgood Marshall later wrote, the arrangement in fact benefitted the economic interests of the states as a whole:

> The Southern states acceded to the demands of the New England states for giving Congress broad power to regulate commerce, in exchange for the right to continue the slave trade, at least until 1808. The economic interests of the regions coalesced: New Englanders engaged in the 'carrying trade' would (at least temporarily continue to) profit from transporting slaves from Africa as well as goods produced in America by slave labor (while) the perpetuation of slavery ensured the primary source of wealth in the Southern states (cited in Franks, *The Cult of the Constitution* 27).

The three-fifths clause greatly increased the political power of the slave-holding Southern states, and the fugitive slave clause (Art. IV, Sect. 2) required the acceptance of "property in man" even beyond the South. This arrangement also worked against any thought of directly electing

the President, to which Federalists were opposed in any case. As James Madison, a Virginia slaveowner, warned, a popular vote for the President would deprive the South of "influence in the election on the score of the Negroes" (quoted in Foner, "The Corrupt Bargain"). Of course the roots of this arrangement go back much further, as the '1619 Project' seeks to remind us. But the Constitution, that holy text of American civil religion, enshrined this limitation of fundamental human rights in basic law. Seen in this context, the addition of the Bill of Rights in 1790 marks a bitter irony, since the exercise of these basic rights, too, was in fact limited to white males.

The subsequent history of the early Republic was not entirely, but surely largely dominated by the North-South divide, which we might therefore call the original political, social and cultural polarization, with white male privilege at its core. This did not at first map perfectly onto the emerging political party system; for decades it was considered a mark of 'manliness' in the South to be above or anti-party (see, e.g., Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict*). In any case, as Alan Taylor argues, and as Alexis de Tocqueville observed at the time, the United States were less united in the early years of the Republic than is generally realized (Taylor, *American Republics*). Passionate loyalty to the states and local allegiances predominated over feelings for the distant government in Washington. Against claims that class and regional divisions were as important or even more important than slavery, however, Taylor argues that the fractiousness turned on it. White supremacy was, in this view, the driving force of Western expansion, and the 'Indian removals' of the Jackson era and thereafter fit well into this context, but it was Western imperial expansion that ultimately forced slavery into the center of American politics.

A 'sorting' process that accelerated after the failure of the Missouri Compromise assured that the battle over the expansion of slavery to the West would continue. That 'sorting' process peaked when the Republican party nominated Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency in 1860, to which the slave states responded by seceding from the Union. (Perhaps I might note in passing that Lincoln received only 40 percent of the popular vote, and owed his election to the now-reviled Electoral College.) In his first inaugural address, Lincoln foregrounded the constitutional issue of whether any state had the right to secede from the Union, and not slavery per se, but at the very latest since the writings and speeches of South Carolina senator John C. Calhoun in the 1830s, it had

been an open secret that the term 'states' rights' was political code for the continued legalization of slavery, and thus of white domination in the slave states. That white power and privilege were also matters of course in the North was so obvious to all that the point did not need to be stated. With that I come to my second key date:

1876/1877

The victory of the Union in the Civil War and the passage of the 14th, 15th and 16th amendments to the Constitution did not resolve this original polarization; instead, it continued in restructured form. To put the point as sharply as possible: so far as the history of American political culture is concerned, the Civil War never ended; Reconstruction did.

The often-violent struggle to prevent an alliance of Northern Republicans and newly freed Blacks from acquiring political power in the South with the help of freedmen's suffrage began soon after the war ended, encouraged among others by President Andrew Johnson, Democrat of Tennessee. In 1870, the year the 15th Amendment was ratified, which forbade denying the right to vote on account of race, the Department of Justice was established, initially to combat the depredations of the Ku Klux Klan. Ironically, the 15th Amendment *increased* the political power of the South, since now all Blacks, not only three-fifths of them, were counted in order to determine representation, whether they actually voted or not. This would make the emerging white oligarchy's denial of suffrage to the very people whose numbers assured their political power all the more outrageous. With the aid of Black votes, Southern states began to support Republican candidates, yet this did not suffice to secure majorities in Presidential elections. The election of 1876 was undecided at first, because disputed results were returned from three Southern states. In the so-called 'bargain of 1877' the election of Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was assured, although he did not win the popular vote, when Hayes' party agreed to recognize Democratic control of the disputed state governments. This effectively ended Reconstruction in the South, though in fact not all Northern troops were immediately withdrawn from the region.

However, that deal did not end, but rather accentuated the already impassioned, deeply polarized politics of the time. The presidential election of 1880 was even closer than that of 1876. Ostensibly the conflicts were about tariffs and the gold standard, but rather more was at

stake than economic policy. As Jon Grinspan reminds us in his new book, *The Age of Acrimony*, the Gilded Age was an era of "passionate mass politics" – with widening participation not only of newly enfranchised Blacks, but also of immigrants, workers, women and children, and a powerful nativist reaction against these new players (for the following, see Grinspan, *Age of Acrimony* and Grinspan, "The Last time America Broke"). Turnout averaged 77 percent, far higher than it is today. Then, as today, multiple loyalties went together with party affiliation. Election Day was a holiday, an occasion for raucous and often violent assemblies. Voters were recruited from the saloons, and the snide expression – "vote early, and often!" – entered the language. Tammany Hall was only the best known of many well-funded big-city machines organized to 'deliver' the vote and distribute patronage, including government jobs, to the organizers.

The disgusted reaction to all this among the educated middle classes as well as the well-off helped produce the reforms of what came to be called the Progressive Era. Many of these reforms, among them greater regulation of monopolies and trusts, limitations on child labor, and the federal income tax, are still celebrated for improving American political and social life. However, as Grinspan shows, Progressive Era election reforms were designed to refocus campaigns toward individual candidates and „genteel debate," and thus to limit participation by working-class and poorer voters. The effort succeeded; turnout in federal elections dropped drastically between the 1880s and the 1920s. Parallel to these efforts ran campaigns to limit or even eliminate Black voting in the South from the 1880s onward, using literacy tests, registration restrictions, and poll taxes that came to be known as Jim Crow laws, as well as outright violence. Of course, I do not wish to assert any moral equivalence between the installation of a racist oligarchical regime in the South and Progressive Era reforms, but the results – lower turnout and disproportionate influence by white elites – were disturbingly similar.

As a result of the failure to enforce Black voting rights and electoral power in the South, the fundamental polarization of American political culture along racial lines persisted for nearly a century after the end of slavery. Racial discrimination became entrenched in the North as well, not in the form of Jim Crow laws, but via so-called 'covenants' and redlining in housing, which led to the factual segregation of neighborhoods and thus of public schools in many Northern cities. Much of this was a reaction to the Great Migration of Blacks from the South to

the North and Midwest, which was itself in large part a result of enforcement of white supremacy and economic servitude in the South.

1933 – WHAT ABOUT THE NEW DEAL 'CONSENSUS'?

The apparently overwhelming support for Franklin Roosevelt's 'New Deal' and the strengthening of the labor movement in the years following was once interpreted, far too complacently, as a permanent realignment of American politics and society. However, as Joshua Clinton and others have shown, political party loyalties remained largely intact; the apparent 'consensus' behind the New Deal resulted from overwhelming Democratic majorities in Congress (Clinton et al., "Where Measures Meet History"). Jefferson Cowie and others have called this era 'the great exception.' As Cowie puts it, the period from the 1930s to the 1970s marks "a sustained deviation, an extended detour from some of the main contours of American political practice, economic structure and cultural outlook," during which "the central government used its considerable resources in a systematic, if hardly consistent, fashion on behalf of the economic interests of nonelite Americans in ways that it had not done before or since" (Cowie, *The Great Exception* 9). I hasten to add that this was enabled after 1945 by unprecedented world economic supremacy; the GDP of the US in 1950 constituted half of the world economy.

In any case, even the apparent majority behind the New Deal did not endure. Beginning in 1937, Southern Democrats began to vote their regional interests and ultimately to form conservative majorities with Republicans that lasted through the Fair Deal (Clinton, et al., "Where Measures Meet History" 199; for a detailed account, see Kaznelson, *Fear Itself*). Throughout these years and into the early 1960s, the Democratic party retained its hold on power nationally, when it did so, only by establishing and maintaining an unholy alliance with the Southern Democrats – who are best described not merely as "conservative democrats," but as acolytes of a racist regime. As those of us who grew up there know, politicians in the South were trained to believe, and acted vigorously on the belief, that the way to win elections was to play the race card early and plainly, or, to cite a widely used expression, to "holla niggah fustest and loudest".

As the two parties strained, each in its own way, to maximize electoral support in the middle of the electorate, complaints grew that the two parties were becoming indistinguishable from one another, with

'conservative' Democrats and 'liberal' Republicans allegedly meeting at the center. In 1950, the American Political Science Association's committee on political parties released a brochure entitled *Towards a More Responsible Two-Party System*, calling on the parties to "identify themselves more strongly with programs" to make choices between them clearer (Cited in Klein, *Why We're Polarized* 2). George Romney, then governor of Michigan, warned in 1957 that such a change could prove highly destructive; as we now know, this was highly prescient. Yet such criticisms only barely masked the fragile continuity of the power arrangement within the Democratic party that I just sketched, which began to break down when Harry Truman introduced measures to improve the standing of Blacks in the military (which provoked the Dixiecrat rebellion), the Supreme Court declared racial segregation in schools unconstitutional in 1954, and the early civil rights laws were passed in the 1950s.

1964/1965

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 might have ended this fundamental, race-based polarization in American politics. Instead, they laid the foundation for a realignment of polarized politics, in which the former party of Lincoln renounced its heritage for good in order to become predominant in the South, and the Democrats gradually shifted to a mix of progressive social programs with appeals to multiple ethnic and cultural groupings (and later the gay rights movement) – with continued financial and organizational support from Big Labor, even as the number of unionized workers continually shrank.

The political impact came quickly, as the supposedly 'independent' candidacy of George Wallace (a reprise of Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrats), won 46 electoral votes in 1968, and the Democrats continuously lost the South from then on, even when they nominated Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, who were Southerners themselves.

The polarizing struggle for racial and economic equality in the 1960s soon became intertwined with another, culture-based polarization within the white middle classes, beginning with the Hippies and turning political with the opposition to the Vietnam war. This polarization "did not break

down along party lines" at first (Heatherington, "Polarization" 417).[1] Nonetheless, contrary to fashionable nostalgia for the protest culture of those days, the political outcome was first a narrow, then a resounding victory for the Republican party in the Presidential elections of 1968 and 1972, respectively. Republicans learned the populist polarization game first, combining Vice President Spiro Agnew's appeal to the 'silent majority' in May 1969, soon taken up by Richard Nixon, with the so-called 'Southern strategy' in 1972, which the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 failed to halt, and which they have pursued ever since.

To this the Republicans soon added polarization strategies based on 'values', beginning with 'the right to life' – code for opposition to abortion – which was foundational to gaining the support of evangelical Christians newly politicized in groups like the Moral Majority, but has since proven effective far beyond that segment. As Richard Viguerie put it later, "we never really won until we began stressing issues like bussing, school prayer and gun control," which he called "gut-level issues." (Quoted in *The Guardian*, 1 April 1981, cited in Cowie, *The Great Exception* 193.) That these issues, abortion and opposition to gay rights were called 'wedge' issues showed from the start that this strategy was intentionally polarizing. It was at this stage, at the latest, that a toxic mix of "variables" around which polarization can occur (described by Manfred Prisching in this volume), including fears of losing social status and cultural loyalties shaped by religious commitments and the urban-rural divide, began to take form. Although these appeals (including attacks on 'affirmative action' programs in college admissions, discussed by Werner Sollors in this volume) were formulated in race-neutral terms, they were addressed in fact to white people. Whereas the racist core of the 'Southern strategy' could be expressed only in code (called 'dog whistling' then and since), 'family values' politics could be formulated more explicitly in different codes, which nonetheless pointed in the same direction. Race became an issue in the North as well, as bussing to assure school integration began to disturb the peace of racially segregated working- and middle-class neighborhoods.

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[1] Heatherington uses this point to distinguish between 'elite' and 'political party' polarization; however, the divisions involved were by no means limited to the elites.

1994

The victory of Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America" in the 1994 congressional elections initiated a refusal of bipartisanship by the Republicans (heartily reciprocated by progressive Democrats), which has been renewed regularly since, with ever stronger emphasis on 'wedge issues,' such as opposition to leftwing identity politics (for an early, excellent analysis, see McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*). The Tea Party movement did not initiate this rightward shift in the Republican party, but radicalized a shift that had already begun to happen, and which corresponded to an increasing turn toward feminism and ethnic identity politics in the Democratic party. With that I come to the present day, this time with three related dates:

2016, 2020, 2021, 2023

The election of Donald Trump was not the outlier that many commentators originally thought it was, but rather the ultimate expression of the intensifying polarization in recent American politics. Both the noise level and the intensity of the conflict have increased significantly since 2016, to the point that the concern expressed by Manfred Prisching (in this volume) that "democracy may be in danger" in the United States has taken concrete form. So where are we now, or: Why is this polarization different from its predecessors?

Among the numerous attempts to answer this question, the most appealing at first glance appears to be Lilliana Mason's 2018 book *Uncivil Agreement*. In her view, "The American political parties are growing *socially* polarized. … Partisanship can now be thought of as *a meta-identity*…" What Mason calls "the American identity crisis … emerges when partisan identities fall into alignment with other social identities, stoking our intolerance of each other to levels that are unsupported by degrees of political disagreement" (Mason, *Uncivil Agreement*, cited in Klein, *Why We're Polarized* 69, 70.)

If Mason is right, political conflict today is less about rational debate, followed by a give-and-take compromise – if indeed this ever was the case – than about the emotional satisfaction of belonging, "owning the liberals" on the right or establishing "safe spaces" for politically correct identity discourse on the left. The thesis surely works for party activists, but the suggestion that this reaches beyond them to ordinary voters is

supported by recent studies showing an increasing tendency of people with similar politics to live in similar neighborhoods, going significantly beyond already established class-based residence patterns. To this we must surely add the well-known 'bubbles' in the "asocial media". In this view, elections turn far less on finding ways to attract allegedly 'undecided' voters in 'the middle' than on mobilizing the base of convinced loyalists. The election of 2016 is a case in point. I remember screaming at the TV when 'senior political analysts' on CNN kept asking during the summer of 2016 when Trump was going to 'pivot to the center,' as candidates had done in the past, even though it was obvious, and Trump himself had said explicitly, that he aimed to win by mobilizing his 'base'. Such was the power of long-held conventional views, in this case the idea that American elections are always won in the middle. Hillary Clinton lost in 2016 because her campaign was less successful in mobilizing the Democrats' presumed base among minority voters and women than its young leaders overconfidently assumed that it would be.

But there are problems with this view. As working-class solidarity songs and the music of the civil rights movement attest, mergers of sociocultural and political identity are hardly new. Moreover, extreme forms of identity politics continue to have limited appeal; despite initial sympathy for the "Black lives matter" movement, 'defund the police' initiatives have gone down to defeat, and 'wokeness' has become a term of opprobrium rather than praise, since conservative columnists started using it as a cudgel and liberal and centrist columnists started paying attention to the damaging effects of 'me too' accusations and other kinds of mobbing on individuals' lives (Applebaum, "The New Puritans"). Most importantly, the elections of 2016 and 2020 divided families against one another; the term 'meta-identity' fails to account for such splits.

It has become commonplace to speak of 'identity politics' as a left-wing invention. In my view, however, important as ethnicity-, gender- and sexuality-based identity politics have become, race remains at the core of it all. Indeed, I would argue that *racial panic* – the fear of losing status and power to vaguely defined 'minorities,' mainly people of color, is at the core of the *white identity politics* (largely, but not entirely male) that is now at the center of Republican strategy. Also in the mix, but hardly separate from the core, are (1) the effort to tap the commitment of

white evangelicals, and (2) appeals to the abandoned white working class, especially working-class white men.

The evident success of Trump's appeal to white evangelicals is at first glance paradoxical; why should people committed to faith-based values in politics overwhelmingly support a man who had affairs with porno stars behind his wife's back and proudly proclaimed his own sinfulness with no sign of repentance? Some of the faithful may have told themselves that the Lord works in mysterious ways, but the real answer can be found in a promise Trump made at a campaign rally at Dordt University, a small Christian college in Sioux Center, Iowa, in January 2016: If you support me, he promised, "Christianity will have power" (Dias, "Christianity"). With respect to the white working class, Hillary Clinton's campaign surely expected that Trump would win the white male vote, but not that he would win *more than three-fourths* of that vote *and also win* the white female vote, albeit far more narrowly. This is NOT only about populist demagoguery; the industrial working class *was* in fact abandoned by Clinton Democrats, who opted to push for future industries instead.

As Hannah Arendt famously wrote, politics is "doing business with fear"; the demographic apocalypse is in plain sight for anyone who will pay attention. The Census Bureau announced in May of 2012 that the majority of babies born in the US were nonwhite (Tavernese, "Whites Account for Under Half of Births in the US"). In certain large states and cities, whites will soon cease to constitute the majority of Americans. This happened in California some time ago, and has now happened in Texas as well; that many large cities have minority majorities due to white flight to the suburbs, which has been compensated only partially by gentrification downtown, is clear enough. Fox News personality Tucker Carlson went so far as to support rightwing extremist 'replacement theory' and to accuse Democrats of promoting illegal immigration, and even of deliberately redrawing Congressional district lines, to maximize the impact of ethnic and non-white votes, in a classic example of projection – accusing the other side of doing exactly what your side is actually doing (Blow, "Carlson"; Baragona, "Tucker"). Such talk marks an extreme pole in a wider spectrum of what sociolinguist Ruth Wodak has called 'the politics of fear,' whether it be of demographic 'replacement,' loss of (imagined) status and power, or both (Wodak, *Politics of Fear*).

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Debate about what, if anything, is to be gained by talking with alienated rural and working-class voters so prominent in Trump's 'base' continues, but sociologists like Arlie Hochschild who have made the effort to engage these voters have recorded the codes clearly enough: complaints about 'certain people' 'jumping the line', lack of 'respect,' and so forth (Hochschild, *Strangers in their Own Land*). Blending Max Weber with Freud, historian and psychoanalyst Eli Zaretzky argues that Trump's charisma was awarded to him by his followers because he established a powerful relationship with his 'base' by giving participants at his rallies permission to articulate openly their deepest fears and sentiments: "The followers idealize the leader as they once – in childhood – idealized themselves." Because he possesses qualities (like bravado and risk-taking) that his supporters wish for in "what Freud called 'a clearly marked and pure form' that gives them 'the impression of greater force and more freedom of libido'," they follow him gladly" (Zaretzky, "Trump's Charisma"; Zaretzky, "Trump's Illness").

With Trump's Electoral College victory in 2016, the refusal of bipartisanship advanced by Newt Gingrich in the 1990s and continued with a vengeance by my namesake and senator Mitch McConnell in the Senate appears to have become Republican party policy for the foreseeable future (flanked by references to 'Critical Race Theory,' and the "woke left," the new dog whistle). In 2021, following Trump's refusal to concede the election to Joe Biden and the January 6 attack on the US Capitol, the arc of polarization advanced still further. Many observers now fear that the wave of legislation advanced by Republicans to restrict voting and put the administration of elections in the hands of political appointees is a move to subvert American democracy itself, on the assumption (correct or not) that (mainly white) Republican voters are more likely to vote despite such restrictions. This effort has been successful thus far mainly in states already dominated by the Republican party, but so-called 'purple' states with Republican legislatures and Democratic governors such as Wisconsin and Pennsylvania are being targeted as well. It is unclear what if anything can stop this effort, other than for Democrats to win the legislatures of the 'purple' states in question, as they did in the Pennsylvania State House in 2022.

Going far beyond such tactics, which have a long tradition in American political history, is Trump's claim that the 2020 election was 'stolen' from him and his refusal to distance himself from the insurrection of January 6, which he appears to have played a key role in inciting. Trump

has since been indicted in Federal court not for incitement or seditious conspiracy, of which many think him guilty, but for his alleged conspiracy with other parties, not yet named as of this writing, to subvert and ultimately reverse the process of certifying the electoral vote for Joe Biden. As early as the summer of 2020 he had begun claiming in classic populist style that he, as the true representative of the 'real American people,' could only be denied election if the balloting itself were rigged (on the equation of populist leaders and their followers with 'the people' itself, see Müller, *What is Populism?*). The successful effort to make agreement with that absurdly false claim a sign of fealty to Trump and thus of allegiance to the Republican party has polarized American politics beyond anything experienced in American history since the Civil War. In their efforts to defend Trump despite the indictments handed down against him, prominent Republicans such as Kevin McCarthy, Speaker of the House of Representatives, have supported Trump's unfounded claim that he is being subject to political prosecution (Mascaro, Republicans). In doing so they appear to have made the rule of law itself a party-political issue rather than a foundational principle of American democracy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Taken together, the points I have made here suggest that consensus-oriented historical accounts of American political history and culture based on the notion of a common identity expressed in the glorious phrase "We the people" tell at best only part of the story. In any case, that narrative is now often carefully modified to acknowledge that the assertion of universal equality was and remains aspirational, and to concede that American politics has sometimes (I would say: often) fallen short of that beautiful dream (for an eloquent example that integrates the perspectives of nonwhites more effectively than in the past, see Lepore, *These Truths*). The centrality of racial inequality to the American story is now consensus; whether or not current attempts to recast American history as a narrative of white supremacy, or to claim that systemic racism defines American society and culture today have gone too far are currently being debated (DiAngelo, "Popular White Narratives"; Belew and Guttiérez (eds.), *White Supremacy*). Efforts to reconstruct some version of 'Neo-Consensus' history (Schulman, "Post-1968 US History"; Springs, *Healthy Conflict*; Smelser and Alexander, *Diversity*),

or to evoke Barack Obama's soaring vision that "There is not a liberal America and a conservative America — there is the United States of America. There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America — there's the United States of America." (Obama, Convention remarks) are ongoing, though the 'neo-consensus' accounts are receiving less academic notice and the vision of Barack Obama more severe criticism than they might warrant.

Just before the 2020 election, Robin Wright wrote in *The New Yorker* that the very idea of one nation with a common past and a common future is "a myth"; "Scholars, political scientists, and historians even posit that trying to unite disparate states, cultures, ethnic groups, and religions was always illusory." (Wright, "Is America a Myth?") Perhaps it would be more accurate to remember that myths need not be lies, but are, rather, necessary stories grounding common belief about who 'we' are, as it says in the Pledge of Allegiance: "one nation (under God) indivisible, with liberty and justice for all". Apparently, the mythical tales that had sustained belief in a common national identity for decades, with powerful assistance from Hollywood and Disney-style TV series, no longer do the cultural work that they had seemed to do in the past. Isolated cases of apparently bipartisan legislation still occur, though even these, for example the infrastructure bill passed in 2022, only show how fraught even efforts to pass broadly popular laws have become, and how difficult it is to describe the result as 'reasoned compromise'.

Now that the generation formed during World War II has been buried with honors, and the successor generation that had by and large sustained the consensus culture of the past passes from the scene, it is surely fair to say that cultural consensus, if it ever truly existed, is unlikely to return. Joe Biden, an old-school politician, appears to hope that returning to trade union-centered politics focusing on a higher minimum wage, steady jobs and improved social benefits – the supposed New Deal consensus – is still possible. I have already suggested reasons for doubting that hope. However, as the results of the governorship elections in Virginia and New Jersey in November 2021 and the mid-term Congressional elections in November 2022, in which the Democrats regained control of the Senate and came close to retaining control of the House of Representatives, suggest that the age-old question of ordinary American voters – what have you done for me *lately*? – retains the power to shift large numbers of votes.

This is especially so when 'kitchen table issues' are combined with voters' assertions of strong support for abortion rights in response to the Supreme Court decision to overturn the historic Roe v. Wade decision of 1973 in June 2022. Whether the Democrats can overcome the continuing divide within their ranks between 'moderates' and 'progressives', improve upon their unusually strong 2022 performance, and win both the re-election of President Biden and Vice-President Harris and control of both houses of Congress despite continuing fanatical support for an indicted Donald Trump in the Republican 'base' remains to be seen.

Will American political culture ever again find 'common ground', or at least a way to achieve large-scale, reasoned compromise when needed to face genuine long-term challenges such as climate change? Sadly, I doubt it. But professional pessimists generally want to be refuted, so I look forward to seeing alternative perspectives.

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PHILIPP GASSERT

Is Social Polarization Always Bad? A Historical Perspective on the Postwar Sociology of Conflict

In his memoir, *A Promised Land*, former U.S. President Barack Obama tells the story of postwar American history as a long history of a breakdown in political and social consensus. When he came to Washington, first as a U.S. Senator, and later as President, he observed a "pervasive nostalgia" for a "bygone era of bipartisan cooperation on Capitol Hill." Then "Democrats and Republicans felt free to cross party lines when required to get a bill passed." As Obama observes, consensus started to break down during the 1960s: "Steadily, year by year – through Vietnam, riots, feminism, and Nixon's southern strategy; through bussing, *Roe v. Wade*, urban crime, and white flight; through affirmative action, the Moral Majority; […] assault weapon bans and the rise of Newt Gingrich, gay rights and the Clinton impeachment – America's voters and their representatives became more and more polarized." By the time he took office, the "big sort" between "red" and "blue" had been "close to complete" (242).

The former President recalls a standard narrative of recent American history as a history of a growing polarization, especially since the 1960s. His focus is on those many issues that are tearing America apart. A similar argument informs many recent accounts of U.S. history and culture. In her sweeping synthesis, *These Truths* (2018), the Harvard historian and regular *New Yorker* contributor, Jill Lepore, underscores that the United States was founded on a set of political values. Yet contemporary Americans were so divided that they can no longer agree what ideas, values and "truths" are holding American society together. In the two decades since 9/11, Lepore writes: "the United States lost its way in a cloud of smoke. The party system crashed, the press crumbled, and all three branches of government imploded." To Lepore as well as many others "it seemed, as Trump took office, as if the nation might break out in a civil war, as if the American experiment had failed, as if democracy itself were in danger of dying" (Lepore 729).

There are hundreds and thousands of similar expressions of this new American Jeremiad that have come up against the backdrop of the rise of

right-wing populism and the deep shock of the Trump ascendancy. The premise of much of this work is that American society is more divided than ever and that, implicitly, it was less divided before. Social scientists such as Arlie Russell Hochschild in *Strangers in their own Land* (2016) or Robert Putnam in *Our Kids* (2015) belabor the point that Americans no longer inhabit the same social, cultural, and political spaces. Obviously, there is ample "hard data" to provide "proof" that Americans feel they are more polarized and divided than they were two generations ago: "In the past," Hochschild writes, "we had ways of mixing up Americans who differ by class, race, and region" (266). And who could argue with Obama that voting patterns in Congress have dramatically changed? There is truth in the former President's lament that it has become difficult to get anything done in Congress, because few politicians "cross the aisle." Conflict seems to have become an end in itself, coming out of a "rigidity present in the social structure" (Coser, *Functions* 7).

This current handwringing about the *Disuniting of America* has many precursors, including that of the eminent Harvard historian and member of the Kennedy White House, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. In 1991, Schlesinger published a long essay under exactly this title. During the late 1980s, he became more and more concerned about the "ethnic gospel." By this he meant the emerging identity politics on the Left. He became highly critical of "ethnic ideologues," who used history as a wedge, not as a source of unity. Calling a "deeply bred racism" the "great failure of the American experiment […] and the still crippling disease of American life," he insisted that the idea of the "melting pot" (as an approximation of unity) was still in the best interest of all sides concerned (Schlesinger 14). At the time, Schlesinger's descent into this despair seemed odd. In 1991, America had just "won" the Cold War; its brand of liberalism seemed triumphant. Today, his warnings are prescient as when Schlesinger raised the question how the nation could be bound together, now that an external enemy had vanished. What he did not foresee, however, was the rise of white ethnic identity politics, which is now feeding conservative rage and polarization in the United States.

Schlesinger's lament stands in a long tradition, going back to the early days of the Republic. Throughout U.S. history "polarization" was constructed in contrast to the rhetoric of unity (*e pluribus unum*). It has been central to American political speechifying from the days of Jefferson's inaugural speech to Obama's famous calls for overcoming

the divisions between "blue" and "red" states. Calls for unity are the core of the "American creed." It is not without irony that many of the iconic texts of that particular American ideology were produced by outsiders or recent immigrants, from Thomas Paine to Israel Zangwill, from Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur to Gunnar Myrdal. As is well known, however, the rhetoric of unity often masked deeper cleavages between "Federalist" and "anti-Federalist", between "slave" and "free" states, between "native" and "immigrant," between "labor" and "capital," or "black" and "white."

What is remarkable, however, is that in the present situation many liberals, like former President Obama or progressives like Lepore, have become so captivated by an essentially conservative narrative of a "loss" of coherence and the "breakdown" of consensus in America. Liberals as well as progressives are transfixed by a story of "polarization," which, in my reading, implies a nostalgic argument about the "undesirability of change." Yet neither progressives nor liberals should be afraid of change. Or have they become "conservative," not in name but in fact, by investing so much energy in lamenting the loss of an elusive former state of "coherence"? And what is the status quo they are trying to reconstruct or preserve? The German sociologist Peter Waldmann speaks of a "conservative impulse" that has taken deep roots in Western cultures. While that conservative impulse has always been there, it is striking to see how popular it has become among progressives and liberals, who fear a "loss of stability" against the backdrop of disruptive change (Waldmann 16).

As I would like to suggest in this essay, historians, political and social scientists as well as literary and cultural studies scholars should take a distanced view and avoid reifying an essentially conservative discourse about polarization. Not all polarization is negative, as Manfred Prisching reminds us in his contribution to this volume, yet he too argues that though most "are considered undesirable or conflictious." While I do not directly disagree with his position, I would like to remind us that it is our job to critically read and "deconstruct" discourses, whether they are about polarization or about unity. We need to place them within their historical and contemporary contexts. We need to demonstrate their social and political functions in the past and in the present. By belaboring and bemoaning that very "polarization," which critical authors or progressive politicians, such as Lepore or Obama, are hoping to overcome, they actually harden the social consensus that Western

societies are weak and polarized. We can use our critical insights into how culture works, and apply them to challenging this very narrative; we can use our analytical tools to describe "polarization" as being equally "imagined" and "culturally constructed" as "consensus." We routinely apply this approach to other social "realities" and "phenomena" such as the nation, race, gender, or class. I am surprised that we do not see the discourse about polarization as something that creates identity and meaning in our times.

Therefore, we should move the debate from "reifying polarization" toward "deconstructing polarization." This can be done in many ways: one would be the history of social science, especially of the postwar period, when the idea of "polarization as negative" was being deconstructed and refuted by scholars such as Lewis Coser, Ralph Dahrendorf, Randall Collins (1975), and many others. As part of a transatlantic debate, the theory of "social conflict" was rediscovered at just the right time before the tumultuous 1960s. That rediscovery, of course, stands in the tradition of the "consensus vs conflict debate," starting with Plato and Aristotle, continuing via Rousseau and Locke as well as Comte and Marx during the intervening centuries (Bernard). As I mention these classic thinkers, it is also obvious that my text cannot do just justice to such a vast topic. All I can do is to remind ourselves that as a social idea "polarization" has a history. It has its ebbs and flows. Currently, "polarization" is enjoying a boom as an explanatory tool and "vision of the social" that gives meaning to Western societies.

Yet the idea that "conflict" is the essence of society has deep roots in the Western history of ideas as well. In the current debate about "polarization," We should remind ourselves that there have been times when we valued "conflict" as an essential tool of democratic progress, for creating a more just and better society. Yet it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that this became a "common sense" sociology or "common sense interpretation" of society. During that period, it seemed to represent progress when Western society moved from a "consensus" to a "conflict" model of social explanation. Now, in activism and thought, there seems to be a comeback of the yearning for consensus, especially among liberal intellectuals. The Right, however, seems to have come to embrace conflict as a tool, and whole-heartedly pushes (white) identity politics, engaging in zero-sum games. While "polarizing approaches" can be observed on the post-colonial wing of the Left, too, the idea that conflict needs rules still seems to be more acceptable to the Left than to

the Right. Thus what I find so challenging in the present situation is not that American society (or for that matter European societies) are divided. That has always been the case. The greater challenge is that a Trumpist Right no longer accepts the rules of the (political) game. Its warrior-style approach to politics seems to be gaining ground even among old-fashioned Republicans and the center-Right.

1 GEORG SIMMEL, LEWIS COSER, AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF CONFLICT

The "origins" point for post-war theorizing on conflict was the 1950s reception in the United States of the German philosopher and pioneer of social science, Georg Simmel, who, at that time, had been largely forgotten in his home country. His rediscovery by the German-American sociologist and refugee scholar, Lewis Coser, jumpstarted modern conflict sociology. In 1908 Simmel had argued that social expressions of conflict, such as "hate", "competition" and even "resentment" should not be seen as "purely negative social entities." To Simmel, as part of his interest in sociability, conflict was not just the catalyst of change (others like Marx had seen that before). He argued that conflict stood at the center of the integration of societies. If two parties struggle with each other, they create a common meaning and thus society. Society is as much the result of "harmony and disharmony, association and competition, favor and disfavor." In their duality and competition, two struggling parties create society (Simmel 14).

If "*Streit*", or "struggle" ("conflict" in modern sociological expression) provides the backdrop of societal integration, then conflict is the essence of modern life (*Simmel-Handbuch* 312). This ties in with Simmel's general view of society as the sum of the interaction of all individuals – individuals, who are organized in sub-groups (state, clan, family, trade unions etc.) that seldom agree on anything and compete for resources (Coser, *Masters* 178). For Simmel, groups could actually not exist in complete harmony. Conflict thus created coherence within a group as well as in the group's relationship with the outside world. It is important to add, however, that Simmel reacted against a German and Central European philosophical tradition in which organic views of society were dominant, such as those expressed in the turn-of-the-century philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies' concept of *Gemeinschaft* (1887). Here individuals commit to one, however defined group (family,

community, nation). This identity takes "priority over other commitments." When it comes to the "allocation of material and emotional resources", thus group comes first (Laub Coser 223).

While controversial in Imperial Germany, Simmel's "liberal idea" of conflict became quite prominent in postwar American sociology. It was being adopted by transatlantic intellectuals such as Coser and the British-German sociologist Ralph Dahrendorf, who reacted against what they perceived as a dominant attitude in postwar sociology. As Walter Powell and Richard Robbins phrased it in the introduction to a *Festschrift* for Lewis Coser, postwar American sociology put "adaptation and structural integration" at the center: "The emphasis was on stability, not change; on adjustment, not conflict; on the steady state of functional maintenance, not structural fissures and divisive conflicts" (Powell & Robbins 8). These were the Eisenhower years, of course; of postwar reconstruction, McCarthyism and "the bomb"; of Eisenhower's "steady hand." The search for stability, however, masked deep divisions in American society. Anxieties were running deep, identities were in constant crisis, gender roles were being transformed. Yet such "defects" were seen as a matter of individual psychology, beyond the pale of sociological analysis (Chafe 106).

Against the "conformist" cultural backdrop of the 1950s, Coser's idea seemed fresh and exciting that conflict was not just necessary and unavoidable, but socially useful, if properly institutionalized – especially in competitive "Western" liberal-democratic systems. Coser, in his first book, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (1956), which had been derived from his dissertation, provided not much more than an extended commentary on Simmel. If looked at today, it is hard to see why Coser's *Functions* made such a splash and gained "surprising sales for a book on theory" (Powell & Robbins 8). As the United States came out of the era of the Great Depression and World War II in 1945, a previous generation of U.S. sociologists, most prominently the "dean" of postwar sociology, Talcott Parsons, had been mostly concerned "with those elements in social structures that assure their maintenance" (Coser, *Functions* 21). Their historical experience had been one of great upheaval. In the 1950s and 1960s, as the United States was becoming a consumer society, the time seemed right to think about the possibility that, while individuals make individual choices and feel less bound by group affiliations, society does not necessarily break down completely as an earlier generation of social scientists had feared.

When Coser defended his dissertation in 1954, Simmel was barely known to scholarly circles in the U.S. His essay on conflict was translated into English the following year. His idea that conflict may serve to integrate society struck a chord because he was highlighting conflict as valuable, without subscribing to a Marxist framework. Philosophically, it also seemed well adapted to American society. Simmel was a liberal in the European sense of the term. He took a market-based system for granted. As the sociologist Jonathan H. Turner has argued, the first reception of Simmel thus happened against the backdrop of anti-Communism and the superficial association (in America; to a lesser extent in continental Europe) of conflict with Marx and "class-struggle", and the analysis mostly of social inequality. As anti-Communism subsided, conflict theory "gained traction." Coser's Simmel-based critique of functional theories "as being too concerned with the status quo and functional integration" was soon more in tune with the Sixties generation, which wanted to move things ahead and came to see "all phenomena as integrative" (Turner 37).

To Coser, not all conflict was constructive. By quoting Simmel, he highlighted the "group-binding" and "group-preserving" functions of conflict. Yet he also pointed out situations in which conflicts may not be resolved. As long as struggles are a means toward an end (which he terms "realistic" conflict), such conflicts may be resolved (Cose, *Functions* 49). There are cases, however, in which such outcomes may not be sought and which "seek expression no matter what the object, where in the conflict the choice of object is purely accidental." He calls those irreconcilable conflicts "unrealistic." They arise "from aggressive impulses." Here conflict is a means in itself. As historical examples for unrealistic conflict he mentions anti-Semitism, hatred of "Negros," and other forms of racism and ethnic conflict (50). Thus, "realistic" conflict, which would include labor strikes and other forms of civil society protests, aims at the achievement of results, whereas "non-realistic" conflict does not. We must ask ourselves today whether we are now living in a period in which the "non-realistic" variant of conflict has become the dominant one.

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2 CONFLICT SOCIOLOGY AS A CASE STUDY IN TRANSATLANTIC INTERACTION

Conflict sociology presents an interesting case study of the mid-twentieth century transatlantic transfer of ideas as part of a "long tradition of sharing democratic idea(l)s and political and cultural values" that Waldemar Zacharasiewicz and Christoph Irmscher have highlighted (11). Coser had been born in 1913 as Ludwig Cohen to a liberal Jewish-German family, his father being a stockbroker and a conservative German patriot (Rosenberg 27). Because of his left-wing political stances, in 1933 he first emigrated to Paris, but luckily made it to the United States in 1941. He worked for the Office of War Information (OWI), became active among the "New York intellectuals" as a writer of essays and journalistic pieces. He then took up doctoral work at Columbia. As he states in his published dissertation, interestingly enough, conflict had been high on the agenda of the newly organized American Sociological Society in 1907 (Coser, *Functions* 15). Yet despite the prominence of conflict among turn-of-the-century sociologists, interwar and post-war sociology, led by Parsons, who had come of age during the 1920s, had been resigned to stressing social cohesion, treating countervailing powers as "tensions", "strains", "malfunctions" of society (20).

Perhaps because of their different historical and cultural backgrounds, the two eminent postwar sociologists took opposing approaches to conflict. Unlike Parsons, who was of old protestant "stock" and whose father had been a college president, Coser was a member of the refugee generation. Their lives had been shaped by the "non-realistic" dysfunctional conflicts of old Europe. Coser had fled the Nazis, had seen war and persecution. He had had first-hand experience of the destructive forces of social conflict. As Coser explained in an interview in 1984, reading Simmel and working on conflict theory was part of his intellectual development away from Marxism. Even though Marx can be read as a conflict theorist, too, Coser's reception of Simmel was part of an "Americanization" of social and political theory. Studying Simmel "turned me toward 'liberalism', the theme of cross-cutting conflicts and a pluralistic society. […] Some young leftists who read my book during the first few years thought it was radical. Now many people who write about it say it's really an expression of 'liberalism:' It's not all that radical" (Rosenberg 44).

Thus, Coser, having moved to America, was becoming "liberalized." He came to highlight the integrating qualities of polarization, if properly understood and properly institutionalized. Ironically, even though conflict theory had been central to turn-of-the-century American sociology, it was now seen as a European import, because left-leaning émigré scholars like Coser, or Dahrendorf, who was writing in a continental, Marxist-inspired tradition and who had published a devastating critique of the functionalist school in 1958, were pushing conflict theory (Ley & Meyhöfer 38-39). Dahrendorf, too, distinguished between social conflicts that had a basis in "real" political and economic differences and social inequality as well as those that are "purely emotional." To Dahrendorf, the latter were not part of social analysis. Rather, these phenomena needed to be dealt with psychologically. As he argued: "It stands to assume that disputes even among larger social units sometimes need rather a psychological than a sociological explanation. A certain social arbitrariness seems not to have been alien to some wars in history" (Dahrendorf 24, *my translation*).

Hence Coser and Dahrendorf see social conflict as something that requires rules and structures, on which both sides can agree. They distinguish between regulated "conflict" and other forms of antagonistic social interaction. Violence is something that happens in unstructured environments. Thus, in their view, societies should strive toward building a structure in which people can organize and voice their grievances (Turner 38). Here we can hear echoes of modernization theory. Interestingly, Coser's wife and close collaborator, Rose Laub Coser, as she highlights the differences between *Gemeinschaft* and liberal, conflict-oriented societies, compares a story from Pakistan, in which kinship thinking leads to poor results in problem solving, to one similar story from the United States, where problems are dealt with in a "realistic" and "modern" way (Rose Laub Coser 221). Therefore the task of conflict sociology was to ask how political systems and societies need to be built so that grievances can be voiced and existing power structures can be challenged, without descending into violence and chaos. While in part a reaction to Nazism and Soviet Communism, conflict sociology also was meant as an intellectual export to newly developing countries, who had "not yet" left kinship and group identities behind and needed to develop more "realistic" ways of conflict regulation.

In essence post-war conflict theory thus was a theory of (liberal) democracy. As Dahrendorf argued, conflict was an enabler of freedom

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(1972). Against the backdrop of the rise of the New Left during the 1960s and 1970s, sociology was intrigued by the study of revolutions, out of which "some general ideas about conflict dynamics" emerged (Turner 43). Historically oriented sociologists like Charles, Louise and Reichard Tilly as well as Theda Skocpol and others wanted to understand "the conditions that generate change from conflict" (ibid.). This included the question of how the state had been first weakened (Alexis de Tocqueville's old observation), before mobilization and revolution came along. Thus, the historical sociology of the 1970s also stressed the power of the state and entrenched elites, and asked how a fiscal crisis could lead to change, when elites mobilized non-elites in the interest of change.

3 WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US TODAY? RULE-BASED CONFLICT AS A MEANS TO MANAGE POLARIZATION!

Today it is easy to see why Coser, who had fled his native Germany in 1933, and who was writing against the backdrop of dictatorship and total war, was celebrating the virtues of a liberal-democratic society which does not fear conflict but rather embraces it. It is dictatorships that fear conflict. To Coser, the goal of conflict sociology was to better understand the conditions under which (regulated) conflict would become beneficial: "Whether internal conflict promises to be a means of equilibration of social relations or readjustment of rival claims, or whether it threatens to 'tear apart,' depends to a large extent on the social structure within which it occurs" (152). In that sense, we can use Coser to ask ourselves, whether and to what extent Europe and especially the United States still follow a conflict model, in which struggles are "realistic" in the sense that they "are a means to an end." In essence, Coser, the immigrant from Nazi Germany, saw liberal democracy as a system that allowed conflict to be "integrating," whereas societies with rigid social structures and value systems did not present such opportunities: they "permit hostilities to accumulate and to be channeled along one major line of cleavage once they break out in conflict" (157).

In this essay, it has not been my aim to provide a short summary of conflict theory, of either the sociological or historical variant, Yet I want to stress the fact that the study of social conflict has, for some time, been the study of the conditions under which conflicts emerge, when and how mobilization is likely, and what kind of results can be obtained. It also asks when, under what circumstances, conflict becomes violent. The

conflict sociology of the 1960s and 1970s celebrated political and social systems in which conflict would be managed in such a way that it did not turn self-destructive. Liberal democracy, of course, is about the management of conflict. By Coser and Dahrendorf it was seen as best suited to manage social cleavages and conflicting aims between social actors, groups, classes, and even different ethnicities and races. Since there are, inevitably, diverging interests in a society, "polarization" is not an aberration, as seems to be the dominant perception today. Rather, such interests are the normal state in any kind of society. Conflicts do not disappear if we simply deny their existence. If a society has no way to bring conflicts out into the open, the system will become rigid and eventually break.

The problem in the present situation is thus not that we have to deal with various "polarizing" conflicts in our societies. There is nothing new about that. Polarization has always been with us. Rather, I think, the major problem in the present time is a diminishing acceptance of what the rules are for the management of inevitably "polarizing" conflicts. When, for example, in the USA the results of elections are challenged to an unprecedented degree and in an openly arbitrary and cynical manner, that is a sure recipe for a breakdown of politics. Moreover, many Americans now seem to be losing faith in the court system, as they are experiencing a conservative backlash when it comes to guns, abortion, and the separation of church and state. We need to ask ourselves whether Western democratic societies are moving in a direction in which a majority of the population as well as some in office no longer trust "the system" to have the capability to manage conflicts. In addition, "compromise" seems to have become a bad word and seems less acceptable to all parties concerned. Moreover, people seem to be less prepared to accept "failure" and do not want to be seen as losing.

This brings me back to my original point and Obama: many social scientists and historians no longer see a successful society, and the achievement of lasting social integration, as the result of the call for an ever-elusive unity and the minimizing of conflict. Rather, they see it as the result of a "well-regulated" conflict-driven interaction. Thus in social theory, Simmel still seems to be carrying the day. Societies at large, however, seem to have become more skeptical about the potentially beneficial results of "open conflict" as a means to manage polarization and to prevent a breakdown of society. I wonder whether that has to do with the fact that in recent years many of the grievances that are being

carried forward in society are being voiced by those who are in a minority position, but who are now standing on the Right. Now that liberalism is struggling hard to hold on to a position of dominance, progressives are taking a mostly negative attitude when it comes to polarization and conflict as an agent of change.

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We are currently confronted with disconcerting signs of polarization in the societies of many democratic countries in North America and Europe. The storm on the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021 was a first climax in this development. Conflicts are manifest between the generations and the genders, between ethnic groups in individual countries and between religious denominations, between migrants and natives, between the so-called elite and average citizens, between urban and rural populations, and globally between countries. This interdisciplinary volume offers contributions by sociologists and historians, scholars in American, Canadian, German, and Romance literary and cultural studies, by linguists and philosophers, who, from a distinctly European perspective, analyze these highly topical areas of conflict. Historical analysis reveals that polarization is not an exclusively recent phenomenon but has developed at least since the seventeenth-century settlements in the New World.

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