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Review of *Charting Transnational Democracy: Beyond Global Arrogance*.

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The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) describes the noun “arrogance” as an “aggressive conceit,” whereas the adjective “arrogant” is defined as, “Unduly appropriating authority or importance; aggressively conceited or presumptuous, haughty, overbearing.” The OED defines the verb “neglect” as to, “Disregard; pay little or no respect or attention to; slight, leave unnoticed. Fail to give proper attention to, fail to take proper or necessary care of; leave unattended; to or uncared for.” Both terms speak aptly to the relationship between the Bush administration and the world. As does a lack of a conception of the “interconnection” described by Martin Luther King, the I and Thou brand of “relatedness” described by Martin Buber. A grim by product of the era of corporate globalization is that instead of such notions of a social connection among people which might accompany cross border economic, political and monetary integration, we live in an era characterized by neglect for poor people and dynamics of empire. While global movements, such as the push for a Global AIDS Fund, do suggest we can achieve a certain level of awareness of connections among nations. Such an initiative comes nothing close to the hopes of global democracy articulated throughout the 1990’s as bankers, bureaucrats, activists, anthropologists, political theorists, and a few anarchists imaged a different kind of globalization based on exchange of ideas, jobs, cultures, and philosophies, rather than bombs, debt, and imbalanced trade deals.

Janie Leatherman, a professor of Politics and Government, begins her introduction to *Charting Transnational Democracy* by referring to Jimmy Carter’s 2002 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. Carter describes a “disparity” in wealth from which we can trace the “root causes of most of the world’s problems.” From here Leatherman contends, “Instead of global awareness, we indulge in a willful ignorance to avoid critical thought and action. *This* veil of ignorance serves *not* to discern justice...” The effect is to close ourselves off from, to insulate ourselves from the suffering experienced by the poor living abroad and throughout the streets of US cities. “When the news brings their lives into our homes, we shut them out. It is easy to do; we throw out the newspaper or click off the television remote control,” the author explains. The political implications of neglect for social and economic inequalities has a wide spread ripple effect. From here, the author sets out the central argument of the volume. “Such arrogance of power is found anywhere from the local to the global. So we speak collectively of *global arrogance*,” (p.4). And herein lies the problem for this reader. Does selective observation or willful neglect constitute “global arrogance” or are there better words, more accurate ways to describe these complex phenomena? Throughout her introduction “Global Arrogance and the Crisis of Hegemony,” Janie Leatherman’s use of the term “arrogance” slip into territory better

described in terms of “neglect.” As result when the editors, both political scholars at Illinois State University, write about “the global arrogance research agenda” or push for their team of “nine scholars (five junior and four mid-career” to fit their analysis into this framework this reader cringes. There is no doubt that much of the foreign policy characterized by the Washington Consensus of trade liberalism and global war on terror (and dissent) can be characterized by notions of arrogance. But there is more to these dynamics. Within the first few pages term feels over used, stretched thin, as the editors force notions global negligence into their more limited theoretical cul de sac, “the global arrogance research agenda.”

Charting Transnational Democracy: Beyond Global Arrogance is a collected volume divided into four parts. Part 1, ‘Escaping the Entrapment of Global Arrogance,’ Part 2, ‘Challenging Arrogance from the Local to the Global’, Part 3, ‘Facing the Dangers of Replicating Global Arrogance,’ and Part 4, ‘Creating Democratic Alternatives.’ Introductory essays by the volume’s editors, Janie Leatherman and Julie Webber fill part one. These essays are perhaps the weakest contributions to the volume. As stated above, they lack a clear working definition of ‘arrogance.’ Instead the essays are filled with often clunky heavily theoretical jargon; some sentences end with prepositions, while others begin with gerundives acting as sentence subjects. The result is prose is often clunky, unengaging, and chock full of unsubstantiated claims. “My second aim is to show an outmoded protest strategy continues to be pervasive in US activist and popular culture,” Julie Weber asserts in ‘Outline of a Generic Will,’ the second essay in the volume (p.31). Yet, the author fails to address the theme of protest efficacy.

Fortunately, the essays in Part II, ‘Challenging Arrogance from the Local to the Global’ are far more engaging. Zoelle and Josephson’s report on the Kensington Welfare Rights Union offers a useful case study in the efficacy of struggling against local manifestations of global problems and creating wins. While the era of corporate globalization has created countless problems, it has also created opportunities, “for new forms of democratic activism and mobilization,” the authors assert. “Whether by foresight or good fortune, KWRU has developed strategies, taken advantage of technologies, and engaged suprenational arbiters that are at the endge of twenty-first-century organizing,” (P. 61). The authors conclude with a note about the war on services at home created by the budget expenditures abroad. This shift in policy priorities is one of the many pernicious elements of the neo-conservative political agenda advancing the war. David Cartright’s essay, “The Peaceful Superpower: The Movement against the War in Iraq” builds on this theme in what is probably the strongest report in the volume. Utilizing a participant action research approach (see Belcher et al. 2005; Brown), the author utilizes the data he received as an active member of the anti war movement. The prose is engaging, concise and clear. The author describes a number of the constituents ranging from religious, to labor, to arts, women’s and queer groups, as well as the many playful affinity groups, including Code Pink, who contributed the mobilization against the war on Iraq. While the author fails to highlight the links between the already mobilized global justice movement on the ground before the war began or the effective use of visual techniques such as stickers to mobilize constituents” (Janie Leatherman, 2004; Shepherd, 2003), he does highlight the efficacy of

dimensions of the groups which successfully articulated what was wrong with the war and ways to represent a better and more caring world in creative and thoughtful ways. He quotes from Lisa Feathersone describing Code Pink as, “not an organization but a phenomenon: a sensibility reflecting feminist analysis and a campy playfulness influenced in style and philosophy both by ACT UP and the antiglobalization movement,” (p. 89). The author considers Code Pinks’ work as part of a wave of innovative feminist direct action which combined an astute analysis with a compelling political theatre. Another example of this wave of guerilla theatre included a wave of over 1,000 readings of the play *Lysistrada*, the 2,400 year old anti war comedy by Aristophanes which took place on March 3, 2003. Prominent actors across the world signed up to participate in this transnational theatrical performance. In London, to name just one example, hundreds of performers staged the play in front of Parliament Square, in an action they described as a ‘mass Greek chorus of disapproval,’ (p. 88). February 15, 2003 was of course the largest day of protest in world history, with tens of millions mobilizing in cities across the world. By the time Colin Powell made his case to the United Nations, his case was already discredited (years before he actually said the speech was the low point in his career). By this point, the reader has a feeling for the heady cold winter wind blowing through the streets of New York as Powell headed to his vaulted stage. Still the war happened. Cartright is accurate to point out that the stage the social and political actors were performing for was as much memory, international solidarity, and even history as it was for the streets of world cities and the Bush administration. The waves of history are never easy to predict; they should not be quickly demarcated. “The administration’s deceit in justifying the war set the context for the political problems the White House began to face afterward,” Cartright explains in his thoughtful reflection. He concludes: “The ways in which social movement influence policy are not always readily apparent. They often emerge in unanticipated form, or in future impacts. Movements can win even as they lose. While the antiwar movement did not succeed in preventing the invasion of Iraq, it helped to set the terms of the debate and exerted considerable influence on public opinion. The Bush administration rammed through its war policy, but it lost the more important struggle for hearts and minds,” (p. 96). Cartright’s thoughtful report is a highlight in this otherwise uneven, poorly edited volume.

- Benjamin Shepard

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