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Book review: adrienne maree brown, *Pleasure Activism*

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adrienne maree brown, 2019. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. Chico: AK Press (448 pp. paperback, \$20)

If in 2019, impending planetary extinction has become an urgent shared concern, author and editor adrienne maree brown's call to heed the physical body for orientation in facing the future suggests that a missing piece in social justice organizing has been a liberatory framework of joy.

In *Pleasure Activism*, brown offers one such framework, a guide for the practice of pleasure that emerges from a rich lineage, and a "diversity of care tactics," in the words of Leah Lakshmi Peipzina-Samarasinha (p. 315) to counter the scarcity mindset of much anti-capitalist organizing. The book also works as a sequel to brown's *Emergent Strategy* (AK Press 2017), although I read the two books in the reverse order.

The edited collection opens with a set of eight pleasure principles (p. 14) building on brown's pleasure lineage. The principles at the start become fleshed-out in the nine sections and subsections of the book, with chapters consisting of essays, poems, manifestos, journal entries, and edited dialogues or trialogues. Many of the chapters written by brown began as essays in her *Bitch* magazine column "The Pleasure Dome." More than 30 other artists, thinkers and doers appear in the collection, either in conversation with brown or as essay authors. The principles to open the book are mirrored by the end with another list: of 11 practices, to make a path to active pleasure (p.431).

Pleasure Activism grounds itself in the work of writers like Audre Lorde and Octavia Butler, with Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic" republished as a first chapter, and Butler's science fiction referenced throughout. Given that the current president of the United States was elected on a platform ripped from the mouth of the villain in Butler's *Parable of the Talents* (Butler, p.15), brown's background is a welcome guide. Rather than an academic collection, the meat of *Pleasure Activism* are interviews with the people who have shaped the author's concept of pleasure, and who speak to the ways in which engaging with joy on a cellular level should guide movement's pursuit of a better world. She writes: "on a species level, I can feel there's not a story for our survival in the cards and in ourselves right now" and that pleasure activism is about moving from dying to reproducing (p. 51).

In sections dedicated to sex, drugs and fashion, among other endeavors, brown interrogates the possibilities for pleasure in the human experience and lays out the spells and rituals she follows in bringing about transformative justice. The

thought is provoking: if the planet is indeed going extinct, perhaps sensations of joy hold the key for extending time? As brown puts it: “What was dinosaur humor? Those moments where you’re like: we’re going extinct, let’s enjoy it.” (p.342)

The collection avoids veering into nihilism, nor does it propose responding to pain with hedonism. There is early disavowal of excess, and acknowledgement that while suffering can crystallise political communities, it does not contain the ingredients for liberation. Instead, brown leans on science fiction, as she believes that “all organizing is science fiction—that we are shaping the future we long for and have not yet experienced” (p.10). The collection of voices engages with the imaginary as urgently as it anchors itself in the physical body.

“Hot and Heavy” homework assignments, of which there are 14 throughout the book, include instructions to track one’s consent in physical activities, and to pay attention to your nipples. brown often calls to focus attention on physical sensations and activate dormant cells. *Pleasure Activism*, as curated by brown, is a fitting example of the collective experience of love and the relationships that define every mass movement (p. 276) and whisper the most ancient wisdom about possibilities for a shared future.

What brown calls her pleasure activism lineage (p.25) speaks to her trajectory as a generative somatic student and healer. Here was not the first place I encountered positive mention of the field of somatics, but it was the first time this practice was articulated as something accessible to a movement or a larger group. Previously, I might have considered somatic therapy as one branch in the field of health practices, to be purchased by privileged members of my environment, for self-contained explorations with a health specialist of the injuries they’ve carried in their bodies.

Instead, brown invites a broader consideration of pleasure as guide through the field of healing the body. “It turns out being present is the most important part of every single experience in my life” (p. 277). *Pleasure Activism* can boil down to paying attention, to being present for the best parts of being human and then recreating the behaviors that contain within themselves our reasons for choosing life. Alana Devich Cyril, who shares the book’s dedication, says in her interview with brown that “pleasure is practice” and one can fall out of practice but life is better when that muscle is strong.

The erotic component of the argument is central, so much so that brown encourages readers to give themselves an orgasm before reading each new section (p.3). In attempting to review the collection with the intention of the writer close at heart, I mostly followed this homework assignment, although it slowed down my journey through the text. Other homework assignments included tracking one’s consent boundaries around any physical touch, like hand shakes or hugs, for a week.

The author expands new avenues for “tuning into what brings aliveness into our systems” (p. 6) and “learning from what pleases us about how to make justice

and liberation the most pleasurable experiences we can have.” (p. 252) She opens by laying out eight principles for pleasure activism, which become fleshed out in the author’s interrogations of her relationships. In the conclusion, brown mirrors these principles by offering a list of suggested practices to guide the pleasure activists, like “find the ease” and “be absolutely committed to your process” while being detached from the outcomes of it (pp. 432-433).

From my own healing journey –frequently interrupted by self-sabotage and scarcity economics– brown’s certainty that pleasure is the missing piece has already been a revelation.

I anticipate in the future I will no longer feel the urge to shirk ownership of the experience of seeking pleasure, and am game for the pursuit of making the revolution irresistible, an aphorism Toni Cade Bambara expressed as the role of the artist and which brown has repurposed to guide those who identify with her call to a pleasure-led activism (p.65).

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Book review: Azumi Tamura. *Post-Fukushima Activism: Politics and Knowledge in the Age of Precarity*

Review Author: Alexander James Brown

Azumi Tamura. *Post-Fukushima Activism: Politics and Knowledge in the Age of Precarity*. New York: Routledge. (210 pp. Hardback £105).

Azumi Tamura's *Post-Fukushima Activism: Politics and Knowledge in the Age of Precarity* is a rich study of urban social movements in Tokyo in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March, 2011. For Tamura, activism in the metropolis has changed fundamentally since the disaster, hence her use of the term "post-Fukushima activism."

Her account focuses primarily on the anti-nuclear movement, but also addresses subsequent movements against the Shinzō Abe government's attempts at Constitutional reform, which is intended to normalise growing militarisation in Japan, as well as a raft of draconian national security laws.

Tamura's treatment of these movements stands out from many other monographs in the field, thanks in large part to her deep engagement with contemporary political theory. She rejects dispassionate, academic approaches to the study of social change, seeking instead in both her fieldwork and her theoretical speculation to become a part of the "we" that speaks through the movement.

Post-Fukushima Activism surveys a number of competing strands of political thought, from liberalism and feminist care ethics to post-workerist and post-anarchist thought. Tamura takes seriously liberal claims about the need for universalism but recognises the powerful critiques from postmodern thought which have demonstrated the instability of universal categories.

In the age of precarity, she insists, "we need a new political imaginary using what we have now: vulnerable bodies, emotions and desires" (p. 59). While skilfully discoursing upon a theoretical tradition drawn mainly from English and European-language sources, she integrates this discussion with the cultural and intellectual history of Japan in the 1980s and 1990s.

A particularly upsetting and powerful voice, which serves as a foil for Tamura's argument throughout the book, is that of Akagi Tomohiro. Akagi is a young precarious worker who wrote a notorious essay in 2007 in which he claimed that his only hope for social change in Japan was a war which could completely disrupt the existing order. Tamura treats Akagi's claim seriously, in all of its

violence and despair, as an extreme expression of a wider sense of hopelessness and internalised violence in neoliberal Japan.

Post-Fukushima Activism is based on two main periods of fieldwork conducted with the anti-nuclear movement in Tokyo in 2012, as well as follow-up interviews conducted in 2014 and 2015. Tamura interviewed 146 protesters. While she initially categorised her research subjects as either independent activists, demonstration organisers or demonstration participants, as her fieldwork progressed she largely abandoned these categories as they became increasingly unstable.

This responsiveness to the fieldwork is evident throughout the book's substantive empirical chapters, where she encounters the shifts in the mood and vibrancy of the movement over time. While staying faithful to her interview subjects' own words, Tamura brings them into conversation with the post-anarchist and post-workerist ideas she interrogates throughout the book. Chapter Three is organised around the idea of the "dissolved subject", which explains the way protesters in an age of precarity engage in movements as ambiguous and highly individualised subjects without necessarily producing a stable collective identity.

Tamura describes how the production of subjectivity in the movement emerges through an emotional and ethical engagement with the issue of nuclear power and this affective dimension serves as a critique of scientific rationalism. There is an emphasis in the movement on the politics of life, not in terms of a particular lifestyle (*kurashi*) but as a raw life force (*inochi*), which is threatened in the context of a risk society.

Later in the book, Tamura analyses the structure of Tokyo's anti-nuclear movement using the notion of "resonant bodies," through which different activist groupings and protest events expressed different political and strategic orientations. The protesters at the Kanteimae, the prime minister's official residence, organised some of the largest protests in 2012. These protesters tended towards a hegemonic understanding of power and thus they conceived of their own actions in terms of a counter-hegemonic struggle.

On the other hand, the more anarchic members of Nuclear Free Sugunami, had a more decentralised view of politics and saw themselves as an *uzomuzo*, a rabble or multitude. They focused on taking creative and spontaneous actions without attempting to build and maintain an organisational form. Yet despite these differences in orientation Tamura finds that there was a continual cross-over and overlap between the bodies of the protesters in different political moments. She describes this composition of the movement using the notion of "resonating bodies."

Post-Fukushima Activism goes on to criticise academic theorising about social movements, noting the tendency to analyse movements on liberal rationalist grounds in an effort to produce objective knowledge about movements from the outside. Tamura eschews attempts "to establish a general model about" post-

Fukushima activism and instead ponders what the movement can tell us about what it means to generate and bear knowledge about social change.

Fieldwork was instrumental in changing her own positionality, from that of an outside observer to one of engaged participant while remaining focused on “what I could do as a researcher to make a contribution to my society” (p. 127). She proposes thinking about the action of post-Fukushima activists in terms of an “anarchic subjectivity,” a concept she argues can be applied both to the majoritarian-oriented *Kanteimae* protesters, with their emphasis on confronting hegemonic power, and the multitude-type movements such as Nuclear Free Suginami.

Many activists move seamlessly between the two movements and are able to separate the different roles they play in different instantiations of activism. “Rather than behaving as a consistent self, they change the presentation of themselves according to what they connect with and what they want to achieve” (p. 131), she explains, in an ontology Tamura compares with the rhizomatic worldview described by Deleuze and Guattari.

The contingency of lives and struggles in the movement produces forms of knowledge which are embodied and situation dependent. Tamura found that activists show little interest in ideological consistency, adopting a pragmatic approach to particular issues and strategies. The knowledge generated through their struggles is not rationalistic but affective. It is based on emotional responses to an overwhelming disaster and does not seek a transcendent position from which to have perfect knowledge, as in Rawl’s concept of the veil of ignorance, but is instead “an attitude or a mode to live with uncertainty” (p. 138).

Direct, embodied engagement with the movement is important in the transmission of this knowledge because it is based less on linguistic arguments than on an opening to possibilities of highly contingent situations. Tamura is conscious that in the era of “alternative facts” and “post-truth”, some liberal theorists have attempted to buttress rational truth as generally shared and accepted truths collapse. However, she argues that this strategy is dangerous and invites further backlash given the widespread rejection of liberal ethics. Tamura suggests instead that an embodied and affective knowledge is needed, one which values “the encounter with a particular body and create[s] new expression together with it, and pass it to other bodies as a form of affect” (p. 140).

In the final chapter, Tamura integrates her fieldwork observations with her theoretical framework by focussing on two concepts: the creation of collective “non-identity” and non-hegemonic knowledge.

She asks: if the identities of the protesters are “dissolved” in the movement, then what kind of “collective identity” emerges? Drawing once again on Deleuze and the philosophy of assemblage, Tamura describes an ontology devoid of separate, individual agency, where “lines” converge in heterogeneous

assemblages in which “each individual takes intentional action, but the outcome of accumulated individual actions as the assemblage would be unintentional to each of them” (p. 152).

Vulnerable bodies, which are already interpolated in relations with otherness, interact as expressions of desire, without a clear self-other distinction. Rejecting the politics of recognition, Tamura maintains that protesters affirm life without necessarily seeking recognition within existing structures of power. Rather than demanding human rights from the state, they express their desire for dignity through their actions.

In interrogating the epistemological implications of the dissolved subjects and resonant bodies she found in her fieldwork, Tamura analyses the literature on science and risk and makes an argument about the relationship between ethics and knowledge in the case of nuclear power. While scientific knowledge attempts to impose order on a chaotic reality in which observers are themselves intertwined, when disaster strikes, reality talks back and reveals itself as ultimately unknowable. In this context, she argues, it is not possible to make an ethical defence of nuclear energy without obfuscating risk’s ultimate unknowability.

Post-Fukushima Activism is bold in its theoretical ambition and yet grounded in a deep engagement with the movement and the debates between movement participants as well as other researchers. Tamura’s contribution is an interesting and valuable one not only to the literature on protest culture in Japan, but to the broader intellectual debate on social movement activism in an increasingly precarious age.

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Book review: Olga Baysha, *Miscommunicating Social Change*

Review authors: Patrick Sawyer and Alexander Finiarel

Olga Baysha, 2018. *Miscommunicating Social Change: Lessons from Russia and Ukraine*. Lanham: Lexington Books (246 pp., hardcover, £65.00 hardback)

Olga Baysha's recent work *Miscommunicating Social Change* concerns a specific form of postcolonial discourse that continues to dominate in post-Soviet social movements. She calls this discourse the "uni-progressive imaginary," by which she refers to the eurocentric view of the world which envisions "progress" as any transformative social change that brings a country closer to "imitating the West."

The discourse produced by this imaginary divides society into a "progressive avant-garde" of history against an "uncivilized other" which leads to framing social conflicts in hierarchical terms and generating both symbolic and physical conflict (p. 181). In so doing, "progressive forces" are able to target both their compatriots in the opposition movement, as well as bystanders who may be hesitant to join in the protests. Not only does the "uni-progressive imaginary" demonize those located outside of the centers of power, but in employing the West as the unquestionable model for society, it also leads to a "discursive closure" which renders "creative and critical thinking impossible" by presenting a single unchallenged discourse that prevents others from surfacing (p. 181-2).

Miscommunicating Social Change revolves around the discourses emerging from protests often read as being pro-western opposition movements in the context of former Soviet states in the 21st Century. Borrowing from discourse theory as developed by thinkers as Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Nico Carpentier, Baysha sets about examining three main case studies involving the uniprogressive imaginary in the post-Soviet sphere. She takes as her main case studies the 2012 movement for fair elections in Russia, the 2014 Euro-Maidan and anti-Maidan conflict in Ukraine, and the anti-corruption movement in Russia that was ongoing at the time the book was published, and which subsequently merged with the other protest movements (against unfair elections, political repressions, pollution, etc) in the summer of 2019.

In each case, Baysha points out the common thread in each movement. She points to the embodiment of the uniprogressive imaginary when those who might sympathize with the regime in power are referred to by the opposition as "sovki" (a derogatory term for someone with a "Soviet mentality"), "rabi" (slaves), "anchovies" (someone who blindly follows Kremlin propaganda), or "terrorists" (in the case of the anti-Maidan movement in Ukraine) (p. 183).

By framing popular opposition to the uniprogressive agenda as a question of “fear”, “mental underdevelopment”, and “moral degradation” (p. 183), the pro-democracy movement alienates and undemocratically ostracizes the people from their symbolic representation of “the people”. The imagery proposed by uniprogressive imaginary pictures the Other as an almost inanimate object incapable of acting in their own best interests. In so doing, the Other is, thus, viewed by the pro-Western subject as preventing the inevitable progression of history. In the case of Ukraine, *Miscommunicating Social Change* looks at how uniprogressivism led to a “totalitarian disclosure” which lumped in all anti-Maidan individuals as “pro-Russian separatists” and “terrorists”, and erased any possibility of exploring the views of the moderates.

It would be absurd to claim that this form of discourse is problematic when these movements far from hegemonic, especially when compared to state power, as held by Vladimir Putin or Viktor Yanukovich. But when we observe power relations in an international context, we find that opposition protesters are supported by international actors who also seek to advance this narrative themselves.

Baysha makes it understood that this discourse could not exist without implicating the global community at large. Terms such as ‘modernization’, ‘development’, and ‘progress’ are commonly used, and often play an imperialist role in the periphery countries of the world system, giving value to the ideals that allowed for the West to dominate them in the first place.

Criticism from the West and Western corporate media regarding “modernization” and “democratization” provide “progressive” alternative media in both countries with the justification to demean the opposition as being, in essence, “anti-modern.” From the quotidian framing of Russia and Ukraine as having “backward” regimes to the European and American politicians visiting and cheering on the Euro-Maidan protesters, core countries do not exist as neutral bystanders, but as active propagators of the uni-progressive imaginary.

The uni-progressive imaginary, as described in *Miscommunicating Social Change*, emphasizes the “supply” side of anti-opposition ideas (state media, political talking points, etc). The author points out that more often than not, there is no mention of the complex “demand” side of any human being’s thought process, which allows liberals to take the leap to considering the Other as ‘hopeless’. Despite the many imperfections of the Soviet Union, a consistent majority of the Russian population continues to harbor positive sentiments for past times because of the “web of values that allowed Soviet people to live full lives” (p. 97).

This “web of values” held dear by the so-called “sovki” allowed for the creation of institutions to look after the well-being of citizens while avoiding the extremes of wealth inequality found in the capitalist world. Contrast this to the 1990s, when “shock therapy” reforms instituted by Boris Yeltsin, considered part of the introduction of “freedom” by liberals at the time, was discredited in

the eyes of the majority of the Russian people, who saw their economic security replaced almost overnight due to “soaring inflation, skyrocketing prices, massive unemployment, and rampant crime” (p. 98).

From the point of view of an ex-Soviet citizen observing pro-Western slogans used by the opposition and derogatory words employed to demonize a society which they remember with nostalgia, there is little wonder why many would be hostile to the liberal movement.

In all three of Baysha’s case studies, uni-progressivism undermined democracy instead of expanding it as these movements had intended. By placing the West as the uncriticizable model for what a country should strive for, uni-progressive discourse becomes a tool for symbolic and political domination over the “underdeveloped” Other, closing off any alternative intellectual discourse.

Miscommunicating Social Change argues that uni-progressivism is something that democratic social movements in the post-Soviet countries should absolutely avoid. She writes:

It is necessary to make the solid and impermeable frontiers between the self and the “other” porous, which will allow the activation of a diversity of positions, the forging of connections between former enemies, and the creation of alliances across borders. This, in turn, will pave the way for working out mutually acceptable terms of co-existence and reducing the chance of violence, whether physical or symbolic (p. 184).

This position, however, is not without its limits. As the experience of the Euro-Maidan in Ukraine demonstrated, a complete “dissolution of boundaries”, or “total pluralism” (p. 184), in order to create a popular front can lead to the cooptation of the movement by radically nationalistic and neo-fascistic forces, as with Svobodna and Pravy Sektor in Ukraine. Once this takes place, symbolic violence can ultimately transform into physical violence.

Russian citizens were also affected by the Ukrainian conflict and the discursive closures that occurred on both sides. The liberal opposition welcomed the Euro-Maidan as the event that “liberated” Ukrainians from an outdated, Soviet-like, corrupt regime dependent on authoritarian Russia, bringing it closer to becoming a “normal” European country.

Pro-government forces within Russia tried to portray Euro-Maidan as an example of western intervention that drowned the country in chaos and blood. The state then used this threat as an excuse to restrict the laws concerning demonstrations, making it possible to render any meeting illegal.

It was not only the post-Crimea annexation euphoria that stabilized the political situation in Russia for a time but also the fear of revolution and a new political crisis that came with the Ukrainian conflict. While this fact almost always goes unnoticed by the media and researchers, Baysha points out that many post-

Soviet people are afraid of changes and revolutions, do not really sympathize with liberal ideas, and feel nostalgic for the Soviet times.

What *Miscommunicating Social Change* sorely lacks is an analysis of Russian pro-government discourse. It appears that this discourse is constructed through an interplay of colonial and anti-colonial discourses.

When the Russian government needs to apply repressive measures, it either states that the exact same measures are a “normal practice” commonly applied in the West, or, when these exceptional measures transgress ordinary laws, that without them Russia would be colonized by the West. The opposition is usually depicted by pro-government media as agents of the West. Or perhaps Russian politics do not actually exist independently from the West. The West is both used as a positive example for repressive measures and a negative one when certain actions of protesters need to be demonized.

In this way, Russian politics is defined by colonial thinking on both sides. Russian liberals use the West as an example of what Russian society should aspire to be, whereas the Russian government uses the West as both an example of what is “normal” and a constant threat.

In order to pursue meaningful policy, either side has to overcome colonial thinking and denounce the coloniality of the opponent. Baysha’s analysis of oppositional media shows the coloniality of Russian liberals, who fail to understand their compatriots’ needs and desires, giving the opposition a tool that could help it to recognize its own mistakes and understand that in pursuit of democracy it acts and thinks in undemocratic ways.

An investigation of pro-government media could encourage meaningful criticism the Russian government in a way that is understandable to the majority of the population. In order to do that, the opposition needs to find issues, such as the Soviet social security system, for example, that are actually appealing for Russian, and make the country more “progressive” than the West.

Luckily, the opposition seems to have learned from their mistakes. During this summer’s protests surrounding the banning of certain independent candidates for the Moscow state Duma election, opposition forces managed to attract tens of thousands of people every week. More than half of Moscow’s population sided with the protesters for the first time in many years (Kommersant 2019).

The analyses of the posts of opposition leaders and oppositional media headlines in August showed an encouraging trend: the uni-progressive imaginary was absent in the majority of cases.

Another unfortunate thing about Baysha’s book is that she only analyses publications from the traditional liberal media (*Novaya Gazeta* and *Ekho Moskvy*) making it hard to compare to what extent the oppositional discourse has changed. Nevertheless, less than five per cent of articles in *Novaya Gazeta* and a couple of articles at *MBKh-Media*, *The Moscow Times*, and *BBC-Russia* used uni-progressive discourse (in the last two cases they were used by their

guests who were either political scientists or opposition candidates) (Olshanskaya 2019, Radchenko 2019, BBC-Russia 2019).

On the news website *Meduza* and on Alexey Navalny's blogs, this discourse was absent. Lubov Sobol, one of the key oppositional candidates in the Duma election, used hierarchical rhetoric only once, calling the protesters "the best people of Moscow" (2019). Only one of the influencers, Ury Dud, who supported the protests, made use of the uni-progressive imaginary in his posts (2019).

Several members of the opposition, mainly Russian feminists, criticized the hierarchical structure that liberals create when describing themselves and those who do not participate in protests. On her Twitter account, Nika Vodwood, one of the most well known Russian feminists today, criticised the way in which *Novaya Gazeta* (Aramyan 2019) painted a heroic portrait of Egor Zhukov, a student of one of the most prestigious Russian universities, the Higher School of Economics, who was facing trial for allegedly participating in massive "riots."

Vodwood's critique points out the hierarchy created between Zhukov and other protesters, which resulted in the validation of his toxic anti-feminist views and an unequal share of public attention to the cases of other protesters, though they were facing the same accusations for the same actions. She pointed out that it is the action, not the person, that matters in such cases. Darya Serenko, another renowned Russian feminist and artist-activist, supported these statements, writing an article in which she criticized the romanticization of the protests, the idealization of the victims of the system, and the blame placed on those who did not participate (2019).

Only *Ekho Moskvy* still holds to uni-progressive rhetoric, which was present in half of their posts. However, even their rhetoric seems to have moved away from colonial discourse. *Ekho* speaker Yulia Latynina is famous for her extremely liberal views, which would be considered as right-wing conservative in the West, proving Baysha's point that Russia's old-school that liberals still use uni-progressive discourse have become outdated and cannot keep up with the times themselves.

Nevertheless, Latynina noted last year that "the Kremlin is not strong, Europe is weak" and that "the regimes that did not modernise began to survive because Europe became weak and started to flirt with them" (Latynina 2019). Such disappointment in the West could make even hard-core Russian liberals like Latynina finally overcome uni-progressive discourse and potentially even make them listen to their compatriots.

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Book Review: *Voices of 1968: Documents from the Global North*

Review Author: Louise Knops

Salar Mohandesi, Bjarke Skaerlund Risager, Laurence Cox, 2018, *Voices of 1968: Documents from the Global North*. London: Pluto Press. (309 pp. paperback, price £19.99)

“There have only been two world revolutions. One took place in 1848. The second took place in 1968. Both were historical failures. Both transformed the world” - Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein.

Voices of 1968 is an extraordinary account of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, movements which transformed the world, and continue to do so today. Salar Mohandesi, Bjarke Skaerlund Risager and Laurence Cox, the editors of the collection, open a window into the many scenes of what has been described as “the first global rebellion” (p.19).

The editors focus in particular on the contentious cultures that developed in the US, Canada, Mexico, Japan, West Germany, Denmark, France, Italy, Britain, Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. The book’s originality and relevance to the field of social movement studies lies in the richness and authenticity of its empirical dimension, as well as to the contributions it makes to ongoing discussions of research ethics.

Research is, by definition, a collective affair. To understand current and past events, we rely on our own observations, but also on work that has preceded ours. Rarely, however, are we invited to take a look at the raw material underpinning academic analysis. The collection of texts and primary sources presented in *Voices of 1968* invites us to do just that, contrasting theoretically-driven and deductive scholarly work in the field of social movements studies.

The editors adopt a historical approach, privileging descriptions of events over conceptual interpretations of them. In *Voices of 1968*, the reader is taken to the unfolding there and then, across the many countries reviewed and the vast array of movements that co-existed during “the long 1960s.”

Voices of 1968 is particularly remarkable in showcasing the heterogeneity and complexity of the tumultuous decade: a kaleidoscope of tactics (p. 24) and struggles emerged, and were hybridized and internationalized with varying levels of success and popularity. We learn about feminist movements and the emergence of radical feminist thought, anti-racism movements, gay liberation movements, workers movements, environmental movements, anti-war movements and many other forms of struggle.

For each country in the book, the reader gets a snapshot of what these movements looked like, but also of how particular events took place. These include well-known actions, such as the student occupations and protest which often acted as a catalyst for other forms of collective action. But also less mediatized ones, such as the women's "liberation from the toilet movement" in Japan, which "re-appropriated and reworked Marxist and Black Power concepts to politicize sexuality and sex-based relations" (p.120)

We also learn, in the poetic prose of Jaime Sabines, about the student massacre in *Tlatelolco* (Mexico, 1968) which became a point of reference for social movements' popular memory (p. 94). Community experiments, such as *Kommune I* in West-Germany, are included, as a place of contestation where "members attempted to live in ways that broke with the bourgeois family" (p.140).

The text is replete with thick descriptions of the repertoires of actions and provides insight into the emotions that accompanied the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s: protests, sit-ins, occupations, (hunger) strikes, pickets, arrests, armed confrontations, theoretical discussions, party formation, and also, the humor, fear, joy and indignation that these events contained.

This diversity is presented in a parsimonious way, through the book's straightforward structure: each chapter focuses on one country, and after a brief historical introduction into the specific context, the editors present a selection of relevant pictures, letters, posters, manifestos, and other artistic contributions. Our attention is drawn, in a series of black and white prints, to the specific materiality of the empirics presented in the *Voices of 1968*: the papers, the streets, the music, the festivals, and the fashion.

At times, the authors provide translations of key slogans, such as those deployed in France: "the economy is suffering—let it die," or "the more I make love, the more I want to make revolution," (p. 194-195).

Elsewhere, readers encounter articles published in activist journals, such as the description, by Dave Slaney, of the LSE occupation (Britain) in the *Bulletin of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign* (p. 234). The reader can dive into poetry and artistic productions, or into the personal reflections of activists, such as Ui Jun (Japan) who writes about "the worst environmental problems of any country in the world" (p. 126).

Sporadically, we come across pictures of the posters announcing upcoming protests, like the Civil Rights March in Northern Ireland (p. 258), flyers and campaign material, but also original photographs of events like the Black Power March in West London in 1970 (p. 230), or manifestos, such as the "Thirteen point program and platform" of the Young Lords Party in the United States (p. 55).

These materials and locations, and the networks between them, made it possible for movements to internationalize, by enabling the synchronization of protests

and the cross-fertilization of political communications. We are thus reminded that “a shared sense of unity across borders” (p. 19) and “the first global rebellion” were not only possible, but also that they were successful in a pre-digital age. There was “connective action” before Facebook, Google maps and online petitions.

Many of the struggles of 1968 –the slogans, claims and repertoires of collective action– resonate with movements that are unfolding worldwide today. Hence, the question arises: what would a “Voices of 2018” look like? It would likely, just like *Voices of 1968*, extend the period of analysis to the years just before and just after 2018.

It could speak of uprisings in 2011 in many parts of the world, such as the Arab Spring, the Occupy movements, and the anti-austerity movements in the South of Europe. It may also document the *#RefugeesWelcome*, *#MeToo*, and *#BlackLivesMatter* movements, and the People’s marches against Brexit. It might make mention of the mass mobilizations that sparked off in the autumn of 2018 in France, and how the “yellow vests” became a unifying symbol of the working poor. It might even speak of a new type of revolutionary messiah, the youth, and the millions of activists denouncing political inaction in the face of climate change, in the name of their future.

Upon reading *Voices of 1968*, I was struck by the similarity of grievances and denunciations mobilized then, and still mobilized today, often coalescing around the same culprit: capitalism and its destructive effects on humans, non-humans and our shared societies.

This is all the more striking given that the 1960s was a period of unprecedented wealth in many of the countries reviewed in the book. The editors underline how back then, “even those who enjoyed the fruits of the affluent society were often left with a bitter taste in their mouths” and signal the tension between “the optimistic and triumphalist rhetoric of modernizing governments and the realities on the ground” (p. 10).

Besides a critique of capitalism and its flaws, we can see the past and present coinciding on another front: challenges to parliamentary democracy and electoral forms of representation. Activists in 1968 and activists today question “the relationship [of activism] to power, both within the state and within organizations” (p. 25). In this regard, the editors acknowledge how the *Voices of 1968* worked to push “democracy in new directions, overturn social roles, challenge accepted forms of representation and redefine the very meaning of politics” (p. 1).

However, the movements covered by *Voices of 1968* displayed at least two critical dimensions that are missing today.

First, 1968 was characterized by a close connection between struggles in the South (decolonization in particular) and those taking place in the North, which inspired and fed off each other in a fluid way. As the authors remind us, “it was

precisely the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America that made possible the radical 1960s in the Global North” (p. 5). In this regard, as the authors explain, the focus on “Voices of the Global North” should not be seen as disregard for the voices of the Global South. It was rather a choice driven by empirical reasons, like the need to acknowledge the reality of different dynamics at play in different parts of the world – as well as material ones, like the difficulty of accommodating an even greater diversity of cases in a single volume.

This close connection between the Southern and Northern struggles departs sharply from the contemporary context where movements in the North, around climate change for example, are sometimes accused of taking a Eurocentric and neo-colonial position in the production of their frames and claims.

A second notable difference between then and now lies in the explicitness of the movements’ ideological orientation. At the very heart of 1968 was the sharing of a common language of revolution: Marxism (p. 20). Of course, as the authors note, not everyone was a Marxist, “but many activists became familiar with Marxist concepts,” which “contributed to the feeling of sharing a kind of *lingua franca* despite the various dialects of Trotskyism, Maoism and so forth” (p. 21). Taking pride in siding with an alternative ideology could not be more different to attempts by contemporary movements to go “beyond and above politics,” often without proposing a counter-hegemonic paradigm to see the world and offer solutions.

Despite the existence and the articulation of alternative ideologies at the time, the reader is forced to recognize that the ’68 revolution did not succeed in meeting the revolutionary expectation: there was no overturn of the capitalist model of society, as “activists ultimately failed to bring together a diversity of voices into an inclusive unity” (p. 27).

The most revealing example in this regard is Britain. In *Voices of 1968*, the country is described as the center of a “global culture,” a nation with a “resurgent left” and intense “labour militancy.” Britain experienced the crisis of capitalism in the 1970s but, as the editors remind us, “it was not the radical left that ultimately benefitted from this breakdown, but a new right under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher” (p.231).

Similarly, the most recent crisis of capitalism, embodied in the financial meltdown of 2008 and the uprisings that followed –the anti-austerity movements in Southern Europe or the Occupy movements– did not result in a global resurrection of the left and far-left. Quite the contrary.

Despite the local and brief successes of the left in some countries (e.g. Syriza in Greece), we were reminded of the incredible resilience of neoliberalism: its capacity to absorb moments of rebellion without reforming itself entirely. “Cooptation”, as the authors remind us, “has been perhaps the most obvious feature of the neoliberal order that consolidated itself in the 1990s and 2000s” (p. 29). The years after the financial crisis took on a rhythm of new austerity

measures and more financial deregulation, leading to the worsening of economic inequalities and environmental degradation.

For all of these reasons, *Voices of 1968* is a timely read. It is inspiring, awakening, and thought-provoking, but in an unconventional way: it does not impose its own questions or interpretations upon the reader. Rather, it provides succinct and comprehensive descriptions from a selection of (northern) countries and movements: enough to answer some questions and encourage further reflections. In doing so, this book makes an important contribution in terms of research ethics and priorities.

Voices of 1968 exemplifies what researchers should always keep in sight: the subjects, the matters, the objects at the heart of the story, and stands as a beautiful demonstration of research as a field of knowledge-building and exploration.

References

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