

JOURNEY'S END

It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end. (Hemingway, in Khalid 2016)

Readers of this volume were promised a high-class, intellectual journey, a peregrination from a theoretical highland down to the empirical sea in search of the solution to two mysteries, exploring a theory and its validation. Now the trip is over. We are back at the highlands and, like any traveler arriving home from a journey, we must unpack our (intellectual) baggage and contemplate what Hemingway thought “matters”: the journey. It has exposed two mysteries: that of why the US has killed so many in war; and underlying this first mystery, a second, the enigma of human being—what it is and how it works, or does not.

Mystery 1

Jarrett Leplin, a respected scientific realist, has presented a list of “claims” that characterize an inquiry as realist. The first is that “the best scientific theories are at least approximately true” (1984:). Whether global warring is a “best” theory is not the focus here; it is rather its approximate truth that is our concern. Mystery 1 is solved if, during the journey, evidence was found indicating global warring theory is approximately true. If it is, it accounts for the New American Empire’s prodigious killing. The theory was formally presented in chapters 1 and 2. In it, three macro-region concepts—contradiction, reproduction, and global warring—account for the power dynamics of empire. Contradictions intensify and coalesce, leading to reproductive vulnerability. Vulnerability sets actors into operations in meso-regions. One category of actors who respond to contradictions are

elites, the tips of the Spear in class warfare. *Deadly Contradictions* paid especial attention to security elites, those with authority over imperial exercise of violence. Under conditions of vulnerability, elites exhibit social reflexivity and conduct hermeneutic politics to solve the hermeneutic puzzle of the vulnerability, which leads to the instituting of public *délires*. If peaceful fixes of vulnerabilities go unsolved, Shultzian Permission is granted, leading to implementation of violent public *délires*. Hell is unleashed, and global warring occurs.

Thereafter, the peregrination descended to the empirical realm and the sea of modernity. Chapters 3 and 4 revealed that the US has been a shape-shifting empire since its very beginning: how from 1783 through the late 1860s it was a rapidly expanding territorial empire; and how from the 1870s until World War II it developed beyond the territorial limits of North America, alternating between a more formal empire, like those of Europe, to a more informal one, like the UK in parts of Latin America during the nineteenth century. Then it was shown how after World War II, the “old boy” Security Elites 1.0, “present at the creation,” organized the US into a three-tiered rental empire, the New American Empire. Here in very late modernity was a social being driven by a global domination public *délire* that fixated its security elites upon achieving world empire—peacefully if possible, violently if not.

Once it was established that the US is an empire, it was important to discover whether it is subject to contradictions. Chapter 5 covered two general sorts of economic and political contradictions that bothered the empire. The US economic system since 1945 has experienced cyclical and systemic economic contradictions. The former manifests itself as a cycle of boom and bust, argued to be the result of overproduction/overaccumulation brought about by an inter-capitalist contradiction. Systemic economic vulnerabilities derive from a land/capital contradiction that involves the pushing of energy force resources toward their limits, as manifested in the emergence of global warming and peak oil. The systemic contradiction has the potential to cause enormous harm, up to and including human being’s not being. Likewise, the US political system has exhibited political vulnerabilities brought about in some measure by an inter-imperial contradiction expressing itself largely in competition with the Soviet Union; and a dominator-dominated contradiction manifesting itself in dominated peoples’ resistance to the US Leviathan.

Chapters 6 through 10 went to war. They examined a total of twenty-four global wars pursued over three moments, each moment corresponding to different concatenations of contradictions. The first moment, from 1950 through 1974, was a period when the inter-imperial contradiction was more intense and the various economic contradictions were more re-

laxed. The Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Iranian and Guatemalan coups, and the Cuban fiasco were analyzed. For each of these global warrings, it was shown that the inter-imperial contradiction somehow intensified; and that US Security Elites 1.0, through their hermeneutic politics, interpreted the contradictions in terms of the global domination public *délire*, granted themselves Shultzian Permission, implemented the *délire*, and as a result engaged in a global war.

The second moment of global warring was between 1975 and 1989, a time Bob Dylan sensed was “a-changin’.” The change was that the concatenation of contradictions was reversing. The inter-imperial contradiction had not disappeared but was relaxing and would, by the end of the period, collapse upon the Soviet Union’s demise. Meanwhile, the economic contradictions were beginning to be more threatening as cyclical recessions started to gain strength. The land/capital contradiction was also intensifying. Global warming became noticeable as CO₂ levels climbed. Peak oil was recognizable as the US began to import more oil from overseas. And the dominator-dominated contradiction began to intensify too, as people in the dominated world realized who the dominator was in the post–World War II era. It was the New American Empire and, just as anarchists in the time of the old empires threw bombs at ruling elites, “terrorists” in the post-1974 years resisted the US Security Elites 2.0 by using themselves, among other things, as bombs.

Chapter 8 demonstrated how the Security Elites 2.0 instituted new *délires* in response to the new contradictory concatenation. These were the oil-control and the anti-terrorist *délires*. These were actually iterations of the earlier global domination public *délire* that were sensitive to the new vulnerabilities of the changing times. The oil-control iteration was responsive to the worsening economic vulnerabilities and sought to make the best of a bad situation by seizing control of the key force resource, oil, to insure domination by having what everybody else (economically) needed. The anti-terrorist iteration addressed the worsening political vulnerabilities caused by the intensifying dominator-dominated contradiction. It tried to relax the “terrorist” problem by killing terrorists.

Three global wars were analyzed during this second moment: Afghanistan I, the Iran-Iraq War, and Libya I. Afghanistan I, the war the Soviets fought with the Afghans, was a throwback, a final intensification of the inter-imperial contradiction. The Security Elites 2.0 responded by granting themselves Shultzian Permission and implementing the Islamic card iteration of the global domination public *délire*, which led to US global warring on the side of Afghans rebelling against the Soviets. US participation in the Iran-Iraq War followed intensification of the land/capital contradictions. Shultzian Permission was granted, and the subsequent in-

stitution and implementation of the oil-control public *délire* resulted in US global warring in Afghanistan. Libya I followed upon intensification of the dominator-dominated contradiction, whereupon Shultzian Permission was granted and the anti-terrorist iteration of the global domination public *délire* was instituted.

The third moment of global warring analyzed lasted from 1990 to 2014. This was a time of severe contradictory vulnerability. Economic contradictions were at their most intense for the time frame visited in this volume. The 2007 recession was the most serious since the Great Depression. Deaths due to climate change, an indicator of the severity of the land/capital contradiction, rose from an estimated 300,000 annually in 2009 to 5 million in 2012 (Levi 2012). The dominator-dominated contradiction coalesced with the economic contradictions and came to a head in 9/11. The intensified, coalesced cyclical, land/capital, and dominator-dominated contradictions were a “perfect storm” for the US Leviathan, posing a hermeneutic puzzle for imperial elites: What to do?

Economic elites tried neoliberalism. It failed. Thereafter, averse to fixing vulnerabilities produced by global warming and the approach of peak oil, they froze into uncertainty. Security Elites 3.0, for their part, engaged in a hermeneutic politics to find a security fix to the vulnerabilities. Their politics did not range far. Two solutions were found in the realm of violent force. Both had initially been constituted during the second moment: they were the anti-terrorist and oil-control iterations of the original global domination public *délire*. In each of the global or incipient global wars examined—Iraq, Iran, Libya II, Syria, Yemen, Israel, Afghanistan II, Pakistan, Kosovo, Chad, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Philippines—conflict emerged out of the perfect storm of contradictions, followed by the granting of Shultzian Permission, which led in turn to implementation of the anti-terrorist and oil-control public iterations of the global domination public *délire*.

The spatial dimensions of the perfect storm of contradictions between 1990 and 2014 were so great that global warring became world warring. This evidence supports the sixth proposition of global warring theory, which states that if the spatial dimensions of contradictions grow, then the geographic distribution of global warring increases. World warring has left millions dead. This suggests that the peregrination in this text has been a postmortem examination through the human being found at the sites of warring: “this one died here, due to global warring; that one died there, due to global warring; they died next, due to global warring; followed by other deaths, due to global warring,” and on and on. Contemplate four further conclusions.

Further Conclusions: First, it is clear the US Leviathan engaged in two varieties of global wars. Initially (1950–1974) its hostilities were largely in response to the inter-imperial contradiction; later (1990–2014) they were over the perfect storm of economic and political contradictions; and in between (1975–1989) there were nineteen years when the New American Empire fought for both sorts of contradictory concatenations.

A second conclusion is that the US exercises of global warring violence caused considerable unintended powers. The US actually did not win, or lost, three of the five global wars analyzed between 1950 and 1974. Korea was at best a draw. The Vietnam and the Cuban interventions were fiascos. The US was successful in the 1953 anti-Mossedegh coup, which US security elites *délired*. But this success produced anti-US animosity among Iranians, who came to regard America as the Great Satan, something security elites did not *délire*. US security elites got their *délires* in the 1953 Guatemalan coup but created a brutal, repressive, dictatorial state, also something they had not intended.

Considering the global wars of the moment of changing contradictions, remember that US security elites in Libya I dearly *délired* to eliminate Gaddafi, which they failed to do. These same security elites appeared to have better luck in Afghanistan I, which they celebrated as a great victory. After all, they had triumphed over the Soviet monster-alterity, a really big Washington *délire*. However, in so doing they created, in the CIA's terminology, blowback. They, with Pakistan's assistance, had armed and trained Muslim rebels, some of whom would go on to join al-Qaeda or the Taliban, becoming terrorists who would fight the US Leviathan tooth and nail, something *undélired*. The Iran-Iraq War deepened Iran's enmity toward the US and created the new, Saddamite monster-alterity in Iraq, which later the security elites would have to destroy.

The wars between 1990 and 2014 have similarly produced unintended powers. Notably, the US Leviathan lost the two biggest global wars. In Iraq, a conflict that, judged in terms of international law, was a “supreme” war crime, the US cut and ran. In Afghanistan II, the end appears essentially the same. In both Iraq and Afghanistan the Security Elites 3.0 sought to enhance oil control but did not. In both countries they wanted to reduce terrorism but did not; in fact they increased it. Both Iraq and Afghanistan have been left profoundly unstable and violent after decades of global warring.

Global warring in Iran was supposed to achieve regime change. It did not. Rather, the covert warring created the unintended powers of increasing burdens upon the US economy, raising tensions between Washington and its clients, and strengthening the presence of the Shiite Necklace in opposition to the New American Empire—all *undélired*. US sanctions have

hindered Iranian oil and gas production, but that has not given US oil companies substantial control over Iranian oil. Global warring in Libya II was supposed to facilitate US control over Libyan oil. Instead it has led to near collapse of the oil industry. It is not possible to control a production that does not exist. At the same time, global warring provoked disintegration of government authority, leading to reductions in the high levels of income, education, and health produced by Gaddafi's regime. In the anarchy of this state, Islamist "terrorist" groups are growing stronger. In Syria too, US participation in the warring has not led to regime change but rather to vastly greater instability, coupled with immense growth of terrorist groups. US participation in Yemen's, Pakistan's, and Israel's wars has grown terrorism in different ways.

In Africa—be it Chad, Sudan, Somalia, or Uganda—US global warring has supported development of authoritarian, less democratic regimes headed by the likes of Habré and Déby in Chad, Salva Kiir in the new South Sudan, various warlords in Somalia, and Museveni in Uganda. Such states tend to be unstable. Equally, they are places of terrorism. In Chad and Uganda the terrorizing has been that of the state brutalizing its own citizens. In Somalia it has followed from the growth of terrorist organizations like al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda. US military intervention has allowed ExxonMobil to retain considerable control over Chadian oil, but military intervention on the side of southern Sudan essentially led to termination of US control over Sudanese oil.

US global warring against FARC and ELN "terrorists" strengthened the Colombian state's ability to inflict terror on its own people. In Venezuela, as Washington prepares the battlefield to wrest control of the oil, US interventions in opposition to the Bolivarian revolution increase instability. In sum, US global warring has led to increased world insecurity, increased authoritarian polities, weakened bonds between Washington and its clients, and the New American Empire's emergence as an (untried) war criminal.

The preceding has implications for the kinetic power of Washington's global warring. Observe the major wars since 1950: the Korean War was no more than a draw; the Vietnam War, a defeat; the Iraq War, a defeat; Afghanistan II, the greatest strengthening yet of the Taliban; the Bay of Pigs, a defeat. Each defeat was against a country, or countries, of lesser kinetic power. Further, as has just been documented for other of its global wars, often times the powers achieved were unintended and un-délired. Bluntly, the US Leviathan has done poorly at achieving intended kinetic powers using global warring. This suggests the ineffectiveness of war for fixing vulnerabilities.

A third conclusion is that US global warring has been hermeneutically blind. It is intended to fix reproductive vulnerabilities brought on by con-

tradiction. Yet it has done nothing of the sort. The neoliberal iteration of the liberal public *délire* has proven hermeneutically blind to fixing the cyclical contradiction. The oil-control iteration of the global domination public *délire* is equally blind to fixing the systemic contradiction that threatens the exigencies of climate change. Even if US elites won complete control of the world's oil, it would do nothing to prevent the consumption of oil that adds to global warming. The anti-terrorist iteration of the global domination public *délire* is blind to the actuality that it increases terrorism, thereby intensifying the dominator-dominated contradiction. Blind to what it does, US global warring spreads the disorder of cyclical economic turbulence, global warming, and violent terror across the sea of modernity.

Finally, ponder a fourth conclusion. The US Leviathan has killed and wounded a lot of people—bug splats, often civilians, often killed pitilessly like Artica, with her unborn child blasted from her womb. The exact number of casualties due to US global warring since World War II is unknown. What is known is that millions upon millions, mostly civilians, have been either directly or indirectly killed or wounded. More millions have been obliged to live the wretched lives of refugees. Still more millions, those not dead or fled, have suffered miserable times as their workplaces, transportation systems, educational institutions, and health care facilities have been blasted to smithereens by military operations.

US military elites insist that America fights humanely. They swear incidents of inhumanity such as the massacre at My Lai during the Vietnam War or at Hadith during the Iraq War are aberrations. However, “American veterans of the war in Iraq” told a different story, one of “a culture of casual violence, revenge and prejudice against Iraqi civilians that … made the killing of innocent bystanders a common occurrence” (Harris, Beaumont, and al-Ubeidy 2006). Moreover, there is evidence of long-standing and systematic US military brutality since World War II beyond that in Iraq. Harbury (2005) offers a history of US participation in torture. Falk, Gendzier, and Lifton (2006) provide data about US war atrocities in Iraq. Rejali (2007: 581–592) has an eleven-page bibliography of US atrocities during the Vietnam War. Turse (2013) reports systematic American brutality during the Vietnam conflict. McCoy (2006) provides an account of the CIA’s involvement in torture. US military assistance programs throughout the world have taught torture. The School of the Americas, renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2000, has been especially notorious for training Central and South American militaries in the use of vicious violence (Gill 2004). The worldwide practice and frequency of US global warring makes it global terrorist No. 1. US media hermeneuts broadcast the monstrosities of resistance terrorists, rightly so. They are silent about the US Leviathan’s monstrosities. Thus is created a

cuckoo land of violent unreality in which Americans, who see only others as terrorists, are the cuckoos.

So, is global warring theory approximately true in the instance of the US Leviathan? Not all the data that could bear upon the theory has been evaluated, but it never is. However, the evidence adduced is consistent with the theory. Consequently, mystery 1 appears solved: Deadly contradictions of global warring theory made them do it. Ponder next the second mystery.

Mystery 2

The second, more abstract and general mystery sought the reality of human being: How it works, or does not. Let us consider next how human being works, or does not.

How Social Being Works, or Does Not

Prior to settling in to the work of social being, allow me to offer a methodological admonition suggested by certain observations in *Deadly Contradictions* pertaining to what is said and written by actors. Ours has been a time when a certain idealism prevails in social and cultural theory. Ideas are texts, and as Derrida once put it, “Il n'y pas hors de text” (“There is no outside to the text”) ([1967] 1976: 158–159). If there is no “outside” to the text, then there is nothing to study there. It is as if there is no context to the text.

This has meant that idealist thinkers have emphasized gathering texts of what people say and write, at the expense of what is “outside”—the social forms in which actors enact the texts. If the present text has revealed anything, it is that what actors say is not what actors necessarily do. US security elites drone on and on about how they come from this really exceptional “city on a hill” that brings “democracy and liberty”; but the reality is they drone on and on bringing terror and disorder. The admonition here is not that we should forget about the text. What actors say and write is part of their culture, and their culture is a force resource that choreographs other force resources. Still, the operation of *all* the force resources provides a better approximation of what people really do. So the admonition is to put the text in the context to more truthfully know reality. Attention now turns to the work of human being, first in general, and then more specifically in empires.

The Work of Human Being: The Ur-proposition is: Doing work takes force to have the power to get the work done. Human structures are termed

social forms, which are imagined to work as the result of exercises of force. Social forms are built up from actors in practices, practices in institutions, institutions in systems, and systems into social beings. The space-time sea of human being, then, is full of social beings exercising force, doing work while connected with other social beings, as well as other biological and inorganic beings. Imperial social forms are just one type of social being.

The preceding suggests a contradictory conundrum, not previously identified but of broad relevance to social being: It takes force to have power; and if force is finite, which at present appears to be the case with energy forces, then the more force is exercised, the less force is left to exercise. To have a future, it is necessary to exercise force in the present, but that consumption of force means that it is not there for the future. You may be able to exercise your force today, but maybe not tomorrow. Present use of force is necessary for, but in contradiction with, future use of force.

The work of social beings exercising force is to make strings with logics, whose powers may sometimes be unintended. Two logics are at play in social beings. The first is a logic of disorder, in which contradictions have the power to move social beings toward the pandemonium of structural deconstruction. The second logic confronts the first. It is one of social constitution, in which social reflexivity—the human organization of autopoiesis, using in actors' brains their cultural neurohermeneutic systems—moves social beings away from the bedlam of deconstruction. Contradiction has its concatenations, which may intensify and coalesce. Social constitution has its iterations and reiterations, which may fix the vulnerabilities provoked by contradiction. Social reflexivity involves actors, elite ones in the present study, reflecting upon hermeneutic puzzles and their vulnerabilities provoked by contradictions.

Actors' minds, John Locke notwithstanding, are not tabulae rasae. Far from it, their neuronal culture is loaded with technical, ideological, worldview, personal, and positional culture. From the culture come different hermeneutics—meanings of what is and what to do about it. Different actors have different perceptual and procedural interpretations of a contradictory situation, which form the basis of hermeneutic politics. Some actors perceive a reality in G way, and believe that people should proceed to Y exercise of force to fix the situation. Other actors perceive that reality in H way, and believe that people should proceed to Z exercise of force to fix it.

Contradicting this tendency to hermeneutic diversity is the actuality that actors in similar positions have similar cultures and thus understand reality in similar ways. In such situations it is possible for actors to be hermetically sealed into particular interpretations. Yet it is always likely there will be some difference. The antipathy between Colin Powell and Dick Cheney had a great deal to do with their understandings of what to do

about Iraq. *Deadly Contradictions* offers no theory to explain who wins in hermeneutic politics; but to the victors in these politics go the spoils of their interpretation having become the fix for the vulnerabilities. Social being in this optic is subject to a Nietzschean “play of forces” in which the forces in the logic of disorder seek to damage the beings’ force, while those in the logic of social constitution work to reproduce it. Permit five observations expanding upon this perspective.

First, contradictions count: all things break down (though they may be transformed). Breaking down is things moving toward the limit of their being, which is contradiction. For humans, contradictions can and do turn deadly. The systemic economic contradiction is already responsible for 5 million deaths per year, by one estimation (Leber, 2015). The US global warring that resulted from the particular concatenation of contradictions in the 1945–2014 time frame has killed millions.

Contradictions count for another reason, which is that they are a basis of what actors sense, feel, and think about. Another way of putting this looks to Spinoza’s notion that being determines reflecting upon being (see Duff 1903); therefore contradictory being as a particular instance of being determines reflection on itself. However, actors’ reflection upon contradictions is *not* direct. Rather, people know contradictions through the already noted interpretive device in their I-spaces, the cultural neurohermeneutic system, which involves the brain in processing the relevance that cultural messages stored in neurons have to events occurring in reality. Most people will not know that an event sensed is part of a contradiction but instead will interpret the event in terms of the cultural knowledge of that event. One of the old boys, if asked whether the events in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s were those of the inter-imperial contradiction, would probably have responded, “No, those events are about the Soviet spread of communism.” Further, the old boys’ understanding of the event would be part of the string of events involved in social reflexivity, which might lead to further understandings of it. Hermeneutic blindness and deception may lead to complete misunderstanding of contradiction. For example, many people believe that the climatic extremes of global warming brought on by the land/capital contradiction are just “normal” weather variations. This is hermeneutic blindness. A number of people who believe this do so because hermeneuts serving the oil and gas industries tell them that climate variations are “natural.” This is hermeneutic deception.

A second observation bearing on the work of social forms is that the strings produced by exercises of force in the logic of social constitution tend to exhibit what might be termed a conservation of *délires*. Recall that social reflexivity, operating as part of the logic of social constitution, produces public *délires* that choreograph the exercise of force to reproduce.

So long as the desires of the powerful remain constant, the public *délires* they institute to ensure their reproduction will remain similar or are likely, to use the term introduced earlier, to be iterations of each other. “Conservation of *délires*,” then, is the principle that social change moves iteration by iteration of public *délires*, with iterations understood as similar ways of doing the same thing.

For example, the global domination public *délire* was instituted in 1950. At first there was its NSC 68 iteration. Then there was its Nixon iteration during Nixon’s presidency; the PD 18, Islamic card, and oil-control iterations during the Carter administration; and the Reagan and anti-terrorism iterations under Reagan. Each of these iterations was an interpretive response to changes in conditions influencing public *délires* and their ability to help reproduce global empire. The oil-control iteration was about fighting to reproduce the empire by having power over its oil and gas energy supplies, threatened by the land/capital contradiction. The anti-terrorist iteration was about fighting to reproduce the empire by having power over “terrorists,” who posed a threat because of the dominator-dominated contradiction.

The conservation of *délires* means that social beings, especially great and complex ones, like the US Leviathan, change course slowly as they glide through the sea of space and time. If a social being’s logic of social constitution is having trouble formulating fixes that relax the logic of disorder, then its course is toward the whirlpools of contradictory disorder. This perspective of change omits the vectoring and optimism of Hegelian dialectics that saddled some of Marx’s thought. Social beings are not assured a thesis-antithesis-synthesis directionality. There is no inevitable zig-zagging progress from the heights of synthesis to still higher synthesis. Rather, social beings inch along according to their public *délires*; making new iterations through hermeneutic politics as new conditions, especially those pertaining to their contradictions, arise. Thus understood, change is, in Lewis Henry Morgan’s terms, “experimental.”

Fourth, hermeneutic politics does not invariably provide public *délires* that work, in the sense of being successful reproductive fixes to contradictory vulnerabilities. Enlightenment thought posited humans as rational. Fat chance—Shakespeare knew better. Humans are giddy. Hermeneutic blindness and deception are always possible. Autopoiesis is not guaranteed. Social beings can and do become disordered when they are unable to sail courses away from the deconstructions of contradiction. Otherwise put, sometimes social beings work, sometimes they do not, and sometimes they work themselves into not working.

The fifth observation begins with a question: if not by rationality, how do humans change social forms? Charles Saunders Peirce, in his essay

"How to Make Our Ideas Clear," articulated what came to be regarded as the canonical expression of pragmatist thought. This was to "consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (Peirce 1992: 132). Actors involved in hermeneutic politics consider the practical effects of each iteration of a public *délire* in order to attain better practical effects in the next iteration of that *délire*, and it is in this sense that experimental change is pragmatic in the play of forces of social beings sailing the sea of human being. Next, reflect upon the work of empires.

The Work of Empires: To consider the work of empires, I pose the question, whatever happened to negative reciprocity? One of anthropology's gifts to social thought has been to demonstrate that the market distribution of goods and services is not the only way of organizing economic exchange. Anthropologists discovered that gift-giving was important, especially in social forms that were not modern. Two main traditions developed regarding gift-giving: one that went from Marcel Mauss ([1924] 2000) to Claude Lévi-Strauss ([1949] 1969); and another that went from Karl Polyani (1944) to Marshall Sahlins (1972). The latter tradition emphasized that there have been three forms of exchange in human history—reciprocity, redistribution, and the market. In "On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange," Sahlins (*ibid.*: 191–210) distinguished three forms of reciprocity: generalized reciprocity, where gift return was not immediate and when it occurred was a gift roughly equivalent to the original; balanced reciprocity, which involved immediate gift return, with the return gift roughly equal to the original; and finally, the residual category of negative reciprocity, where the reciprocity was not one of roughly equivalent gift exchange. In this case, one of the exchanging actors sought to get "something for nothing with impunity" (*ibid.*: 195) through measures such as haggling, theft, or wife-capture. The first two forms of reciprocity were supposed to dominate nonmarket economies. Less was said of negative reciprocity. It was less important because it was less frequent in the giving and counter-giving of nonmarket economies.

A substantial secondary literature has arisen to discuss and critique different aspects of the original gift-giving and exchange scholarship. One strand in this literature is debate over the difference between gifts and commodities, with Gregory (1982) insisting upon difference and Appadurai (1986) arguing for similarity. Another strand recognizes that gift-giving did not go away when markets emerged (Cheal 1988; Carrier 1992). Absent from this literature is contemplation of whatever happened to negative reciprocity.¹

I believe *Deadly Contradictions* suggests that negative reciprocity has exploded in importance since the origin of empires. To explain why this is so, let us first define “reciprocity” in terms of flows and counterflows of force resources to parties in an exchange. Implicit here is that gifts and commodities are variant forms of reciprocity distinguished in terms of who gets how much, when, of force resources in an exchange. Generalized and balanced reciprocity remain exchanges where parties to the exchange receive roughly equal amounts of force resources. “Negative reciprocity” characterizes exchanges where somebody “gets something for less” (than was given). It is an exchange where the party giving less—and such a party may be a social position, such as “capitalist”—can accumulate more in force resources than do the others.

It is common knowledge in anthropological literature that for the vast bulk of human history, people lived more or less egalitarian lives in their social forms. However, when the state was invented in ancient times and imperial social beings began their diffusion across the globe, the violent force of aristocrats in the empires was used to ensure that they accumulated more force resources than anybody else. This was because: A (the aristocrats) took force resources in the form of produce from B (food producers) and reciprocated by giving B the force resource of land from their holdings. Usually, the land received was about enough to support the food producer’s family. Critically, the violent force of aristocrats ultimately allowed them to have large tracts of land, of which portions could be provided to many producers. This meant that individual aristocrats took force resources from numerous producers. Bs received enough force resources from their labor on their land to support themselves. However, A received vastly greater force resources from the labor of Bs on their land than did individual Bs. This was negative reciprocity—a differential accumulation of force resources favoring aristocrats. Such negative reciprocity is termed “aristocratic.” By the end of medieval times much of the world had been subjugated to the tender mercies of aristocratic negative reciprocity.

Then, in early modern times, as capitalist institutions emerged as the basis of the economic systems of Europe’s old empires, the military institutions in the political system of those empires warred—not always or invariably successfully, but frequently—to reproduce the conditions for capitalist accumulation. The two parties to the exchanges required for such accumulation are capitalists and labor. In their exchanges, A (the capitalist) gets surplus value from B (labor), and B (labor) gets wages from A (the capitalist). Surplus value and wages are monetary forms of force resources and as such are a form of capital. Capitalists always accumulate far more surplus value than labor acquires wages. In this optic, capital accumulation is understood as a logic producing greater negative reciprocity, in the sense that

it makes greater numbers of laborers who provide greater sums of surplus value to capitalists. By the end of the old empires, imperial domination had spread across the entire globe along with the negative reciprocity understood as “capitalist.”² Hence, the growth of old and new modern empires has involved the growth of negative reciprocity through the operation of the logic of capital accumulation. The building of a world of imperial social beings with their aristocratic and capitalist negativity reciprocity has had another effect, considered next.

The Arc of the Moral Universe: On 7 March 1965, some six hundred largely African-American civil rights marchers left Selma, Alabama, for Montgomery, the state capital. There they intended to struggle against racial segregation by demanding their voting rights. They had gone only six blocks when they were set upon by police, who beat them brutally. The event became known as Bloody Sunday. A little over a week later, Martin Luther King led another march from Selma to Montgomery. This time it was successful, and before a huge crowd in front of the state capital he stated that segregation was “on its last legs” (in Remnick 2010: 13). Then he rhetorically asked his listeners how long it would be before it was over and responded, “Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice” (*ibid.*: 13). Martin Luther King is one of the world’s great moral leaders. I think he was wrong about the arc of the moral universe.

To understand why, consider the following: Many elites, and even their subjects, in the empires of modernity, helped by their hermeneuts, think of history as the growth of civilization. The actuality is different. The US Leviathan might be the most powerful empire ever, but in its propensity to violence it is a typical empire. Ever since the invention of empires some four or five thousand years ago, they have developed force resource extraction institutions, directly or indirectly supported by institutions of violent force, to accumulate force resources for their elites. They have all been the most powerful social beings of their epochs. History has been the emergence of ever more powerful empires, with ever more extensive and dense powers, ever more devastating violence, and ever more negative reciprocity—in the sense that ever more persons are actors in logics where some few get lots of force resources, and the vast majority get few such resources. Life for the vast majority who get a little is not much of a picnic. Life for the elites favored by the negative reciprocity is very much a life of privileged picnics. Such an organizing of human being is unfair and, accordingly, unjust. Consequently, and sadly, it is important to recognize that Reverend King was wrong. For a very long time, the arc of moral justice has bent toward injustice.

So what is the solution to the second mystery? Human being has been the work of a contradictory “play of forces” subject to logics of social constitution and disorder. There is no guarantee that the work works, in the sense that social constitution always wins out over disorder. Moreover, this play has so far instituted ever grander empires that, all their fine monuments, arts and literatures notwithstanding, are moral eyesores.

Critical Mediations: Utopia or the Sixth Extinction

I have lived inside the monster and know its entrails. (Martí 1895)

The bureaucratic, totalitarian monster grew stronger and spread. (C. L. R. James 1969)

Remember from the Preface that Rousseau said anthropology should be the discipline that studies other people in the world to better “know our own.” Investigation of twenty-four US wars among other peoples all over the world has told us something about “our own,” which in the course of our travels we have discovered is an interconnected world where we all live. Imperial social being was in some measure the reason those wars were the way they were. Now reread the two quotations above of Jose Martí and C. L. R. James.

They were not hybrid intellectuals, though both had lived in the US. Martí was a Cuban patriot and poet who spent time in the US during the 1880s and 1890s. James was a Trinidadian political economist, cricket commentator, and Marxist who lived off and on in the US in the twentieth century. US hermeneuts do not usually take such interpreters’ views seriously. Not American. Not Harvard or Yale. What can they know? Martí knew the US when it was first flexing its muscles in extraterritorial imperialism. James knew it while the New American Empire was being instituted. Both knew the same thing: the US was a “monster.” To US hermeneuts this is balderdash, the nonsense of two Caribbean cranks. America is “the shining city on the hill” whose security elites track and bugsplat monster-alterities, and even whacked Saddam and bin Laden.

But the “shining city on the hill” claim is unsupported by *Deadly Contradictions*. The US is an empire—a new sort of empire, but an empire nevertheless. In the New American Empire, much of the extraction of force resources is done through capitalist negative reciprocity, by capitalist institutions with military institutions supporting them. This leads to a Rousseauian understanding that Martí and James help to clarify. This text’s analysis of the twenty-four wars, despite its focus on other peoples where the wars occurred, has led us to “know our own.” Here is what we

now know: Rousseau had it wrong, at least for modernity. There is no “our own” world and their, other world. Structurally it is a monad. Imperial social beings reproduce by connecting with, and thereby becoming part of, other social forms. In doing so, the US Leviathan, following a negative reciprocity logic, choreographed by the global domination public *délire*, sows terror and disorder.

I ask my readers not to think this reality abstractly, but to feel it. Think of pregnant Artica trying to protect herself and her unborn child. Hear the rocket swoosh in to explode. Smell the stench of blood, feces, and explosives hanging over her body, blown open with the fetus hanging out. Know that this has happened to millions upon millions in different ways and times since 1945. Sowers of such horror are monsters. This revelation answers the question that President Obama left unanswered in his Nobel Peace Prize speech, the location of evil. The US Leviathan is a moral monstrosity.

Apocalypse Soon: What does the future hold? In the current moment, according to Slavoj Žižek, leftist missionary to postmodernists, humanity is coming to be *Living in End Times* (2011). Some Jeremiah is always declaring that end times are just around the corner. But curiously, Žižek was not alone: the years from 1990 to 2014 witnessed an upsurge of apocalyptic nattering in America. A 1993 poll found that 20 percent of Americans believed Armageddon was near (Berlet 1995). By 2011 the figure had doubled to 41 percent, with well over half the people surveyed in the American South convinced it was approaching (Pew 2010). There is a tendency to poke fun at the interpretations of fundamentalist “rednecks.” Remember also that Hank Paulson’s wife told him to turn to God as the hard times of the Great Recession began. Rednecks and economic elites seem to share in apocalyptic angst.

They may be on to something. There have been five mass extinctions of species in the history of the globe. Some believe that a sixth is in progress (Kolbert 2014). It is obvious that no reproductive fixes are currently operating for the systemic contradictions that threaten human and other living being. The concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has already risen to 400 ppm, where it is known to have deleterious consequences. The oil companies are sucking up the last dregs of tight oil. Peak oil may be postponed, but it is coming. Critically, the oil-control public *délire* does nothing to fix the land/capital contradiction. Even if successfully implemented, which it does not appear to be, all it can do is increase the New American Empire’s power as the key energy force resources disappear and disorder sets in. So it is appropriate to talk of *very late modernity*, in the sense that either modernity will change to something else, or the something else will

be nothing else. Consequently, all hands are on deck on the US Leviathan as the Sixth Extinction gathers force, because its apocalypse is imminent and scary. This leads to a grave hermeneutic puzzle: what, in Hell is to be done?

Lenin's Question: What to do, of course, was Lenin's question. I have sympathy for Lenin's answer, but my procedural response differs somewhat. Perceptually, imperial organizations are monstrosities. Humanity is better off without them. So I believe, like Lenin, they need to be eliminated by whatever means work. Procedurally, this is no easy matter.

Elimination of imperial monstrosities, as Lenin knew, is not a simple matter of having a revolution in which the winners take all and live happily ever after. Procedurally, imperial elimination involves two chores: eradicating the empires and instituting a global replacement able to equitably divide force resources in ways that allow these force resources to be reproducible. Instituting such novel social beings at a global level would be an extraordinary feat in the building of complex beings. No matter what, history will continue. Humans will experiment with different iterations of reproductive fixes. Perhaps some fix will emerge and enable global social beings to continue reproduction with equitable division of force resources. At present, however, there are no such fixes.

Further, remember the principle of the conservation of *délires*. There are hermeneuts working as hard as they can to keep the monstrosity going. Economic elites work day and night at the Harvards and Yales of very late modernity, fixated upon discovery of neoliberal iterations of capitalist reproduction to better regulate the flow of force resources to capitalist elites. They are aided by similarly continuously laboring security elites in the military-industrial complex who are fixated upon discovery of more "shock and awe" so as to produce more lethal iterations of global domination public *délire*. But after all is said and done, humans are giddy pragmatists. There is no necessity for fixes to work and save the day.

The average species exists five to ten million years before extinction (Lawton and May, 1995, Chapter 1). The human species has been around about three hundred thousand years. For 99 percent of this time, as earlier noted, human beings sailed the sea of space and time in classless social forms. Then the species invented empires, whereupon it went from bigger to even bigger empires capable of bigger and even bigger monstrosities. The conservation of *délires* saw to it, iteration by iteration, that imperial social beings extracted ever more force to exercise more power to reward elites with more prizes. The most recent incarnation of such predatory beings, the New American Empire, has generated contradictions whose fullest intensification promises complete disorder—apocalypse soon.

President Reagan, in his farewell address at the end of his presidency, said, “I’ve spoken of the shining city all my political life. … And how stands the city on this winter night? … After 200 years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true to the granite ridge, and her glow has held no matter what storm” (Reagan 1989). Poppycock! Since antiquity and the invention of empire there have been many imperial monsters on many hills, each with their appalling fires atop “granite” ridges. Perhaps what President Reagan really glimpsed, when he saw the “shining city” glow in very late modernity, was the latest, biggest monster’s light in the enormousness of the infinite universe, flaring in a darkened world.

Here comes the unsatisfying part. Some will complain that I have been pessimistic. Critical thought is supposed to liberate. They demand hope. Hope is not an answer. It is an opiate. Some demand to know, what is to be done? Liberation can be gained only when people know the actuality of their social being. This knowledge is what *Deadly Contradictions* has sought to contribute. Liberation begins with the elimination of empire. It ends with the establishment of complex, egalitarian, reproducible social beings able to operate globally. Liberation will not come merely by altering economic systems. Imperial economic systems are fused with their political counterparts, bristling with military institutions that control and exercise immense amounts of nonviolent and violent force. Elites in these institutions are disposed by their positional culture to solve hermeneutic puzzles violently. Unless their force is tamed, contradictions are likely to be deadly. Some may be tempted to label the vision of a future human being without empire as utopian. The choice may in fact be between utopia and the Sixth Extinction.

Notes

1. Entry points into the gift-giving and reciprocity literature would include Gregory (1982), Jonathan Parry (1986), and Graeber (2001: 217), who believes that “as currently used,” reciprocity is “very close to meaningless.” Narotzky and Moreno (2002) present the only major discussion of negative reciprocity, which they explore in Nazi concentration camps.

2. Piketty (2014: 1) has published an empirically rich and theoretically convincing explanation of why “capitalism automatically generates … inequalities,” which in our terms means it generates negative reciprocities.