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Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future by Henry A. Giroux (review)

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symploke, Volume 22, Numbers 1-2, 2014, pp. 394-396 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

symploke
editor
Jeffrey S. Eklun

AUSTERITY

Volume 22 Numbers 1-2

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as this book is an invitation to join that resistance, Gilligan's focus has shifted from centering care to centering resistance to its distortion. That is a welcome step.

Claudia Card, *University of Wisconsin*

Henry A. Giroux. *Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2013. 183 pp.

Henry Giroux is one of our foremost public intellectuals. Not content to speak to other academics, Giroux writes books that mix academic theory with political commentary, journalistic analysis with the academic study of culture. The same mixture is evident in the different venues in which he publishes. He is as likely to publish an incisive analysis of current events in the left-wing electronic journal, *Truthout*, as he is to publish a piece on critical pedagogy or the politics of culture in a more academic forum. Giroux's approach to the study of culture and society, moreover, is an explicitly activist one. Parallel to the work of other activist-scholars working in cultural studies and critical pedagogy (a field Giroux helped to found), his writings attempt not only to educate but to contribute to the transformation and betterment of society. His work has thus served as a model for many of us who attempt to mix the political, the pedagogical, and the scholarly.

Given the activist focus of his writing, every Giroux book attempts to make a specific intervention into the political events and analytical discourse of the moment in which it is published. Such intentional currency is certainly the case with *Youth in Revolt*, which looks hopefully to the Occupy movement for possibilities of a renewed commitment to democratic culture even as the book extends the critique of neoliberalism articulated in other recent writings by Giroux. The book's most notable contribution is its theorizing of the value of the Occupy movement and other contemporary youth movements as "harbingers of democracy fashioned through the desires, dreams, and hopes of a world based on equality, justice, and freedom" (138). Unlike mainstream commentators, Giroux takes the movement seriously, arguing persuasively that they represent a new approach to politics and collective organizing: "The protesters articulated and embodied the desire for new forms of collective struggle and modes of solidarity built around social and shared, rather than individualized and competitive, values" (123). This same commitment to collectivism is evident in the movement's refusal to delink its various demands from each other or to be reduced to a single issue. Always attentive to the pedagogical dynamics manifest in public culture, Giroux underscores the way in which the Occupy movement has also articulated a public pedagogy: "These youths have become the new public intellectuals of the twenty-first century, using their bodies, social media, digital technologies

and other educational tools to raise new questions, point to new possibilities, and register their criticisms of the antidemocratic elements of casino capitalism and the punishing state" (125). Rather than faulting the movement for what it has so far failed to achieve, Giroux compellingly argues for what it can teach us about the possibilities of a future society based around economic justice and radical democracy. He also persuasively historicizes the Occupy movement in relationship to broader and more international currents, such as the revolutions of the Arab Spring and the early, collectivist response in New York City to the violence of 9/11.

If the Occupy movement is the most immediate catalyst for the writing of *Youth in Revolt*, the ongoing degradations produced by neoliberalism is another. In books such as *Against the Terror of Neoliberalism* (2008) and *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability?* (2009), Giroux has emerged as one of the most forceful critics of the damage that neoliberalism has done to democracy, public culture, and, most powerfully, the lives of those living on the wrong end of the ever widening divides of race and class. He makes a compelling case for the danger neoliberalism presents for democracy: "Any society that allows the market to constitute the axis and framing mechanisms for all social interactions has not just lost its sense of morality and responsibility; it has also given up its claim on any possibility of a democratic future" (103). Giroux's critique is at its best when he is talking about the effects of neoliberalism and privatization on education, whether it is his spirited defense of the humanities, his powerful critique of the "privatizing racism" that underwrites the banning of ethnic studies in Arizona, or his account of the merging of public education with the prison-industrial complex to produce "prison type schools" and the school-to-prison pipeline (81, xxv).

As powerful as his critique is, it could benefit from being more nuanced and dialectical. Giroux tends to present the forces arrayed against democracy and social justice as monolithic and unified. Yet, as much as neoliberals and neoconservatives have found common cause as of late, there are still major tensions between the two groups' beliefs and practices. Similarly, the book would benefit from a more genealogical account of neoliberalism, which, as Michel Foucault has demonstrated, went from being explicitly anti-authoritarian (if still invested in inequality) in its German guise as ordoliberalism to making common cause with authoritarianism in its recent manifestations in the US (See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell [New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008], 79-158). One wonders, if there are still tensions in this union of neoliberalism and authoritarianism, tensions that can be strategically exploited by the reconceptualized left that Giroux compellingly imagines. It is in the realm of the book's presentation of popular culture, though, that the book feels least nuanced and most moralizing. In the book's second chapter "Disturbing Pleasures" Giroux presents an image of neoliberal popular culture as a "pedagogy of cruelty" in which participants partake in "orgies of violence, slaughter, and mayhem" (41, 39) While I agree that contemporary popular

culture often reflects values of a society that is invested in the meanness of the so-called "free market," Giroux's sweeping condemnation does little to engage popular culture as a dialectical site that can be a locus for critique and political imagination as much as ideological retrenchment.

Still, even given these limitations, *Youth in Revolt* is a galvanizing book from one of our most important public intellectuals.

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Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White, eds. *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012. 338 pp.

Since the early 1990's interest in the French philosopher Henri Bergson has skyrocketed, driven in part by the pervasive impact of Gilles Deleuze's interpretative writings on Bergson within the humanities and social sciences, but also by a reevaluation of the vitalist (including the non-organic) dimension of Bergson's thought. In his important anthology, *The New Bergson* (1999) philosopher John Mullarkey called for a rethinking of Bergson as "a contemporary philosopher" rather than an "historical curiosity," and fresh readings of Bergson in light of current philosophical issues by such scholars as Keith Ansell-Pearson, Elizabeth Grosz, Suzanne Guerlac, and Mullarkey himself now make that a well developed project. The same period witnessed renewed study of what is known as 'Bergsonism', with a flurry of publications devoted to Bergson's historical and contemporary impact across the humanities (Such studies include R.C. Grogan, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France* [1988]; eds. Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy* [1992]; Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* [1993]; Francis Azouvi, *La gloire de Bergson* [2007]; Donna Jones, *Racial Discourses in Life Philosophy* [2010]; eds. S. E. Gontarski, Paul Ardoin, Laci Mattison, *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* [2012]; and Charlotte de Mille and John Mullarkey's forthcoming edited volume, *Bergson and the Art of Immanence*). These developments were augmented by the appearance of magisterial biographical studies of Bergson by Philippe Soulez and Frédéric Worms (See Philippe Soulez and Frédéric Worms *Bergson* [2002]; and Frédéric Worms, *Bergson et les deux sens de la vie*, [2004]). In 2002 Worms provided scholars of Bergson with a forum for such reconsiderations by inaugurating the journal *Annales Bergsoniennes*, which has so far devoted special issues to such key subjects as phenomenology, critical reassessments of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, Bergson's political legacy from the era of Jean Jaurès to the present, and Bergson and the sciences. Taken together, these studies attest to a renewed understanding of Bergson's importance and to the ongoing reassessment of his philosophy in light of the pressing issues of our own day,