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Michael Galchinsky

“Global Civil Culture: Crafting Universal Structures of Feeling”



Jose Clemente Orozco, *The Fraternity of All Men at the Table of Brotherhood and Ultimate Universality*, The New School for Social Research, 1931, fresco, 6 x 12 ft.

In 1931, as the League of Nations was deteriorating, Mexican muralist Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) created a cycle of 5 frescoes called *Revolution and Brotherhood* for The New School for Social Research in New York. In keeping with Orozco's socialist outlook, the frescoes depict workers, colonized peoples, and other victims of oppression. “The Fraternity of All Men,” the central picture in the series, represents a league of nations, with leaders from races, nations, and religions all over the world sitting stiffly around a table upon which rests an open book. The men are close-mouthed and are not looking at one another. The pages of the book are blank, implying

perhaps that when it comes to human brotherhood, the League's words were empty, or more optimistically that the story of human brotherhood had yet to be written.

Orozco's fresco is an early example of what I call global civil culture. A distinct species of humanism, global civil culture is comprised of symbols and performances which advocate, reflect, or reflect *on* an ethos of universal human solidarity and equality. This ethos—or “structure of feeling” in sociological terms—is founded on the dignity due to all human beings because of their common origin, intended to transcend any context-specific social categories (e.g., nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, religion), and codified as human rights in international treaties. Works that have been produced to engender or reflect a global civil structure of feeling have emerged from a number of fields: literature and the fine and performing arts, architecture, the media, religious rhetoric, school curricula, NGO forums, athletic competitions, the global calendar, and universal symbols.

Global civil culture represents a subset of the broader category “global civil society.” The latter phrase signifies the set of non-governmental associations, communications, and cultural works that provide the social underpinning to support global governance systems. To date, cultural works have rarely been noticed in discussions of global civil society. Rather these discussions have mainly focused on the number of international non-governmental organizations in existence. In purely statistical terms, global civil society would seem to be thriving. Today there are some 30,000-40,000 international NGOs with human rights platforms, as opposed to only a few tens or hundreds when the UN was established in the late 1940s. That statistic might suggest that today's global civil society is more vigorous and successful than in its early

decades—but in fact, something close to the opposite is the case. In my project, *Global Civil Culture*, I intend to research 1) the reasons why the establishment of a public structure of feeling in support of universal human rights seemed promising and necessary in the 1940s and 1950s; 2) why this project proved unsuccessful from the mid-1960s through the end of the century; and 3) in what ways, and with what success, the project has been revived since 9/11.

1. National Civil Culture

Why culture? My hypothesis is that a robust global civil culture can help to establish people's emotional investment in the success of the human rights and humanitarian laws, treaties, and institutions designed to protect disfavored populations. At least we know that civil culture on the national scale has sometimes worked as a form of social repair. For example, historian Lynn Hunt has demonstrated that in the prelude to the French Revolution era a feeling of empathy for others was a product of cultural works beginning in the 1750s. Eighteenth-century epistolary novels promoted and modeled empathy across class, gender, and race lines. As she says,

Empathy only develops through social interaction; therefore, the forms of that interaction configure empathy in important ways. In the eighteenth century, readers of novels learned to extend their purview of empathy. In reading, they empathized across traditional social boundaries.... As a consequence, they came to see others—people they did not know personally—as like them, as having the same kinds of inner emotions. Without this learning process, 'equality' could have no deep meaning, and in particular no political consequence (Hunt, 40).

Recognition of and identification with the interiority of other people in novels became “the seedbed” of the French Revolution’s declaration of human rights, because “people learned to think of others as their equals” (Hunt, 58). Hunt’s example can be multiplied and is the necessary consequence of certain presuppositions of cultural sociologists and literary critics that I will examine as a matter of course in this essay.

While cultural historians, literary critics, and sociologists have provided useful starting points for an investigation of global civil culture, however, their models have been limited by being generally restricted to the national case. Theories developed with reference to the nation-state may or may not be relevant to the global domain. The question to be tested is whether, given a different set of conditions, the global variety of civil culture can produce results similar to the national variety. For the most part this question has not yet been tested because culture—as a broad domain of symbolic productions, rituals, patterns, and performances—has generally either been neglected in global studies or has been treated solely as a product and replicator of non-egalitarian geopolitical structures. The treatment of global culture within a rubric of hegemony, resistance, and accommodation generally assumes that cultural works claiming to speak of universal human values have in fact been produced by Western elites within a hierarchical international structure. This assumption precludes *a priori* the existence of a cosmopolitan audience in favor of human solidarity and equality, or a type of culture that could reflect and help to disseminate those values. It also assumes that the infrastructure of publishers, distributors, museums, reviews, etc. are always founded on unequal assumptions and networks.

In the tradition of liberal democratic political thought, culture has usually been conceived of as marginal to the development of nation-based civil societies. While the early theorists, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, dismissed the value of culture altogether, 19th c. thinkers like Alexis de Toqueville and John Stuart Mill did accord it a role. Yet most of their latter-day interpreters have ignored this aspect of their thought, with the result that national civil society has come to be regarded almost solely as the product of voluntary associations and media.

Locke and Rousseau did not conceive of a role for intermediaries to facilitate communication between the individual and the state, whether these could be defined as voluntary associations, media, or culture. Nor did they allow for individuals' private judgments or cultural productions to influence state functions. The citizen and the state would communicate directly by means of the vote and representative government.

For Locke, civil society is comprised of “those who are united into one body, and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide controversies between them, and punish offenders” (*Second Treatise*, sec. 87). Representative democracy is defined in procedural terms, as an array of “settled standing rules...by men having authority from the community” (sec. 87, also cf. ch. 9, sec. 131). The procedural perspective takes little interest in the substantive aspects of democracy—that is, the values and habits of equality, freedom, and social solidarity. Nor is Locke interested in the agency of individuals. In a certain sense, from the proceduralist point of view there are no individuals, for Locke says that “all private judgment of every particular member” must be “excluded” so that “the community comes to be umpire” (sec. 87). If there are no individuals exercising their private judgment, there can be no

voluntary associations, which are the expressions, in group form, of individual judgments. Neither can there be any role for culture expressing in imaginative forms a feeling for civil solidarity. Through the process of procedural democracy individuals are bound together to make “one people, one body politic, under one supreme government” (sec. 89)—the emphasis on unity obviating the need for smaller unities within the greater one. The only associations Locke imagines are “factions and rebellions” (sec. 93), which may be justified in cases of bad government but cannot be said to have civil intent.

Like Locke, Rousseau also defines the original and ongoing purposes of civil society procedurally (Rousseau, *Discourse of Inequality*, 60; *On the Social Contract*, 151). The terms of the social contract are that “*Each of us places his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole*” (Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, 148). Individuals establish a general will through the deliberations their elected representatives. Citizens should be prohibited from having “communication among themselves” through “partial associations...at the expense of the large association” (*Social Contract*, 156). Because private associations divide the people, “Nothing is more dangerous than the influence of private interests on public affairs” (*Social Contract*, 179). When democracy listens to the concerns of groups, the general will is lost, and there are only as many voters “as there are associations” (156). There is only one permissible association in civil society, that of the entire “people” organized as a unified body politic to establish the public interest through its formal—legislative and executive—institutions (*Social Contract*, 148). Because art is an expression of individual, private interests, it must, like private associations, be discounted a source of public deliberation.

Alexis de Tocqueville provides the first defense of the role of national civil society in his celebration of America's plethora of voluntary associations which, situated between the individual and the state, represent a medium for public deliberation. While Tocqueville agrees with Locke and Rousseau that transparent procedures are essential to a functioning democracy, he argues that associations are essential to it because they train participants to value a certain set of *morés* which are just as essential as rules and laws. He calls these *morés* "habits of the heart" and defines them as "the sum of the moral and intellectual dispositions of men in society" (Tocqueville, 287, 305; Kaldor, "Democracy and Globalization," 35). If civil society is "a medium through which social contracts or bargains are negotiated between the individual and the centers of political and economic authority" (Kaldor, 43), then the contracts must be based on a shared set of values. Tocqueville and his descendants (e.g. Francis Fukuyama, Robert Putnam, Jurgen Habermas) celebrate America's multitude of voluntary associations as evidence of a deeply interwoven civil society. They imagine civil society as a bottom-up, deliberative, and ultimately emancipatory process. Those who form associations do so largely because they find themselves in the minority and hope, in Tocqueville's words, "to discover the arguments most likely to make an impression on the majority, for they always hope to draw the majority over to their side" (Tocqueville, 194).

To put it in the terms of recent sociological theory, to succeed, associations must communicate their intent to link their cause with the secular yet hallowed civil beliefs and customs of the nation (Alexander, 92-93). They must align their own projects to the prevailing civil structure of feeling. Associations—whether professional, social, charitable, religious, or political—serve the function, in Robert Putnam's evocative

image, of bowling leagues: they build a citizenry bound by horizontal ties to one another as well as by vertical ties to the state.

Although he celebrates associations, Tocqueville understands that they limit individuals' free speech through formal or informal persuasion, and that therefore in a democracy volunteerism must be accompanied by a well-established free press (Tocqueville, 181-195). He asserts that "freedom of the press is the principal and, so to say, constitutive element in freedom" and the primary means of public deliberation and generation of public opinion, the latter of which is "mistress of the world" (Tocqueville, 191, 435). Free deliberation about the public interest requires free factual media (Albrow and Glasius, "Introduction," 8-10; Habermas, *Structural Transformation*; Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*). Free deliberation through media has come to be called "communicative" democracy, as distinguished from procedural democracy. Although theorists classify both factual and fictional media as communicative institutions (Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (1996)), they have focused most of their attention on factual media. These media make it possible for civil society associations to reach an audience if they can succeed in demonstrating that their cause is linked to the broader emancipatory projects of freedom, equality, solidarity and other democratic habits of the heart (Alexander). Even in states where procedural democracy is not enshrined, communicative democracy through media like the Internet may still have a presence (Albrow and Glasius, 16).

Communicative democracy models demonstrate the limits of the associational theory, but still generally neglect a treatment of the functions of *fictional* media in facilitating deliberation on the public interest. An illuminating instance of this neglect is

Habermas' essay, "Kant's Idea of Perpetual Peace." Kant's essay, "Toward Perpetual Peace" (1795), the first to call for the construction of a "league of nations," is generally recognized as the philosophical foundation of cosmopolitan democracy. Analyzing Kant's essay gives Habermas an opportunity to demonstrate how globalization has necessitated revision of Kant's model, which was founded on the Westphalian assumption of national sovereignties. Habermas repeatedly suggests that Kant attends only to the legal implications of cosmopolitanism for states, ignoring what is essential today, a "liberal political culture" that could "mediate between morality, law, and politics" globally (Habermas, "Kant's Idea," 177). While Habermas seems to give "culture" an important role, he defines the content of this culture only in vague terms. This culture is to express the emerging world society's collective consciousness, a consciousness that is manifested in collectively "perceived situations" (175), in a "shared conception of the desirable state of peace" (185), in "the awareness of global dangers" (186), and in "the moral universalism that...remains the authoritative normative intuition" (188). Yet exactly who experiences these perceptions, conceptions, awarenesses, and intuitions is left in shadow. Through what mechanisms does the collective awareness of moral universals become produced and disseminated? On these questions Habermas has little to say.

One would expect that the theorist of communicative democracy would emphasize the role of communications in the production of a global consciousness. Habermas does suggest that globally dispersed media produce "dense symbolic and social interrelations" (174). However, with the rise of national and global communications, he argues, mass media have become more vulnerable to manipulation

for purposes of national and international indoctrination and deception. At the global level, communication even in the simplest terms does not succeed because the “supporting structures”—such as supranational media outlets—do not exist. Hence, for him “there is not yet a global public sphere” (177). With no functioning global public sphere, one is hard pressed to discover a basis for shared conceptions and intuitions regarding moral universalism. So much for factual media—what about the fictional kind? Early on Habermas seems to dismiss the role of culture. Kant “still counted on the transparency of a surveyable public sphere shaped by literary means” (176), but art as a means of public deliberation could succeed only when a small circle of elites were the deliberating parties. The emergence of mass media and mass publics has led to a “degenerated” (176) culture.

In his discussion of art Tocqueville anticipates Habermas’s view that mass culture is degraded culture, stating pithily that in democracies “quantity increases; quality goes down” (Tocqueville, 468). Democracy is fatal to careful artisanship (Tocqueville, 474). In democracies, the imagination shrinks from the realm of the ideal—which should be its native land—“to conceive what may be useful and to portray what is actual” (483). The democratic suspicion of traditional forms of authority extends to the arts, leaving artists with few traditions on which to build; hence, they are always having to start over and can never learn from their forebears. The result is utilitarian and instantly obsolete art. In sum, democratic culture is ugly and uninformed by tradition, and it does not appeal to citizens’ best aspirations. How then can it serve a civil function?

Yet Tocqueville is somewhat more open than his descendant, for he does assign culture a limited role in promoting civil habits of the heart. If the people turn toward the

promise of humanity itself, they can embrace a utopian ideal of human perfectibility.

While democratic arts ignore the past, they do embrace the future. It is a bright future of social mobility in which, Tocqueville says,

peoples of different countries mix, see one another, hear one another, and borrow from one another. So it is not only the members of a single nation that come to resemble each other; the nations themselves are assimilated, and one can form the picture of one vast democracy in which a nation counts as a single citizen. Thus for the first time all mankind can be seen together in broad daylight (486).

It is in the arts that the cosmopolitan vision “of the entire human race” (486) finds formal means of expression. And by seeing humanity as a “whole,” citizens “are led to recognize in the actions of each individual a trace of the universal and consistent plan by which God guides mankind” (486).

Here, Tocqueville might have been speaking of Walt Whitman, the American poet of democracy who asserted in the tradition of *E Pluribus Unum* that every person can sing “the song of myself,” and that each individual’s self-song will be the universal song. For Whitman, the mundane particulars hint at the ideal universals which, at a deeper level, establish transhistorical continuities beneath the changing, contingent surfaces of the real. After one of his long realistic lists of the kinds of ordinary people he finds in America, Whitman concludes that “these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them, / And such as it is to be of these more or less I am, / And of these one and all I weave the song of myself” (Whitman, “Song of Myself,” 41-42). Political equality both produces and is produced by a moral recognition: I am the Other; the Other is me. In “For You O Democracy,” Whitman prophesies a future utopian civil society: “I will

plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America..., / I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks, / By the love of comrades" (Whitman, "For You," 99). Rather than aspiring to be merely a catalog of material details, he promotes a form of idealism—what the 19th c. positivist August Comte called "the religion of humanity." Like the Victorian novelist George Eliot, Whitman attempted to inculcate the religion of humanity without the traditional trappings of institutionalized religion. As Eliot wrote in the epigraph to her short story "The Lifted Veil," "Give me no light, great Heaven, but such as turns / To energy of human fellowship" (2).

While Tocqueville opened up a limited space in democratic theory for national civil culture, the other giant of Victorian theory, John Stuart Mill, gave greater emphasis to it. Like Tocqueville—whose *Democracy in America* Mille reviewed with enthusiasm—Mill refutes the tradition from Locke and Rousseau denying intermediary communication between the individual and the state. He specifically encourages associations, reasoning that

If people must be allowed, in whatever concerns only themselves, to act as seems best to themselves..., they must equally be free to consult with one another about what is fit to be so done.... (Mill 168-169).

Like Tocqueville, too, Mill defends the right of free speech and public deliberation through factual media (Mill 108). However, he understood better than his predecessor that creating associations and free speech institutions would not be enough to underwrite liberal democracy. It must equally be grounded in what he called "the mental culture" of a civic-minded populace. He insisted that "the real morality of public discussion" lay in attitudes and feelings that could not entirely be engendered through participation in

associations. The citizen must avoid “the want of candor or malignity, bigotry or intolerance of feeling” and must be generous to the other side, calm, and honest (Mill 118). These attributes together would constitute a “mental culture”—his version of the habits of the heart, the structure of feeling—necessary to the functioning of substantive democracy (Mill 100).

But he goes further: he allocates a positive function for artistic expression in the development of mental culture. For Mill, the rational deliberation promoted by associational democracy was incomplete without emotive, imaginative appeals to shared values. In the *Autobiography*, he argues that rational deliberation and analysis are not enough to ensure the public interest; one also requires “the internal culture of the individual” that has been cultivated by the ideal productions of the imagination (*Autobiography*, 118). Poetry like that of William Wordsworth would tend to increase people’s sympathy for “the common feelings and common destiny of human beings” (121), and, together with proper education and “general unanimity of sentiment” (133) would conduce to engrave moral convictions on the hearts of citizens.

Lately, policymakers, theorists, and funders supporting the growth of national and global civil societies have neglected Mill’s prescriptions about the role of culture. The emphasis on associations as the primary liaisons between the people and the state has become so ingrained that Western donors and thinkers contributing to programs to strengthen civil society in emerging democracies have, since the 1980s, measured the success of these programs almost entirely by the number of NGOs. They have virtually equated civil society with associations. As one activist in a new state in Eastern Europe put it, “We dreamed of a civil society and got NGOs” (qtd. in Ishkanian, 61). The

associationists have imagined no role for private individuals except as donors to and members of associations. Instead, they have relied on associations alone to produce civil habits of the heart and education into democratic citizenship (Eberly, 277-289). This perspective has been referred to an “‘NGOization’ of civil society” (Ishkanian, 58). At the extreme, the consequences for a democracy can be just what Locke and Rousseau feared: a society in which associations usurp the direct relation between individuals and the state.

However, this singular focus on NGOs has several problems. First, associations are not necessarily devoted to promoting freedom, equality, and solidarity, and are rarely structured as miniature democracies. Civil society associations, including and perhaps most especially those at the global level, are generally organized by elites by means of a hierarchical structure (Bob et al, 2007/2008, 201). NGOs in non-democratic regimes, as well as in liberal democracies, often include a substantial proportion of associations with anti-civil aims—e.g., terrorist organizations, groups promoting hate speech. Indeed, in non-democratic regimes when the state is not regulating associations it is often one of their major sponsors, through which it attempts to control the supposedly voluntary sector. In cases where the associations are produced indirectly by the state itself (e.g., the Hitler Youth), their proliferation has demonstrably weakened rather than strengthened democracies (Ishkanian, 60). Emerging democracies with an authoritarian past may not be able to counter residual authoritarian structures and habits (Kaldor, 36), and may themselves rely on the secretive and hierarchical organizational models of those structures. Even in democracies, few individuals have access to NGOs, and the NGO sector’s unequally distributed levels of capacity, influence, and funding do not ensure an

even playing field. Most significant from the standpoint of civil culture, NGOs are not the only, and not always the most important, liaisons between powerful institutions and individuals.

While political theorists of civil society have often neglected the role of culture, cultural critics have claimed varying levels of influence for it. For Marxist critics, culture was a reflection of conflicts in the political and economic spheres. The role of the culture industry was to reinforce hegemonic views programmatically and formulaically (through the production of sets of expectations known as genres) and to ameliorate social conflicts, if only in the realm of the imagination. Amelioration was a means of letting off social steam but ultimately reaffirming existing inequalities. Michel Foucault refined this Marxist analysis by analyzing the broad dissemination of power through various discourses (whether “factional” or fictional”), so that government was not the only, nor the most important source of surveillance and social control in a society. Foucault analyzed how discourse functions in resistance against or accommodation of hegemony, or subversion of minority voices by the dominant power. The model focused on resistance, accommodation, and subversion leaves little room for discourse that aims to bind citizens to a common vision in the cause of national (or global) civil repair.

Yet we know empirically that fictional media have sometimes played important roles in the production of civil feeling at the national and regional levels. In the US context, we can point, for example, to Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Poitier’s turn in *Guess Who’s Coming for Dinner*, Morrison’s *Beloved*. The relations between neighboring states have often been imagined in civil terms by writers located at the border, who have attempted to establish more or less permeable boundaries between

national cultures by highlighting differences and similarities, gauging the strength and direction of cultural flows, and illuminating power relations in the border communities (Fox; Davila). Such works indicate a preoccupation with the possibility of hybrid, multinational and multicultural identity. The Internet has, of course, taken multinational and multilingual to new heights. Wikipedia, the web-based, multilingual, collaboratively-authored encyclopedia has become a symbol of cyber-community across borders.

We know, too, that certain genres have been enlisted in emancipatory projects or, alternatively, in efforts at social control. Indonesian puppet theater became a potent means of voicing anti-colonial protests in favor of political and social equality. Poetry readings in Mayakovsky Square in Moscow became launch points for democratic dissent during the Soviet era. Celebrations of *Carnivale* in Brazil create a space in which rituals of social leveling and even hierarchical reversals can be performed.

For feminists, cultural productions have played a special role in enabling them to link their concerns to broader civil values. It is no accident that the first feminist philosophy, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), focused much of its energy on denouncing representations of women by poets and novelists, especially Milton. Feminists have had to recognize and raise consciousness of cultural stereotypes and bigotry to prepare the space for new visions of women's potential and rights. They have often challenged the communitarian notion of a single public, or single consensus around the public good, with assertions of the existence of multiple publics producing multiple, often contested cultural works. At the same time, they have often challenged the liberal assumption that the individual is the fundamental rights-bearer in

society, arguing for at least some group rights (Delanty, 44). Fictional works by women, from Charlotte Brontë's romantic novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) to Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis* (2003), which are not primarily about what men think of women but about what women think of themselves, have enabled women to make their voices heard, often when formal voice (the rights to vote, stand for office, hold property, etc.) was denied them.

Minorities, dissidents in repressive societies, and other marginalized groups have also used culture to call attention to their civil and political disabilities. In the American context, Emma Lazarus, a Jewish woman, penned the sonnet "The Colossus" from which were taken the famous lines engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty promising to give asylum to "the huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Mine Okubo's illustrated memoir of her experiences in a Japanese internment camp, *Citizen 13660* (1947), appealed to Americans to treat their own minorities with the openness, tolerance, and equality promised by their Constitution. In Rio de Janeiro, Augusto Boal's internationally acclaimed Theater of the Oppressed enabled marginalized Brazilians to take the stage to dramatize their experiences. For his efforts he was arrested and tortured by the military junta in 1971. After a period of exile in Paris, he returned to Brazil and continued to build the Theater. The theatrical productions raised Boal's public profile and in 1992, he was elected as a Vereador (city councilman), where he enacted civil rights ordinances (Sommer, 1672). In highly authoritarian states that exercise strict surveillance and censorship, persecuted groups have had to learn to express their civil desires for equality, freedom, and solidarity in a collective language of symbol, allegory, and myth—i.e., in the language of culture.

Ultimately, analyzing the strength of civil society is not a question of having to choose between associations, media, and culture. Tocqueville and Mill and their descendants offer complementary analyses. The concepts of habits of the heart and mental culture have been especially influential, adapted by sociologists stretching from Emile Durkheim to Raymond Williams to Jeffrey Alexander. For these thinkers, *morés* are “structures of feeling” which can be cultivated in support of civil solidarity. In a given national setting, there will be a dialectical relation between cultural history and social history.

Durkheim in both *The Elements and Forms of Religious Life* and *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* agreed with Tocqueville that laws could not find popular assent unless citizens made an emotional commitment to their practice, and that this commitment would have to be cultivated primarily by means of associations (Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, xxxii, 100-108). Yet he went beyond the association formula to describe a set of “civic morals” needed to bind the “social structure” which could only be based on “symbols of the collectivity” that would place certain ideals in the category of the sacred (73, 161).

Like Durkheim, Raymond Williams sought to formulate a theory of how social structures of feeling differed from standing sets of rules or ideological programs:

We must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs... [W]e are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable), over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and

justified experiences.... Such changes can be defined as changes in *structures of feeling* (Williams, 132).

Williams notes that the gap between ideology and lived experience—between the *ought* and the *is*—is productive of a range of feelings and beliefs. His concept of “structures of feeling” as sets of public and social morés reappears in its most elaborate form to date in Alexander’s *The Civil Sphere* (2007). Alexander explains that

Civil society is...a realm of structured, socially established consciousness, a network of...structures of feeling that permeate social life and run just below the surface of strategic institutions and self-conscious elites (Alexander, 54).

Drawing not only on the tradition from Durkheim, but from cultural anthropology and post-colonial theory, among other things, Alexander argues that civil society requires interpreting “the distinctive symbolic codes that are critically important in constituting the very sense of society for those who are within and without it” (54). Fictional media play a constructive role in establishing structures of feeling, for “the symbolic forms of fictional media...provide a continuous flow of representations about ongoing social events and actors.... [They have a] cathartic impact on the self-understandings of civil society, on the structures of feeling that define its identity as a civil place” (75-6).

As evidence of the significant role of certain types of art and performance in the establishment and maintenance of civil structures of feeling, Alexander reads symbolic codes in use during the US Civil Rights movement. While he classifies factual media as “culture” to the extent that their framing of stories helped determine which habits of the heart the public adopted, he also demonstrates that the works of writers and speakers—the autobiographers Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X, the orators Sojourner Truth and

Martin Luther King, Jr., the essayist W. E. B. DuBois, the poets Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks, the novelist Richard Wright, the book of Exodus—played crucial roles in helping the movement organizers link their struggle to larger democratic ideals (Alexander, 281-282, 366-370). One could easily take the story of US civil culture beyond the civil rights era to demonstrate that productions like the films *Glory Road*, *Hairspray* and *The Great Debaters*, the novels of Toni Morrison, and the plays of August Wilson, among others, have promoted the norms enforced by civil rights legislation in the realm of culture. The Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday, and the King memorial planned for the Washington Mall, have become important catalysts for continuing national discussions on the state of racial equality. Texts, calendar days, and memorials may (but not always will) act as a horizontal force binding citizens together in the teeth of the vertical structures that separate them. The binding force of civil culture could easily be demonstrated in other national contexts as well.

If cultural works function as social phenomena, it does not necessarily follow that their intent or impact will be civil, or that one can accurately speak of them as having any impact at all. It may be that, even when they articulate civil aims, their effect will be to reinforce inequality. According to the classic Marxist view, cultural works are determined products of their social milieu, not determining agents. Their representation of their social world accords with the predominant views and practices of a large portion of the collectivity. They reinforce dominant values and existing structures. Such productions do not impact their world; they represent it. And if the image depicted in their mirror is sometimes less violent, more equal or fair than the reality, it is not because these works can or should prepare the citizens to become agents of change; rather the

purpose of such civil images is only to give the citizens short-lived relief and escape in the realm of the imagination.

While this perspective does account for the anti-civil effects of some cultural productions, however, its emphasis on cultural determinism minimizes their potential impact as agents of change. Here, cultural sociology can be supplemented by certain kinds of literary theory. The literary critic Franco Morretti has developed a method for analyzing texts as social phenomena that understands them to be both determined and determining. In particular, his approach to genre theory emphasizes that cultural productions are embedded in a web of social relations. For example, a novel comes to being in relation to the author's familial experiences, her discussions with publishers and editors, the scene and social milieu at the time of composition, her reaction to reviewers and critics (and their reaction to her work), and informal reader responses. Rather than being merely the effect of these relations, the novel results from a series of complex interactions with other social actors in which the work is both cause and effect. Morretti tries to ascertain how and why genres transform to meet the demands of their social world and how they are transformed by that world. By paying attention to how a particular genre transforms through time, he can demonstrate that the genre has changed to meet changing social criteria for success (enabling it to survive in the cultural marketplace) and that it, too, brings about some change in the market, to the extent that it introduces innovations or exemplifies the limited possibilities of the genre at that time (Morretti, *Graphs*). Literary evolution is a product and determinant of social evolution.

Building from the liberal democratic theory of John Stuart Mill, cultural sociologists' model of civil education accords a significant role for the emotional

component of imaginative works. If cultural theorists have provided useful starting points for an investigation of global civil culture, however, their focus on the national case may limit their applicability to the global case. Alexander, for one, envisions the development of a global version of his model of the civil sphere, writing that “it is possible...for the imagining and the organizing of civil society to go beyond the territory of the nation-state” (552). But the development of a model adequate to the world stage is not merely a question of transferring the same tools to a different setting. As we will see, building a useful model requires, in addition, the development of new concepts and tools.

2. Models of Globalized Culture

While cultural sociology has lacked a cosmopolitan dimension, most theorists of global civil society have, for their part, conspicuously lacked a theory of civil culture. Cosmopolitan democracy, they emphasize, is a reaction to the weakening of state sovereignty because of the growth of international institutions and trade. There is widespread acknowledgment among international relations scholars that the individual human person has first the time become an object of concern at the international level, but the individual is not conceived as an actor but as an object of states’ concern, protection, and victimization. The focus of theories of global civil society has usually been 1) cosmopolitanism’s procedural and institutional components—treaties, courts, intergovernmental institutions, etc.; 2) the participation by non-state actors, mainly NGOs; or 3) the development of global publics and media (Delanty, 52). To be sure, there are numerous theories of globalized culture, but these have rarely if ever

distinguished the civil variety from those works enmeshed in the hegemonic politics of the day.

Those interested in the development of cosmopolitan communications have largely ignored cultural contributions. They have instead concentrated on factual media. In the most prestigious journal in the field, *Global Civil Society*, the 2007/2008 issue was dedicated to *Communicative Power and Democracy*. The volume deals mainly with the relation between increasing global communications technologies, concepts of global publics, and substantive cosmopolitan democracy. Such concepts are founded on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the use of media “regardless of frontiers” set out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Brownlie, ed., 25). Analysts of communicative democracy have on occasion noticed a role for imaginative work as well, although in these cases the focus is ordinarily on how the media represents the work rather than on the social function of the work in itself. For example, Vincent Price has written that global media produce “large attention aggregates (for example, the World Cup draws a television audience in the hundreds of millions)” (Vincent Price, 27). Here it is not the spectacle of global sport that holds public attention; rather, attention is the result of media coverage.

When analysts of communicative democracy do introduce cultural works, they are often content merely to note the works’ existence rather than analyze their social function. In the chapter of *Global Civil Society 2007/8* on “Voices of Global Civil Society: Cartoonists, Comic Strip Artists, and Graphic Novelists,” Fiona Holland suggests that “Political cartoonists should be considered as important actors in global civil society” because they do not “rely on language” (166). Yet besides the fact that

most of the cartoons do rely on language in combination with the visual images, Holland provides no analysis of how the examples she reprints interact with global publics.

Because such productions are created by individuals and private groups, they provide some of the only direct outlets for citizen participation at this global level. Their strength is that they are expressions of discourse directly addressed to the imagination and the emotions rather than to reasoned deliberation: they cultivate civil habits of the heart in the *language* of the heart. Not all such productions are civil in intent, of course. *Jihad* videos on the web are a case in point (Bob et al, 212). Yet even non- or anti-civil productions can inspire heated debate that produces civil effects. Monroe E. Price recognizes international sport and film festivals as potential “armament[s]” for global civil society groups (Monroe E. Price, 52). The Beijing Olympics were a bonanza for promoters of a cosmopolitan culture, because athletics as the symbol of global comity were ironized by China’s refusal to pressure Sudan to stop its genocide in Darfur, respect the rights of protesters, or compromise on Tibetan independence. Global civil society NGOs labeled the China games “the genocide Olympics,” underscoring the way in which culture can provide a catalyst for the expression of a cosmopolitan structure of feeling (Kaldor and Kostovicova, 88-89). As the semiologist Roland Barthes long ago demonstrated, not only the pageantry surrounding sport, but sport itself, can be interpreted through a cultural lens: it can be read almost as a form of dance, a stylized set of symbolic movements and gestures communicating attitudes toward national, regional, or global identity (Barthes).

A model of cosmopolitan culture must go beyond cataloguing genres, however, to examine *which* values are encoded as cosmopolitan and *how* culture engenders and

reflects such values at the global level and with respect to national publics. We can identify the set of values by extrapolating from the norms codified in international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as from pronouncements by UN leaders and the UN's specialized agencies (including the World Health Organization, UNESCO, the International Labor Organization, and so on). Based on these sources, cosmopolitan values would include, among others:

- promotion of human rights
- prevention of war and genocide
- nuclear non-proliferation
- humanitarian generosity to persecuted ethnic and religious minorities
- protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, members of diasporas, and victims of natural catastrophes
- poverty reduction
- environmental sustainability
- disease prevention and treatment across borders, and world health promotion
- prohibition of slavery and sex trafficking
- religious universalism
- global intercultural understanding.

It is relatively simple to describe the *what*. The *how* is much more complex.

Where globalization theories have attempted to model culture, they have tended to focus on the asymmetrical relationship between hegemonic cultural producers (primarily the US) and the global recipients of their products. Here, we see the Foucaultian and postcolonial subversion/resistance/accommodation models applied to the global arena.

Global culture includes representations of people who cross national borders, works that themselves cross borders, and works that are engaged in some way with world institutions. Conceived of as examples of “the enhanced interconnectivity of cultures” (Delanty, 53), globalized cultural works are analyzed as contributors to a system of hierarchal relations rather than as the part of that culture dedicated to building a global horizontal ethos of human solidarity, equality, and freedom.

Perhaps the most prominent analyst of globalized culture, Diana Crane, describes four distinct models for analysis. Theorists of media imperialism argue that culture is largely globalized by media conglomerates in the West (mainly the US), whose aim is, through the dissemination of such products, to effect global homogenization and American cultural and corporate imperialism (Jameson et al.). A similar critique comes from postcolonial theories of urban architecture, which see skyscrapers, hotels, bungalows, suburbs, and other aspects of the built environment in “global cities” as examples of the dissemination of Western architectural models (King). By contrast, theorists of “cultural flows” emphasize that symbolic artifacts move in both directions while being locally hybridized by recipients with their own cultural traditions. Reception theorists focus less on media conglomerates than on audience reception, arguing that audiences receive global cultural products through their own lenses, resisting homogenization from a separatist, multicultural perspective. Crane’s own model is of a more “disorderly process” characterized by negotiation and competition (Crane, ed., 2002; King, 26-27).

Imperial imposition, resistance, hybridity, negotiation, competition—none of these terms recognizes the possibility of a type of culture with communicative intent to

engender and reflect the values of cosmopolitan democracy. This absence of an adequate theory of global civil culture is not surprising. Although cosmopolitan democracy has begun to emerge—in the form of intergovernmental institutions, treaties, and NGOs—cosmopolitan *culture* has not. Attempts to establish and maintain an infrastructure to support this kind of culture have met with substantial obstacles.

3. The Failure and Promise of Global Civil Culture

Neither the theory of national civil culture nor of globalized culture presents an adequate model for analysis of global civil culture. The national model fails to appreciate the unique nature of the global institutional structure and the challenges it presents to civil society. Meanwhile the model of globalized cultural productions tends to emphasize those productions that are oriented toward reproducing various forms of particularism or hegemony—e.g., national, ethnic, religious, or regional identities, or hyperpower influence. By contrast, contributors to global civil culture conceive their works as universalist in character, expressing what used to be called “the conscience of the world,” or, as Durkheim puts it, “a conscience collective” or “collective ideals” (Durkheim, “Forms of Social Solidarity,” 123-124; *Elements*, 425). Such universals, although expressed differently in every regional, national, ethnic, tribal, or religious community, could be found at the core of all of them. They exhibit “relative universality”—local or national traditions that express an overlapping consensus with internationally recognized human rights norms.

These contributors are animated by the assumption that the UN and NGOs cannot simply compel solidarity through legislation: people have to *want* to be civil. They

believe that culture can engender and reflect that desire to a global citizenry. Global civil culture must be seen as a distinct subset of global culture as a whole, with its own objects, canon, infrastructure, strengths, and weaknesses. A constructive model would set global civil culture apart from national varieties on the one hand, and from globalized culture per se on the other. It would analyze the institutions and resources necessary for the creation and maintenance of such a culture, such as literary and artistic genres, review journals, the critic industry, media, etc.

We can begin by adapting Mill's model and those of the cultural sociologists to the global arena. In fact, if culture is a necessary component of civil society at the national level, how much more significant it is in the case of the global level, where the obstacles to growing a civil society are much greater. Specifically, unlike national citizens, "citizens of the world" lack common territory, strong centralized institutions, ethnicity, language, ideology, history—in other words, they lack the horizontal ties that bind individuals within states into imagined communities. Obstacles to freedom, equality, and solidarity—nationalism, xenophobia, racism, religious exclusivity, income gaps, the focus on the needs of states rather than of individuals—are exacerbated at the global level. Group differences among states are profound and not always bridged harmoniously. In these conditions the project of promoting solidarity among humanity seems quixotic and as we will see, sometimes the associations on which funders and political theorists have placed so much stock have impeded rather than enabled the success of this project. As Gerard Delanty puts it, "The problem with world community or universal humanity is that it ignores the plurality of communities and presupposes moral and cultural detachment" (140).

Clearly, then, the concept of culture will have to be taken out of its usual local or national habitat. It has to be reconceived as a set of nomadic practices and productions, a culture that can travel across jurisdictions, bound not to territory, history, or local lore, but to shared values (Tomlinson; Laddaga). My contention is that, where other ties are lacking, cultural productions promoting global civil values could represent and advocate such values.

The creation of this sort of global civil culture was envisioned by the founders of the international order. International law specifically protects individual and collective cultural rights (e.g., UDHR Art. 22 and 27; ICESCR, Art. 15; ICCPR, Art. 27). These include the rights to take part in, enjoy, preserve, disseminate, and transmit cultural heritage in one's own country. Even the formation of these rights to culture was bound up with the expression of culture. As Joseph Slaughter has demonstrated, during the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the legislative discussion at the UN of the article guaranteeing the free development of human personality took the form of a debate on the meaning of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (Slaughter, 1406).

But such standards are not intended merely to be localized in states. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the specialized agency tasked with promoting cultural rights. It identifies and protects World Heritage Sites, elicits programming for symbolic calendar cycles (e.g., the Year of International Languages), fights against illicit trafficking in cultural objects, protects and promotes cultural diversity, and facilitates intercultural dialogue toward peace, among other things. The agency stands for the development of cultural productions that have value not only

for national treasures but for the peoples of the world. UNESCO is, then, the normative institution for promoting global civil culture.

An array of literary, artistic, film, photographic, and musical genres has emerged to reflect on the world community's attention to the promises of cosmopolitan values. For example, there are narrative genres like the *Bildungsroman* that dramatize the development of the human personality and the cultivation of human dignity (Slaughter, 1415). There are artworks that shine a light on human rights violations (e.g., torture, rape, genocide) to shame the perpetrators or to create the foundations for collective historical remembrance or reconciliation (Goldberg 2007). There are children's television productions (e.g., *Sesame Street*) produced in multiple languages and tweaked to give them a culturally appropriate context, but which aim to promote global solidarity and tolerance. Regional genres (e.g., telenovellas produced by Telemundo, the Spanish-language affiliate of NBC) broadcast a common language-based heritage beyond borders. Musical genres from pop to world music manifest instances of global collaboration and intercultural appreciation and appropriation. Novels like Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* engage in what K. Anthony Appiah has labeled "the dialogical universality of cosmopolitanism"—that is, they address experiences or beliefs held in many places (e.g., feminism) in terms of local traditions and languages (Appiah).

Yet beginning even before the establishment of the UN and continuing until the present, difficulties with creating and disseminating this kind of culture have presented themselves at every turn. First of all, the contours of the global civil sphere differ in a basic sense from civil society in any state. Global civil society is, in large part, comprised of voluntary associations hailing from both democratic and non-democratic

states. Depending on their context, associations based in non-democratic and democratic states define civil norms in distinct ways. The global arena is perhaps the one place where different cultural models of human solidarity, equality, and liberty come into sustained contact. What happens when such distinct civil spheres meet?

When Jeffrey Alexander refers to the shrunken civil society in non-democratic states, he describes it in quite different terms than he uses to describe the robust civil society in democratic states. The universal suffrage and other regulatory controls in democratic societies encourage associations to declare their communicative intent toward a broader public solidarity. In non-democratic societies, Alexander suggests, there are few such incentives, and, in the absence of free speech, associations with civil intent must adopt indirect, circumspect discourses to avoid censure and punishment—underground fiction or allegorical fiction, codes. Civil society must be mobilized against the state and not, as in liberal countries, in partnership with the state or as a loyal opposition. This explains why, when there *is* a meeting of activists from democratic and non-democratic states who ostensibly *share* a commitment to global civil values, they often talk past one another. The secret language of the symbol cannot always find common ground with the open language of the declaration.

For this and other reasons, despite the proliferation of human rights NGOs, global civil society has become increasingly unstable. On the legislative front, after an initial period of enthusiastic standard-setting in the 1940s and 1950s, the UN's human rights work ground to a halt in the mid-1960s due to the Cold War and the changing character of the UN, which admitted large numbers of non-democratic states to membership. In this new context, civil solidarity increasingly took the narrow form of building coalitions

with one's political allies to win contests over *which* human rights norms would take precedence. The democracies were generally in favor of civil and political rights, while the communist states in the Eastern bloc and their allies in the non-Aligned movement generally sought economic, social, and cultural rights. States at this level increasingly acted like petulant and obstinate children, threatening to leave and take their marbles with them, or joining coalitions of the willing to work against others. Voluntary segregation among states stopped up the UN's human rights work for forty years.

We might expect global civil associations to have done better. Yet even when they have had communicative intent toward civil values, their efforts have been severely hampered by the absence of any empowered global publics to which they could appeal. There have never really been any citizens of the world. Don Eberly has recently expressed the view that when you get beyond the nation-state associations rather than individuals constitute "a global electorate" (Eberly, 301)—but they don't. It would be difficult to argue that international NGOs represent the world's people. By what means would the "general will" be expressed through the NGOs? In fact there is no universal suffrage. What passes for global factual media—CNN, BBC, al-Jazeera—are in fact contextually situated conglomerates appealing to specific publics with specific expectations. National factual media, for their part, largely ignore or diminish the goings-on at the global level, and until recently there have been very few recent examples of fictional media that have tried to hallow universal civil norms. When Sidney Pollack made *The Interpreter* in 2004, it was the first film ever set at the United Nations. Since the 1960s culture has lagged behind legislation, languishing in the face of interstate conflicts, nationalism, ethnic hatred, and religious extremism.

The weakness of the legislative agenda became ludicrously clear when Sudan was elected to chair the Commission on Human Rights at the very moment when its government was supporting genocide in Darfur. It became clear in the Security Council's failure to act during the genocide in Rwanda, or in the great powers' use of the veto to protect themselves and their allies from scrutiny during armed conflicts. It became clear at NGO forums where the ostensible humanitarian goals of the conference were forgotten as the conference became a shouting ground for opposing political views. As long as human rights remain a scrim behind which states and their citizens pursue their national conflicts, there may not be much to be hoped from a global civil society.

Factual media have hardly done better. As we have seen, factual media generally either reflect the interests of their sponsors or fractionalize the global public into increasingly narrow and specialized sub-publics (James Deane, 155-156). Independent efforts like Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* or the widely disseminated speeches of the Burmese dissident leader Aung San Suu Kyi have perhaps had more success.

But arguably, if deliberation among global publics has taken place consistently anywhere, it is in symbolic productions and cultural artifacts. These works promote subject identification with individual and collective human rights victims, represent atrocities, promote intercultural understanding, and advocate support for global institutions. UNESCO's work provides numerous examples. Its Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture has given Arabic literary texts a chance to introduce a civil Arab culture to non-Arab readers, eg. the novels of Algerian writer Tahar Ouettar. UNESCO promotes cultural tourism, bringing travelers to witness the dances and arts traditions in Nigeria that are listed as part of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In 2004, a

UNESCO Chair in Studies of Interculturalism, Art and Cultural Management and Mediation in the Balkans was created at the University of Arts in Belgrade. Of course UNESCO is not the only place one may find examples.

Films from *Beyond Rangoon* to *Cry Freedom* to *Salvador* to *Three Kings* have brought to light atrocities in Burma, South Africa, El Salvador, and Iraq—spotlighting the devastating effects of racism, hyper-nationalism, and patriarchy as well as the repair work done by organizations like the Red Cross. Novels and autobiographies from Rigoberta Menchu's *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* to Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* to J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* have called attention to genocidal and intergenerational rape (Swanson-Goldberg). The testimonial literature from the Holocaust, the Argentinian mass killings and disappearances of the 1970s, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, among others dramatize through personal narratives of abuse the power of subjective identification. Through such publications and practices individual and collective voices either speak through particular stories to our general human condition, or elicit intercultural outrage, dialogue, and understanding. If global civil values are to be found anywhere, one might think, it is in art.

Still, given that cultural artifacts, too, are embedded in specific historical contexts, they may be complicit with, or expressions of, non-civil ideologies and institutions at the global or international levels. As in the case of the negative reactions against Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* or Ayaan Hirsi Ali's film *Submission* about Muslim women's subjugation, cultural works can become the catalysts for anti-civil struggle. Controversies over the rightful ownership of cultural antiquities can embitter nations against one another for years—in the case of the struggle between Britain and Greece

over the Elgin marbles, for hundreds of years. Likewise, the custodial care of cultural antiquities has often produced tension, for example, in the international outcry over the Taliban's dynamiting of the 6th c. Buddhas of Bamyan in 2001, or the American military's failure to prevent or stop the looting of Mesopotamian treasures from the Iraqi national museum in 2003.

An example from Jewish history is helpful in understanding the scope of the problem. The emigration of over a million Jews from the Soviet Union for Israel, Germany, and the United States—approximately 970,000 to Israel alone between 1967 and 1990—represents one of the most important success stories of all human rights activism since World War II. Yet it is striking that the UN system was paralyzed in the face of Soviet repressions of Jews' cultural and religious rights. The cultural rights guaranteed by the UDHR, the Covenants, and the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education were all powerless in the face of Soviet policies which restricted educational activities, suppressed first Yiddish and then Hebrew, closed synagogues, schools, newspapers, and theaters, subjected writers and artists to show trials and condemned them to prison, labor camps or psychiatric hospitals, prohibited religious worship, and sought to abolish all forms of ethnic self-expression that deviated from official dogma. The USSR successfully manipulated UNESCO. When in November, 1972, a group of Moscow Jews wrote to the Director General of UNESCO in Paris to request help in gaining Soviet permission to learn Hebrew, they received no reply other than a few exit permits for the letter's signatories, a concession to the Soviet government which hoped to “decapitate” the group—detach it from its leadership. The USSR routinely deprived Jewish parents of the right to choose their children's education,

guaranteed by UNESCO in 1960, and the agency did nothing to condemn these violations. Throughout the period 1948-1989, the Soviet representatives restrained the ability of the UN and its specialized agencies to monitor and compel the USSR's compliance with cultural rights provisions of treaties it had adopted. They were able to do this by making alliances with anti-Zionist states which gave them a majority in the General Assembly, through their use of diplomatic pressure in the specialized agencies and the various human rights bodies, and their use of the veto in the Security Council. The whole history Soviet repression of Jews' cultural rights illustrates how difficult it is for the international community to enforce civil cultural norms in states bent on quashing free speech and cultural expression.

Like the human rights system, global and regional sports events—e.g., the Olympics, the European Cup, etc.—have also been touted as ways of knitting together the world community. Certainly the pageantry of the Olympic opening ceremonies, with each country marching in procession carrying its flag, is intended to promote a feeling of global interconnectedness, and the personal relationships among athletes developed at the events often lead to cultural exchanges in the off-years. But international conflict rather than cooperation can just as easily become the theme. Media coverage of the Games is everywhere saturated with national self-congratulation—in the form of video diaries by, and patriotically constructed narratives about, the athletes—at the expense of the lip-service paid to global harmony. More extreme forms of conflict broke out when racism was enshrined in the Berlin Olympics in 1936, when Israeli athletes were murdered at the Munich Olympics of 1972, when a terrorist bombed the Centennial Olympic Park at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, and when protesters against' China's human rights record

attempted to prevent the Olympic torch procession in many countries in 2008. Nationalist and anti-nationalist extremism can both degrade the symbol of the interlocking rings.

After a period of initial promise, global civil culture met with daunting obstacles that reached an apogee between the mid-1960s and the end of the twentieth century. Where it succeeded in raising global awareness and sympathy, it did so unevenly, partly due to distribution problems owing to the lack of a global media and cultural infrastructure, partly due to the impact of international conflicts. This history has not killed off hope for cosmopolitan culture, however, at least in some quarters. Creating a response to two decades' history of genocides, massacres, systematic rape, terrorism, and other human rights violations has driven many recent cultural productions. In fact, in the aftermath of 9/11 there has been a resurgence of interest and efforts in global civil culture. The George W. Bush administration has, perhaps ironically, done more than anything else to create the conditions for this resurgence. By its refusal to sign key international treaties (e.g., the Kyoto Protocol, the statute of the International Criminal Court); its attacks on the torture ban and detainee treatment clauses in the Geneva Conventions; its lack of commitment to safeguarding Iraq's cultural heritage; and its endorsement of interrogation practices that included the desecration of Muslim sacred texts held by prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, the administration has inspired an internationalist and cosmopolitan backlash.

In Western cinema and photography the trend toward greater awareness of human rights abuses is plain enough. Films like *Hotel Rwanda*, *The King of Scotland*, *Blood Diamonds*, and *The Constant Gardner* have attempted to raise world awareness about

genocide, slavery, and a feckless pharmaceutical industry in Africa. As its name suggests, *Babel* depicts with melancholy a world of competing, yet interconnected tongues in which the United Nations peacekeepers cannot keep the peace. In *The Interpreter*, one woman has to choose between her desire, as a UN translator, to become a facilitator of cross-cultural communication, or to respond to the call of her own suffering nation. The photograph of the hooded prisoner at Abu Ghraib achieved instantaneous iconic status as proof of the deterioration of international prohibitions on torture. In her 2004 book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag placed this photo in a tradition of photography promoting human rights and civil solidarity stretching from the American civil war to contemporary Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and 9/11 New York City (Sontag). International celebrities like Bono and Angelina Jolie have used their fame as tools with which to draw world attention to inequities and suffering around the world. Such efforts call their audience to outrage against abuses and subjective identification with the abused, feelings necessary as precursors to support of human rights legislation and international cooperation.

Nor is this trend only a first world phenomenon. While critics have treated many productions emanating from the developing world through the lens of postcolonial theory, such works are not always engaged—or are only partially engaged—with the issue of colonization. Works like Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka's poetry collection, *Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known* (2003) and Jhumpa Lahiri's story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) contemplate the consequences of fluid borders, migration, refugeeism, diaspora, and exile, opening up a vista of the potential and limits of cosmopolitanism. Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish novelist and Nobel laureate arrested in

2005 for disparaging his country's treatment of the Armenians and the Kurds, explicitly linked the need for Turks to withstand sectarianism to the need for people around the world to imagine their way sympathetically into one another's identities. He spoke to a Georgetown University audience of the need for "literary globalization"—in which the imagination of "the other, the stranger, the enemy" could bind multiple publics together (Thompson). Sayed Kashua, an Arab Israeli novelist, used the family as the starting point in *Dancing Arabs* (2002, Engl. 2004), to explore how humanity can shine through national and ethnic identity. Fine artists have also made numerous contributions. One of the most affecting is "The Littlest Voices," a series of drawings by children who witnessed violent acts during the Darfur genocide. Human Rights Watch collected these and circulated them to museums around the Western world.

The emerging global culture of the Internet is not only promoting shared values as a matter of subject content but is producing them as a matter of form. The growth of collective, decentralized, multinational, multilingual, large-scale projects promises new work premised on multiple authorship and openendedness. Literary critic Reinaldo Laddaga has analyzed the narratives organized by Wu Ming, the name of which is Mandarin for "anonymous." Wu Ming has built a model "to link a practice of the verbal arts to the production of citizenship in a globalized world" (Laddaga 457). It has called for the production of a mythology dedicated to supporting the social movement for global justice. Through the Internet it has provided a platform to enable a very large-scale conversation that results in narratives produced from migrant perspectives on planetary issues like environmental degradation. The narratives are written collectively by anyone who wishes to contribute, are revisable, and are open-ended—on the model of open-

source programming. *The Ballad of Corazza*, a collectively written long poem, has been touted as one of the first fruits of the formation of time-limited “disorganizations” (Laddaga, 462). The language of “self-organization” provided by chaos theory has also been applied to such platforms. The Internet, as a supranational technology with no fixed home in space, makes possible the invention of new cultural forms that—so culture producers like Wu Ming maintain—can help us to “think globally.”

In whatever form it takes, global civil culture is an attempt to strengthen the support of publics around the world for human rights and humanitarian norms, treaties, and institutions. But this goal opens many new lines for inquiry. For one, if we are to build a sustainable global civil culture, we must have a better understanding of where global culture resides. Does it reside in content, public reception, distribution networks, communicative institutions, or regulatory mechanisms? Each of these cultural dimensions discloses a different side of global culture.

If global culture resides in a content consisting of shared human values, does it matter where the content is directed? If a musician writes a song intended only for his national compatriots that advocates such values, is it global culture? If the song reaches across states multilaterally but not worldwide, is it global culture?

Similarly, if global culture is to be identified by public reception, does it matter what percentage of the world’s population responds to it? Through what mechanisms might such responses be measured? There might be a range of responses to the musician’s song. One listener may come to sympathize with its civil content but do nothing to support global institutions. Another may speak about it to friends. Another may be more inclined to vote into office a leader who supports a global platform.

Another may become an activist. Which of these outcomes is measurable? Which constitutes the “success” of global civil culture?

If global culture is to be measured by the strength of worldwide distribution networks, communicative institutions, and regulatory mechanisms, to what yardstick can these be compared? Given that such developments are, because of their scope, *sui generis*, there arguably exists no control for a study of them. Does global civil culture require a centralized distributor? If the musician’s song is disseminated to a developing country by a company based in the developed world, is its global civil content invalidated by its hegemonic origins? Or another recent example of the quandary: the Visa ad at the Beijing Olympic Games. Behind artfully photographs of athletes, the resonant voice of Morgan Freeman appeals to our shared humanity:

Maybe it’s not where an athlete’s from that makes us root for them. Maybe it’s not the flag on their back, or the anthem that we hear when they win, that makes us cheer. Maybe it’s simply that they are human, and we are human, and when they succeed, we succeed. Go World. Visa, proud sponsor of the Olympic Games and the only card accepted there.

Does the company’s self-promotion cancel out its appeal to universal solidarity?

What would constitute a global communicative institution? By whom would it be funded, and how would its content differ from that produced by national communications? Does the decentralized and diffuse nature of the Internet make it a sufficiently powerful platform for spreading global civil ideas? Does the unequal access of individuals in developed and developing countries, in rich and poor neighborhoods—the so-called “digital divide”—disqualify as a global disseminator of culture? What tools

for promoting global civil culture are at the disposal of centralized institutions like UNESCO, and through means can these tools reach a global audience? In other words, what vertical lines of communication can be brought to bear to ensure that, for example, knowledge of World Heritage Sites is introduced into secondary education systems in every region in the world? If these lines of communication are to flow in both directions—or in many directions, supposing a more diffuse and decentralized system, by what mechanisms can public responses be collected?

Whether a post-9/11 cultural cosmopolitanism has a better chance of succeeding in this effort than the version of the 1940s and 1950s depends, in part, on the cultural infrastructure created by people around the world to sustain it. There are many activities that people might undertake to create and maintain global civil culture. Global arts foundations could underwrite the establishment of new venues in every world region dedicated to promoting, disseminating, exhibiting, and performing civil culture. Museums could plan exhibits dedicated explicitly to the theme. UNESCO could create new grants and fellowships to encourage works in progress. Human rights NGOs could monitor states' protection of cultural rights more actively. Universities could revive comparative and world literature programs and sponsor new journals. Factual media, old and new, could spend a greater proportion of their arts coverage reviewing global productions. In other words, cosmopolitan culture will only emerge if it is supported by a dedicated infrastructure.

But the new culture requires more than an infrastructure; it requires a structure of feeling. Cultural works that reinforce universal values can promote a sense of our shared human needs and aspirations. In turn, the feeling of shared humanity can inspire new

cultural works. Proponents of cosmopolitan democracy often dismiss culture as a luxury, the least important of the rights. But the international community has proven that you can't institute a feeling for humanity. People have to write it, sing it, act it, dance it, play it, paint it, film it, build it—*dream* it into being. However many NGOs there are, a global civil society will not truly exist until people everywhere can imagine it.

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