THE THIRTY YEARS' CRISIS: ANXIETY AND FEAR IN THE MID-CENTURY UNITED STATES

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Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933–1973* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013)

In 1952, Bill Gaines, the entrepreneurial comic book publisher, embarked on a new venture. He had already made a name for himself by introducing the "horror" comics (*Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Terror*) that had rapidly acquired an eager readership. Those titles summoned up repressed aspects of postwar culture, reveling in sadism, sexual infidelity, and grisly torture. But the id knows many pathways, and in 1952 Gaines launched a humor magazine called *Mad*. The title was a celebration of unreason. As its icon, *Mad* boasted Alfred E. Neuman, a grinning half-wit who lived by the mantra, "What, me worry?"[1]

It was a joke with teeth. Serious people worried. As Mark Greif argues in *The Age of the Crisis of Man*, the characteristic mood of deep thought at mid-century was anxiety. Not about the here and now, but about events unfolding at a deeper level, heard on what Ralph Ellison called the "lower frequencies."[2] Mid-century intellectuals were tormented by the thought that modernity had given birth to a "new man," fitted for the demands of industrial society but lacking some crucial human element (*Mad* riffed on this with its cover boy's last name: Neuman). In book after book, they declared "man" to be in "crisis." His fundamental nature, his irreducible essence, was under assault and in need of defense.

It is important to note how bizarre all of this was. Of all the countries in the world, one would think that the United States would be the *least* prone to panic

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[1]   The story of Gaines and *Mad* is told in David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America* (New York, 2008).

[2]   Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York, 1994; first published 1952), 572.

attacks. Harry Truman's 1945 characterization of it as "the most powerful nation, perhaps, in all history" was apt.[3] It had weathered the interwar period without its liberal government intact, it had got through the war with relatively minimal loss of life, it commanded the global economy, and its domestic economy was a cornucopia. "At least two-thirds of us are just plain rich compared to all the rest of the human family," noted Henry Luce in 1941. "Rich in food, rich in clothes, rich in entertainment and amusement, rich in leisure, rich."[4]

Scholars of international history have argued that this global good fortune carried cultural and ideological consequences. "America's emergence as a global power has been consistently driven by a sense of can-do confidence, a faith in scientific and technical solutions, and a missionary certitude that the United States was destined to serve as a model for the rest of humanity," writes Michael Adas.[5] That attitude prevailed, Adas and his colleagues argue, not just in Washington but within major US universities, where social scientists crafted a theory of modernization that placed their country in the vanguard of history. As modernization theorist W. W. Rostow saw it, social development proceeded in stages and terminated in a state of "high mass-consumption," exemplified by the United States at mid-century.[6] Nils Gilman has argued that modernization theory "embodied the highest flowering of American intellectual life" because it "colligated many of the postwar period's dominant ideas about society, politics, and economics."[7] By 1960, such ideas appeared to Daniel Bell to have garnered a rough consensus, leading him to famously declare the "end of ideology in the West."[8]

Still, not all were at ease in Zion. Numerous biographical and group studies in the past decades have identified important thinkers who shared little of Rostow's self-assurance or contentment. Casey Blake's *Beloved Community*, about prewar radical communitarianism, and Daniel Horowitz's *The Anxieties of Affluence*, about postwar critics of prosperity, are two examples.[9] Both take as a major

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[3]   Harry Truman, quoted in Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford, 2015), 15.

[4]   Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," *Life*, 17 Feb. 1941, 61.

[5]   Michael Adas, *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 8.

[6]   W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, 1960), 10.

[7]   Nils Gilman, "Modernization Theory: The Highest Stage of American Intellectual History," in David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele, and Michael E. Latham, eds., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst, MA, 2003), 55.

[8]   Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, IL, 1960), 369.

[9]   Casey Nelson Blake, *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990); Daniel Horowitz,

figure the urban theorist and historian Lewis Mumford, who can serve as our archetype of the troubled intellectual (Greif focuses on Mumford, too). Before the war, Mumford lamented the "widespread starvation of life."[10] During it, he railed against "the rottenness of our civilization itself" and accused his countrymen of being "passive barbarians."[11] Even the victory over fascism brought him little comfort. Instead, Mumford declared the prospect of atomic warfare to be "the greatest crisis mankind has yet faced." It was a threat of the deepest kind, he believed, requiring root-and-branch solutions. "*There is no part of our modern world that we must not be ready to scrap*" (Greif, 62, emphasis Mumford's).

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The mystery of the mid-century is that it was the time of both Rostow *and* Mumford, an era of confident social science but also, as Arthur Schlesinger Jr put it, the "age of anxiety."[12] Yet we tend to treat the upbeat aspects of the period as defining its character and to regard malcontents like Mumford as lonely prophets in the wilderness. In his sweeping, ambitious study, Mark Greif gathers together all of the trepidations felt by various members of the intelligentsia and argues that they were not unconnected or episodic. Rather, they hung together, they formed a "discourse." That discourse could be found throughout the North Atlantic, though the United States served as its "entrepôt" (xi). And, argues Greif, it dominated the intellectual production of the period.

Greif's account includes such diverse figures as Reinhold Niebuhr, Hannah Arendt, Robert Maynard Hutchins, Theodor Adorno, William Faulkner, Peter Drucker, Julian Huxley, Lionel Trilling, Arthur Schlesinger Jr, Dwight Macdonald, and Tom Hayden, and it's not hard to think of many others who fit the pattern. What united them all was not just a sense of looming catastrophe but a belief that the peril was an existential one, threatening "man." "What is man?" they asked with trembling urgency. The question, with its suggestion that there was some human essence to be identified and defended, was as important as the answer. And so they asked it obsessively, over and over—Mumford, R. G. Collingwood, and Ernst Cassirer all began books with that question. "You can't imagine into what kind of moralizing pool of humanistic sermons we were plunged after the war," remembered Michel Foucault (quoted at 286). "Everyone was writing books

The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939–1979 (Amherst, MA, 2004).

[10]   Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York, 1962; first published 1934), 178.

[11]   Lewis Mumford, *Faith for Living* (New York, 1940), 7, 41.

[12]   Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston, 1949), 1.

on the Human Condition," concurred the novelist David Lodge, "and publishers were fighting under the desks for the options" (quoted at 256).

And what was the crisis that they all found so threatening? Answers varied, though they tended toward the metaphysical. Aspects of mid-century history that are the most noxious to us today—Jim Crow, empire, censorship, patriarchy, and the despoliation of the environment—were passed over blithely by the crisis thinkers. Instead, they fretted about the state of their souls. They worried that mechanization was taking command of society or that totalitarianism was, and they warned that civilization was tilting into barbarism. The Holocaust horrified them less because of the millions it killed than because of the rumor (false, it turned out) that the corpses were processed into soap. The notion that people could be transformed into factors of production seemed to capture perfectly modernity's violation of the sanctity of the human. "What was I," asked the narrator of Ellison's *Invisible Man*, "a man or a natural resource?" (quoted at 168).

Greif greets questions such as these with more than a little weariness. "One of the striking features of the discourse of man to modern eyes," he writes, "is how unreadable it is, how tedious, how unhelpful." The discourse was "somewhat empty in its own time, even where it was at its best," and at its worst it was mere "cant" (11). The problem, Greif believes, was its abstraction, its focus on the (definite article) crisis of man (singular) rather than on the concrete problems of men and women. He thus reserves his praise for thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, who spoke the crisis language yet perceived its limits.

Regarding the crisis-of-man episode as largely empty, Greif has relatively little to say about the arguments that animated it. His focus is on form and context, not content, and here he proves his worth. *The Age of the Crisis of Man* glows with erudition as Greif chronicles the rise and fall of the discourse. It emerged in the 1930s as a controversial proposition, muscling aside pragmatism (which wondered whether there *was* any essence of man), Boasian thought (which harbored similar doubts), and orthodox Marxism (which saw a crisis but denied that it was metaphysical in nature). The dissenters were never entirely quieted, but thinkers who spoke the language of the crisis of man found themselves nonetheless able to claim the higher ground, acquiring the status of "serious" thinkers. Even the *Partisan Review*, which in 1943 protested against "reactionary theories about 'human nature'" and "the abandonment of the historical for the metaphysical approach," had by the end of the decade become a major vehicle for existentialism (66). By then, Greif argues, the discourse of the crisis of man had achieved a "total success," such that opposition to it "would henceforth occur in nearly all US intellectual life *within* the language of man and not outside it" (73, original emphasis).

At this point in the story, it is worth pausing to note the obvious. Although Greif collects an impressive set of major intellectuals under the umbrella of the crisis of man, there are many others who stood mostly or entirely outside it. They include Thurman Arnold, Kenneth Arrow, Charles Beard, Ruth Benedict, Edward Bernays, Daniel Boorstin, William F. Buckley Jr, Vannevar Bush, Rachel Carson, Kenneth Clark, Robert Dahl, John Dewey, W. E. B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, Milton Friedman, John Kenneth Galbraith, George Gallup, Michael Harrington, Friedrich Hayek, Richard Hofstadter, Zora Neale Hurston, Jane Jacobs, C. L. R. James, LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka), George Kennan, John Maynard Keynes, Alfred Kinsey, T. S. Kuhn, Aldo Leopold, David Lilienthal, Walter Lippmann, Robert Lynd, Carey McWilliams, Margaret Mead, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Gunnar Myrdal, Vance Packard, Talcott Parsons, Karl Popper, W. V. O. Quine, Ayn Rand, John Rawls, Robert Redfield, W. W. Rostow, Paul Samuelson, Joseph Schumpeter, B. F. Skinner, Henry Nash Smith, Benjamin Spock, and William Appleman Williams. Undoubtedly, these thinkers brushed up against the discourse and perhaps a few took inspiration from it (some appear as part of Greif's story). Yet the main themes of their thought pointed them in other directions. Some didn't sense a crisis. Others did, but they didn't identify "man" as its victim.

Greif takes little note of this. He treats the crisis of man as the defining feature of the age (his book's subtitle, *Thought and Fiction in America, 1933–1973*, speaks to the ambition of his claim). Thus, by the time the discourse achieves "total success" in the immediate postwar period, rival bodies of thought drop out of Greif's narrative. Instead, he searches for tensions deep *within* the discourse, in its works of literature.

Writers of fiction are obliged to engage with the concrete details of life, often using everyday speech. For this reason, Greif argues, the novelists of his period carried "the abstract discourse of man into the realm of practicality," where "its contradictions and gaps would come into relief" (255, 319). They poked at and prodded the discourse, seeking to make sense of it not just as high philosophy but as a guide to lived experience. In doing so, Greif claims, they foresaw and helped to bring about its end. Four chapters follow, on Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Flannery O'Connor, and Thomas Pynchon, who subjected the crisis-of-man theme to complicated variations the better to accommodate the realities of ethnicity, race, religion, and technology.

Those interested in Greif's quartet of novelists will learn much from his placement of them within the crisis discourse. Who realized, before Greif, that Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Bellow's *Dangling Man* shared a protagonist, "man," with Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man*? Or saw deep the resonances between Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Dwight Macdonald's essays?

Greif's analysis of the crisis discourse—its tropes, its presumptions—wrings new significance from familiar texts.

Greif's causal arrows point in two directions, though: the discourse informs the novels, and then the novels quietly undermine the discourse. That second part may raise a skeptical eyebrow or two. There's little doubt that fiction writers tested the limits of crisis thought. But as you follow Greif through the back alleys of metaphors and half-hidden meanings, it's hard not to wonder whether that circuitous route was really the most direct path out of the discourse. Greif is so acutely attuned to the tensions and modulations of crisis thinking within literary texts that it's surprising how little he makes of the simultaneous clash of ideas taking place next door, in the social sciences. Yes, Ralph Ellison wove a meandering course between universalism and particularism that explored the limits of both as applied to African Americans. But this was also the time when the social science of race was exploding onto the national scene, from Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) and Kenneth and Mamie Clark's influential doll studies through to the Moynihan Report and the many responses to it. Surely it was not only in literature that the idea of man as a singular subject, unmarked by ethnoracial difference, was challenged.

The book shifts back into high gear in its final section, which considers the unraveling of the discourse starting in the late 1960s. Feminists asked cutting questions about how universal "man" truly was. A long-standing black vernacular practice of referring to figures of authority as "the Man" began to appear in print and in white speech. Rather than asserting a universal human essence, radicals and countercultural figures fashioned their appearances to mark their divergence from the mainstream. "We're all Niggers now," is how Gloria Steinem voiced the sentiment (quoted at 277). "Man" in the earlier decades had been the victim of the outsize forces of modernity. Now, as "the Man," he was the perpetrator.

In philosophy departments, the discourse split dramatically. On one side, analytical philosophers retained the discourse's notion of a universal subject but discarded the idea of a metaphysical crisis. On the other, Continental philosophers turned violently against "man" and the centrality of individual consciousness. Foucault concluded *The Order of Things* (1966) by looking forward to the day when "man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea" (Greif's book ends on a strikingly similar note).[13] Branching off from the discourse of the crisis of man in different directions, the two traditions quickly

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[13]   Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1994; first published 1966), 387. On the last page of *The Age of the Crisis of Man*, Greif imagines "a giant face," a mask representing the "fundamental subject," and enjoins the reader (borrowing a phrase from *Moby-Dick*) to "strike through the mask!" (330).

became mutually incomprehensible—"as if mockingbirds were courting finches" (312).

And yet Greif warns that the crisis-of-man discourse may be on its way back. Climate change has reintroduced the notion of an existential catastrophe facing not just specific groups but humanity as a whole. Much of the resulting talk about the "human condition" strikes Greif as wildly unhelpful:

I want to tell my contemporaries: Stop! Anytime your inquiries lead you to say, "At this moment we must ask and decide *who we fundamentally are*, our solution and salvation must lie in a new picture of ourselves and humanity, this is our profound responsibility and a new opportunity"—just stop. You have begun asking the wrong analytic questions for your moment ... Answer, rather, the practical matters, concrete questions of value not requiring "who we are" distinct from what we say and do, and find the immediate actions necessary to achieve an aim. (328, original emphasis)

Mid-century talk of a crisis of man yielded heat but not much illumination. Greif fears that we'll once again tie ourselves up in fruitless abstractions.

But was mid-century thought really so hollow, so devoid of content? There are two reasons to think not. First, already mentioned, is the large number of thinkers whose engagement with the crisis discourse was at most part-time: the Boasians, the Marxists, the Freudians, the Keynesians, the pragmatists, the race theorists, the consensus school, the modernization theorists. Many of these, suffice to say, were deeply practical in their thought.

Second, even the thinkers fully within the crisis camp successfully addressed themselves to concrete questions. Often, their talk of man's crisis was simply a framing device, a clearing of the throat that preceded in-depth studies of history, sociology, or philosophy. Greif acknowledges this implicitly by analyzing the crisis of man as a discourse, a mood, and a set of tropes rather than as a developed body of thought. Yet his attention to form means that Greif has less to say about the substantive contributions of the social theorists he treats. So, for example, he writes at length about Lewis Mumford's and Peter Drucker's adherence to familiar crisis-of-man scripts but makes little of the work for which they are famous: Mumford's penetrating insights into the history of cities and technology, Drucker's radical revision of management theory. There is nothing wrong with Greif's decision to study the frame rather than the picture, but it makes his complaint that the discourse was "empty" seem not entirely fair. He apprehends the era by its clichés and then concludes, via somewhat circular reasoning, that the problem with the period was that it was too clichéd.

Fortunately, *The Age of the Crisis of Man* does not hang on Greif's claim that the crisis discourse defined the period or on his judgment that it was empty. Greif is undoubtedly right to suggest that "crisis" was a key theme, and his deft analysis of that theme offers an important correction to the persistent notion

that the mid-century was the golden age of technocracy. Below that, on the level of the paragraph, one finds in Greif's book spirited, smart, and often surprising explorations of the thought of the period. It is a helpful reminder that the substance of a book often lies deep within it.

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Readers intrigued by the notion of a mid-century crisis will be pleased to find the theme picked up by Fred Turner, a cultural and intellectual historian distinguished for his fascinating book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture.*[14] There, Turner found a through-line connecting the cultural radicals of the 1960s to Silicon Valley in the 1990s. Turner's new book, *The Democratic Surround*, is intended as a "prequel" (10). Using the same chronology that Greif does (though with a narrower range of subjects), Turner follows anxieties about totalitarianism from their emergence in the 1930s to their expression in the art and counterculture of the 1960s.

Like Greif, Turner begins with the specter of fascism and the thick gloom that engulfed the intelligentsia in the 1930s and 1940s. Intellectuals not only looked over to Europe in horror, they also believed that similar patterns were taking root in domestic soil. No event seemed to confirm this more than Orson Welles's broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* in 1939, which, despite being presented as a radio drama, sent listeners into a panic as they prepared for a Martian invasion. What Welles's broadcast showed, observers concluded, was that mass delusions and the propensity to act on them had nothing to do with the German character. There was something in modernity itself that had robbed individuals of their autonomy and capacity for critical thought. "Modern society has become so tightly organized, so rationalized and routinized that it has the character of a mechanism which grinds on without human consciousness or control," wrote Dwight Macdonald. "More and more, things happen *to* people."[15]

Had it stopped there, we might rightly regard this talk of crisis as empty fulmination. But for many thinkers, the human condition wasn't just a crisis to be lamented but a problem to be solved. Turner examines the "culture-and-personality" school, an influential cadre of intellectuals (largely ignored by Greif) who blended Sigmund Freud with Franz Boas. Like Freud, they stressed the importance of the psyche and particularly subconscious aspects of it. But whereas Freud explained the development of the psyche as a universal process

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[14]   Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago, 2006).

[15]   Dwight Macdonald, "The Responsibility of Peoples" (1945), in Macdonald, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist: Essays in Political Criticism* (New York, 1957), 33–72, at 51, original emphasis.

based on biological drives, the culture-and-personality school deferred to the Boasian insight that much of the individual's personality was specific to her home culture. That was an enabling thought. If personality was the product of culture rather than of inbuilt urges, it could be worked on; it could be engineered. The problem was mass culture, which yielded a fascist personality type: rigidly intolerant, violently aggressive, and easily led. A democratic culture, by contrast, would yield a democratic personality: autonomous, tolerant, flexible, creative, and collaborative.

What does a democratic culture look like? That question, Turner argues, animated a great number of mid-century thinkers and artists. Turner takes a particular interest in their ideas about media and argues that in the 1940s they developed a new cultural form, the "surround," designed to inculcate democratic habits. He traces its origins to *Balinese Character* (1942), a photojournalistic book produced by anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. Unlike past books of photography, such as Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1889), Mead and Bateson did not use images didactically. They kept their textual interventions to a minimum and placed the photographs on the pages so that none took precedence over another. In this way, Turner argues, "Mead and Bateson groped toward a new and specifically democratic genre of communication. No instrumentally powerful narrator demanded that the reader glance to one image or another. No dictator tugged at the reader's heartstrings or tried to paint a picture of racial differences" (71–2). The book would function less as a road, carrying the reader from one point to another, than as a garden, an environment to be explored. Or, to switch the metaphor to one Mead herself used: rather than receiving a fixed menu, readers would be offered a buffet.

To credit Mead and Bateson as great innovators for their book design would be a stretch. *Balinese Character* was part of a new genre of phototextual books, including Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell's *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937), Dorothea Lange and Paul S. Taylor's *An American Exodus* (1939), and James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), all of which presented images with minimal textual guidance in an attempt to offer unmediated access to the subjects of the photographs ("So far as possible we have let them speak to you face to face," Lange and Taylor explained[16]). But Turner is undoubtedly right that all of this was spurred by a desire to find more democratic modes of communication. "The primary need at the moment," wrote the high-profile Committee for National Morale in 1941, is to "free the individual citizen from his fear of being moved, to restore to the individual his belief that *he can*

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[16] Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (New York, 1939), 6. On the genre and its politics see Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life beyond Limits* (New York, 2009), 276–82.

make choices, he is not just a helpless musical instrument on which the propagandist plays whatever tune he wishes" (quoted at 75, original emphasis).[17]

Democratic theorists were drawn especially to museums. Unlike films, which pressed a linear succession of images and sounds upon a passive viewer, museum exhibits allowed visitors to choose their own path and pace. All the better if the exhibit could be made disorienting enough to liberate the spectator from the tyranny of the curator. Drawing on the aesthetic principles of the Bauhaus, mid-century artists sought to create ambiences rather than arguments. They used oddly sized images, they placed objects on the floor and the ceiling, and they experimented with nonlinear floor plans, all in the hopes of overcoming passivity in the viewer. Even film could be made more democratic if, instead of drawing attention to a single screen, curators presented multiple screens at once or screens large enough that the viewer would make her own choices about where to look.

These experiments unfolded in prominent spaces, most notably at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Bateson turned the Bali book into an exhibit there. Lewis Mumford and Archibald MacLeish helped develop another such show for MoMA in 1940 ("in this exhibition, the visitor is not a passive spectator but an actor," a curator wrote), but MoMA board member Abby Rockefeller shot it down because, ironically, she judged it to be too propagandistic (quoted at 101). Democratic modernists had more success with three extraordinarily popular MoMA exhibitions, Road to Victory (1942), Airways to Peace (1943), and The Family of Man (1955), all designed by Bauhaus émigré Herbert Bayer and, except for Airways, curated by Edward Steichen. Though they had messages, all three privileged immersion over instruction.

The surround proved irresistible to modernist artists, especially those around Black Mountain College, where Walter Gropius, Paul Goodman, Robert Rauschenberg, Buckminster Fuller, Francine du Plessix Gray, Willem de Kooning, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham explored democratic forms of art and culture. Turner focuses on Cage, who believed the normal methods of classical music—a composer issuing commands to a performer for the benefit of a silent and passive audience—to be totalitarian. He experimented first with indeterminacy, then, famously, with silence. Turner credits Cage with staging the first "happening," a theatrical version of the surround, in which multiple unconnected performances unfolded simultaneously. In 1952, the same year in which he debuted his silent composition $4'33''$, Cage performed the happening at Black Mountain College: he lectured from a ladder, Cunningham danced, Charles Olson and M. C. Richards read poetry, and David Tudor played piano while photographs were

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[17]   Turner hypothesizes that Mead, a member of the committee, wrote those words.

projected onto the surfaces of Rauschenberg's *White Paintings*. In this, writes Turner approvingly, "Cage freed sounds, performers, and audiences alike from the tyrannical wills of musical dictators" (148).

Democratic cultural forms lent themselves readily to the avant-garde, but they also slotted neatly into postwar geopolitics. As we now know well, waging the Cold War was a matter of art as well as armies, and the State Department latched onto abstract expressionism, modern dance, jazz, and much else besides in its attempt to win hearts and minds. Turner shows something similar happening with surround-style modernism. The US Information Agency sent Steichen and Bayer's The Family of Man to thirty-seven foreign countries to showcase US culture. Buckminster Fuller designed geodesic domes for international expositions, and Charles and Ray Eames produced a seven-screen documentary for one of them. At the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, the avowedly apolitical Cage explained to his audience that the problem with European classical music was that it encouraged listeners to "act like sheep rather than nobly" (262).

It's a little hard to know what to make of those State Department junkets that the titans of postwar culture were always going on. Does it show that they were dupes, or does it show that Foggy Bottom was admirably adventurous in its handling of cultural affairs? Turner veers toward the latter interpretation but ultimately seems uninterested in the question. Perhaps he's right to find the whole debate tiresome. Still, given the obsession of his cast of characters with developing non-propagandistic cultural forms, there is something remarkable about the ease with which they slotted into the Cold War propaganda machine. At a time when the United States government was enforcing Jim Crow, staging coups, backing dictators, stockpiling nuclear weapons, and becoming increasingly entrenched in South Vietnam, it mattered that the public face of the country was a geodesic dome stuffed with The Family of Man photos and featuring John Cage agonizing about authoritarian tendencies in classical music. As a Czech observer who had been subjected to some of the United States' cultural diplomacy noted, "Your propaganda is the best propaganda, because it is not propaganda at all."[18]

Turner is too much of an admirer of postwar modernism to walk far down that pathway. *The Democratic Surround* is not a book about complicity. It's a book about continuity, part of Turner's multivolume campaign to excavate the "forgotten openness of the closed world" of the postwar era and thus find the roots of our freewheeling and decentralized Internet culture.[19] Its central achievement is to notice how the anxieties about fascism from the 1930s and 1940s poured into the art of the 1960s. This is a nontrivial observation. Although Turner's book

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[18]   Quoted in Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York, 2012), 108.

[19]   Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 16.

does not delve deeply into the 1960s, his story provides an explanatory key that unlocks much of that decade's art. Rather than seeing the postwar counterculture merely as a rebellion against the buttoned-up 1950s, Turner regards it as a creative response to the mid-century sense of crisis. "The children of the 1960s did not only overthrow their parents' expectations," he concludes. "They also fulfilled them" (293).

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Reading Greif and Turner today, the surprise is how long this episode lasted. The likelihood that the United States would fall into fascism in the 1930s was small, though not vanishingly so. Yet the anxiety that this prospect generated among artists and intellectuals was profound and prolonged. When the literal collapse of liberal politics no longer seemed likely, they carried the fear into metaphorical realms and worried about a deeper crisis of the soul. That fear drove them into an uncritical cooperation with the Cold War and—in Greif's diagnosis—into equally unforgivable excesses of banality. It is often said that generals always fight the last war, adapting their battlefield tactics to the challenges of the past rather than those of the present. Perhaps we can say that of intellectuals, too.

The Crisis of the Third Century, also known as Military Anarchy or the Imperial Crisis (235–284 AD), was a period in which the Roman Empire nearly collapsed under the combined pressures of barbarian invasions and migrations into the Roman territory, civil wars, peasant rebellions, political instability (with multiple usurpers competing for power), Roman reliance on (and growing influence of) barbarian mercenaries known as foederati and commanders nominally working for Rome But not all fear is the distorted, excessive fear of anxiety disorder, beavering away over negligible or imagined ills. Some is the entirely justified fear of what is fearsome: struggle, deprivation, dying. In the APA study, people of color reported significantly higher anxiety than Caucasians, in an environment of rising, strident racism. Following an extended fight in the states and in Congress over America's tattered safety net, adults without health insurance reported a significantly higher overall stress level than those with insurance. The single largest area of increase in anxiety surro A few years ago, a polygraph examiner in Chicago recounted to me how one subject had beaten the test. After the suspect "passed" (the technical term is NDI, "no deception indicated"), the examiner, who was convinced that he was guilty of the crime, asked him how he had managed to outwit the machine. The subject, apparently more proud of his ruse than concerned to maintain his innocence, opened ...Â Besides being a prolific writer, he has been a director, an actor, and a political activist in the second half of the twentieth century. As Brigitte Gauthier writes in her The causes of the Thirty Years War in Western Europe: By 1600, two camps had emerged in western Europe: France and the United Provinces The House of Habsbu.Â Another area of weakness was that the southern area of the route relied on political stability in the northern Italian states. Any crisis in any of these states would hinder the Spanish use of the "Road". For many years, France had been fearful of Habsburg encirclement. Spain was on her southern border and the Spanish Netherlands had been on her north-east border. 4 Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," Life, 17 Feb. 1941, 61. 5. 5 Adas, Michael, Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 8CrossRef Google Scholar. 6. 6 Rostow, W. W., The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-communist Manifesto (Cambridge, 1960), 10Google Scholar. 7.Â On the last page of The Age of the Crisis of Man, Greif imagines "a giant face," a mask representing the "fundamental subject," and enjoins the reader (borrowing a phrase from Moby-Dick) to "strike through the mask!" (330). 14. 14 Turner, Fred, From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism (Chicago, 2006)CrossRef Google Scholar. 15.