

Lizard Talk



Lizard Talk;

Or,
Ten Plagues and Another

An Historical Reprise
in
Celebration of the Anniversary
of
Boston ACT UP
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Peter Linebaugh

Midnight Notes
P.O. Box 204
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts
02130

WELL, WELL, WELL. Happy Birth Day, ACT UP,
and Many Happy Returns of the Day!

The AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power has just begun to flex its muscles. We are all beginning to feel better in the reflection of your struggle against AIDS. Although you may sometimes feel like the little boy whose thumb in the dike is all that stands between the next breath and the deluge, your supporters gain courage by your example.

AIDS, like the pestilences before it, has been used as a principle of division - division between the genders, between the races, between the nations and the continents. But it has backfired, and the struggle against it brings us greater power than we knew, for we are beginning to understand that there is not a single question of struggle that is not involved in yours. The struggle against sex and racial discrimination, the struggle of workers at our places of employment, the struggle for civil liberties, the struggle for housing, the struggle to chose our own life-style, the expression of solidarity with those struggling in Africa, in Haiti, in the Philippines, and in Latin America, the struggle against medicine-for-profit, the struggle for education, the struggle for prisoners' rights, the struggle against identity papers, the struggle to sleep when, where, and with whom-ever, the struggle to retain some of the breakthroughs of the 1960s to create our own forms of sociality, the struggle against drug abuse, the struggle for gay liberation, the struggle for women's liberation, the struggle for the envi-

ronment, the struggle for science for the people, the struggle for sex, and the struggle for safe streets, have gained strength from your vigilance, creativity, and staying power.

Here is a birthday present. It is a history of ten plagues. It contains warnings and danger signals. It shows us how far we have come. It is a collective present which could not have been written without the help of Michaela Brennan, Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, Evan Stark, John Wilshire, Monty Neill, Nancy Kelly, Bettina Berch, Harry Cleaver, John Roosa, Kate Linebaugh, and all the "whores, sluts, and martyrs" who supped on minestrone last Friday beyond midnight.

So, as they say in San Francisco, "let us go gayly forward."

HIV made its active appearance in the late 1970s in the United States. At the same time, in Chicago, an economic theory was propagated ("monetarism") that organized poverty, famine, disease, and dislocation all over the world in the interests of ruling classes whose corrupt desperation was personified by an aphasic actor, Ronald Reagan. Chicago also became a center noted for the adoption of free-market economic models to the interpretation of law (Stephen Possner) which ceased to pretend to justice and quantified instead the cost-benefit of life and death, and such jurists gained political ascendancy. Not long after, under the barking leadership of William Bennett, other dogs of the liberal arts joined the howling chorus for "Western

Civilization." A Chicago historian, William McNeill, published Plagues and Peoples in 1976, shortly before the AIDS pandemic appeared.

He takes a long view, indeed the longest view he can, beginning with "Man the Hunter" and placing "him" within a very deterministic ecology. He notes that our survival is contingent upon survival against microparasites which inhabit our bodies (bacteria, viruses) and against macroparasites (ruling classes in their many mutations) who raid, enslave, exploit, tax, kill, and otherwise mess us up. Any kind of parasite is dependent upon its host, the HIV no less than a ruling class, and therefore it is in the interest of the parasite not to annihilate its host completely, as otherwise, the parasite too is dead. A balance, or stasis of some kind, must be accommodated. The host is permitted to live only to the extent that it works to produce a surplus for the parasite.

While McNeill does not prattle, as Hitler does in Mein Kampf, about "sacrifice for the race," or "ruthless measures for survival," he is at ease with that cool distance from events that permits him to speak of "Nature" and our "species." Susan Sontag warned against the metaphorical treatment of disease, and that is a danger McNeill has not resisted. He retains a lay person's knowledge of disease and a Chicago person's knowledge of ruling classes. He does not, for all the suggestion of a class analysis of plague and history, tell us about the lost history of our own communism. Nor does he know about the lizard.

1. Lizard Talk in Ancient Egypt

"AIDS!" her lips curl about the syllable. "There is no such thing. It is a false disease invented by the American government to take advantage of the poor countries. The American President hates poor people, so now he makes up AIDS to take away the little we have."

Prostitute in Port-au-Prince, quoted in Life, August 1987.

What about the famous plagues of ancient Egypt? They provide an atavistic component to the whisperings and prayers of the bourgeoisie. They are the "fundamentals" of the Fundamentalists. Did not the Lord of Hosts, the wrathful Yahweh, sling down plague and pestilence to those who got in the way of the "Chosen People"? Listen to the voice of the chief physician of the Baptist Mission Hospital outside of Port-au-Prince (one-third of whose beds are unoccupied): "Fornication. It is Sodom and Gomorrah all over again, so what can you expect from these people?" (Life magazine, August 1987).

In Lutheran, in Calvinist, in Vatican, in Zionist ideological practise, these are the fool "fundamentals" dividing "darkest Africa" from the "glory that was Greece," the slave mode of production based upon the empire of irrigation (ancient Egypt) from the slave mode of production based upon the democracy of the city-state (ancient

Greece), the ancient Third World from the ancient First World.

The plagues of the Old Testament took place in the 13th century B.C.E. They are the pestilences described in the Book of Exodus. But what is this book? It was composed at least three hundred years afterwards, during the reign of Solomon. It summarizes cultic recitation, song, and chronicle: or, the official myths of an ancient state, and must therefore be treated accordingly.

Zora Neale Hurston speaks of them as pan-African stories. The pestilences are exercises of the magical machismo of Moses, a man with a stick, a rod of power, a serpent god who leads slaves to freedom. He must fight the Egyptian oppressor and the Egyptian gods. The victory over Pharaoh is a victory of superior magic.

Moses throws down his stick, and it becomes a serpent. He dips it in the waters of the Nile, and the waters turn to blood. He stretches his staff over the streams, and frogs fall all over, even into ovens and kneading troughs. He strikes the dust on the ground, and maggots spring up everywhere on man and beast.

Flies, hailstorms, locusts, eclipses, pestilences, boils: Moses and his stick bring all of them, and Pharaoh's magicians are stumped at every turn. Thus does Yahweh defeat the frog goddess, the sun god, and the cattle deities.

Such serpent-and-stick power is a living power in Haiti and in Dahomey as Zora Neale Hurston discovered. How did Moses, the leader of slaves and outlaws (for these are the Egyptian meanings of the word "Hebrew") obtain his magic? He learned it from Pharaoh's stable boy, Mentu. Moses says to him, "I love you because you know all about the beginnings of things and you tell me about them. You tell me such nice lizard talk."

But Mentu did not give his knowledge for nothing. Moses brought him scraps from Pharaoh's kitchens. "Roast pork at Pharaoh's table meant boiled hog head for the help." With his new pupil Mentu could say, "I am eating further back on the hog now."

The class relations of magic-knowledge are made clear. It is concocted in kitchens and stables, exchanged for a price, and only then comes the familiar, ambiguous story of rebellion, massacre, and new kingdom. "'No more toting sand and mixing mortar! No more taking rocks and building things for Pharaoh! No more whipping and bloody backs! No more slaving from can't see in the morning to can't see at night! Free! Free! So free till I'm foolish.' They just sat with centuries in their eyes and cried."

Certainly, this is a version that only is possible after the liberation of the Afro-American, the historic person who straddles Christianity, Judaism, and Voodoo. The reading of the Egyptian pestilences supplied as a result of that experience is the opposite of Luther and Calvin, the gods of capitalism, whose Gospel was really "Work or be Hanged."

2. "What they had formerly done in a corner..." Ancient Greece

Thucydides. Let us call him "Thuc." He belonged to "the glory that was Greece," and no wonder for he came from an aristocratic family. He was the manager of a gold mine on the frontier of the Athenian empire. He was a failed general and an exile of twenty years. We're supposed to study his book, The Peloponnesian War, as part of "western civilization." OK. Let's have a look.

He praised maritime imperialism. He recounted the Athenian bid for Mediterranean hegemony. He lived in the transition to commodity production, and to the money-form of human creation. It is the transition from piracy to commerce (smile).

In methodology his book is no less revolutionary, as it departs from the magic of Moses. It is influenced by the sophist theories of disease propounded by Hippocrates: there is the observation of symptoms, the chronicling of the course, the identification of crisis, and the analysis of causes.

In the year 430 B.C.E., during the second year of the war, the Spartans invaded Attica and attacked the silver mines. At the same time a pestilence descended upon Athens striking first at the port city of Piraeus. It arrived, rumours had it, from Egypt and Libya, and beyond them, it was said, its origins were to be found in Ethiopia. Thus, it

was a disease of the "Other." Thus, does "darkest Africa" plague western civilization. Thus, does "Western Civilization" blame the victim. The old story has begun.

In Athens it ravaged the population, killing soldiers, wasting the urban population. It spread with ferocious rapidity as masses of people suffering from the Spartan invasion migrated to the city. Thuc describes the symptoms of the pestilence - the inflammations, the thirst, the insomnia, the diarrhoea. Thuc cannot but help to see it as part of a natural crisis. Birds and beasts refrained from contacting those who were infected.

But already this "modern historian" - actually the historian of diplomats and bankers, the man who writes a vade mecum for every politician - understood that there was nothing exclusively "natural" about an epidemic. He described the "lawless extravagance" induced by the unnamed disease.

"Men now coolly ventured on what they had formerly done in a corner ... seeing the rapid transitions produced by persons in prosperity suddenly dying and those who before had nothing succeeding to their prosperity." Pestilence, in its social dynamics, contains a possibility of liberation. Thuc the banker and Thuc the health professional was worried: "Fear of gods or law of man there was none to restrain them."

The epidemic produced a crisis likewise of political

leadership: Pericles was blamed, and indeed he was himself to succumb to the pest. And it produced a military turning point causing the Lacedaemonians to quit Attica. It intensified class struggle everywhere. Revolution broke out in Corcyra.

"The iniquitous resolves of those who desired to get rid of their accustomed poverty, and ardently coveted their neighbor's goods" and "the reprisals exacted by the governed who had never experienced equitable treatment or indeed aught but insolence from their rulers" worried Mr. Thuc, but why should it worry us? The struggle for justice became the therapeutic treatment of choice upon the part of the slaves, the poor, and the afflicted.

3. Christianity and the Whore of Babylon

The macroparasitism of Roman times preyed upon the peoples of the world through the vectors of tribute, taxes, and tithes. The poor slobs from Palestine to Portugal bought immunization from barbarian attack by payment to the civilized legions of Caesar and Nero. And the same 'protectors' extended their 'health' to Africa, India, and northern Europe, thus bringing a confluence of four human disease pools into the Mediterranean world which consequently was visited by repeated epidemic. Measles, smallpox, influenza, typhoid, dysentery, mumps, malaria ravaged this world in periodic visits that culminated with

Justinian's plague of 543 C.E. as commerce and conquest extended this 'known world.'



263. The praying mantis tells the insects: "To die is to be reborn into a better life."

The formation of a Mediterranean disease poll transpired during the same centuries of the consolidation of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. McNeill argues that disease and religion were inter-related, the transcendental fatalism of each religion reduced the danger of class struggle against Chinese, Indian, and Roman ruling classes.

It is true that the institutionalized Christians comforted the sick, nursed the dying, and consoled themselves with the thought that death was a release from suffering, and justice might be meted in the afterlife. Thus, did Eusebius of Caesarea complacently credit his church, while the Bishop of Carthage found mortality a "salutary departure." The microbiology of the Roman empire thus became lost in the theological sell-out of the early church fathers.

Yet, the macroparasitism of Rome, "the Whore of Babylon," was denounced by the turned-on drop-out, John of Patmos, who found deliverance in the Seven Angels from the Tent of Testimony with their Seven Plagues and Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God, as he described them in the last book of the Bible, Revelations.

Bowl One poured out foul malignant sores, Bowl Two turned the sea to blood, Bowl Three turned the rivers and springs to blood, Bowl Four burned men with flames, Bowl Five made men gnaw their tongues in darkness, Bowl Six dried up the Euphrates, and Bowl Seven poured huge hailstones ("weighing perhaps a hundredweight") upon Babylon. Such like passages of Revelation remained for night two thousand years a source of prophetic hopes to millenarians and revolutionists from the Middle Ages (Joachim of Fiore), through the 17th century (Abiezer Coppe), and into the 20th century (Peter Tosh, Bob Marley).

Class anger rages through Revelation making it less opium for the masses than crack for a vanguard. The kings

of the earth who had committed fornication with Babylon and the merchants of the world who grew rich upon her bloated wealth could only weep and mourn. They could no longer buy and sell: "their cargoes of gold and silver, jewels and pearls, cloths of purple and scarlet, silks and fine linens; all kinds of scented woods, ivories, and every sort of thing made of costly woods, bronze, iron, or marble; cinnamon and spice, incense perfumes and frankincense; wine, oil, flour and wheat, sheep and cattle, horses, chariots, slaves, and the lives of men."

4. One Hundred Tales of Love in the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism

"I was on DMSO [chronic topical application of dimethylsulfoxide] last year. It paid real good and it was better than that plague thing [bubonic plague vaccine immunization study] that fucked with guys last year. There was a lot of bad reactions to DMSO, but I guess that's why it paid so good."

Department of Criminology, University of California, Vacaville Prison interview (1969).

The Decameron was written by Boccaccio (Bo' for short) shortly after the Black Death of 1347-1349 which killed more than one third of the European population. He was the son of a Florentine banker. He went to Business School in Naples, but he couldn't hack it, so he tried Church

law, but he couldn't cut that either, so he became a diplomat and survived the Plague.

The hundred tales contain as many satiric pricks against the Church and the Bourgeoisie. Although the stories were stolen from the dying peasants to whom Bo' stood in a relation that may be compared to Joel Chandler Harris and the Afro-American, i.e., as a vector of palliation, their goal was to amuse the genteel who were occasionally and good-humouredly satirized.

The peasants "had no physicians or servants whatever to assist them, and collapsed by the wayside, in their fields, and in their cottages at all hours of the day and night, dying more like animals than human beings."

Bo' begins the fun with a short disquisition on comfort and compassion. This does not lead him to the subject of nursing, of tending to the sick, of caring for the dying. No, the comfort he means is the entertainment of those who have abandoned the city to escape precisely "an endless torrent of tears and sobbing." "Fathers and mothers refused to nurse and assist their own children, as though they did not belong to them."

The seven ladies and three gentlemen escape the town because: "Most houses had become common property;" "All respect for the laws of God and man had virtually broken down and been extinguished in our city;" and bereavement became a signal "for laughter and witti-

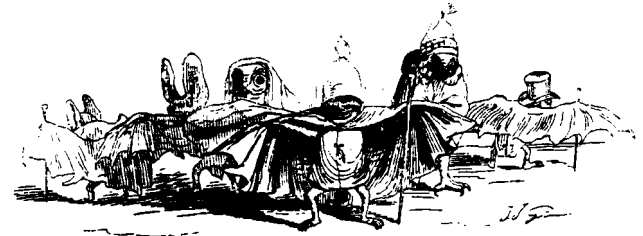
cisms and general jollification." The ladies meet in church and begin to talk, to plan: criminals are no longer exiled but career in the streets "in open defiance of the law." The ladies agree that they are at "the mercy of the scum of our city, who, having scented our blood, call themselves sextons and go prancing and bustling all over the place, singing bawdy songs that add insult to our injuries."

They skip town and ease their digestion of banquets savoured with eastern spices by telling their jokes and stories. These spices, however, came aboard the same ships that brought *Pasteurella pestis*.

This is the name of the microparasite whose vector is a flea and whose host is the "ship rat." It was brought to Europe by a combination of two macroparasites, 1) Ghengis Khanis plunderitis and the rapid circulation of life forms in central Asia, and 2) the virus Venetiaavaricious, the central artery of European commodity trade. The macroparasites had not developed techniques of self-immunization, that is, there were not "administrative routines" (triage, quarantine) in urban Europe for dealing with the infestation.

Pasteurella pestis found a succulent human population to thrive upon, because the defenses of the host had been severely weakened by malnutrition and war. The feudal peasantry had begun to develop patterns of its own against these scourges, namely millenarian movement and peasant rebellion against the parasites of Church, Lord, and Prince.

The Lollard movement in England and the Fraticelli movement in Italy were two such, and it was against them, as well as every other form of deviance, that ruling class commentators welcomed the Plague. The ruling class theory of disease was that it was either influenced by changes in the heavenly bodies (astrology) or that it was a punishment from God for an iniquitous way of life. Henry Knighton, the English chronicler, considered the Plague a "marvellous remedy" in the prevention and punishment of the practise of women dressing as men, for instance. Furthermore, vicious pogroms against Jews began, and ended, with the course of the plague.



Meanwhile, the Church offered salvation in exchange for money. The Pope invited Christian souls to Rome. One million two hundred thousand heeded the call and upon completion of their pilgrimage deposited their offerings, and (since only 10% survived to return home) their corpses as well. Meanwhile, the Pope moonlighted to the fairer clime of Avignon whence he ordered that the dice factories be converted to the manufacture of rosary beads.

In Germany, meanwhile, the bravest souls seemed to get into beating themselves up, for it was in central Europe that the Flagellant movement, or the Brothers of the Cross, originated as a response to the Plague. Men (and a few women) wandered the desolated countryside in bands of two or three hundred. On arrival in town they assembled themselves in large circles and proceeded to whip themselves into a frenzy of weeping, singing, and hollering.

The authorities at first met them with sceptical toleration, but it soon became clear that the Flagellants meant the Church no good as they ridiculed the hierarchy and looted the monasteries of their ill-gotten gains. Thus did pious S & M turn to revolutionary chiliasm.

Genocide on the scale of the Black Death had its revenges upon the macroparasites. *Pasteurella pestis* neither annihilated the sources of revolt, nor disciplined the working class to moil, nor prevented men dressing as women. Wages doubled in Europe - life actually became more valuable. Furthermore, to quote Thorold Rogers, "the effect of the Plague was to introduce a complete revolution in the occupation of the land." This reached its apogee in England where the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 produced an historic crisis of feudalism. Attacking monasteries, liberating prisons, taking over land, assaulting lawyers and priests, peasants and urban craftspeople united under the potent slogan,

When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the Gentleman?

The meaning is double, for the words "delve" and "span" may refer to either agricultural fertility or human generation, that is to ploughing, harvesting, fucking, and birthing.

5. The Columbian Exchange

In 1492 feudalism came to an end, and capitalism began. Merchants, bankers and incipient industrialists allied with the European sovereigns to form "nations" and "states" against farmers, peasants, and urban artisans who were expropriated from the wide world's common. As proletarians their first experience of massive wage-labor was in the armies and navies of the European empires. From the standpoint of the intercontinental transmission of microparasites, the Columbian exchange can be simplified as an exchange of smallpox and syphilis. When it is said that syphilis is the first "historical" disease what is meant is that disease in its epidemiology has become a social rather than a biological event.

The Europeans were efficient carriers, and the Americans were biologically defenseless. Between 1520 and 1600 fourteen epidemics ravaged Mexico and seventeen hit Peru. Most of these were of the smallpox. Within ten years of conquest the Mexican population declined from 25 million to 16.8 million, and by 1620 the Mexican population had fallen to 1.8 million. Similar genocidal events occurred in Peru. Resistance to disease was profoundly weakened by overwork and slavery.

While the Europeans did not have a bacteriologist's knowledge, they knew what they were doing. The 1616-1617 pestilence of New England cleared the woods "of those pernicious creatures to make room for better growth," wrote Cotton Mather, who regarded Massachusetts as "a new found Golgotha." The Pilgrim's famous "city on the hill" was thus compared to the place of Roman execution. Indeed, Drake had written of "the wilde people" of Roanoke, Virginia, that they said "amongst themselves, it was the Inglishe God that made them die so faste."

On the other hand, it was after the return of Columbus' ships that syphilis appeared in its virulent, epidemic form in Europe. This, the most "historical" of diseases. Ever since, "civilization and syphilization have advanced together."

At once it became the classic disease of capitalism. First, within a twinkling (by 1500) it was spread worldwide by the European empires - to Africa, India, and China. Second, it became the excuse of regulating pleasure as public baths were closed, as kissing came under suspicion, and as the common drinking cup went out of style. Third, it was the disease of nationalism: the Brits called it the French Disease, the French called it the Italian, the Germans the Polish, the Polish the Russian, the Chinese called it the European disease, the Japanese the Chinese, and so on.

Lurking beneath such nationalist chuckles, one hears the hysterical laughter of racist slaughter. By 1530 the

disease was named by Fracastoro whose poem, "Syphilis," told the story of a Haitian shepherd whose disobedience to god was punished with this disease whose very name therefore suggests the racism and imperialism of its origin.

Fourth, it was the perfect disease of bourgeois misogyny.

This worked in several ways. Fear of syphilis was an essential component to the European genocide against women of the Renaissance, called the "witch craze," because it was widely believed that syphilis was the mark of the devil. In 1826 the Pope banned the use of the condom because it defied the intentions of divine providence in punishing sinners by striking them in the member with which they had sinned. "Popo Go Homo" said the Castro when the Pope visited San Francisco in September 1987.

The ideological leaders of the bourgeoisie, such as Martin Luther, made no bones over their genocidal intentions: "If I were judge I would have such venomous syphilitic whores broken on the wheel and flayed because one cannot estimate the harm such filthy whores do to young men...." By the 18th century the bourgeoisie used syphilis as a means of attacking the aristocracy (for whom its marks were marks of 'gallantry'!) and as a compensation of its own ruthless repression of sexuality. But we get ahead of our story

6. "The Death Carts Did More..."

"It takes a plague to know a plague" may be said both of the principle of inoculation and of the historiography of epidemics. Certainly this was true of Daniel Defoe's book, The Journal of the Plaugue Year, which was ostensibly about the Great Plague of London in 1665 but which actually was contribution to the planning of the plague in 1721 when both the bubonic plague and the smallpox re-appeared in Europe and the western Atlantic.

In 1721 the bubonic plague appeared in Marseilles where it was met with religious piety and repressive quarantine. In the Dutch ports cargoes were burnt and sailors forced to swim ashore naked. In London merchants, reeling under the interruptions of their profits by the financial scandals of the South Sea Bubble, were reluctant to agree to similar measures of quarantine. The danger appeared at a conjuncture of a) rural guerilla movement in some recently expropriated Royal forests, b) serious strikes by the industrial weavers of London, c) an urban crime wave, and d) mobs rioting against the Royal dynasty.

These instabilities took place amidst a widespread debate about the indiscipline of the working class and the desirability of establishing workhouses. The Government, therefore, called upon the Bishop of London to stress the gravity of the situation, so he hired Daniel Defoe to take up his pen to contribute to the formation of that moral panic characterizing the biomanagement of epidemic.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic in Marblehead and Boston, the inoculation controversy began in the same year. It provides to the history of immunology a classic instance of class war via disease control. The story begins with the famous blue-stocking, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who had recently returned from Constantinople where her husband had been ambassador. She brought with her knowledge obtained from two Greek physicians who had studied in Padua (the most advanced medical school) of the effectiveness that inoculation had in immunization against smallpox. The doctors learned the practise from the Greek peasant women in Thessaly. Thus did "lizard talk," or the botanical folk medicine of the poor, contribute to the advance of "western medicine."

One obtains a meaning of what is meant by "western medicine" in the events of the New England inoculation controversy. The smallpox had been a useful ally to the merchants and puritans in their wars against the Indians. Bacteriological warfare was the precondition of expropriation and genocide. As late as 1763 Lord Jeffery Amherst ordered that blankets infected with smallpox be distributed among enemy tribes. By the 1720s, however, the disease threatened to strike closer to home, as a real danger to the ruling elite.

Indeed, the speed with which inoculation was accepted in England was the direct result of the dynastic crises that the disease caused among aristocrats. Queen Anne's son perished from it, leading to the Hanoverian Succession,



Figure 1. The doctor's robe. The nose of the sinister costume was supposed to act as a filter, being filled with materials imbued with perfumes and alleged disinfectants. The lenses were also supposed to protect the eyes from the miasmas. Illustration from *Historiarum anatomicarum medicarum rariorum* (1661), by Thomas Bartholin.

and a Habsburg smallpox death led to the War of Spanish Succession. So, when Dr. Zabdiel Boylston introduced inoculation into Boston, Cotton Mather readily took up the idea, for at this time, as we've seen, the ruling class could not afford such "sacrifices for science."

"Sickness is in Fact the Whip of God for the Sins of Man," Mather had once said, playing the time-tested Mosaic game. But when that "whip" threatened his back he too turned to a "Mentu," and he learned of inoculation from an African named Onesimus, unpaid in his employ. Otherwise inoculation was vigorously opposed on two grounds. For one thing it was expensive and thus only the rich had access to it, and for another while inoculation conferred immunity it did not prevent contagion. Consequently, a grenade was thrown through Cotton Mather's window, while in Marblehead "heathenish rioting" took place among the fishermen, the maritime workers, and dissident townspeople who pulled down the houses of those promoting inoculation.

1721, therefore, was a turning-point in the history of capitalist epidemiology: the danger of "accidental" death to the ruling class, the expropriation of working-class knowledge, class specification in the biomanagement of its ravages, and the creation of "moral panics" such that the history of the microparasite joined significantly with the class project of macroparasitism. The ruling class began to develop specialists in the subject, physicians and surgeons with their institutional infrastructures in hospitals and the drug trade.

In The Journal of the Plague Year the method was neither the statesman-like analysis we found in Thuc, nor the magical bogeyman of Moses, nor the insouciant delights of Bo' nor the genocidal fulminations of Puritan commanders: Defoe gives the shopkeepers' form of knowledge with its appeals to "common sense," the empirical combination of instances told in the context of "oral history." There is much wagging of the head, crocodile tears, neighborhood gossip, and sharp words against the idleness of the workers. The mode pretends to non-fiction - credible, plausible, "news fit to print." Why?

The entire project was brilliant on its surface and counter-revolutionary to its core. The macroparasite attacks by grinding its hosts into poverty, malnutrition, and destruction of pith and marrow. The immune system is defeated by over-work and extraction of increasing surplus-value. The English macroparasite was on the one hand traditional in its guises (King-in-Parliament, merchant-and-landlord), and on the other hand, it had done some powerful mutating by the 1660s adding to its customary forms two that were new.

One of these was international and it sought hosts to prey upon in Ireland, in Africa, in Bengal, in the Caribbean, and in America. They were an aristocratic DNA which, as did Newton and Locke, developed specifically patterned aggressions upon a variety of hosts. They may be likened to Pharaoh's magicians. They felt kinship with Thuc of Athens and Bo of Florence. Newton, during the

Plague of 1665 developed the calculus which taught the macroparasites about vectors, circulation, and flux.

The other form of English macroparasitism was what Napoleon called the "shopkeeper," what historians call "the middling sort," what Thomas Malthus called the "industrious" or the "worthies," and who were numerous and respectable. They sapped the strength from their hosts, the poor of England. They should be depicted with sticks and money bags, for its activity was counting and coercing. They lived in houses not palaces. Tight-assed and thin-lipped, they had been deeply threatened by the English Revolution of 1640-1660. It was to them that Daniel Defoe wrote.

In the Middle Ages poverty was a blessing and work was a curse. The macroparasites after 1660 tried to make it the reverse. The plague of 1665 was a major step in stigmatizing the poor and in sanctifying work.

Defoe transcribes municipal orders forbidding wandering beggars from the streets, forbidding plays, games, and ballad-singing, forbidding assemblies at feasts, and ordinances closing the taverns, ale-houses, and coffee-houses at 9:00 P.M. Living with working, having fun, enjoying food too much, or drinking late thus became part of a pathogenic syndrome. The "loose and disorderly" person was the vector, they thought, of the disease. A system of police invigilation was set up - parochial examiners, watchmen, and searchers. Funerals were abolished, no assemblies for

the dead or even church-time prayers were permitted, and burials were permitted only at night.

Defoe believed that the poor brought the Plague upon themselves by their "adventurous conduct," for they lived "as lavish, as extravagant, and as thoughtless for tomorrows as ever." That is, the industrial work habits (punctuality, regularity, thrift, and obedience) conferred immunization. Moreover, their "brutal courage" in tending the sick, carrying infested persons to the pest houses, and burying the dead explained why the poor contracted the disease. Women, especially, were "the most rash, fearless, and desperate creatures ... as there were vast numbers that went about as nurses."

Defoe thus attacks not only those infected, but the communities giving them comfort. Furthermore - this is the scary part - he understands the utility of the plague to the maintenance of class discipline. Listen to this. "As I said before, the good Management of the Lord Mayor and the Justices did much to prevent the Rage and Desperation of the People from breaking out in Rabbles and Tumults, and in short, from the Poor plundering the Rich; I say, tho' they did much, the Death Carts did more." This is the first acknowledgement that epidemic disease was becoming, not only a social event, but a social product.

7. Yellow Fever & Racism of the Founding Fathers

"Aedes mosquito study" in which "freshly grown, unfed mosquitoes in carefully prepared biting cages are applied to the forearms of volunteers for a period of ten minutes."

California Department of Corrections, Research and Review (c.1971).

That the 1790s was a decade of "revolution" is plain to all, for who can avoid the hoi-polloi of the bicentennials? We have the "miracle of Philadelphia" when the White Men of Means drew the shutters closed and shut themselves in to organize the 5/6's Clause in the U.S. Konstitution. And we have plenty of the red-white-and-blue, the "Marseillaise," Left-Right-and-Center, Bastille storming, and all, over in France. But to the discerning mind what is remembered from that decade is the colossal warfare of the West Indies, slaves who defeated three European Empires, abolished the plantation, and established an independent Haiti, on Christopher Columbus's first port of call.

Indeed, the mixture of American, African, and European peoples in the Caribbean in the 18th century can be compared to the formation of the intercontinental gene pool in the Mediterranean during antiquity. Only in the Caribbean what had taken several centuries, if not half a millennium, in the Mediterranean, was accomplished in a



duration of a few years, reaching a demographic and revolutionary climax in the 1790s. And thus from an epidemiological standpoint, as well as a political one, Haiti came to occupy a position analogous to that of ancient Greece and Rome.

Yet the differences were many. The main one now was the centrality of the African experience. The pandemics of the late 18th century put the slave experience at the forefront. Like the epidemics of antiquity they were thought by Europeans to have originated in Africa, but unlike them, this European interpretation was infected by racism root

and branch. In opposition, pan-Africanism developed, the experience of liberation wars, and as we read in Aimé Césaire, the philosophy of *négritude*: "At the end of the wee hours burgeoning with frail coves, the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded."

Another difference: the 1790s did not have its Thuc'. Instead, the parson, Thomas Malthus, wrote his pious lines, lines dripping with mathematical genocide, from the orderly perspective of his flower garden. Food production increases arithmetically, people reproduce geometrically, you see: this is the postulate of his "reason," and therefore people have to be killed. Q.E.D. War, plague, and famine were the "laws of nature", and he calibrated them exactly to the needs of the plantocrats with their whip crackings and to the factory owners with their eighteen hour days.

His perspective was a) worldwide and b) it substituted Nature for Jahweh. And it was all for our own good. Of course. Killing with kindness. It is a perspective that still reigns sovereign in the pages of the official press. Thus, Stephen Jay Gould taking the metaphysical distance of the biologist in discussing the AIDS pandemic, refers to "nature" thirteen times in a single column of newsprint! Thus it is at the very moment when nature becomes a realm subsumed under society that the social rulers proclaim its "laws" as determinants over society.

"Mangé kou bêt" [eat like an ox] said Dr. Jean William Pape in Port-au-Prince. He said it over and over again as each wasting patient left the AIDS clinic. It does not take the brilliance of modern science with its train of ambitious virologists with its government bankrolls or its high-tech labs to understand the proposition, nor the political suggestion implied by such therapy.

Philadelphia was the new capital of the United States, and try as it might to disguise the slave basis of the "democracy," chickens came home to roost. For it was not long after the ship Sans Culottes arrived in July 1793 bringing with it the white, black, and mullatto refugees from the slave rebellions of the West Indies that the Founding Fathers of the "new nation" decided to skip town.

They were frightened, for the ship also brought with it a new mosquito, aedes aegypti, carrying the yellow fever virus. But they did not know this. "The fever of Bollam" or "the fever of Barbadoes" as it was variously called seemed to be the result of African or Caribbean revolution. Through the summer and fall of 1793 the population of Philadelphia was decimated. Watches and clocks stopped. Poverty and starvation were rampant. Children were abandoned. The Federal gentry fled.

The official response to the epidemic, led by Dr. Benjamin Rush, gave an atmospheric etiology to the disease. It was something in the air. Consequently, smoking tobacco and explosions of gunpowder were recommended as effec-

tive preventatives. Unofficially, the bourgeoisie of the town blamed the freed slaves of the Caribbean and they let loose race riots against the Philadelphia Afro-American population as the best way of ending the epidemic.

Yet, the working class of Philadelphia took the opportunity to settle some scores. Half the servants deserted their masters. Prisoners were freed from the jail. Nurses were accused of robbery. Others demanded a pay raise to \$3 a day. Within the epidemic, as we have seen so often, the people who in fact suffered most from it, took it as an opportunity to deal with the macroparasites. It was a moment of potential. However, let us not accept the bourgeois fears of the working class during the epidemic, according to whom the working-class rage in a terrible, apocalyptic, thieving moment of rebellious redemption. At least not entirely. It is a one-sided, despairing view.

It was from the ranks of the suffering that leadership emerged. Richard Allen, born a slave, founded the Free African Society in Philadelphia in 1787 and later the first Methodist Church for Afro-Americans. Absalom Jones, also a slave, founded the first Episcopal Church for Afro-Americans in mainland America. Together they coped with the epidemic by organizing treatment and comfort. They sat with the afflicted. They comforted the dying. They wiped the brow of the feverish. They acquired the hearses. They built the coffins. They dug the graves. Working without wages or reward they accomplished the duties of humanity while the well-to-do fled in dread and shame.

The epidemic became an event for collective self-recognition and the construction of a collective historical identity.

8. Gothic Disguises of Industrialization

"With cholera or with typhoid we will use a dose of organisms that will produce disease in 25 or 30 percent of the control [unvaccinated] population."

Dr. Richard Hornick, University of Maryland
Maryland House of Correction, Study of Cholera and Typhoid Fever (1971)

The literature of epidemics is a literature of escape because literary artists are paid by a ruling class whose response, whenever possible, is to flee danger. We take Edgar Allan Poe as an example. He wrote "The Masque of the Red Death" in 1842. The year is important and in a minute we'll return to it.

The story goes like this. Prince Prospero believed he could seal himself off from the infections of a fatal pestilence ("the Red Death") by gathering a thousand courtiers behind the lofty walls of a gothic abbey. "The external world would take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think." The story is full of atmospheric. All the appliances of voluptuous pleasure were arranged in seven differently colored rooms for a long, hermetic life of

bizarre, decadent Beauty. Only the hourly chimes of the ebony clock silenced the musicians and disturbed the evolutions of the dancers. It was an assembly of phantasms. The macabre, sensuous scene is interrupted by a mummer, the Red Death, who enters the apartments and murders Prospero. "He had come like a thief in the night," writes Poe quoting of Revelation.

Is Poe writing about a pestilence? if so, why is it a red pestilence unless he is also writing about the working-class revolution of the time? and why does he associate the pestilence with the classic statement of European millenarianism?

Some real history may help us. "Cholera was the classic epidemic disease of the nineteenth century," just as yellow fever and small pox had been of the previous two, writes Charles Rosenberg in The Cholera Years (1962). The pandemic that shook Poe's generation was the cholera that spread from the east through Europe and then to American cities between 1831 and 1832.

The cholera originated in Bengal (1817) where its spread was assisted by the pattern of British commerce and military movement. Indeed, the lizard talk of the Indian villagers recognized that the cosmic imbalance suggested by the epidemic was the result of deities (Sitala, Mariyamma, Ola Bibi) angered by the disturbances of British imperialism. A ritual exchange of food (chickens, chapathis) between villages designed to propitiate the capricious

displeasure of these female deities established a network of communication that was opaque to British eyes. The oppressed begin to define "health" in its own terms.

Such lines of communication were an essential part to the First War of Indian Independence, or the Great Mutiny of 1857. So, if Indian "superstition" was largely ineffectual against the water-borne virus of the cholera, the same "folk-lore" helped to form the infrastructure against the British macroparasites who in any case carried the virus back to European and north American cities.

Poe in 1831 was dismissed from West Point (cutting classes, refusing to attend church, disobeying orders) and went to live in Baltimore where his circumstances of life were penurious, and he would have been alive to the rumours and fears of cholera which then, as at any time in modern history, were designed to repress sexuality, to encourage racism, and to establish a pathology of the class relation (workers are sick, rulers are healthy).

The U.S. press considered, as indeed did medical opinion, that cholera was the result of an intemperate and dissolute life. The newspapers reported that of 1,400 "lewd women in Paris" 1,300 had died of cholera. It was considered the "poor man's plague," by some with a note of pity, and by others with a note of satisfaction - the purpose of cholera was "to drain off the filth and scum which contaminate and defile human society." In Baltimore, specifically it was reported that the majority of cholera victims were the

"most worthless" sort. To suffer from cholera was "socially inexcusable."

"The Irish and Negroes seemed its foreordained victims" and in many cities the case rate was double for Afro-Americans. Physicians experimented upon the slaves of the South and the slum-dwellers of the North. Racial medicine was created in the first half of this century. Those suffering from cholera and the communities to which they belonged were not merely passive victims. They had their active notions of justice and social therapeutics, becoming thieves in the night. New York suffered an epidemic of B and E's. Physicians and city officials were attacked and brutally beaten."

The N.Y. Evening Post of 23 July 1832 published an interesting account of the infamous Five Points area of Manhattan: "The Five Points ... are inhabited by a race of beings of all colors, ages, sexes, and nations, though generally of but one condition, and that ... almost of the violent brute. With such a crew, inhabiting the most populous and central portion of the city, when may we be considered secure from pestilence. Be the air pure from Heaven, their breath could contaminate it, and infect it with disease." The very breath of the working class was deadly!

The working class was most dangerous precisely where it was least divided by gender, race, or age. Furthermore the particular working class of Five Points was strategically vital to international trade since it provided the labor

pool for the Hudson River docks, wharfs, and quays. It was here that the international circulation of value reached one of its most sensitive and dense concentrations. Hence, selective genocide was contemplated and effected under the guise of "natural law."

The purposes of this were not lost upon the working class. At the time of the 1831 cholera epidemic "the belief spread across Europe that the rich, under the influence of Malthusian ideas, were deliberately spreading the disease to reduce the population," as Norman Longmate has written (King Cholera: The Biography of a Disease [1966], p.4).

The 1830s were also characterized by the mechanization of production in factories. In turn, these required a concentration of men, women, and children. Huge numbers of people were removed to the crammed quarters, so squalid, so fetid, that is called "urbanization" in Manchester, Liverpool, New York, and Boston. These were "the Hungry Forties." In addition to the trade unions and the mass political parties that were formed, another social dynamics was established: on the one hand the quarantine of urban communities and their planned isolation (called "slums"), and on the other hand the dangerous cultures of alcohol, thievery, and desperation.

Charles Marks, the young revolutionary, wrote in 1844 that "the cheat, thief, swindler, beggar, and unemployed; the starving, wrtched and criminal workingman - these are figures who do not exist for political economy but

only for other eyes, those of the doctor, the judge, the grave digger, and bumbailiff, &c.; such figures are specters outside its domain. For it, therefore, the worker's needs are but the one need - to maintain him whilst he is working in so far as may be necessary to prevent the race of laborers from dying out." It was necessary to produce a anew kind of worker, "as a mentally and physically dehumanized being."



The same year Poe published "The Masque of the Red Death," in England, the Poor Law Commissioner, Edwin Chadwick, published the blue print of the "public health" movement, The Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain. It was designed to regulate and preserve the urban proletariat for it, like the plantation slaves, needed to be carefully reproduced. It suggested in its attention to the municipal water supply (underground sewage disposal, introduction of the water closet) a 'hydraulics' of urban class relations, and it advanced the movement, begun by Bentham, for the incarceration of the ill, the sick, and the diseased; what Michel Foucault would call the establishment of "the clinical gaze."

As for the structure of the industrial cities, the developments of the 1830s and 1840s introduced what we may name after their most famous personifications, the "Holmes-Watson Style." Sherlock Holmes, the ace detective with his deductive method, and Dr. Watson, the complacent physician with his conventional pieties, summarize the twin organization against the urban proletariat of the 19th century - police and sanitation - for those decades saw not only the hydraulic control of the working-class via the "public health movement" but also the establishment of the armed-cop-on-the-beat in the new police forces arrayed against the industrial proletariat. Together they destroy homeopathic medicine (whose base had been the family farm), and they adopt urban "reform" to manage disease which thus ceases to be endemic and becomes what Evan Stark has called "endopolic," or intrinsic to the city.

By the end of the century capital was beginning to plan the life-cycle of the urban masses by immigration, social, educational, and urban policy, and in doing this, even as it congratulated itself on its successes, it realized that its victories over diseases limited its macroparasitical powers. Hitler wrote, "To me the giant city seemed the embodiment of racial desecration." Mark Twain expressed the result: "It has been discovered that the majority of the most useful and fatal diseases are caused by microbes of various breeds; very well, they have learned how to render the efforts of these microbes innocuous. As a result, yellow fever, black plague, cholera, diphtheria, and nearly every valuable distemper we had are become but entertainments for the idle

hour, and are of no more value to the State than is the stomach ache."

9. "I had a little bird..." Bolshevism and the 'Flu

The largest, quickest, and most devastating pandemic in all of human history was the influenza epidemic whose first of three waves began in Kansas in March 1918, and recurred in ever widening and more mortal forms in the autumn and the winter. Yet, this epidemic is distinguished from others by a second reason, the historical amnesia - a virtual black-out of memory - that has greeted it in subsequent generations. Its historian summarizes: "Nothing else - no infection, no war, no famine - has ever killed so many in as short a period. And yet it has never inspired awe."

Between 22 and 30 million people were killed in a year. Half a million of these were in the United States whose troop-ships carrying young men to the Western Front of Europe during World War I, in conditions that were floating test tubes of the virus, brought the 'flu to France, then Germany, England, and Russia, and from the European continent the virus was transmitted along the sea-lanes of European imperialism to Latin America, to West Africa, to India (where 12 million died), to China, Japan, and the Pacific islands. More were killed by the epidemic than were killed by the Civil War or World War I which Robert Graves called "the Sausage Machine, because it was fed with men,

churned out corpses, and remained firmly screwed in place."

The age specific mortality curve of the epidemic was shaped more like a 'W' than a 'U' which is to say that those in the strong middle years of life were as affected, and more so, than the very young or very old. This characteristic deeply worried the official macroparasitic institutions which relied on those in their middle years to produce, to reproduce, and to fight. To them, not so much life, as production and reproduction was the worry. Henry Cabot Lodge was concerned about the productivity of munitions plants. In March 1,000 workers at the Ford Motor Company fell sick. The number of rivets driven per day at the Philadelphia shipyards fell at a rate that alarmed the war producers. The equivalent of two combat divisions of the AEF, or the American Expeditionary Force ("Ass End First"), were incapacitated in France. 40% of U.S. Navy personnel were affected. 37 life insurance companies omitted or reduced their annual stock dividends. The macroparasites and the microparasite were thus in mortal competition for the bodies of the healthy ones in middle life, and that for another reason too. As an air-borne infection, "the rich died as readily as the poor."

War censorship and political repression of the Wobblies opposing the war impeded both epidemiological knowledge and the transmission of therapies. In the United States public health policies seemed directed at regulating all forms of human communication and by savage law enforcement. The girls in Brockton, Massachusetts, ac-

knowledged the isolation as they ignored it, skipping rope to:

I had a little bird,
And its name was Enza
I opened the window
And in-flew-Enza

(Their's was a lizard talk in its way, for by the 1970s research in the epidemiology of 'flu concentrated on the migration of birds.)

500 were arrested in New York on "Spitless Sunday." Large gatherings were prohibited. Telephone booths were padlocked. Public water fountains were closed. In San Francisco face masks were required to be worn. Cash tellers were equipped with finger bowls. A municipal ordinance of Prescott, Arizona, adopted a suggestion from an obscure newspaper by the Fascist, Benito Mussolini, making it a crime to shake hands. The Army Surgeon General reported that "civilization could easily disappear from the earth."

The middle point of the 'W' grew and as a result the famous 'Lost Generation' of despairing American writers came into being, and yet with the exception of Katherine Anne Porter none wrote about the 'flu epidemic. Was this massive, social, denial? Was this male chauvinism? Was this a sequela of the disease's "profound systemic depression"? They are important, unanswered questions.

Katherine Anne Porter synthesized the times, the creation of the 'new man,' and the 'new woman.' As Prohibition loomed guys started sporting hip flasks, and the new woman took up the cigarette - alcohol and nicotine, traditional responses, since the 1790s, towards epidemics. The government-issue wrist watch became the emblem of the urban individual; it became essential to the urban-and-factory planning of the Twenties. The government drive for money (War Bonds) was the only occasion of permitted gathering, and that under the slogan "Give 'till it Hurts." Indeed, "Sacrifice" was the watchword for the soldier and the 'new' woman alike: give money, give your time, give your labor, give you life.

One accomplishment of the American search for an antibody to the 'flu in 1918 was the recognition, following the disastrous results of experimenting on prisoners of Deer Island, Boston Harbor, that human beings make for the least satisfactory of laboratory animals. The virologists discovered something else. Historical memory is not a matter of our minds, research, and intelligence alone. It exists in our blood. Thus it is of the 1918 epidemic. That epidemic, and all 'flu epidemics, leave "their footprints in our serum."

Woodrow Wilson spoke in favor of votes for women at the height of the epidemic, appearing to offer a deal: votes in exchange for the 'flu. His famous Fourteen Points with its right of self-determination to colonized nations was enunciated at the beginning of the epidemic. Towards its end he was in Paris redrawing the map of world imperialism, and

when he fell to the aches and fever of influenza he refused to take his doctor's advice ("take it easy") and explained, "We are running a race with Bolshevisim and the world is on fire."

In Pale Horse, Pale Rider Katherine Anne Porter wrote, "No more war, no more plague, only the dazed silence that follows the ceasing of heavy guns; noiseless houses with the shades drawn, empty streets, the dead cold light of tomorrow. Now there would be time for everything." Yes, time for proletarian revolution in Czarist Russia, time for the Arab revolt, time for insurrection in South Africa, time for the mobilization of the textile workers of Bombay, time for the revolt in Haiti led by Charlemagne Péralte, time for the Mexican revolution, time for the Irish 'troubles,' time for the Spartacist revolt in Berlin and the Red Flag in Budapest, time for the Portland General Strike and the great steel strike of Pittsburg, time for the pan-Africanism of Garvey. Thus, health improves as a result of strikes, riots, rebellions, and revolution.

The multinational, worldwide host upon which the macroparasite preyed through its vectors of the assembly lines of Detroit, the gold mines of south Africa, the sweat shops of Bombay, the plantations of Haiti, the shipyards of Belfast, the metallurgical shops of Kronstadt, the slums of cities all over had begun to develop their own "antibodies" - the international revolutionary offensive, thus walking the talk of the lizard.

Against them the macroparasite struck back with savage repression - invasions of Russia, the Amritsar massacre in Punjab, coordinated infantry-air attacks in Haiti and Tulsa alike, race riots in Chicago, the Ku Klux Klan in the White House, Fascism in Italy, and National Socialism to Germany.

10. Mein Kampf & Tuskegee

"Administrators fear that one thing will lead to another - that prisoners will strike for better food, that they will try to escape. This is why they must keep prisoners feeling powerless and divided."

Beverly Abplanalp, Prisoners' Legal Services (N.Y.), Gay Community News, 1988.

The Nazis learned much from America. In Mein Kampf (1925-6) Hitler praised American race policy as being closest to that "folkish state concept" he wished to bring to Germany, and did. Hitler and the Nazis in the 1920s shared with American medical opinion an obsessive preoccupation with syphilis.

The racial medicine that developed in America in the 19th century sought to establish differences in disease immunity, susceptibility, and relative severity between the

racess. They tried to prove that blacks were physically inferior and sexually promiscuous. When the census indicated a declining birth rate among Afro-Americans in the second half of the 19th century, some physicians regarded this as confirmation of the racist belief that freedom from slavery would lead to racial extinction.

Syphilis was depicted "as the quintessential black disease." Another physician said Afro-Americans were "a notoriously syphilis-soaked race." No doubt these attitudes affected the "social hygiene" movement of the turn of the century when white professionals educated the white population to safer sex. The huge manpower needs of World War I led to the creation of the Division of Venereal Diseases of the U.S. Public Health Service, and to neighborhood VD clinics. Yet even these structural changes in the social reproduction of a healthy labor force failed to modify the virulent assumptions of American racial medicine.

The Nazis also associated syphilis with an oppressed minority, the Jews. "This Jewish disease" is what Hitler called it. It contaminated the people, corrupted the young, and poisoned the blood of the race. Hitler censured the sexual stimulation of the city (movies, billboards, shop windows), which he associated with syphilis and "blood sin and desecration of the race" in a process he called "Jewification." To the Nazis, the disease whose origin and name is inseparable from European conquest, massive migrations, slavery, and misogynist family policy, became once again, this time in the name of cleanliness, the means to institute an

ascendingscale of murder - "euthanasia" of syphilitics, forced migration, slave labor, and death camps.

In America, too, genocide was practised in the name of science. In 1932, the year the National Socialists won a plurality in the German Reichstag, the U.S. Public Health Service instituted its own "official, premeditated policy of genocide" (as one critic called it when it was exposed in 1972) under the name of the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male. About 600 Afro-American men in Macon County, Alabama, were hoodwinked into the study. In exchange for an occasional hot meal, a ride in a Buick, and a burial stipend, the syphilitic men enrolled in a study which was designed to show, what no evidence had ever suggested, that the mortality of Afro-American syphilitic men differed from that of white syphilitic men.

The men were not told they had syphilis. They were denied treatment for syphilis. Their wives and their children contracted syphilis. The study was racist in its goal, its means, and its techniques. The "government doctors" hoped to show that the mortality of tertiary syphilis in black men indicated a higher incidence of cardiovascular pathology than in syphilitic white men who were believed to die more often from neural complications. The men were treated like cattle - "corralled" in annual "round-ups" and given lumbar punctures with huge needles.

While Macon County thus became a "private labo-



ratory" or "sick farm" analogous to Buchenwald, Nordhausen, and Auschwitz, one should not infer that the experiments were a local aspect of 'Southern exceptionalism' any more than the freezing, immersion, and typhus experiments of the Nazis were exceptional, because as the Tuskegee "subjects" migrated northwards, as some would, Public Health officials in Cleveland, New York, and Detroit provided "colleagial cooperation" by withholding treat-

ment to the afflicted men, despite the Hippocratic oath and despite state and federal public health laws of 1927, 1943, 1957, and 1969 specifically prohibiting the withholding of treatment.

The Tuskegee experiment continued for forty years. The trial of the Nazi doctors, and the resulting Nuremberg Code against human experimentation, didn't even give the post-war public health officials pause (indeed, in the late '40s the U.S. Government assisted and protected Nazi doctors!). Nor did the Helsinki Declaration of 1964 on the same subject cause the project to be questioned. What brought an end to the "study" was a combination of the efforts of a San Francisco whistle-blower whose parents had fled the Nazis, and the legal efforts of Fred Gray, the civil rights lawyer of Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. Behind them in 1972 was of course both the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Revolution.

"Scores of men had died from a disease that could have been cured." The U.S. Government to this day has not apologized for the experiment. Even the liberal critique of the experiment shares a moral attitude with the racial medicine of the Nazis and Klan, for when they charge that the Tuskegee Study was "bad science" they mean that some of the men may have been "contaminated" by unauthorized treatment. This is the topsy-turvy, ass backwards, world of sicence, where saved lives equals "bad science" and treatment equals "contamination."

Indeed, it may be up to the same tricks. In February 1988 Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, announced that the U.S. is planning to conduct large-scale human experiments in Africa to test potential AIDS vaccines. In the same month Dr. Robert W. Ryder, director of an American AIDS research program on humans in Zaire, explained, "What we can do here that we cannot do in the United States is to follow thousands and thousands of AIDS victims because wages are low."

Such research is conducted in a specific economic and demographic context, in the case of Africa one largely determined by the World Bank. It promotes an anti-natalist policy and seeks to reduce the number of Africans who being too attached to "old ways," i.e., their land, are obstacles to the development of macroparasitic agricbusiness. In this context, the AIDS scare is highly useful. The international medical establishment has gone out of its way, from the Panos Dossier to Dr. Gallo and his monkey business, to produce the appearance in the West of massive HIV prevalence in Africa.

The authors of Aids, Africa and Racism summarize their unequalled command of the medical literature: western doctors "gathered together groups of sick and dying patients, and diagnosed them as suffering from AIDS to the exclusion of all other



possibilities. Without the ethical constraints that applied in their own countries, they conducted small and unreliable seroepidemiological surveys that "proved" that millions of Africans were infected with the virus. They barely paused to question, let alone explain why so few of these seropositive people showed any evidence of the disease. To prove the disease had originated in Africa they fetched old blood samples collected on previous safaris from the bottom of their freezers, and subjected them to the same unreliable tests. And then they broke the news to a Western public eager for yet another story of millions dying in Africa."

It is the old story, going back to the sharecroppers of Macon County, to the free Blacks of Philadelphia, to the yellow fever in Haiti, to the shepherd "Syphilis" of Hispaniola, and back further to Thucydides and Moses. It is the story of racism. Once it is believed that Black people are dirty, disease-ridden, sexually promiscuous, and about to die anyway, then it becomes possible to institute genocide.

In the midst of the Tuskegee experiment at the time of the "Final Solution," Zora Neale Hurston, steeped in the pan-Africanism that swept the world after 1918, re-wrote the Moses tale in 1939 telling about Mentu and his "nice lizard talk." Compared to then, Africa is immeasurably stronger. It will take care of itself. To be sure it needs our help. But this help is not

the help of crocodile tears. It must be the help of our own lizard talk against the controlled, selective, and secretive knot-heads who manage our illnesses in the pretence of our health

We have learned from our history that the more we commingle and converse, the more we eat each others food, sleep with each other, and deal with one another's shit, the stronger we become. We have learned from our history that the microparasites that destroy us appear as godsend to the macroparasites, until they threaten, or until we threaten, to get "out of control." We have learned from our history that the macroparasites need us both for their wealth and power and for their health. That is why we developed lizard talk to begin with. They can no longer produce those genocidal microparasites without paying a price of such social disorder that we must take power ourselves for justice's and our own lives' sake.

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Midnight Notes 9.5