### 1NC - Shell

#### Our interpretation is the topic should determine the division of aff and neg ground – winning that \*CLEAR NEGATIVE POSITION\* should always be sufficient condition for voting negative – hold the line, CX and the 1AC prove there’s no I-meet.

#### “Resolved” means to enact a policy by law.

Words & Phrases ’64

(Words and Phrases; 1964; Permanent Edition)

Definition of the word “resolve,” given by Webster is “to express an opinion or determination by resolution or vote; as ‘it was resolved by the legislature;” It is of similar force to the word “enact,” which is defined by Bouvier as meaning “to establish by law”.

#### Violation: They did not affirm the topic or defend hypothetical implementation

#### The Role of the Ballot is to vote for whoever does the better debating – any alternative framework must explain why we switch sides, why there has to be a winner and a loser, and why there are structural rules. The frame for evaluating offense is that debate is a game and we’re all here to win – that means procedural questions come first.

#### Standards:

#### Limits and Clash – abdicating government actions sanctions picking any interpretation for debate – incentivizes retreat from controversy and forces the neg to first characterize the aff and then debate it which eliminates the benefit of preround research. A common point of engagement ensures effective clash, which is a linear impact – negation is the necessary condition for distinguishing debate from discussion, but negation exists on a sliding scale. The topic of discussion is up to the affirmative, but depth and nuanced engagement is determined by negative ground. Any impact intrinsic to debate, not just discussion, comes from negation because it starts the process of critical thinking, reflexivity, and argument refinement.

### Methodology

#### Questions of method are a prerequisite – Capitalism excludes alternative viewpoints from debate by characterizing them as “unsuccessful”, creating pedagogical hegemony – insulating itself from criticism. Questioning this framework is key to prevent intellectual stagnation and true transformative policy.

**Gunder & Hiller 09** (Michael, Auckland University senior planning lecturer, Jean Hillier, Associate Dean, Discipline Leader and Chair, Sustainability and Urban Planning at RMIT U, Planning in Ten Words or Less: A Lacanian Entanglement with Spatial Planning pgs 111-2, 2009) //VM

The hegemonic network, or bloc, initially shapes the debates and draws on appropriate policies of desired success, such as the needs of bohemians, knowledge clusters, or talented knowledge workers, as to what constitutes their desired enjoyment (cobblestones, chrome and cappuccinos at sidewalk cafes) and what is therefore lacking in local competitiveness. In tum, this defines what is blighted and dysfunctional and in need of economic, spatial planning, or other, remedy. Such an argument is predicated on a logic, or more accurately a rhetoric, that a lack of a particular defined type of enjoyment, or competitiveness (for surely they are one and the same) is inherently unhealthy for the aggregate social body. Lack and its resolution are generally presented as technical, rather than political issues. Consequently, technocrats in partnership with their "˜dominant stakeholders` can ensure the impression of rationally seeking to produce happiness for the many whilst, of course, achieving their stakeholders' specific interests (Gunder and Hillier 2007a, 469). The current "˜post-democratic` milieu facilitates the above through avoidance of critical policy debate challenging favored orthodox positions and policy approaches. Consideration of policy deficiencies, or alternative solutions, are eradicated from political debate so that while "˜token institutions of liberal democracy' are retained conflicting positions and arguments are negated (Stavrakakis 2003, 59). Consequently, "˜the safe names in the field who feed the policy orthodoxy are repeatedly used or their work drawn upon. by different stakeholders. while more critical voices are silenced by their inability to shape policy debates' (Boland 2007, 1032). The economic development or spatial planning policy analyst thus continues to partition reality ideologically by deploying only the orthodox "˜successful' or "˜best practice' economic development or spatial planning responses. This further maintains the dominant, or hegemonic, status quo while providing "˜a cover and shield against critical thought by acting in the manner of a "buffer" isolating the political held Rom any research that is independent and radical in its conception as in its implications for public policy' (Wacquant 2004, 99). At the same time, adoption of the hegemonic orthodoxy tends to generate similar policy responses for every competing local area or city-region. largely resulting in a zero-sum game (Blair and Kumar 1997).

## LINKS

### Identity Politics

#### Identity politics are anti-radical – no revolutionary potential to disrupt capitalism or change class politics

Herod 7 (James, graduate of Columbia University and social activist, “Getting Free”, p. 33-4) //VM

The so-called new social movements, based on gender, racial, sexual, or ethnic identities, cannot destroy capitalism. In general, they haven’t even tried. Except for a tiny fringe of radicals in each of them, they have been attempting to get into the system, not overthrow it. This is true for women, blacks, homosexuals, and ethnic (including Anative) groups, as well as many other identities old people, people with disabilities, mothers on welfare, and so forth. Nothing has derailed the anticapitalist struggle during the past quarter century so thoroughly as have these movements. Sometimes it seems that identity politics is all that remains of the left. Identity politics has simply swamped class politics. The mainstream versions of these movements (the ones fighting to get into the system rather than overthrow it) have given capitalists a chance to do a little fine-tuning by eliminating tensions here and there, and by including token representatives of the excluded groups. Many of the demands of these movements can be easily accommodated. Capitalists can live with boards of directors exhibiting ethnic, gender, and racial diversity as long as all the board members are procapitalist. Capitalists can easily accept a rainbow cabinet as long as the cabinet is pushing the corporate agenda. So mainstream identity politics has not threatened capitalism at all. The radical wings of the new social movements, however, are rather more subversive. These militants realized that it was necessary to attack the whole social order in order to uproot racism and sexism problems that could not be overcome under capitalism since they are an integral part of it. There is no denying the evils of racism, sexism, and nationalism, which are major structural supports to ruling-class control. These militants have done whatever they could to highlight, analyze, and ameliorate these evils. Unfortunately, for the most part, their voices have been lost in all the clamor for admittance to the system by the majorities in their own movements.

#### Capitalism causes inevitable crises which culminate in genocide and a war against alterity

Internationalist Perspective 2K (Internationalist Perspective 36, Winter 2000, Internationalist Perspective, “Capitalism and Genocide,” <http://internationalist-perspective.org/IP/ip-archive/ip-archive.html>) //VM

The basis upon which such a pure community is constituted, race, nationality, religion, even a categorization by "class" in the Stalinist world, necessarily means the exclusion of those categories of the population which do not conform to the criteria for inclusion, the embodiments of alterity, even while they inhabit the same geographical space as the members of the pure community. Those excluded, the "races" on the other side of the biological continuum, to use Foucauldian terminology, the Other, become alien elements within an otherwise homogeneous world of the pure community. As a threat to its very existence, the role of this Other is to become the scapegoat for the inability of the pure community to provide authentic communal bonds between people, for its abject failure to overcome the alienation that is a hallmark of a reified world. The Jew in Nazi Germany, the Kulak in Stalinist Russia, the Tutsi in Rwanda, Muslims in Bosnia, blacks in the US, the Albanian or the Serb in Kosovo, the Arab in France, the Turk in contemporary Germany, the Bahai in Iran, for example, become the embodiment of alterity, and the target against which the hatred of the members of the pure community is directed.The more crisis ridden a society becomes, the greater the need to find an appropriate scapegoat; the more urgent the need for mass mobilization behind the integral state, the more imperious the need to focus rage against the Other**.** In an extreme situation of social crisis and political turmoil, the demonization and victimization of the Other can lead tohis (mass) murder**.** In the absence of a working class conscious of its historic task and possibilities, this hatred of alterity which permits capital to mobilize the population in defense of the pure community, can become its own impetus to genocide. The immanent tendencies of the capitalist mode of production which propel it towards a catastrophic economic crisis, also drive it towards mass murder and genocide**.** In that sense,the death-world, and the prospect of an Endzeitcannot be separated from the continued existence of humanity's subordination to the law of value**.** Reification, the overmanned world,bio-politics, state racism**,** the constitution of a pure community directed against alterity, each of them features of the economic and ideological topography of the real domination of capital, create the possibility and the need for genocide**.** We should have no doubt that the survival of capitalism into this new millenium will entail more and more frequent recourse to mass murder.

### Identity Historical Materialism

#### The alt is to adopt a historical materialist approach that acknowledges that racial and gender difference is rooted in the capitalist system of exploitation.

Scatamburlo-D’Annibale and McLauren 03, V. and Peter McLaren, “The Strategic Centrality of Class in the Politics of ‘Race’ and ‘Difference’”, UCLA, 2003, <http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/mclaren/mclaren%20and%20valerie.pdf> //VM

A historical materialist approach adopts the imperative that categories of difference are social/political constructs that are often encoded in dominant ideological formations and that they often play a role in "moral" and "legal" state-mediated forms of ruling. It also acknowledges the "material" force of ideologies—particularly racist ideologies—that assign separate cultural and/or biological essences to different segments of the population that, in turn, serve to reinforce and rationalize existing relations of power. But more than this, a historical materialist understanding foregrounds the manner in which differ- ence is central to the exploitative production/reproduction dialectic of capital, its labor organization and processes, and the way labor is valued and enumer- ated. The real problem is the internal or dialectical relation that exists between capital and labor within the capitalist production process itself—a social rela-tion in which capitalism is intransigently rooted. This social relation—essential or fundamental to the production of abstract labor—deals with how already existing value is preserved and surplus value is created. If, for example, the process of actual exploitation and the accumulation of surplus value are to be seen as a state of constant manipulation and as a realization process of con- crete labor in actual labor time—within a given cost-production system and a labor market—we cannot underestimate the ways in which difference—racial as well as gender difference—is encapsulated in the production/reproduction dialectic of capital. It is this relationship that is mainly responsible for the ineq- uitable and unjust distribution of resources. Hence, we applaud E. San Juan's goal of racial/ethnic semiotics that is "committed to the elimination of the hegemonic discourse of race in which peoples of color are produced and reproduced daily for exploitation and oppression under the banner of individualized freedom and pluralist, liberal democracy" (1992, p. 96).

# Case

### Simulation – Advocacy

#### Assessing the likely consequences of implementation of the aff is necessary to determine whether it’s a good advocacy – debate is a site for testing ideas where students develop skills and refine their positions – that’s a prerequisite to advocacy out of the round

Welsh 12 [2012, Scott Welsh, “Coming to Terms with the Antagonism between Rhetorical Reflection and Political Agency”, Philosophy and Rhetoric, Vol. 45, No. 1]

Jürgen Habermas’s Toward a Rational Society (1970) and Theory and Practice (1973), two of his less widely cited early works, can help us understand the democratic significance of Fish’s distinction between academic engagement and direct political action. Like proponents of activist scholarship and critical rhetoric, Habermas aims to address the disconnection between scholarly reflection and practical, political consequences. However, by “consequences,” he does not mean the effective political agency of scholars. Rather, what he seeks is the effective democratic agency of citizens. He frames the question of the relationship between scholarship and politics, or theory and practice, as a matter of “whether a productive body of knowledge is merely transmitted to men engaged in technical manipulation for purposes of control or is simultaneously appropriated as the linguistic possession of communicating individuals” (1970, 79). Simply having effects on public discourse is not the same thing as supplying conceptual resources for citizens engaged in democratic politics. Drawing on Vico, Habermas argues that “truths which are to have consequences require a consensus prudently attained: that is the ‘semblance’ of truth in the sensus communis of citizens participating in public discourse” (1973, 73). Moreover, for such consequences to be democratic, they need to be understood and adopted by citizens pursuing their own ends (1973, 277; 1970, 61, 75). For Habermas, reducing the potential consequences of scholarship to political ones risks a return to precisely what he is against, expert manipulation and control (1970, 75). His vision of “emancipation” is figured as something that citizens can only achieve for themselves (1973, 276). In contrast, McKerrow’s critical rhetoricians, McGee’s social surgeons, Fuller’s agents of justice, and Hartnett’s social justice scholars are “performers,” principal agents acting on the public from their academic bases of power with their own particular ends in view, pursued, in practice, as settled truths. In contrast, Habermas subordinates politics to democracy. The role of scholars in the context of democratic politics is to supply conceptual resources that citizens might appropriate in their own ways. For Habermas, it is the very acceptance of the antagonism between scholarship and politics that allows the products of expert inquiry to be democratically consequential. In his early critique of critical rhetoric, John Murphy approaches this conclusion in his argument that critical rhetoricians, in their insistence on being political performers, implicitly neglect the rhetorical tradition’s guiding pedagogical concern with supporting the political agency of citizens aiming to make wise decisions in diverse and unpredictable contexts (1995, 2). However, Habermas does not ultimately propose a kind of scholarship that could itself be more self-consciously structured by the irreducible antagonism between scholarly theory and political practice. The way he originally frames the problem of the relationship between theory and practice—as a question of how to redeem “the promise of practical politics,” understood as providing practical orientation about what is right and just in a given situation, without relinquishing “the rigor of scientific knowledge”—prevents him from coming to terms with the antagonism (1973, 74). Yet for this scientific knowledge to have practical consequences within public discourse, citizens would first need to achieve a “higher stage of reflection, a consciousness of acting human beings moving forward in the direction of emancipation” to fully grasp even journalistic “translations” of scholarly research (1973, 276; 1970, 79–80). Without a fundamental reeducation of society in research literacy of all kinds, a genuinely deliberate, democratic appropriation of expert knowledge would remain impossible. Dispiritingly, such nonmanipulative expert-citizen interaction “could be guaranteed only by the ideal conditions of general communication extending to the entire public free from domination” (1970, 75). Although Habermas makes a democratic case for recognizing the unavoidable distinctiveness of scholarship and citizenship while insisting that scholarship be relevant to citizenship, he does not propose a kind of theory or critique aimed at producing a rigorously pursued scholarly product more immediately suitable for use by citizens within public discourse as it is. C. Wright Mills’s The Sociological Imagination is remarkable in that it advances an argument for a mode of scholarly reflection that takes up precisely this challenge. Although scholars advancing a vision of scholarship as political participation justly cite Mills, particularly insofar as he does not shy away from academicizing politically sensitive subjects, from drawing conclusions in publicly accessible ways, and from allowing his impatience to show (Klumpp and Hollihan 1989, 89; Wander 1990, 144–45), he nevertheless jealously guards scholarly reflection as an activity irreducible to political participation. Rather than embed it within a particular political or partisan struggle, Mills seeks to rescue social science from its connection to the political agendas of governing state bureaucracies (2000, 180). This does not mean for Mills, however, that to be a scholar is to adopt an antistate posture as a kind of reflex. It also does not mean working alongside situated political advocacy groups aiming to substitute one governing state bureaucracy for another, an approach that has been recommended. Rather, he writes, the role of reason I have been outlining neither means nor requires that one hit the pavement, take the next plane to the scene of the current crisis, run for Congress, buy a newspaper plant, go among the poor, set up a soap box. Such actions are often admirable, and I can readily imagine occasions when I should personally find it impossible not to want to do them myself. But for the social scientist to take them up as his normal activities is merely to abdicate [their] role, and to display by his action a disbelief in the promise of social science and in the role of reason in human affairs. This role requires only that the social scientist get on with the work of social science and that he avoid furthering the bureaucratization of reason and discourse. (2000, 192) Mills comes to terms with the antagonism. He aims to make a distinctly scholarly difference. He also makes clear that while the scholarly subject position often takes up residence in a body that is also inhabited by the citizen subject position, scholars being citizens is not what he is talking about. If anything, rather, Mills describes citizens being scholars or politically embedded citizens who nevertheless embrace the scholarly split in their identity. Mills is especially interesting, however, because he also proposes a mode of scholarly production that explicitly aims to respond to the antagonism between scholarly reflection and political action. What scholars concerned with democracy are urged to produce are concepts suitable for citizen appropriation within the “sociological imagination.” The sociological imagination is composed of the terminologies that people in “their everyday worlds” turn to in order to make sense of the “the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world.” Such terminologies should help citizens to “use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations” (2000, 4–5). They are, ideally, “intellectual pivots” that facilitate “the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world” (2000, 7). Rhetoricians will immediately recognize Mills’s concern to produce concepts for use within the sociological imagination as sympathetic to the rhetorical concern for articulating inventional resources for use by citizens within the public sphere. Furthermore, resisting the “the magisterial discourse about the ‘requirements of science’ being on the order of centuries rather than decades,” Mills argues that scholars should not so readily assume “a view of the social sciences as a strange building-block endeavor” in which studies “can be ‘added up’ or ‘fitted together’ to ‘build up’ a reliable and verified image of the whole” (2000, 65). Such a view perpetuates the idea that if only scholars could achieve the grand synthesis or, in Habermas’s (1996) language, a theoretical account balanced perfectly “between facts and norms” and citizens could understand and appreciate it, then true democratic emancipation could be achieved. In contrast, Mills’s emphasis on supplying concepts for use within the sociological imagination invites us to recognize that, as citizens, we cannot take all of the ingeniously linked details of any grand theoretical synthesis with us. Rather, no matter how much rigorous attention to detail goes into one’s theorizing, it is only the guiding metaphor to which the theory will inevitably be reduced that can have a life within the sociological imagination (2000, 71). Since it is only the shorthand heuristic derived from the theory that has the potential to engage the sociological imagination anyway, Mills recommends the direct, rigorous pursuit of such heuristics (2000, 48).

### Simulation – Advocacy Skills

#### Debate helps up come up with solutions, thinking about research and the way to solve problems bolsters advocacy skills

Hern 12 (Lindy, Department of Sociology at the University of Hawaii, “Everybody In and Nobody Out: Opportunities, Narrative, and the Radical Flank in the Movement for Single-Payer Health Care Reform,” May 2012, p. 318-319)

These assumptions illustrate the ignorance that sometimes comes from positions of power and further legitimate the importance I place in studying social phenomenon from a marginalized position. My greatest hope for this project is that the reader will conclude that single-payer activists should be respected for their passion, altruism, and creative action when working to promote solutions that others have defined as not realistically possible. My greatest fear is that the reader will conclude that single-payer activists are sectarian fundamentalists without a basis in reality. The practice of liberation that activists undertake through the telling of narratives is not rooted in delusion, but is rooted in the understanding that progressive social change in the United States requires that groups collectively act in order to change the reality that they face. This “reality based hope” is rooted in the actions of single-payer activists rather than on the dominant understanding of the opportunity for specific types of reform. Bob Haiducek, untiring organizer of the Million Letters for Health Care Campaign, recently discussed the process of reality based hope saying, Remember our reality-based hope. We know that realistic hope is based on realistic actions of education and communications, which is what our campaign is all about: Americans knowing what the subject is and getting their questions and concerns answered. That is followed by an opportunity for an informed American(s) to participate in our massive monthly communications action(s). Keep in mind that we can and will get single-payer health care, improved Medicare for All, and that it will be the best health care for all system. Reality-based hope can help instill in you a realistic, firm belief that U.S. health care for all can and will happen Reality based hope is rooted in the “realistic actions” that can affect the environment of opportunity in which activists act. This process is facilitated through the multiple forms of narrative practice in which activists participate. Time periods during which activists are realistically able to create a more diverse array of opportunity narratives, due to material conditions, facilitate the development of a more diverse array of strategies and tactics which can then have an increased impact on further mobilization and the environment of opportunity. The little ant that could reach the top of the table leg was not ignorant, delusional, or unconcerned – it was able to re-construct the reality that it faced by ignoring those who were constructing this reality in ways that negated the possibility for a more just system. In reality, the “public option” that was supported by groups like HCAN was no more successful than the single-payer option, even though it had the backing of financial and political resources that single-payer activists have never had. Throughout our history as a nation, progressive social change has occurred because enough individuals shared a vision for a more just social order and were able to reconstitute through their actions and the development of empowering narratives the material reality that they faced in their efforts to promote social justice.

### Ballot Bad – Competition

#### Competition turns the aff – causes competitive demonization and precludes compromise

Ritter 13 [Michael, JD UTexas Law, B.A. cum laude Trinity University. September 2013. “Overcoming the Fiction of ‘Social Change Through Debate’: What’s to Learn From 2Pac’s Changes?” https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/9896ec\_8b2b993ec42440ecaab1b07645385db5.pdf]

The fiction of social change through debate abuses the win–loss structure of debate and permits debaters to otherize, demonize, dehumanize, and exclude opponents. The win–loss structure of debate rounds requires a judge to vote for one side or the other, as judges generally cannot give a double win. This precludes the possibility of compromise on any major position in the debate when the resolution of the position would determine the ultimate issue of “which team did the better debating.” Thus, the fiction of social change through debate encourages debaters to construct narratives of good versus evil in which the other team is representative of some evil that threatens to bring about our destruction if it is endorsed (e.g. capitalism). The team relying on the fiction of social change through debate then paints themselves as agents of the good, and gives the judge a George W. Bush-like “option”: “You’re either with us or you’re against us.” The fiction of social change through debate—like Bush’s rhetorical fear tactics and creation of a false, polarizing, and exclusionary dichotomy to justify all parts of the War on Terror—enables the otherization, demonization, dehumanization, and exclusion of the opposing team. When the unfairness of this tactic is brought to light—particularly in egregious situations when a team is arguing that the other team should lose because of their skin color—all can see that the debate centers on personal attacks against opposing debaters. This causes tensions between debaters that frequently result in debaters losing interest or quitting. By alienating and excluding members of the competitive interscholastic debate community for the purpose of winning a debate, it also makes the reaching of any compromise outside of the debate—the only place where compromise is possible—much less likely. By bringing the social issue into a debate round, debaters impede out-of round progress on the resolution of social issues within and outside the debate community by prompting backlash.

#### Introducing their performance into the competitive forum of debate re-inscribes the ideology of war which targets the other.

Chow 06 Professor Comparative Lit at Brown, (Rey, “The Age of the World Target” p 40-42)

Often under the modest and apparently innocuous agendas of fact gathering and documentation, the "scientific" and "objective" production of knowledge during peacetime about the various special "areas" became the institutional practice that substantiated and elaborated the militaristic conception of the world as target.52 In other words, despite the claims about the apolitical and disinterested nature of the pursuits "I higher learning, activities undertaken under the rubric of area studies, such as language training, historiography, anthropology, economics, political science, and so forth, are fully inscribed in the politics and ideology of war. To that extent, the disciplining, research, and development of so-called academic information are part and parcel of a strategic logic. And yet, if the production of knowledge (with its vocabulary of aims and goals, research, data analysis, experimentation, and verification) in fact shares the same scientific and military premises as war‚—if, for instance, the ability to translate a difficult language can be regarded as equivalent to the ability to break military codes‚—is it a surprise that it is doomed to fail in its avowed attempts to "know" the other cultures? Can "knowledge" that is derived from the same kinds of bases as war put an end to the violence of warfare, or is such knowledge not simply warfare's accomplice, destined to destroy rather than preserve the forms of lives at which it aims its focus? As long as knowledge is produced in this self-referential manner, as a circuit of targeting or getting the other that ultimately consolidates the omnipotence and omnipresence of the sovereign "self"/"eye"‚— the "I"‚—that is the United States, the other will have no choice but remain just that‚— a target whose existence justifies only one thing, its destruction by the bomber. As long as the focus of our study of Asia remains the United States, and as long as this focus is not accompanied by knowledge of what is happening elsewhere at other times as well as at the present, such study will ultimately confirm once again the self-referential function of virtual worlding that was unleashed by the dropping of the atomic bombs, with the United States always occupying the position of the bomber, and other cultures always viewed as the military and information target fields. In this manner, events whose historicity does not fall into the epistemically closed orbit of the atomic bomber‚—such as the Chinese reactions to the war from a primarily anti-Japanese point of view that I alluded to at the beginning of this chapter‚—will never receive the attention that is due to them. "Knowledge," however conscientiously gathered and however large in volume, will lead only to further silence and to the silencing of diverse experiences. This is one reason why, as Harootunian remarks, area studies has been, since its inception, haunted by "the absence of a definable object"‚—and by "the problem of the vanishing object."55 As Harootunian goes on to argue, for all its investment in the study of other languages and other cultures, area studies missed the opportunity, so aptly provided by Said's criticism of Oriental ism, to become the site where a genuinely alternative form of knowledge production might have been possible. Although, as Harootunian writes, "Said's book represented an important intellectual challenge to the mission of area studies which, if accepted would have reshaped area studies and freed it from its own reliance on the Cold War and the necessities of the national security state,"56 the challenge was too fundamentally disruptive to the administrative and instrumentalist agendas so firmly routinized in area studies to be accepted by its practitioners. As a result, Said's attempt to link an incipient neocolonial discourse to the history of area studies was almost immediately belittled, dismissed, and ignored, and his critique, for all its relevance to area studies' future orientation, simply "migrated to English studies to transform the study of literature into a full-scale preoccupation with identity and its construction."57

### Poetry – Ineffective

#### Poetry doesn’t spur social change or ameliorate social conditions – it actually trades off with real-world political solutions

Wolff 10 (Rebecca, MFA @ Iowa, poet, fiction writer, and the editor and creator of both Fence Magazine and Fence Books, 7/28, "GLUTEN: ESSAY WITH REDUNDANCIES, EMBEDDED OPEN LETTER TO JULIANA SPAHR, DISCLAIMERS, AND PSYCHO-POLITICAL UNRAVELING," http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:WwI3QseZcH8J:www.fenceportal.org/%3Fpage\_id%3D1008+&cd=9&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us)

I admire, and sometimes look up to, those who work with and experiment with the dynamics of the group, and who can see their way clear to define a group for themselves. You invoke the largest of groups when you state that your mandate for poetry is that it respond to “shared social struggle”—you imply a vast yet identifiable group whose struggles you demand and challenge poetry to address, to respond to. Everything’s fine, with what you say, with me, until we get to this clause: “…and that any poetry which subtracts itself from such engagements is no longer of interest.” “To us” being the clearly implied end of the sentence. I find myself, since I am writing directly to you, wondering: Who died and acknowledged you the legislator of that which is of interest? Why are you putting yourself in the position of eliminating/intimidating, with your implied author- ity, anyone who does not agree with your position? Certainly it is a didactic move, and I understand that there are powerful, timely arguments for didacticism, but it is also a dictatorial one, and this just doesn’t seem very you, nor very “shared.” While my strongest objection is to the gesture itself, here I will additionally try to out- line my disagreement with the ballast of your assertion, with the ball you are throwing. And I’ll throw in a disclaimer: My disagreement doesn’t really originate or reside in my own poetry, though of course yours is a planet-sized call-out to anyone who invokes the personal in her poetry. I don’t have these kinds of qualms about the poetry that I write. Sometimes it’s kind of social, when that’s what I’m thinking about. Sometimes it’s about my mom, who also is a person in the world so referencing “mom” could be construed as social. “Referencing,” as words do, can be social. The I is a metaphor for others, when it’s working right. Narratives are one way that wisdom is transmitted; plus they’re an awesome trick. So while I admire your super-strong drive for some kind of unified, community-based, activated practice for your own writing and for the writing of those you want to be surrounded by, for reasons having to do with my free-school, egalitarian upbringing, I really can’t stand anyone telling anyone how it is okay to write poetry. The move is especially egregious in this situation in which it is being posited that there is something really important at stake, such as social change or social improvement or social progress or social anything, however modestly it is asserted that you don’t really know what it is that you are calling “social poetics.” You take a “means justified by ends” approach here, and while it is impossible for me or anyone to prove that a social poetics is not demonstrably effective ENOUGH to justify ultimatistic rule, it is also impossible for you or anyone to prove that it is. I like (and by like I mean hate) this idea of a sort of concretism or absolutism that is warranted or merited by circumstance, and thereby am adopting same for my oppositional platform, which asserts that the following is the case: Poetry and poems are not socio-politically effective, and therefore claims made on sociopolitical grounds for the relative “interest” or merit of various terms or subject matter or areas of interest for poems and poetry are specious. My assertion is that currently, and concretely, poetry, or poetics, in whatever practical forms and constructed contexts it takes place has actually a negatively measurable effect or impact on real-world conditions of social struggle. As far as I understand it this is what George Oppen thought, and he made the critical mistake of thinking that he commensurately had to STOP WRITING POETRY and just do socio- political actions. I’m not saying this is what ought to be done, or that poets ought NOT engage the social in their poems, their thinking about poetry, and their reading of poetry. Far from it! My other assertion is that, in the both/and kind of way, poets ought to just go ahead and engage like crazy with the social, IF THEY FEEL LIKE IT (feelings being related to sociopolitical conditions), and engage students/correspondents in thinking about this poetry, and engage publishers in projects that help to distribute it, or just post it on their blogs, or what have you. And I would hope that your Skool has at heart a dream for stirring up some kind of thousands-strong “army” or shall I say industrial-strength, family-sized kind of Activated Coterie of rigorously engaged young people who are going to collectively summon up some material activity, some action that is not self-erasing by virtue of its context. When I say art has been ineffectual/ineffective I don’t mean by any means to suggest an inevitability, but rather an unfortunate eventuality, or current outcome. So on an adjusted scale of political efficacy I’d say writing a socially engaged poem is a negative, while buying ecologically sound dish soap is a .5, and writing a letter to your congressperson is a 1.5 or greater, depending on the congressperson and what county you live in. Dish soap consumption? No, dish soap production. Why don’t I stay outside the rubric or trope of industrial manufactur- ing? Because it would be disingenuous to do so. I understand, I like to think, though I do not partake in it, how great it must feel to feel like you are part of a great society of poets who are forging ahead, joining hands, making space for new ideas, getting really deep into some ideas. But I ask again: What is the place in this great society for totally rude, cool-kid behavior like that above? When you seem to be convinced that a great deal is at stake in the behavior of poetry, its comportment, its deportment. One very practical, material danger of your statement—it is a bold assertion, and really a much shorter version of this letter might simply ask that you instate the “to us,” for maximumclarity of group intentionality—is that there will be decades, now, thousands, multitudes yet to be born, of young poets, especially in California but certainly all over, who will shake in their boots to think that they might fall short or run afoul of the Skool’s requirements, without knowing it, no matter how hard they try, oh lord, it’s their worst nightmare. And if I am still an editor I will be required to plow through their sad output, their earnest attempts to please you. It makes me long for decadence. In poetry. I do agree that it’s good when poems are perceivably awake to shared reality. As mentioned above, the jury is out, probably forever, on whether this awakeness is ameliorative of bad social conditions. I do not mean to say that this awakeness is a bad motive or context for a poem, but rather that it is nightmarishly bad for charismatic leaders to suggest the hallucinogenically charismatic notion that because of the awesome burden on poems, ultimatistic gestures by poetry “actors,” if you will, are justifiable.