

the unheimlich man-oeuvre

The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics. *Susan Harding.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. ix + 336 pp., appendixes, bibliography, index.

Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe and Japan. *John R. Hall with Philip D. Schuyler and Sylvaine Trinh.* London: Routledge, 2000. viii + 228 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.

Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench. *Vincent Crapanzano.* New York: The New Press, 2000. xi + 406 pp., notes, references, index.

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Editor's Note: This essay is written as a dialogue between the two reviewers.

working the apocalypse: millennium and the maintenance of the uncanny

Judy Rosenthal: The authors of these three books examine particular religious communities and their political manifestations, looking at relationships between language practices and conversion and among narrative repetition, time, and political action. The religions—Baptist Fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, and apocalyptic groups such as the Branch Davidians—aim to domesticate the alienation and soul sickness common to the cultural territory of modernity. At the same time, they reenchant the home front, bringing florid biblical catastrophe and utopia (or other textual traditions) into the everyday lives of the faithful. John Hall's collection addresses millennium, apocalypse, and violence in the context of infamous cults and their standoffs with the state. Susan Harding's book about Jerry Falwell focuses on how his charisma is constructed and

deployed when creating a modernist politicized fundamentalism, a turning point in the religious right's accumulation of power in the United States. Harding addresses the efficacy of using biblical stories to create latter day fulfillment of the Word of God—the reenactment of these stories serving as proof of biblical truth for the faithful and the resulting reenchantment of a flattened modernized world (the "awakenings" that occur are "deeply exhilarating and wildly transformative"; they involve "expansive thrill" [p. 131]). Vincent Crapanzano writes about taking text literally and the nature of such literalism in the discourses of religious fundamentalists and judges of the Supreme Court. Crapanzano comes close to positing a direct relationship between biblical literalism and political conservatism of various kinds.

In reviewing these works it is fitting to link issues of religious language and political practice to three topics: apocalyptic violence, reenactment of biblical narrative, and textual literalism. We have also injected our own leitmotif, the unheimlich (in brief, the uncanny, as well as the angst accompanying the experience of homelessness). The subjects of all three volumes include popular longings for a different kind of world, for more earthshaking sense or more beautifully dramatic meaning in life, although the authors do not posit such popular longings as a sufficient explanation for the rise of the religious movements. There is a close relationship between these enchanted premodern satisfactions and religious positivism and scientism, including the move to make fundamentalism and millenarianism resolutely modern and politicized (both epistemologically and practically with regard to the use of technology for politico-religious outreach and, in some cases, for resistance to the state).

The three books are especially interesting to me because I grew up a Jehovah's Witness in a Texan working class family and because my fieldwork in anthropology is about West African

Vodu culture. Jehovah's Witnesses are millenarians with a vested interest in the Armageddon of the Book of Revelation; Vodou worshippers are literalists of a kind, in that their fetishes are considered to be literal, concrete deities and not representations or metaphors. That said, the relationship of Jehovah's Witnesses to the Word of God is not exactly the same as that of Jerry Falwell and his followers, nor that of the fundamentalists Crapanzano examines. Further, the literalism of the Vodou fetish is not the literalism of the text in the strict sense, as Crapanzano writes about it.

What is similar about Jehovah's Witnesses, the Moral Majority of Jerry Falwell, and the Christian fundamentalists in *Serving the Word* is their effort to interpret the Bible as fact through their involvement in a modernity that includes believing that everything in the Holy Scriptures is properly scientific. They are positivists, assured that they really can establish the most significant truths of the centuries with verses from the Bible. They also practice a hermeneutics of bible study and witnessing whereby they deftly move from one verse to another, building evidence through textual space and sacred time for their apocalyptic and millenarian doctrines and emotions. All believe that the Word comes true over and over again as narrative and event; the biblical sagas foreshadow what is happening now, the last days before God brings destruction to the wicked and begins the new dispensation.

Harding compellingly describes such employment of bible stories to give meaning to specific predicaments in the present and to weave Christian identities through the practice of identification with the characters of scripture in her ethnography of Jerry Falwell's empire. I remember going from door to door during my own childhood and experiencing the excitement of showing polite householders the marvelous nature of the word of God in the stories that were being relived in the present, with us at the center of the universe. When Harding writes of Falwell's 1978 "circling Liberty Mountain in prayer" (p. 117) (in a mimesis of Joshua and the Israelites circling Jericho) so as to raise seven million in funds for his ministry, I was struck with the apparently demagogical and calculating nature of the scheme he engages in *and* with his perhaps utter sincerity in this purported refulfillment of biblical narrative.

The subjects of all three books and Jehovah's Witnesses also share a belief in and practice of the end time (not always the biblical version), the Apocalypse, or the battle of Armageddon. They all have a concept of history that is biblical or mystical and both replayed (past and present flowing through each other) and linear, the end time always hovering ever nearer. And these several histories include as center stage actors the chosen Christians (the Moral Majority and other fundamentalists) or members of groups discussed in *Apocalypse Observed* (the Peoples Temple of Jonestown, the Branch Davidians of Waco, Aum Shinrikyo of Japan, the Solar Temple, and Heaven's Gate). Most of these players believe that their actions hasten the end or make it possible by fulfilling prophecy and, in some cases, by carrying out the witnessing that must be completed before God will destroy the wicked.

The particular critical stance these authors take toward their subjects raises ethnographic questions. For example, is it more difficult for anthropologists to write about the religious right in the United States than to write about Vodou, Moroccan, or South African culture? Crapanzano has previously written about people with whom he is in fundamental ethical disagreement (see *Waiting*, 1985). The Jerry Falwell crowd fails to seduce Harding as well, and she is somewhat contrite about disappointing them (they wish her to show signs of conversion to their faith, but she does not convert). Although John R. Hall, Philip Schuyler, and Sylvaine Trinh are more sympathetic than the press and popular opinion in general, they make no bones about expressing general disapproval of their subjects' beliefs and behavior (it would be hard to approve of mass suicide or murder). What are the implications of this absence of seduction that distinguishes these three studies from a great many others containing the writers' heartfelt approval of or sympathy for (even conversion to) the subjects' culture, including practices of the sacred?

Adam Lutzker: Picking up from your questions, I agree that religion is a problematic topic for academics—scholars have trouble finding a place to speak that is neither too close to nor too far from their subject.¹ Both explanations introduce a problematic of distance that necessitates theorizing the relationship between the knowledge-producing subject and the object of discourse, a theme of great significance to the reflexive turn in anthropology (see

Clifford and Marcus 1986). Both Harding and Crapanzano confront this problem by reflecting on the implications of their ethnographies for their own subcultures (intelligentsia, liberal academic, postmodern anthropologist) in the United States.

The late-20th-century revival of religious belief, both orthodox and unorthodox, is as significant for social theorists as it was unexpected. In dominant theories of the early post-war period, modernization and secularization went hand in hand (think of Talcott Parsons' work as a paradigm). This was clearly wrong, in retrospect, and coming to terms with the religious revival that happened is an important task for a social theoretical understanding of today's problems and prospects. I speak from a position within the secular left that includes the realization that secularism is an ideology with its own internal ideological tensions and dynamics.

One obvious interpretive strategy is to see religious revivalism as a nostalgic response to the absence of a space for human meaning within modernity's disenchanted world view. Religion reenchants the world by investing everyday events with greater significance and history with a clear plot, an attempt to make humans at home in a world that has become *unheimlich*.² I find this movement unsettling because it is not linked to an explicit theorization of modernity and the associated reasons for feeling out of place in the modern world. I prefer social theoretical critique to nostalgia; yet the three books under review show that contemporary fundamentalism is not reactionary nostalgia—it is something new and different, at least in the United States (I think elsewhere as well). Fundamentalism today is not antimodern, and that is why it is so disturbing.

Harding argues at the end of her book that Falwell should be seen as an internal product of modernism rather than as an external response to it. That is clearly true in his methods, such as his ability to exploit resources of the mass media, but also in the substance of his message—the nationalism, the consumerism, and the willingness to see the state as a tool and ally.

the book of Jerry Falwell—religious practice as consumerism

Judy Rosenthal: Like Crapanzano, Susan Harding disapproves of the culture that is her

subject. Yet she seems to go further than Crapanzano in her willful suspension of critique (p. 57) in order to gain access to fundamental Baptist logic and passion. "The membrane between disbelief and belief is much thinner than we think. All I had to do was to listen to my witness and to struggle to understand him. Just doing so did not make me a fundamental Baptist born-again believer, but it drew me across that membrane in tiny ways so that I began to acquire the knowledge and vision and sensibilities, to share the experience of a believer, this space between belief and disbelief, or rather the paradoxical space of overlap, is also the space of ethnography. We must enter it to do our work" (p. 58). Harding speaks of Falwell's "fundamentalist empire" as "an immense empire of words, a factory of words, a veritable Bible-based language industry" (p. 15).

Harding traces the path of conservative Protestantism from the 1925 Scopes trial to the present. In her fascinating account of the consequences of the Scopes trial, she cites fundamentalist literalism as the key to William Jennings Bryan's defeat. Clarence Darrow was able to employ Bryan's own interpretive tools—"the rules of fundamentalist rhetorical combat" (p. 73)—against him, and there was no recourse. This event marked an end to fundamentalist contestation on the political stage and rendered Bible-believing Protestants marginal until the late 1970s. This was true because "at the national level, signs of religious partisanship were voluntarily suppressed" (p. 75) and because most fundamentalists also believed it was scripturally forbidden for Christians to take part in the politics of this world (St. Paul's command to "render Caesar's things to Caesar and God's things to God"). Conservative Protestants today may find secular humanists to be their main enemies in the United States, led by Satan himself to "take over America from its rightful Christian heirs" (p. 75).

After Falwell expanded his ministry and following during the 1970s, he began his mission of pulling fundamentalism away from its isolationism and propelling it into the very center of American culture and politics (p. 16). Because Falwell had been remarkably successful in attracting college students and academics in the 1970s, the middle-class component of his congregation had increased greatly by the 1980s. Before Falwell's movement, the separatist ethos sacred to fundamentalists kept them out of worldly professions such as medicine, law,

and journalism (p. 147). In 1996 he took the step of joining his church with the Southern Baptist Convention, a network less isolated and thus more open to the middle class than was Falwell's own group. Harding calls this move "a major turning point in the history of American fundamentalism" (p. 16).

Falwell's ability to make his fundamentalism more inclusive—to join it with evangelism and middle-class Protestant conservatism in general—enabled him in 1979 to name all of these groups "the Moral Majority" (p. 20). "Born-again Christian rhetorics, by definition, sutured up the two things kept apart, by definition, under the regime of secular modernity—routine political activism and aggressive, Bible-based super-naturalism" (p. 81). Falwell thus brought fundamentalists and other literalist Protestants out of their position of political exclusion (both self-exclusion and rejection from dominant political organizations) and propelled them into national politics as major players. This conglomerate group of conservative Christians has been a significant force ever since. Also integral to their recent central place in U.S. politics was the combining of conservative religious voices against homosexuality, abortion, pornography, the Equal Rights Amendment, and media violence and in support of teaching creation science in public schools. During the 1950s and 1960s, Falwell and other fundamentalists spoke in favor of racial segregation. Harding shows how these positions have softened somewhat since the creation of the Moral Majority, particularly in Falwell's discourse.

Harding spends considerable time on doctrine so that readers can understand complexities in reconfiguring key elements of scripture and fundamentalist tradition. For example, "Longstanding Christian folk theories of history—various premillennialisms that envision the return of Jesus Christ to rule a one thousand-year kingdom—were variously deployed to refashion the end time, that is, current history, as a time for worldly Christian activism" (p. 80). Given the data that Harding provides, I would say that Falwell's use of Bible stories and apocalyptic prophecy almost replace the belief in an end time that would end all history with end times that are always (over and over again) just around the corner. His last days are a way of being, a constant culture of renewed apocalypse and millennium. That is one of the reasons fundamentalism of Falwell's sort has

become a powerful political force; if he and his flock were to believe *the end* was near, they might not organize politically. Like Jehovah's Witnesses, they might prefer to leave Caesar's things to Caesar. Harding says it well: "Bible prophecy as it is practiced in everyday life is not so much a system or set of religious beliefs as it is a narrative mode of knowing current history. . . . Popular apocalypticism . . . is a kind of narrative politics that contests the dominant secular or modern voices of journalists and academics for control over the definition and meaning of current events and of history more broadly" (pp. 233–234).

Yet there is evidence in Falwell's theology that the message of the apocalypse also points to linear history and the End of all ends:

Here was Falwell's signature innovation in the Bible prophecy revisions of the 1980s: in order to do the only thing Bible prophecy prescribed them to do in the end-times, namely, spread the gospel to the four corners of the world, Christians must do more than that. . . . He argued that unless born-again Christians acted politically they would lose their 'freedom,' religious and political, which was what enabled them to spread the good news at home and abroad, that is, to fulfill Bible prophecy. . . . World history is hopelessly regressive, careening pell-mell into Satan's maw, and it may seem as if America is plummeting down the same dark tunnel, but, not necessarily, not if Christians act now (p. 244).

Harding sees both repetitive or cyclical time and linear time at work in Falwell's rhetoric: "Christians continue to operate according to a specifically antimodern causal logic, one more divine than human. . . . Both Satan and God are winning, and Christians are double agents, at once inside and outside, the history of the future" (pp. 245–246). Bible stories happen over and over again as returnings of the non-repressed (the hyperconscientized) until such cyclical sacred history arrives at the end times and the faithful can draw linear traces up the spiral of repetition. These fundamentalisms, literalisms, and apocalyptic practices are firmly rooted in the histories and basic cultural units of the societies in which they operate.

Harding finds herself still vulnerable to the "exclusionary forces at work" in Falwell's rhetoric (p. 165). "His reasoning struck me

as . . . unreasonable, irrational. I could not avoid thinking that he sounded self-righteous, intolerant, and judgmental. In short, I was undergoing a modern, or liberal, reaction to fundamentalism. I was reacting to the militancy of Falwell's language, to the very quality that distinguishes more moderate Christians and non-Christians from fundamentalists" (pp. 165–166).

Although Falwell's discourse excludes liberals of all hues and religious appurtenance, it also, by its rhetorical style, unintentionally renders itself unpalatable to many more conservative Christians and ethnic minorities who otherwise would have found themselves on Falwell's side politically. Harding holds that Falwell's speech forms and content identify his ministry as white—and not otherwise—and as unmistakably male centered (p. 166). Yet that very tone endears Falwell to his vast congregation. His sins and his confessions are as important to his fundamentalist charisma as are his goodness, his uprightness, and his penchant for self-sacrifice. Even his troubles with finances and the law, and accusations of intemperance and dishonesty, somehow bind Falwell's followers to him by increasing his charisma—by pointing to the uniqueness of his character and his abject dependence upon God to keep him, a mere mortal, leading his flock (p. 87).

Ted Koppel's 1988 effort to unmask televangelism, including that of Falwell and the popular Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, did not quite meet its mark. Harding writes that Koppel "produced a bald caricature of social-scientific explanation, one that undermined his own ostensible detachment, that inspired a cascade of mixed metaphors, wild intertextualities, and backtalk from his guests, and began to erase the very distinction between him and them which he had to establish in order to have any authority at all" (pp. 252–253). The TV preachers were more than simple opposites of the likes of Ted Koppel, a supposed exemplar of rational media social critique. They were players in a particular forum of modernity with its own highly rational strategy:

Far from being premodern relics, atavisms of an earlier age, the televangelists were a late capitalist crossbreed of symbolic production, consumption, and social reproduction. They were harbingers of an emerging political economic order in which the stakes were collective identities, cultural ideas, and

symbols as well as profits, markets, political power, and lost souls . . . Falwell was Mr. Modern Fundamentalism and Bakker was Mr. Postmodern Pentecostalism" (p. 258).

How does biblical-Falwellian narrative construct the basis for belief and practice for the faithful? How does Falwell's "going around the mountain" for seven days reenact the ancient Hebrews' circling of Jericho and thus reenchant the world for the faithful? How does repetition of *the word* in the form of stories and the recreation of events create fundamental cognitive crisis or *communitas* for members of the religious community? My interpretation of Harding's answers to these questions is that speaking sacred repetition *ad infinitum* carries out the specific task of maintaining and recreating discourses and practices of a thrilling biblical uncanny that overpowers the gray secular certainties of modernity. It makes the heimlich unheimlich, over and over again. Yet the leaders of these communities employ the very capitalist strategies, in all their rational modernity, that have become so canny in the service of a spiritually enchanted premodern, yet modern, future. (Here I am turning the modernist unheimlich on its head, treating it as familiarly dusty and boring in its production of anxiety, heimlich in its own way; whereas it is the excitement of the end time and millennium that colors the world desirably unheimlich, calling for a transcendence of the homely.)

Adam Lutzker. Harding utilizes recent developments in social theory (the performative turn associated with Judith Butler and post-thick description ethnography) to enter into, make sense of, and report back on, the cultural practices that make up Jerry Falwell's institutionally powerful brand of Christian fundamentalism. This performative turn has been used by Kathleen Stewart (1996) and Elizabeth M. Taylor (1992), both students of Harding, to recover the lost agency and "world making" (Heidegger 1962, pp. 80, 189) capabilities of socially marginalized peoples in the coal camps of Appalachia. They use storytelling and other communal social practices to resist cultural hegemony, constructing social worlds and collective identities at odds with the dominant cultural assumptions and social identifications of modern America. Harding shows that the same tools can be used to analyze the world of the Christian conservative, but, for this reader at least, the results in this case were

unsettling. The political economies of the coal camps and Falwell's congregation differ significantly. Residents of the coal camps respond to economic marginality and dislocation, while the members of Falwell's church include affluent suburbanites. While the residents of the coal camps are constructing an oppositional social theoretical and political economic discourse, the members of Falwell's church are constructing a justificationist ideology that legitimates professional lifestyles, conspicuous consumption, a notion of social responsibility limited to social regulation and control, and an adventurist American foreign policy. When Harding emphasizes the agency of Falwell's congregation in constructing a local social world she foregrounds the amount of ideological heterogeneity within modern American culture and challenges groups attached to the utopian imaginary to match the Christian Right's practical and poetic successes in world building. But the general strategy of recovering lost agency seems less appealing here since the political right seems to have plenty of agency already.

My critique of the fundamentalist social imaginary turns on its life-denying regulations of self-creation (Crapanzano's fieldwork, presented in chapter 2 of *Serving the Word*, examines the restrictions placed on acceptable behavior and emotion by fundamentalist social norms and highlights their human costs) and its presumed universalist scope. Several types of repressions seem to play out here, particularly in the attempt by fundamentalist communities to regulate psychosocial affect and in various religious and political unconscious adherences that operate at a visceral level. This produces an inevitable return of the repressed, in which the drives, practices, affects, and behaviors being regulated go underground; but rather than disappearing, they emerge in a new way (see Freud 1950 and Foucault 1980 on the "return of the repressed"). Harding and Crapanzano analyze strategies of repression used by the various religious groups; Hall provides examples of the consequences of this repression.

You point out that repetition generates the experience of the *unheimlich* for Falwell's people. I read Harding as isolating the method in Falwell's production of the *unheimlich* in a routinized form. Falwell thus takes his place within a larger group of social actors involved in the capitalist production of the *unheimlich* experience. This becomes the ultimate form of

consumerism—consuming unsettling experiences that return some magic to drabber experiences of capitalist modernity.³ Here is another point of contact between the religious right and the broader culture. Other subcultures get their dose of the *unheimlich* in other ways (listening to alternative music, engaging in counterculture activities, reading Heidegger or poststructuralism), but the underlying motivation and the structuring principle of the experience is (I infer) much the same across these subcultures.

I am quite taken with your quote from Harding (p. 258) about the emerging political economy surrounding the cultural production of collective identities (in which Falwell and Koppel are coworkers). It would be nice to have some more points of entry into the literature analyzing this new political economy of culture (see Frow 1997; Harvey 1989; Jameson 1991; Lash and Urry 1994). Its essential feature is experiencing the *unheimlich* as both the raw material input and the finished product output. In this political economy, value is added by transforming a scary and lonely mood into a safer, collective, and cathartic experience. This transformation is the glue that constructs collective identities and generates emotional attachments to them. It is also the driving force behind cultural production and consumption and a crucial sector for understanding economic development.

serving the word: literalism as a social control strategy

Adam Lutzker. Crapanzano presents his topic as inquiry into a particular philosophy of language or interpretive style that he labels literalism. He lists ten features of literalism on pages 2 and 3 of his text. In brief, these features imply that words have simple meanings that generate unambiguous meanings of texts that are equivalent to authorial intention. Consequently, meaning is clear, stable, and independent of context. Crapanzano generates a long and interesting list of examples of literalism in his preface: Christian fundamentalism, conservative understandings of the law, popularized versions of psychoanalysis and genetics, the discourse of identity politics, mechanical understandings of Marxism, and positivist philosophy of language. Unfortunately, he decides to study only the first two examples. This limits the book's scope to two overlapping, politically conservative communities of discourse

and prevents readers from exploring the urge to stabilize interpretation closer to home, that is, in movements that the academic intelligentsia might be more sympathetic to on political or cultural grounds. It also prevents Crapanzano and readers from addressing broader questions, such as whether or in what ways literalism is inherently politically or epistemologically conservative.

Crapanzano, in essence, analyzes the logical inconsistencies of literalism along with detailed discussions of the strategies for managing these inconsistencies and their social consequences. He views society "as a field of competing interpretive styles" (p. 1). Social action is coordinated by various "strategies for managing different interpretations" (p. 1). Literalism is a strategy for the uncritical reaffirmation of existing interpretive frames. It represses ambiguity of meaning and social conflicts over interpretation in favor of a constructed traditional or obvious meaning. Its founding gesture is a form of bad faith that denies its performative political function. Interpretive regimes are modes of governance; literalism is a form of social control.

Crapanzano lays out his overall project and presents a capsule history of theories of language and hermeneutics in an excellent introductory chapter. At almost every turn, he opposes his own understanding of language to the literalist understanding. He foregrounds the expressivist and pragmatic uses of language over the referential; the role of context and convention in stabilizing meaning; a moral view of signification as a contractual obligation between speakers; and the importance of the performative function of language, especially in the canonical foundation texts such as the Bible and the Constitution, that are so important to these conservative literalists.

Crapanzano devotes the first half of his book to Christian fundamentalism. His presentation of the history and theology of fundamentalism in the first chapter is mainly an intellectual history of how conservative theologians have attempted to deal with the problems of biblical interpretation in their project of extracting a consistent, unambiguous meaning from the text. In the second chapter, Crapanzano discusses fundamentalist practice—the application of the doctrine to everyday life. This section is based on fieldwork conducted predominantly in southern California since 1995. In the third chapter, he looks at fundamentalist views

of history and time. "The literalist understanding gives at least the illusion of stopping time and history by projecting (a notion of) meaning that transcends time" (p. xxiv). The literalist project fails in creating this illusion, Crapanzano argues, because the changing context affects meaning.

Comparing Crapanzano's fundamentalists to Harding's analysis of Jerry Falwell's success reveals a contradiction between fundamentalists' literalist linguistic ideology and their performative linguistic practice. Interestingly, the fundamentalists seem to share a lot ideologically with the broader modern American culture even though they see themselves as rebelling against it. In addition to this literalist ideology, which Crapanzano hints is widespread in American culture, fundamentalists also share a dominant cultural notion of experience as understood by positivism, scientism, or empiricism, rather than the broader notion of experience found in mysticisms of various sorts.⁴ They believe in science, as understood by 19th-Century materialism, and they think the Bible is scientific. Fundamentalism is possible within modernity only because it is a mixture of modernist elements. Its claim to be anti-modern is part of its basic mystification of its own ideological status.

An analysis of the details of scientific literalism would broaden Crapanzano's work, allowing readers to see the literalist strategy at work in a context distinct from political conservatism. It would also allow readers insight into the debates over the status of science—debates in which the defenders of science attack their critics as irrationalists while appealing to the same literalist strategies for controlling interpretive communities of discourse that Crapanzano analyzes among the fundamentalists.⁵

Crapanzano does utilize the hermeneutic circle in the introduction to *Serving the Word*, so he would presumably accept that all discourses are circular, that is, they cannot justify their fundamental vocabulary to those outside who are not willing to grant the discourse its performative force. Is he not conscious of the thinness of his argument against the circularity of fundamentalist discourse? Crapanzano's hermeneutics should lead him to expect that every discourse is circular—that is, it makes sense to those within it who ignore its constitutive repressions of its contradictions, and it seems obviously flawed to those outside it who see the contradictions. Crapanzano has a

too-reductive notion of literalism. Literalism can mean different things depending on one's notion of experience. It is only literalism about language combined with a scientistic notion of experience that produces the modern American conservative type of literalism that Crapanzano opposes. As Rosenthal suggests earlier, if Crapanzano were to broaden his focus, he would find other examples of literalism, especially non-Western ones, that do not fit his framework.

In his discussion of legal literalism, Crapanzano does a nice job of exposing the necessarily performative element in literalist Supreme Court ideology. Through close analysis of the language of the Constitution, the *Marbury v. Madison* decision that establishes the principle of Supreme Court review of legislation for its consistency with the constitution, and the revival of original intent as an interpretive principle in the 1970s, Crapanzano establishes the interpretive inconsistency of legal literalism, its willful "epistemological naivete" (p. 260), and its entanglement in the same contradictions as religious literalism. He skillfully utilizes the attack on intentional explanation in literary criticism to argue the futility of attempts to isolate a clear, authorial intention in matters of law (pp. 287–303). Finally, he analyzes the legal invocation of binding precedent, showing it to be yet another form of bad faith that disguises agentic choice as logical necessity. All in all, Crapanzano's chapters on law are emotionally cathartic for this reader, particularly as they dismantle the arguments of jurists such as Robert Bork, Anthony Scalia, and their intellectual kin. My only comments are that Crapanzano understates the motivational significance of the Warren Court in general, and *Brown v. Board of Education* in particular, for the literalist turn among conservative legal scholars and that he could profitably explore the relationship between his own understanding of language and that of scholars in the Critical Legal Studies movement, who share his stance toward legal literalism.⁶

Judy Rosenthal: I particularly enjoyed *Serving the Word*. Crapanzano tacks back and forth between careful ethnographic relativism and political meditation about what all this fundamentalism must mean today and what sort of attitudes we politically progressive intellectuals can have towards it. He confesses his inability to sympathize with *their* lack of relativism. Crapanzano's fundamentalist subjects

are different from Harding's: "They disapproved of mixing religion and politics, of exploitative and hate-provoking preaching, and of irresponsible healing. They looked askance at organizations like the Christian Coalition (though I suspect most of them vote along coalition lines). They were so certain of their values—and so isolated, morally and spiritually, from mainstream America—that they could not understand why anyone with different values would be angered by their incapacity, their unwillingness, to engage in dialogue or debate. . . . Theirs was a preclusive discourse: they had the truth" (p. 325). In contrast, many of the legal literalists—"people in high places with enormous power"—hid the religious nature of their political certainties; they employed their supposedly purely intellectual literalism as "an alibi to mask personal and political interests and agendas" (p. 326).

Crapanzano admits he was more ethnographic in writing about the fundamentalists than about the Supreme Court literalists (p. 326). His book is part ethnography, in the strict sense, and part political and social critique of a powerful element in Supreme Court proceedings. Although Crapanzano admits failure to shed his disapproval of fundamentalists' life-denying asceticism, he does manage to like many fundamentalists. Even so, he admits, "I did not really become friends with any of them—I couldn't. It was as though God came between us" (p. 328). On the other hand, Crapanzano does not even try to warm to the literalism of the legal minds. That form of fundamentalism—which does not speak its true name (it does not confess to its religious basis)—asks for hostile critique. In an attempt to explain this uneven treatment, he writes that anthropologists "take belief to be a privileged domain, so deeply personal as to be untouchable . . . the effect of our own particular chivalry toward belief and faith [and] that accounts for some of the differences between my chapters on religions and law" (p. 329).

apocalypse observed—terrible faith versus the state

Judy Rosenthal: Although *Apocalypse Observed*, written by sociologists, is a cultural study, of the three books it is the least centered on language. Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh examine the ways ideological opposition to religious movements and efforts to control them, including

state violence, push their adherents in the direction of violent behavior. They focus on five religious orders—the Peoples Temple of Jonestown, the Branch Davidians in Waco, Heaven's Gate, the Solar Temple, and Aum Shinrikyo. The first four groups ended with collective suicides, and the last performed murder and terrorism. Anticult activists, concerned relatives, news media, and the state participate in an escalation of tension and finally violence against and by deviant religious groups. These groups are clearly products of the societies they reject, often mirroring more widely held fears and hopes.

The nearly 1,000 members of the settlement of the Peoples Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, lived communally in the spirit of a "leftist political vein of crude communism" (p. 17), sharing work and production, childcare, and the life of a hugely extended spiritual family. Their leader and prophet, Jim Jones, "connected to the legacy of blacks' search for redemption in the United States . . . as part of a higher religious purpose to history" (p. 20). The Peoples' Temple was an effort "to escape the degradation of racism and class inequality in the United States" (p. 20). Opposition from the U.S. government, the press, and numerous relatives of members catalyzed the collective suicide of 913 members of the Peoples Temple and their murder of five outsiders. Hall argues that the state and other opponents created a myth of Jonestown, "the story . . . of a sick and fiendish man who plotted the deaths of those who would expose his sham community," and whose followers were "too naive or powerless to break the hold of Jim Jones . . ." (p. 16). Hall claims that a fairer interpretation of the events and the culture of the Peoples Temple would also critique their opponents: "The collectivism of countercultural organizations flies in the face of the dominant American ideology that embraces capitalism, individualism, and the nuclear family, and it is thus vulnerable to becoming coded as antidemocratic and subversive" (p. 17). In fact, Jim Jones' organization turns out to have been "a left-wing religious movement dedicated to racial integration," (p. 16) to living a life over and against dominant capitalist culture "by radicalizing the social gospel through a congregational communal formula of 'apostolic socialism' and direct social ministry, combined with a leftist political agenda in the wider society" (p. 27). Members of the Peoples Temple eventually went so far as

to commit "revolutionary suicide," a concept articulated by Black Panther Huey Newton (p. 28).

Hall insists that "Government authorities in the United States have a long tradition of using the state's monopoly on the legitimate deployment of violence to control utopian social movements" (p. 66). His chapter about the Branch Davidians in Waco and their 1993 standoff with the FBI further demonstrates his thesis that the state is virtually always involved in the debacle of mass suicide. When concerned relatives were unable to rescue their family members from the Waco community, their accusations of child abuse helped provide legitimization for an armed assault by the FBI. But, in fact, there was no clear evidence of child abuse that might rationally create such an emergency (p. 69). The fire that consumed the Branch Davidians would not have occurred had the FBI not attacked. Hall makes the specific point that these groups experienced state power as overwhelming in both its display of violent intentions during the catastrophic events and its ability to dismantle and destroy the targeted communities.

Hall also takes to task one-sided coverage by the press, which adds oil to the fire by demonizing cults in stories of "cult-busting" that "follow the genre of the heroic exposé" (p. 71). First Amendment rights may not be respected when a religious group is the suspect—the government, the press, and groups organized to destroy cults (including relatives of cult members) take sides militantly in matters of religion. In addition, at Waco "the BATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms] itself was not simply driven by the anticriticism of the cultural opponents. It had its own institutionalized tradition as something of a wild-west outfit, defending the state's monopoly over the legitimate means of violence" (p. 74).

The case of Aum Shinrikyo in Japan was fundamentally different from that of the Peoples Temple and the Branch Davidians. Aum Shinrikyo is a religion that has brought together elements of Buddhism, Hinduism, and various syncretic sects that began to sweep Japan during the 1980s. It has included numerous young adults, many of them technicians and professionals. Some lived in highly ascetic communities withdrawn from the rest of society in an effort to reach enlightenment and to head off the impending doom prophesied by Nostradamus. Aum Shinrikyo determined to save

humanity from disaster by changing the way people lived.

In 1990, the leader Asahara Shoko and 25 disciples entered the political world through presenting themselves as candidates for legislative elections, but they received very few votes. This political failure may have triggered the apocalyptic turn in Aum Shinrikyo that culminated in their 1995 Tokyo subway gas attack resulting in the death of 12 people and medical treatment of 5,510 persons. Hall interprets these events as a reaction to impending lawsuits and investigations by state agents precipitated, in part, by Asahara Shoko's contracting the deaths of several members who threatened to leave the sect. Aum Shinrikyo members were guilty of murder but were never involved in mass suicide.

Trinh and Hall analyze public reaction to the sect before the terrorist event: "The fear and stigma surrounding Aum Shinrikyo may not have come so much from confronting something beyond comprehension as from looking at a distorted mirror image of Japanese society that people found uncomfortably understandable" (p. 110). They take to task the educational system, and by extension modern Japanese culture, for lack of social critique: "Schools replicated standardized knowledge but created human automatons who lacked the capacity to think outside bounded information games. So long as these automatons found places within the existing social order, things went smoothly. But when they took up life in a countercultural movement, they easily succumbed to its discipline and demands" (p. 81).

In their analysis of francophone examples of apocalyptic violence, Hall and Schuyler write that the Solar Temple "is a hybrid that transcends neat modern distinctions between science and religion, reason and faith, spirit and sexuality, technology and popular culture" (p. 126). They describe Swiss, French, and Canadian manifestations of the Solar Temple (all of which were connected) as a countercultural movement attracting intellectuals and individuals who were economically privileged and politically connected, including, for example, a French nuclear engineer, close relatives of powerful industrialists, an orchestra conductor, a mayor, and an official in the Québec Ministry of Finance. Inspired by the Knights Templar of the 12th and 13th centuries and by Rosicrucian goals of saving humanity from "the error of death" (p. 119), adherents

believed that ecological apocalypse would result from the emotional and spiritual pollution common to the human race. To escape from this "kingdom of fire," they offered a "mystical mood"—a rite of passage enabling an encounter with the divine (pp. 125–126). Members of the Solar Temple believed in transcendence of earthly existence and a spiritual transit to other time-spaces, eventually to Sirius, a "Dimension of Truth and the Absolute" (pp. 136–137).

In 1994, after the group became convinced that it was misunderstood by the world and persecuted by state authorities, 48 members were found dead in two Swiss communities. Their notes indicated this was no ordinary suicide; it was a transit to another dimension. Even so, that all of the deceased transited voluntarily remains to be proven. Similar circumstances claimed the lives of five in Québec, including a woman and infant who clearly did not transit of their own volition. A year later, 16 members of the Solar Temple transited together in France, as did five more in Québec in 1997.

What could possibly persuade these individuals to align themselves with such a sect and eventually to kill themselves (and others) in this way? Hall and Schuyler's evocative description holds that "in a world beset by secular influences even within the Church itself, the Temple Solaire resurrected enchantment" and "its principle innovation—erasing the firm boundary between life and death—resonates with similar religious ideas" of other groups that are " 'utopian' in the specific sense that their ascendancy on a wide scale would entail a dramatic reordering of culture, power, and social relations" (p. 127). This, indeed, is powerful enchantment.

In his chapter on Heaven's Gate, Hall describes a group of believers more reluctant to be violent toward others, but who killed themselves because they were so sensitive to the outrage of their opponents and the general indifference of the world to their urgent message. "They took their own lives as an affirmation of faith that by this act they would be physically transported to Heaven" (p. 182). The group's original leaders, Bo and Peep, whom Hall calls "New-Age Puritans" (p. 152), began a spiritual partnership in the early seventies. They preached and practiced an extreme asceticism, determined to withdraw from the world of spiritual darkness and convinced God had given them an "overwhelming mission" (p. 152),

revealing to them an apocalypse soon to hit the earth. They were to recruit as many believers as possible and lead them away from the impending doom “aboard a spacecraft (‘cloud of light’) at the completion of their ‘overcoming’” (p. 154). This was to be a long journey to the “Next Level” of evolutionary development. Few people took their mission and their warnings seriously. This lack of concern brought pain to the couple, but over the years they built up a small community. By 1997, 39 members lived together in Rancho Santa Fe, California. Hearing of the nearing of the Hale-Bopp comet, they decided to join it and purchased a telescope to see the spaceship accompanying the comet. They videotaped good-byes, enjoyed movies and pizzas, gathered passports, money, and a few personal items, then took phenobarbital and drank vodka. Assistants placed plastic bags over their heads, then followed suit. Heaven’s Gate, less affected by state threats than other groups in this volume, did not engage in violent actions of self-protection.

In spite of significant differences between these five religious orders and the violence they suffered or enacted, Hall finds they are all “analogic variations on one cultural structure: the *warring apocalypse of religious conflict*” (p. 189). He holds that these groups formed “paranoid communities” and that paranoia was just as essential to the forces opposing them—forces that sought to employ the social order against those who would endanger it (p. 196). Discussing Durkheim and recent writers on moral boundaries and “exemplary dualism” (p. 197), Hall theorizes the relationship of these groups and events to modernity: “Ritual work that distinguishes an existing social order from alien Others can be undertaken either as a holding action against the rise of modernity or in order to defend modernity” (p. 197). He discusses the Puritan revulsion for uncertainty and disorder, the Nazi use of technology at its most modern, and the disciplined character of the Holocaust. “Notwithstanding the brutal character that repressions of the Other can take, it would thus be mistaken to assume that modern societies have been purged of the techniques of such repression or the capacity and will to use them” (p. 197). He also argues that states are in an impossible impasse—to the extent that they control acts of violence on the part of apocalyptic groups, they themselves become violent players in end time scenarios (p. 200).

Does millenarianism necessarily end in violence? No—millenarian beliefs and practices are products of “normal society” in the United States and in Europe (p. 200). And the violence of some millenarian groups is not the result of their internal tensions or an expression of their basic nature; state intervention is the direct cause of violence, or it triggers desperately violent self-defense strategies in groups who interpret their world as a dispensation perched on the brink of apocalypse.

Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh have made an outstanding contribution to the political analysis of millenarian groups.

Adam Lutzker: I agree that of most interest here are similarities between cults and mainstream society. The cults form their world views by isolating, in a purified form, elements of broader, society-wide ideologies. Hall does a nice job of mapping the world views of the cults back onto the broader social landscape. He also locates the responsibility for violence with the state. The ensuing violence results from a state-social response of (mis)recognition and repression. This provides examples of the return of the repressed mentioned above and explains why politicized messianic eschatology is such a dangerous mix.

bringing it all back home (to our usual concerns and anxieties, disciplinary and political)

Judy Rosenthal: These works, and Crapanzano’s *Serving the Word* in particular, inspire a number of questions that are not (nor could they be) entirely answered in their pages, and certainly not in this review. What do fundamentalist literalism and the repetition of biblical narrative (that facilitates identity) have to do with metaphor and metonymy, or with representation of the sacred? Does Christian literalism completely refuse metaphor? After all, these Protestant believers do mark a difference between signifiers, or the Word, and the signified.

What do these questions have to do with identity politics—with the strategic necessity of identity politics (or, for political fundamentalists, its literal material factualness), as well as its inherent wrongness epistemologically and with respect to the goals of social justice (for some readers, the ideal of radical democracy)? How is the aporia (or logical impasse) inherent in identity politics, both as strategy and as doctrine,

linked to literalism and the resisting potentials of millennial groups? It is through a radical identity politics that some of the groups examined by Hall have resisted the state.

Is not sectarianism, or the adherence to a monistic version of truth, the culprit rather than literalism with respect to apocalyptic violence as well as the conservatism of literalism? ("We are the only ones who possess and wield the Truth," all of these groups appear to say.) Some versions of literalism arguably can translate into a new mix of modernity with reenchantment.

Epistemological monism and historical monism are two very different concepts and phenomena, and both are entirely relevant to the subject at hand. Does not the trope of literalism have different meanings in different contexts? The concept is less stable in both academic and popular language than Crapanzano's use of it seems to imply—he takes literalism too literally. Crapanzano tells his story in a manner not altogether unlike the moral outrage of the literalist fundamentalists he describes.

What are the millenarian or fundamentalist aspects of the U.S. government, politics, and culture (the Constitution, the Supreme Court, and so on) that have become so secularly second nature that they no longer appear to have metaphysical or religious moorings? Given that Crapanzano finds literalism in the discourse of U.S. Supreme Court justices—a literalism quite linked to fundamentalist religious literalism—might he not find it in ever so many other sites and positions linked to the state?

What about the possibility of a curious relationship between literalism and fetishism? Is the fetish the most literal literalism imaginable? Reading Crapanzano, readers may imagine that literalism of the biblical and constitutional word takes meaning as something that can be peeled from the page, as though it were stuck face to face with the text or with a particular historical intentionality that is foundational and unchanging—as though the oral reciting of these texts provides a palpable origin of truth in the air, a material reproduction of an older original. Literal voduns and other fetishes are, among other things, congealed words—speech made concrete and history made material in condensed form.

I take this Vodun literalism to be very different from the literalism Crapanzano attacks, although I recognize that the Word, as well as original intention, are fetishized in some sense

by religious and constitutional fundamentalists. Yet there is something to pick at in the comparison. Unlike religious fundamentalists, the carriers of Vodun literalism do not imagine themselves to possess The Truth—they are insistently pluralistic and theological relativists. Literalism is not necessarily intolerant and closed—West African fetishists (literalists?) are radically open, and their divination system is open ended in its interpretive repertoire. The most literal, concrete, or materialist mode of all—the literally fetishistic—may be the most abstract and open to the outside, to new couplings and juxtapositions.

How are literalism and Vodun materialism or fetishistic concretism distinguishable? Vodun materialism is the refusal of the opposition between the material and the nonmaterial (or whatever is opposed to the literal material)—metaphor, the ideal, the symbolic, the spiritual, the Word, or language. It is text, or Word, all the way down in Vodun. Each of the material and spiritual ingredients in the making of the fetish is a text put in contact with other little bits of text—together, they light the fires of interpretation, and there is no end in sight as far as meaning goes. This is a metonymy rather than a relationship of metaphor. Such fetishism is far from the literalism of Christian fundamentalists and Supreme Court judges who, after all, believe that language and its referents (or signifiers and signifieds) are of different orders.

(Or do they?)

Adam Lutzker and Judy Rosenthal: Harding and Crapanzano seem to be telling readers that the fundamentalism of which they write is not always about belief in end times in the strictest linear sense. In their examples, the end times are always just around the corner. Being in end times is a way of being, rather than a doctrine about the literal end of the world. Because Christian fundamentalism is a constantly reproduced and reconfigured culture of apocalypse and millennium, Jerry Falwell was able to politicize it and create the Moral Majority, extracting the antiworldly or antimodernist strain from Christian fundamentalism. Had Falwell and his flock really believed the battle of Armageddon to be near, as do Jehovah's Witnesses, he would not have been able to convince his followers to acquire university educations and enter the professions in a sort of fifth-column politics—to infiltrate the secular world in order to seek out the sheep trapped in it, thereby providing Christians with such

improvements as Christian psychology, medicine, history, and teacher training. This abandoning of traditional political isolationism (that Jehovah's Witnesses have never abandoned) propelled the religious right into a position of major political influence, including a heavy hand in the 2000 presidential election.

Politically active fundamentalists may see the United States as on God's side, or Christ as leading the country in a worldwide battle against evil. For this reason, and to the extent that fundamentalists take a final (linear) end time seriously, the United States would be saved during the coming apocalypse. It is not clear whether fundamentalists' concern is to ensure that all U.S. citizens would be saved, or only all Christian U.S. citizens. Nor is it clear whether the saved would immediately ascend to heaven or live out the millennium on a utopian earth. In any case, if Christians do their part and U.S. citizens join the ranks of the saved, their actions can make the United States worthy of election. These religious leaders have invented a peculiarly American mixture of nationalism, consumerism, and millennial religion—they point out good versus evil in foreign policy, America's grand role in the world, and the spiritual transformative effects of consumerism. Consumerism marks this brand of millenarianism as fundamentally different from many religious movements of the past. It is precisely this intriguing mix that makes such movements so effective in marketing their views.

Adam Lutzker: My general response to reading these three books is that we secular leftists need to analyze the fissures in our own world view. I fear that the urge to literalism and associated forms of regulation also affect social groups that appear far more liberal than Christian fundamentalists. I have expressed disappointment with Crapanzano's book because his keen analysis of literalism is restricted to two case studies of the far right. Because I criticize Crapanzano for not putting his subject position in question, it is only fair to put mine on the line. Secularism as a world view depends on a distinction between a public and private, a distinction between the right and the good, a misrecognition of the sources of subjectivity, and a slippage between its own partisan vocabulary and a neutral framework for resolving social conflicts.⁷ The public and private distinction grows out of an attempt by the signatories of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 to distinguish political and religious authority in the

17th century and the emergence, in Enlightenment thought, of an autonomous political-economic realm governed by reason. The distinction between right action, about which liberalism required consensus, and the good life, about which it did not, followed from this fissuring of the social world into public and private spheres. This uneasy divide has been subject to renegotiation—public discourses of social control have been aimed at the private sphere for at least the last 200 years. Michel Foucault's (1977, 1980, 1991) genealogies of discipline, biopower, and governmentality narrate this encroachment of the public into the private. Post-Enlightenment thinkers account for emotional identifications with the symbolic order. Secularism identifies subjectivity with rationality, but the trend of post-Enlightenment thought is to see subjectivity as a surface phenomenon driven by deeper processes of which it is, at best, only partially aware. Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud—Paul Ricoeur's (1970) masters of suspicion—are the founding fathers here, but poststructuralists have continued to develop this insight. Connolly (2000) refers to these underlying sources of affectivity as the "visceral register" (p. 164). Lastly, secularism conflates its own theoretical vocabulary and metaphysical commitments with the requirements of neutral political adjudication of competing claims. Hence, Jürgen Habermas's (1987) cranky response to Nietzsche and his followers in which he effectively says: I can make no sense of your discourse from within my own philosophical commitments, so I conclude that you are unreasonable. This repression of difference, instead of discursive engagement with it, reveals the dogmatism within the secular project.

Like literalism, secularism has its own denial of its conditions of possibility—its own founding gesture of bad faith. Secularists' inability to account for their own status results in an eviscerated treatment of modernity and opens a space for more visceral responses to the aporia of modernity. This space is filled all too easily by religious revival movements. By analyzing these movements, their strategies, and responses to them in detail, the authors of *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, *Serving the Word*, and *Apocalypse Observed* have improved understanding of both modernity and the wealth of social movements and social worlds that make up contemporary society. The reward of the

next step—an internal critique of secularism—will be a better understanding of the *unheimlich* experience of modernity and its role in the new political economy of culture and identity within which we (Falwell and Koppel, literalists and interpretivists, millennial cultists and secular academics alike) are all enmeshed.⁸

notes

1. Charles Lemert (1999) argues that the differentiation from, and repression of, religion is the constitutive, founding gesture of social theory and accounts for the failure of social theory to deal adequately with religion, with negative consequences for social theory's treatment of modernity.

2. As Harding (p. 311) reminds readers, the primary theorist of modernity as disenchantment is Max Weber (1930, 1968). An important recent presentation is *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion* by Marcel Gauchet 1997.

Unheimlich is an ordinary German word that has become a term of art for both Sigmund Freud (1955) and Martin Heidegger (1962). *Heimlich* means "at home" or familiar; *unheimlich* means "not at home" or unfamiliar. Strachey (in Freud 1955) translates *unheimlich* as "uncanny." For Heidegger, the term means not-being-at-home, the state of homelessness that produces angst and motivates human cultural and technological production as a search for a way of feeling at home in the world. We are utilizing these associations in our title, claiming that it is the *unheimlich* nature of the lived experience of humanity in the modern world that motivates religious revivalism in general and fundamentalist movements in particular.

3. Perhaps capitalism's real opponent is boredom or satiation, which leads people to drop out of the production-consumption style. The *unheimlich* experience seems now to be the cutting edge of the expansion of the commodity form.

4. For a history of the changing understanding of the notion of experience, see Heidegger 1967.

5. Such a project is currently underway in the interdisciplinary successor to the philosophy, history, and sociology of science known as "science studies." See Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1997), especially chapter 8, "Microdynamics of Incommensurability: Philosophy of Science Meets Science Studies."

6. For more on the history of the intellectual impact of Brown among the legal scholarship

community, see Laura Kalman (1996). For CLS scholarship, see Mark Kelman (1987). Jacques Derrida (1992) argues that this original, constitutive, performative gesture of law is ultimately backed by mystical violence. It is a necessary act of bad faith that obscures this fact to generate legitimacy for the legal system.

7. My source for this discussion of secularism is William Connolly (2000).

8. Two works that attempt such a history of a subjectivity attuned to the role of the *unheimlich* in everyday life are Judith Butler (1997) and Eric Santner (2001).

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