

Representing Political Violence: The Mainstream Media and the Weatherman “Days of Rage”

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By 1971 the revolutionary energies of the New Left had been pretty much exhausted, though remnant groups like the Weather Underground continued on with their tactics of violence (chiefly bombings) aimed at disrupting the American “war machine.” Their actions attracted a considerable amount of mainstream press attention, enough to prompt the poet Allen Ginsberg to offer a rather provocative interpretation of the situation in an interview he gave to the *Partisan Review* in that same year: “The government is indulging in murderous violence on so vast a scale that nobody’s mind can contain it. That’s why it’s easy to headline the Weatherman’s bomb, lonely little bomb, lonely little antirobot bomb, that wasn’t intended for humans, even” (Colbert 304; also cited in Daniels 459). While Ginsberg’s notion of some kind of a collective atrocity overload driving the national media may not be particularly helpful to understanding the situation, his statement remains quite interesting because it succinctly captures the deeply rhetorical nature of political violence and hints at the ways the socio-cultural functions of these representations shape our readings of them. In his reversal of the dominant media representations of these two types of American bombs and bombers, Ginsberg challenged a clear distinction long maintained by this country’s mainstream media—and the public memory it shapes and nourishes—between state-sanctioned violence¹ and those acts labeled as “terroristic.” Ginsberg spoke directly to that powerful grammar of violence within our cultural discourse that assigns state-supported uses of force too clearly demarcated space different than that category of violence designated as “terrorism.”² For the

purposes of my essay, his words continue to be significant precisely because they so sharply call into question those widely accepted differentiations between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” political violence and thus they may suggest something important about the shape of our cultural discourse during those years of widespread and sometimes violent public opposition to government actions in Vietnam.

To be sure, Ginsberg’s argument concerning the proper reading of political violence was not particularly original in the context of the public debate over the war in Vietnam. This struggle over interpretation had played a key role in the anti-war movement at least as early as 1965 when protesters invoked a post-Nuremberg ethic to justify their resistance to “criminal” actions in Vietnam (DeBenedetti 128). Even more to the point, the blurring of differences between domestic violence and government actions was often identified by prominent critics of the War as a crucial rationale for their opposition. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, declared in a widely publicized 1967 speech: “I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government” (quoted in DeBenedetti 172).

King’s refusal to differentiate between the “legitimate” violence of the state and that perpetrated by those acting in opposition to it as well as Ginsberg’s inversion of the dominant calculus of violence worked to contest directly the culture’s mainstream representations of these seemingly intractable elements in our national political life. In this essay I would like to take up the challenge within King’s and Ginsberg’s words and consider more carefully the largely rhetorical struggles over this grammar of violence operative during the late 1960s and the way it shaped representations of domestic political violence. In particular, I wish to investigate not only the content of these representations—as they were disseminated by elements of the mainstream print media—but also the possibility that these purportedly “objective”³ news accounts may have been shaped by an underlying ritual structure that was critical to the cultural work performed by these texts. This essay will therefore be in part an examination of what Daniel C. Hallin posits as the “intimate institutional connection between the media and the government” which maintained itself throughout the travails of the Vietnam War era (19), a relationship which played a significant role in the representation of those “terrorist” bombs commented upon by Allen Ginsberg. But beyond this discussion, the underlying structure of these news stories will bring me to a consideration of the ritual-like nature of these texts, of the means by which the mainstream press served at this historical moment as a “boundary-maintaining mechanism” (Parsons, quoted in Hallin 21) to restabilize that calculus of political violence seemingly undermined by Martin Luther King, Jr. and other anti-war activists. Following Hallin therefore, I seek to illuminate “the role of [the media in] exposing, condemning, or excluding from the public agenda those who violate or challenge consensus values . . . and uphold[ing] the consensus distinction between legitimate and illegitimate political activity” (21).

To this end I wish to focus my attention on an event which occurred prior to the Weathermen's decision to make bombs their tactical weapon of choice. In the middle of October 1969 the Weathermen organized their first—and only—mass political action in the streets of Chicago. The Days of Rage, as this event came to be called, seems a particularly apt choice for my essay because, in the eyes of contemporary commentators like John Kifner of the *New York Times*, it marked the “first real violence—deliberate, planned attack on persons and property—on the part of the New Left” (“Vandals” 15). Thus, the relatively modest amount of damage to person and property occasioned by the Days of Rage is somewhat beside the point since in the popular imagination of the day—including that of the Weathermen themselves—“the image of antiwar radicalism blended indiscriminately with that of random violence, such as the Charles Manson murders” (DeBenedetti 251).⁴ Such a conflation of images was in part made possible by the highly charged political discourse which surrounded the disturbing events of the late sixties. By 1969, many public voices were remarking upon the palpable sense that violent domestic revolution was indeed possible: *Time* magazine speculated about the onset of “Guerilla Summer,” the Justice Department characterized the times as “the year of the [domestic] bombings” (quoted in Anderson 325), and Richard Nixon himself asserted that American institutions faced in domestic unrest the greatest challenge to their survival in history (DeBenedetti 252). Tom Wicker had perhaps stated it best only two months prior to the Days of Rage when he wrote: “Everything since Chicago [the 1968 Democratic National Convention] has had a new intensity—that of polarization, of confrontation, of antagonism, and fear” (quoted in Raskin 142).

Wicker's reference to the Chicago Convention also provides another very significant reason for examining closely the Weatherman action of October 1969. Probably no event of the late sixties was more destabilizing to the calculus of violence than the “police riot” which occurred at the 1968 Democratic Convention. The brutality of the Chicago police had elicited widespread media condemnation and it had the effect of calling into question the line between the “lawful” exercise of force and violent “criminal” behavior.⁵ As Terry Anderson explains, the aggression displayed by the authorities in Chicago “provoked one of the first times that the moderate establishment press agreed with underground reporters” (224). But of even more significance for the purposes of this paper is that the media was roundly criticized for its coverage of the Convention and that a number of prominent politicians blamed the press for the outbreak of domestic violence (DeBenedetti 229). Rather predictably, leading media spokespersons like CBS News President Richard Salant promised that “if the set of circumstances that occurred in Chicago ever occurs again, I think we'll report it somewhat differently” (quoted in Gitlin, *World* 196). The Days of Rage would be a crucial site for the playing out of these cultural anxieties and a moment well-suited to re-visiting the representation of domestic violence and even perhaps re-invigorating the process of ritualizing and mythologizing political violence.

The events of October 8-11, 1969, are in themselves relatively simple in outline. The Weatherman faction had earlier that year broken off from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), embracing their own rhetorical self-fashionings as the vanguard of revolutionary action, as the group willing and able to carry out violent struggle against the state. Although not large in numbers, they “held the rest of the Left enthralled” by virtue of their expressed intent to escalate the fight (Gitlin, *Sixties* 399). The Chicago event was to be their first major national action, dedicated to, in the language of their communiques, “bring[ing] the war home” and “establish[ing] another front against imperialism right here in America” (Boudin et. al. 177; “Look At It” 168). Thousands were said to be ready to gather at Chicago’s Lincoln Park (the site of so much of the violence during the 1968 Democratic Convention) to initiate an action which would intensify the revolutionary struggle and, as Weatherman leader Bill Ayers would write, “create class war in the streets and institutions of this country” (187-88). As things turned out, only about six hundred souls ultimately heeded this call, but those who did, came ready for conflict, with many dressed in heavy clothing, wearing helmets and gas masks, and carrying lead pipes, chains, and riot sticks. For several nights they proceeded to trash portions of Chicago’s Gold Coast, causing a fair amount of property damage, inciting a certain hysteria in the local press, and prompting the Governor of Illinois to call out the National Guard. By the end of the four days of the action, several hundred of the Weatherman faction had been arrested, with an equal number injured (including six wounded by police gunfire), thirty-six police officers had been hurt and one Richard Elrod, an assistant corporation counsel for the city of Chicago and a close friend of Mayor Daley, lay in a hospital bed paralyzed from the neck down (Thomas 223).

Although the Weatherman action did not incite the revolution that its organizing literature had prophesied, the event received abundant print coverage. It dominated the Chicago papers for a number of days and it generally garnered front page status in daily newspapers across the country. The national news magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*, as well as other important periodicals like *The Atlantic* and the *New York Times Magazine* featured extensive coverage as well.

This essay will in fact focus its attention on just these kinds of mainstream *print* accounts of the Days of Rage, for although the events of October 8-11 received considerable television play, I believe that there are several factors which make the print media more useful than television when considering the ritualized narrative structure of media representations of domestic political violence. First of all, television news segments tend by nature to be brief, and the “lecture format” employed in these stories must therefore move very quickly (Gitlin, *World* 265). Thus, even if one accepts Gitlin’s argument that television news remains chiefly verbal in nature despite its obvious visual components (*World* 265), the brevity of television news stories creates a certain condensation of materials that contributes to its reliance upon “cartoonlike stick-figure representations” (Gitlin, *World* 231). The print media, with more available time and

space, should theoretically not be pushed by its format into such stereotypical characterizations, and if ritual elements do indeed turn up in these print accounts, they cannot be easily dismissed as *merely* the manifestations of the medium's format. Furthermore, the additional time and space allotted to print versus television means that when ritual elements appear, they are usually played out more fully in print and are thus more readily identifiable. Finally it is important to remember that in the late sixties print outlets remained the primary source of news for most Americans. As Lawrence Lichty would conclude after a survey of consumer habits more than a decade after the Days of Rage: "What seems obvious is that most American adults get the 'news' from many sources. And judging from the 'exposure' data, most of what they get every day still comes from the newspapers" (57). If anything the power of the print media in 1969 would have been even greater than Lichty reports because it preceded the onset of such innovations as the all-news cable stations whose impact Lichty seeks to assess. Such factors, when combined with the greater availability of a wide number and variety of print sources, suggest that a concentration on the print media may very well provide the best available means to understand the sources and nature of the extensive media coverage given over to the Weathermen's action.

Of course, to speak of the "nature" of media coverage risks the danger of overgeneralization since the mainstream print media during this period was not some single-voiced monolith that spoke in uniform ways about domestic protest. One must be careful here not to imply that all mainstream news outlets covered this event in precisely the same manner; more generalized disagreements within the press over the meaning and legitimacy of social protest surely influenced individual accounts of the Days of Rage. Yet it is my belief that, beneath the very real differences between, for example, a *Chicago Tribune* story and a *Newsweek* report on the same events, one can detect an underlying commonality in perspective on and representation of the National Action that brings us close to Hallin's disclosure of the media's traditional role in "uphold[ing] the consensus distinction between legitimate and illegitimate political activity" (21).⁶ Certainly some media outlets pursued this end more vigorously and self-consciously than others, but I hope to show in this essay how the rhetorical strategies employed in a range of mainstream accounts participated in just this kind of cultural agenda.

Indeed, the degree of media attention given over to the Weatherman action may begin to suggest something of the event's place in this national political conversation. In retrospect, the high level of media interest should not be surprising since the Days of Rage provided the mainstream press with much favored images of radical violence. As Todd Gitlin remarks, by this time "the media were giving lurid prominence to the wildest and most cacophonous rhetoric, and broadcasting the most militant, violent, bizarre, and discordant actions" (*World* 182). The Weathermen's embrace of revolutionary rhetoric certainly fit the bill in this regard, as it did in relation to other, earlier scenes of protest violence. This essay will have much to say about how the Days of Rage

was represented as a replay of the events surrounding the Chicago Democratic Convention, but it is also important to keep in mind that media representations of political violence in late 1969 were part of a continuum of press coverage of increasingly radical actions against the War and the state. For example, several commentators have pointed to the student strike at Columbia University in the Spring of 1968 as a key turning point in media treatments of what Tom Hayden once called the move from “symbolic civil disobedience to barricaded resistance” (quoted in Anderson 201). According to Terry Anderson, with Columbia even the “liberal press . . . edged right,” as labels like “extremist” (*New York Times*) came to favor in mainstream media responses to more militant forms of protest (199). This shift continued throughout 1969, and it was against such a well-defined background that images of the Weathermen action took shape. Indeed, Mark Rudd, who had become a media star through his leadership of the well-publicized “Action Faction” at Columbia, would again be cast as a leading player in the Days of Rage, though this latter version of revolution as theatre would garner even less enthusiastic reviews than had been forthcoming in 1968.

Most assuredly, all sides in this rendition of home-grown “revolution” (to use a word favored by both sides in the conflict) were one in the conviction that representations of the action would have much more political significance than the actual violence carried out in Chicago’s streets. Weatherman leaders looked to the media to communicate their message of violent revolution and they delighted in that coverage, no matter how hostile or biased it appeared (Whitehead 92). They aimed to replay the strategies of Chicago 1968 and the “politics of information” and “symbolic” protest developed by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin and used to such great effect in August 1968 (Farber xix, xv, 22). The Weathermen’s self-proclaimed “victory” in Chicago would be chiefly one of images, as spokespersons announced that its representation would “establish our [Weatherman’s] presence in the nation’s mind” and “show that white kids are really ready to fight” (Thomas 212).⁷ In order to achieve such culturally and politically significant ends, most of the struggle would of necessity have to be enacted rhetorically, for the actual events of the Days of Rage turned out to be relatively insignificant. Indeed, the Weathermen’s rather meager performance in the streets of Chicago might better be judged as a playing out of former SDS President Carl Oglesby’s monitory words written only a few months prior to the National Action: “Let me put this . . . bluntly. We are not now free to fight The Revolution except in fantasy” (47). But as Kirkpatrick Sale pointed out in the aptly titled essay, “Myths as Eternal Truths,” the charge of living a fantasy may not have been entirely discomfiting to a group of individuals who, in the summer of 1969, had watched SDS collapse because its leadership had “accepted the overblown image of SDS presented by the media and [had begun] to see themselves as a serious revolutionary force” (quoted in Gitlin, *World* 190). Mark Rudd himself had proclaimed at the tumultuous SDS convention where the Weatherman faction was born that “the Movement needs leadership, the Move-

ment needs symbols, and my name exists as a symbol” (quoted in Sale 577). They offered a revolution of symbols, a revolution of rhetoric; the Days of Rage would be a war waged by Weatherman leaders who had “internalized their own projected image and devised a rhetoric and practice of ferocity” (Gitlin, *World* 191).

One must recognize however, that such images were not simply restricted to the private delusions of a small radical group. Rather, the mainstream press was locked in an intensely reciprocal relationship with the Weathermen and they widely disseminated these images throughout the country. The media offered the public a version of events in Chicago attuned to its own political agenda, often working to rehabilitate beleaguered lines of cultural authority made weak by protests against the War and specifically by events surrounding the “police riots” during the 1968 Chicago Convention. Indeed, a critical element in the media’s representation of the Days of Rage involved the persistent (though not entirely unanimous) association of the action with more generalized cultural fears of domestic revolution. Echoing Weatherman self-fashionings of itself as the vanguard of revolution, the media often rendered the radical group as a potentially very real threat to domestic order and tranquility. In the days immediately prior to the action, the Chicago papers gave prominent play to the impending specter of violent terror in the streets. The arch conservative *Chicago Tribune*,⁸ for instance, offered its readers news of an SDS-Progressive Labor “arms cache” seized by police (Koziol 3), while the bombing of the Haymarket statue honoring police (two days before the action would commence) led to editorials describing the radicals as “young revolutionaries” (“Haymarket Bombing” 24) and a wide dissemination of angry police declarations that the bombing constituted an “obvious declaration of war between the police and SDS and other anarchist groups” (Thomas 196). Similarly, national outlets often began their stories of the action by linking it to domestic and international revolution. Ralph Whitehead, writing in *Commonweal*, introduced the major players in the story by describing John Jacobs (a key Weatherman theoretician) as “Che to Mark’s [Rudd] Fidel” (92). *Newsweek* was even more explicit with this association, declaring that the action “marked the debut of a violent new kind of kamikaze politics designed to bring on yet another Battle of Chicago, and, ultimately, the Second American Revolution” (“The Left” 42).

Such representations, in the national media at least, may have been a reflection of naivety, for as J. Justin Gustainis explains, “reporters, many of whom had been unfamiliar with the Weathermen before Chicago, tended to take the group’s rhetoric at face value and wrote stories greatly exaggerating the revolutionaries’ importance” (95). Yet, it is equally important to recognize that media accounts of the Days of Rage action were consistent with the broader representation of SDS carried out by the media during 1968-69. In the wake of such events as the protests at Columbia University, a portrait of SDS as a dangerous and genuinely threatening group began to take shape in the public consciousness.⁹

Only a few months prior to the Days of Rage, the House Un-American Affairs Committee had issued a report claiming that SDS was “seriously considering the possibility of instituting armed insurrection in this country,” while periodicals like *Reader’s Digest* and *Fortune* magazine promoted the idea that “[t]hese youngsters in SDS are acting out a revolution—not a protest, and not a rebellion, but an honest to God revolution” (quoted in Sale 443; 402n). Indeed, *Life* magazine’s cover story for the week prior to the action explored the prospect of revolutionary violence both here and abroad, and in its October 17 issue there appeared a long piece entitled, “Can It Happen Here?,” which featured such commentary on SDS and other groups of “organized revolutionaries” as “never in the history of this country has a small group, standing outside the pale of conventional power, made such an impact or created such a havoc” (Kern 69).¹⁰

Yet it is precisely at this point of interpreting the Days of Rage as a precursor of domestic terror and revolution that press accounts diverged in a most interesting manner. Some of the more politically conservative outlets continued to maintain throughout their coverage the drumbeat of incipient revolution close at hand. The *Chicago Tribune* followed up its earlier story of a hidden arms cache by reserving space for detailed arrest reports on those apprehended for allegedly transporting incendiary devices, and it gave prominent front page play to a story that action leaders were calling for the “dynamiting of various parts of Chicago” (“Dynamite” 1). In a similar vein, Guy Halverson of the *Christian Science Monitor* would, in the second paragraph of his initial report on the action, speculate that “the violence may presage a new type of hit and run guerilla warfare by the militants, who openly seek alliance with black and third-world revolutionaries” (“Chicago’s” 5). By the end of the action he had seen nothing to change his mind, and the paper concluded its coverage with a long front page article which represented the events of October 8-11 as the forerunner of the “long feared possibility of guerilla warfare” (“Planned Violence” 1). In such representations, the Days of Rage were ominous in their implications.

The more prevalent and perhaps more politically moderate representations, however, took up this theme of revolution only to ultimately render the Weatherman action as a notable failure and one that heralded the end rather than the beginning of domestic revolution. Ostensibly reacting to the small size of the protest crowd and the relative insignificance of the actual property damage inflicted, these accounts judged the action as a failure on every level. As *Time* magazine would entitle its story, the events in Chicago had demonstrated a “Poor Climate for Weathermen” (“Chicago” 24). Yet, in the context of our interrogation of an operative grammar of violence at work in these representations, it is important to recognize that these judgments were not simply straightforward political evaluations of the Weatherman’s potential strength and ability to foment domestic unrest. In a situation where rhetorical gesture could override or even displace physical action, the communicative power of image was again critical.

Thus, the mainstream media gravitated toward a version of the story that deconstructed the Weatherman’s basic strategy of using the action as a kind of

mass advertisement of its own revolutionary toughness. Indeed, one of the primary approaches to the story was to represent the Days of Rage as a futile gesture at revolution, a kind of *playacting* that was fundamentally non-serious in its consequences and its implications. Turning on its head the Weatherman concept of “guerilla theatre” as a primary medium for revolutionary instruction (Kopkind 20), the mainstream media used the theatrical metaphor to reinforce its interpretations of this domestic terrorism as only make-believe. *Newsweek* entitled its story of the action “The Left: Wild in the Streets” (42), a reference to a recent and quite silly film about young people as agents of revolutionary change.¹¹ Similarly, James Glassman’s essay in *The Atlantic* rather derisively speculated that the Weatherman faction had apparently derived their ideas about violence and toughness from “watching too many Sal Mineo movies” (34). Later in his article Glassman described seeing the victims of the street violence: “It is incredible to see. It looks so much like the real thing—a real revolution, with real blood and real violence and a gust of exhilaration” (38). But of course the whole point was that the revolution was not real, it was only pretend, or better, pretense. And the reader was only to conclude, along with Glassman, that “the revolution [such as it was] is over” (40).

Such a trivialization of the Weatherman action seems at first glance to stand in stark contradiction to those accounts proclaiming the advent of domestic revolution. Yet I believe they worked in conjunction, for the more skeptical strategy seems part and parcel of what Todd Gitlin has described as the media’s unflagging efforts during the late 1960s to “elevat[e] moderate alternatives” (*World* 205) to the radicalism represented by SDS and the Weatherman faction. According to Gitlin, many in the press saw the unrest generated by the War as threatening the social order and as creating an imperative to find moderate alternatives to the more dangerous-looking types associated with the Weatherman faction (*World* 205-232).¹² “By accenting the difference between legitimate and illegitimate movements, by elevating the former and disparaging and/or withdrawing attention from the latter,” Gitlin wrote the media “could work to restabilize American politics around a new, antiwar consensus, while remaining responsive to the administration’s definition of the situation both in Vietnam and at home” (*World* 216). It is not without significance therefore that the *Time* magazine coverage of the Days of Rage appeared in an issue with a cautiously sympathetic cover story on the upcoming Moratorium Day actions, while the *Newsweek* cover of that week was entitled “Which Way Out?” and the issue featured several moderate anti-war voices in its exploration of “the range of options open to the U.S. in Vietnam” (“Five Ways” 28).¹³

The representation of the Weatherman faction as engaged in little more than bad play-acting was consistent with this strategy for it rendered them as outside the mainstream and alienated from the “real” politics of the antiwar movement. Indeed, a number of press outlets explicitly emphasized just this notion, highlighting any evidence that the action had, in the words of *Time* magazine,

“widen[ed] the gap between the extremists and the rest of the peace movement” (“Chicago” 24). This was an important theme in many accounts, and the rejection of the action by Chicago’s Black Panther Party as “Custerism” (“The Left” 42) was among the most widely reported aspects of the four-day event. Militant elements of the Movement were rejecting their own (Anderson 329), and the media would make this a prominent part of the story. *The Nation* would even use the Panther Party’s own words as the title for its editorial on the action (“Custeristic” 428), while *Newsweek* would feature the clever pun that the action would be remembered as “Rudd’s last stand” (“The Left” 42). I believe the association of this trope with foolish—and isolated—adventurism is key to understanding the cultural work performed by media representations of the Days of Rage.

Such a separating out of the Weatherman faction from Gitlin’s moderate anti-war alternative can also be seen in the persistent representation of the Chicago action as an event carried out not by dangerous revolutionaries but by misguided and mischievous children. James Glassman’s report for *The Atlantic* described the participants as “very small, pasty-faced, and pimply,” and he characterized their chanting in Lincoln Park as “shouted with the enthusiasm of high school football cheers” (40, 38). *Newsweek*’s version of the same scene separated it as something akin to a “pep rally” carried out by “adolescent adventurers,” who would, when the conflict with police became more serious, be reduced to “sniffled” pleas of, “Don’t hit me,” and cries that they should run home to mommy’s house (“The Left” 42, 44). Likewise, John Kifner characterized the first night’s events as having “the desperate rote feeling of a pep rally for a high-school team deep in a losing streak,” carried out by “very young and scared” Weathermen who “seemed slight and small: a dwarf battalion to set against the beefy police legions” (“Vandals” 24). As the reporter for *Time* magazine recounted it, the property destruction caused by the Weatherman faction was the result of the Chicago police “refus[ing] to play” and the “youngsters” going off and throwing a temper tantrum (“Chicago” 24). These were misbehaving children in need of a good spanking, not dangerous revolutionaries.¹⁴

Such a representation led quite logically to the conclusion offered by several media sources that the impending revolution evoked by popular conceptions of SDS and by more “nervous” treatments of the story like those of the *Chicago Tribune* might not be all that immanent after all. In the words of *Newsweek*, the conclusion to be drawn from the events of October 8-11 would be that “[i]n the end, the politics of unprovoked violence had lost the battle—and perhaps the war” (“The Left” 44). Thus the moderate voice of the Moratorium deserved the cover story because this was the true voice of America’s youth; it was the widely publicized Woodstock of only two months earlier which had shown, or at least had been represented to show, that the kids were ultimately not dangerous, but were quite peaceful. The small (in number and in stature) Weatherman faction was little more than ill-behaved misfits who mostly needed the firm hand of authority and a re-integration into a culture exemplified by the pep rally and the

high school football game. And in a culture riven by generational strife, what conclusion could be more comforting?

To propound this message, to recuperate parental authority by presenting the protesters as misbehaving children and the police as “tough but controlled” (“Chicago” 25) parental surrogates practicing a sixties version of “tough love,” such an end might easily have shaped how the media reported the story. It most probably had something to do with the decision of the *Chicago Tribune* to feature a front page interview with the mother of Brian Flanagan, the man accused—and later acquitted—of the assault on Assistant Corporation Counsel Richard Elrod (Sale 611). The *Tribune* heralded the “shock” of Flanagan’s mother at hearing of her son’s alleged crime,¹⁵ and offered readers the tantalizing suggestion that Brian’s transformation into a “revolutionary” may have been prompted by his leaving home and associating with “the wrong group of kids” (Pratt 1,5). The article even subtly hinted that Brian’s loss of his father at an early age had been a factor in his embrace of a “radical politics” contrary to his mother’s “conservative” positions. And with some mysterious—and presumably Leftist—source now supplanting Mr. Flanagan’s role as the financial supporter of Brian’s activities (readers were told that the father had established a college fund for his son prior to the former’s death), Mrs. Flanagan could only lament that “I don’t understand these kids at all” and declare that “I’m glad his [Brian’s] father is not here to have to hear about this” (Pratt 5). At the very least, like all the rest of these “kids,” what Brian Flanagan most needed was help from an institutionally established authority figure: as Mrs. Flanagan herself cried, “I begged him to see a psychiatrist” (Pratt 5). Lacking this remedy, she could only return to the reinvigorated authority of the police as instruments of patriarchal power, for her ultimate response to the Days of Rage was to conclude that the police “should knock the heads off of every one of them [the protesters]” (Pratt 5).

The reporting of stories like this one about Mrs. Flanagan does little to conceal the socio-political agenda driving much of the mainstream media’s coverage of the Days of Rage. The potential of this story to calm fears of impending social unrest, to reassure readers that the revolution was not at hand and that patriarchal authority would prevail, must surely be part of the explanation for the essential form and wide play of press accounts chronicling the National Action. But I believe a closer examination of this coverage also reveals a more interesting and perhaps even more powerful imperative at work in these accounts. The grammar of violence which I earlier proposed as organizing representations of domestic terrorism is present within these seemingly straightforward accounts. The cultural work performed by these representations is not always as obvious as it appears in Mrs. Flanagan’s call for harsh disciplinary measures; often stories are more subtly shaped by “ritualistic”¹⁶ elements such as mimeticism and exclusionary violence into a “predictable national mythology pitting forces of order against forces of chaos” (Gitlin, *World* 191). It is to these more subterranean components of the story that I now turn.

In its story on the Days of Rage, *Time* magazine published a single photograph of the event,¹⁷ one which purported to show, as the caption put it, “Police Charging Rampaging Radicals” (“Chicago” 25). Just as the caption tends to blur the differences between the cops and the Weatherman faction—“charging” and “rampaging” could easily be substituted for one another with little change in meaning, especially since both can function as either verbs or adjectives—even more does the photo chosen by *Time*’s editors suggest a kind of collapse of difference. The picture shows a central group of five individuals flailing away at one another with night sticks; all are wearing white helmets, light shirts, and dark trousers. Except for the suggestion of a light colored stripe on the pants legs of two individuals—presumably the police officers—it is quite difficult, especially on first glance, to distinguish police officer from radical, duly instituted authority figure from law-breaking Weatherman. The photo becomes especially provocative when one recalls Stuart Hall’s argument that news photos typically and conventionally are offered to readers as the “literal visual transcriptions” of the “real” world, as giving “witness to the *actuality* of the event they represent. . . . News photos operate under a hidden sign marked, ‘this really happened, see for yourself’” (quoted in Gitlin *World* 48n). In this scenario, *Time*’s photograph suggesting that one cannot readily distinguish the good guys from the bad guys would work to destabilize those clear lines of authority and difference so prominent in the story elements already discussed. Instead, the overall effect of the photo would be to endorse the sentiments of Weatherman supporters who described their battle-outfitted compatriots as “our riot squad,” the perfect reproduction of the police riot squads they would engage in street fighting (Thomas 200). Interestingly enough, James Glassman’s essay for *The Atlantic*, a not particularly pro-Chicago police account and one of the few mainstream stories to feature prominently police beatings of arrested protesters, also created this picture of mirrored antagonists. Glassman put into the hands of the Weatherman faction the Chicago policeman’s own weapon of choice—the police riot club—and chose to omit from his rendition of events any reference to the dissidents’ widely reported use of lead pipes, chains, and other less “official” kinds of weapons (38). His is the portrait of two equally armed and outfitted antagonists set to battle, a version not unlike that found in the *New York Times* front page article describing the scene of “police and young demonstrators fenc[ing] with one another, using their clubs like medieval staves” (Kifner, “300” 30).

These representations of embattled equals, nearly indistinguishable from one another as they trade blow for blow is consistent with later versions of the protest scene which describe how the Weathermen’s actions were met by the “police [who] fought back in kind” (Gitlin, *Sixties* 394). But they also suggest those more generalized moments in the history of human cultures when the onset of reciprocal violence seemingly renders the social fabric most vulnerable, when social chaos¹⁸ looms most threateningly. The theorist Rene Girard has identified

this phenomenon as a critical element of the cultural dynamic, for it signals the descent into unchecked conflict, when traditional markers of difference collapse and all are cast into a maelstrom of rivalrous and mimetic violence, where acts of force merely elicit counterblows from the mirror-image rivals.¹⁹ From Girard's perspective, this is also a moment of acute danger because it constitutes a fundamental "crisis of distinctions—that is, a crisis affecting the cultural order. This cultural order is nothing more than a regulated system of distinctions in which the differences among individuals are used to establish their 'identity' and their mutual relationships" (*Violence* 49). Without these markers in place, the mirrored antagonists tend to fuse into the undifferentiated chaos of blows and counterblows, a scene not unlike that evoked by the photograph appearing in *Time* magazine.

Girard's ideas about the erasure of identity during these moments of apparent cultural crisis also provide an interesting gloss on John Kifner's story in the *New York Times* detailing the escape of demonstrators from police apprehension. Kifner described in some detail how armed and armored radicals would suddenly rip off their attire, only to reveal underneath it "collegiate, flowered dresses" or conservative male attire. At this point they simply "melted into the crowd of shoppers," mimicking the latter's appearance and thus making the "radicals" indistinguishable from the law-abiding citizens ("103" 79). The traditional markers would again seem to have been subverted, rendering the violence associated with this situation a logical outcome of this crisis situation.

In a similar fashion, the very common occurrence among media accounts to label the Days of Rage as a "mob" action has links to this Girardian scene of imitative violence, for a mob is first and foremost a phenomenon wherein individual identities are lost and behaviors are driven by the emulation of the acts of others. Thus beneath headlines of a great "Loop Battle" (Koziol and James, "105" 1) between police and demonstrators, a variety of reporters narrated vivid scenes of an "invading mob" ("Cops" 1) let loose in the city, "roaming [its] streets" (Kifner, "Guard" 1) and setting off a "melee" (Cooper and Ward 1) of "indiscriminate street violence" (Halverson "Chicago's" 1). *Newsweek* described the event as a "mob action" with "fanatic[s] . . . running wild in the streets" ("The Left" 42). These are the images of collapsing identities (the *Chicago Tribune* even included an account of a man pretending to be a woman during the Weatherman's "Women's Militia March" ["Cops" 2]), chaotic violence, and the apparent failure of that "regulated system of distinctions" described by Girard. Perhaps the Days of Rage really did portend something genuinely destabilizing and revolutionary.

Of course, the police themselves were never actually described as a mob, even if those earlier suggestions of their mirrored relationship with the Weatherman faction might encourage just such an inference and even if such images played upon popular notions of an out-of-control Chicago Police Department randomly beating people during the 1968 Convention. The media did not represent the scene in Chicago's Gold Coast as akin to Girard's notion of the

“sacrificial crisis,” no matter how strong the apparent similarities. Instead, the more proper analogy would be to compare these news accounts to Girard’s description of the function of rituals in pre-modern cultures, wherein any momentary destabilization of the structures of social difference is secondary to the ultimate goal of re-establishing and renewing difference through a ritualized enactment of the victimage mechanism (*Violence* 89-92). In other words, these media representations always contained a “happy ending,” always moved toward the retrieval and reinvigoration of “legitimate” authority (e.g., the police, parents), in spite of whatever flirtations with cultural chaos they seemed to describe. They represented the apparent collapse of social rule and difference (which, without doubt, was felt acutely by many during the period), but only in the effort to restore it.²⁰

One of the more curious features within media representations of the Days of Rage suggests something of the heuristic power present within the Girardian critical paradigm. I have already mentioned the numerous occasions when media reports described the events in terms of symbols drawn from favored rituals of 1960s middle America—football games, pep rallies, etc. *Newsweek’s* account, for example, used this conceit in an extended fashion for its opening, describing a scene that when viewed from afar seemed “as sinister as a campus rally on the night before the big game,” with “youthful, enthusiastic spectators” singing and dancing, unified around a “colorful pennant” (“The Left” 42). *Newsweek* then undercut this purportedly reassuring tableau with the jarring realization that the figures in the park were bent on violent protest that would challenge the ideological foundations of those middle-American rituals of communal solidarity. But what is even more interesting about the mainstream media’s choice of cultural symbols is that it reproduced much of the same iconography deployed by the Weatherman faction in its own literature. For example, *The Fire Next Time*, a pamphlet produced near the time of the National Action, contains a pair of illustrations showing first a young man throwing a football and then the same (or a similar looking) man in the same throwing motion, but tossing a Molotov cocktail (Jacobs 13). Similarly, in a pro-Weatherman essay on the origins of the faction at the 1969 SDS National Convention, Andrew Kopkind described the heroes of the narrative as a “spirited pep squad” (20).

Obviously, the writer of the *Newsweek* story did not intend to evoke these associations, but I think those who composed the pro-Weatherman literature did; they were clearly intent on overturning the power of these symbols, or more specifically, on usurping them to very different set of cultural and political ends. They crafted a kind of deep irony of protest, using the weapon of irony to destabilize identities and thereby upset those powerful hierarchies that helped sustain the oppression that the protesters opposed. With their own accounts of dangerously deceptive “pep rallies” (the opening scene in the *Newsweek* story quickly shifted from one of harmless youthful energy into “a violent new kind of kamikaze politics designed to bring on yet another Battle of Chicago” [“The Left”

42]) and with radicals nearly indistinguishable from police, the mainstream media would seem to have been an unconscious co-conspirator in this struggle over cultural symbols.

However, in this contest of signifying practices, as in the representation of social chaos discussed earlier, these destabilized symbols make an appearance only as a prelude to their restoration and reinvigoration. The *Newsweek* account did not remain long in its initial mode of potentially corrosive irony, for the article's second paragraph began with the firmly reassuring declaration that the Weatherman's goal of "the Second American Revolution [thus invoking another, even more powerful, cultural symbol] . . . didn't quite work out that way" ("The Left" 42). By the conclusion of the story, the first paragraph's dalliance with the overturning of a system of cultural markers—and the chaos this impends—had been clearly rejected, replaced by a renewed sense of socio-political stability offered to the reader in no uncertain terms. As the last line declared, "In the end, the politics of unprovoked violence had lost the battle—and perhaps the war" ("The Left" 44). Deploying a similar rhetorical strategy, a *Chicago Tribune* editorial entitled "Mad Dogs in the Street," sought to reclaim another contested image by labeling the protesters "pigs," the counter-culture's favored term for the police and other representatives of institutionalized authority and a primary linguistic weapon in the attempt to undercut the legitimacy of "the Establishment." "They [the Weatherman faction] behaved worse than any pig ever could," pronounced the editorial ("Mad Dogs" 18), a strangely ambiguous statement that both reduced their adversaries to a sub-human level and restored to the police the moral high ground by turning the Left's own words back upon themselves.²¹

I believe this contest to control the interpretation of important cultural symbols is fundamental to understanding the nature of the media's coverage of the event. By employing a kind of ritualized version of players and events, the media attempted to win the struggle to control interpretation and restore a sense of calm to a scene that could have been read as the harbinger of a new level of domestic terror. Controlling those representations of middle-American life that the Weatherman action worked to overturn, these accounts established the identity of this new radical group within a reconfigured and renewed calculus of difference; participants in the action were the bad kids, they were no better than animals, and most importantly, they were characters in a ritualized drama which cast them as vanquished by the powerful figures of institutionalized authority who would most certainly prevail.

To be sure, the Weathermen were not altogether unwilling participants; in a profound sense each side in this rhetorical struggle performed as if their antagonists crafted the representations. As several commentators have remarked, the Weathermen fashioned themselves as bolder and more revolutionary than anyone else in the New Left, and they tried to establish "a sense of distance, exclusion, and elitism" (Sale 562-63) from the rest of the Movement (Lader 281). Mimicking the ritualized media representations described above, they took on the mantle

of violence, danger, and threat to the established order. But of course the real struggle was to control the ultimate interpretation of these tropes of otherness, and it was here, as we have seen, that mainstream press and Weatherman accounts diverged dramatically. For the media, the Days of Rage marked an opportunity to assert the restoration of the social order and the violence initiated by the Weathermen would be the end, and not a beginning, to revolutionary cultural unrest.

No such rhetorical project could succeed however without confronting the twin specters of the 1968 “police riot” at the Democratic National Convention and the increasingly manifest nature of American aggression in Southeast Asia. Both circumstances called into question any easy division between good guys and bad guys, both made difficult any clear differentiation between “legitimate” violence exercised by the state and the “illegitimate” violence carried out by its opponents here and abroad. Thus, a central feature of many media accounts was a rewriting of recent American history under the guise of reporting the story of the Days of Rage.

All sides seemed to agree that October 1969 would be a replay of August 1968. According to Todd Gitlin, the Weathermen had, prior to the National Action, “convinced themselves, and aimed to convince everyone else, that the movement was precisely the nightmare which the police had fabricated a year before” (*Sixties* 393). They would consciously mimic events from 1968 as closely as possible, choosing, for instance, to again use Lincoln Park as a primary staging area, and they would employ the on-going Chicago conspiracy trial as an important backdrop to the entire proceedings. The mainstream media too understood that they were re-visiting recent history. Parallels abounded, even in the days leading up to the Action. The *Chicago Tribune* would again offer its readers frightening hints of what the Days of Rage would bring, just as it had published “alarmist articles” about Yippie plans to endanger the city prior to the 1968 Convention (Anderson 220). The *Tribune* wrote of a “hidden arms cache” discovered in early October 1969 (Koziol 3), a kind of story highly reminiscent of those pre-Convention articles about secret “Communist . . . and left-wing” conspiracies to bring down Chicago during the Convention (quoted in Anderson 220). Things had not gone particularly well in 1968 for the city or for the mainstream media, as both had been widely criticized for their performances during that week in August (DeBenedetti 229); the Days of Rage would be their chance to re-tell the story in a very different manner.

And this is precisely what they did. The mainstream media offered the Weatherman action as the final chapter to the “police riot” enacted fourteen months earlier. Beyond the stock renditions of the scene as “another Battle of Chicago” (“The Left” 42), media representations of the story often figured the Weatherman faction in the image of the 1968 rampaging police. Their “savagery” (Cooper and Ward 1) and “senseless rampage” (“Chicago” 24) recalled nationally broadcast images of police violence at the Democratic National Convention. The *Chicago Tribune* was particularly strenuous featuring accounts which

described brutal mobs of “radicals” pulling people from restaurants and beating them with riot-sticks—a scene eerily reminiscent of police attacks on the Hilton Hotel during the convention protests (“Motorists” 1). Continuing in this vein, the *Tribune* would scream in its October 11 headline, “SDS Beats Infiltrator,” and proceed to describe how a swarm of armed radicals attacked an unarmed and defenseless individual who turned out to be a police infiltrator (Mount and Gilbert 1-2). Little wonder then that in its initial coverage of the event the paper would feature on its front page such “eyewitness” comments as, ““This was a lot more frightening, a lot more vicious than anything I saw last year during the Democratic national convention”” (“Motorists”); the whole world was watching again, but this time the picture was in a very different focus.²²

Within this retelling of the 1968 Convention story, the police could resume their role as the embodiment of legitimate authority and force, as the protectors of the city against the “invading mobs of radical revolutionaries” (“Cops” 1). As the banner headline in the *Chicago Tribune* read on the morning after the first night of street violence: “Cops, Troops Guard City.” In almost every account they were represented as “professional” (“The Left” 42) “restrained” (Cooper and Ward 6), and “tough but controlled” (“Chicago” 25), as meting out violence only in measured and justifiable amounts. John Kifner of the *New York Times*, for example, went to some length in pointing out that the most seriously hurt victim of police gunfire had only been shot in self-defense by a cop in fear for his life (“Guard” 1). Later, he would assert in his *New York Times Magazine* piece that in October 1969 “[t]here were not the wild, cursing, brutal, club-swinging [police] charges of the 1969 convention. This time, the roles were reversed: it was a demonstrator ‘riot’” (“Vandals” 27). “Innocent” passersby (who had often been targets of police beatings in 1968) were now pictured in media accounts as coming to aid of police and assisting in the arrests of “radicals” (“Guardsmen” 2A). This recuperation of police authority and the rewriting of the 1968 “police riot” were finally complete when several news outlets brought forward Daniel Walker, the author of the report condemning police actions at the Convention, to pronounce the demonstrators “lunatics” and bestow his “highest praise” for the police (“The Left” 44). The *Chicago Tribune* perhaps said it best with its clever, though probably unintentional, word play on the events of fourteen months earlier: “Daniel Walker Lauds Police Riot Control” (Powers 8). The Days of Rage would indeed be represented as a story “about disorder,” but as Gitlin suggests in the more general context of media accounts of the Movement, “it [the story] . . . turns to the restoration of order under benign official aegis” (*World* 266).

Such an attempt to restore clear lines of demarcation can also be seen in the way several media outlets may have used the Days of Rage to offer a different version of the United States’ ever more troubled situation in Southeast Asia. Casting the demonstrators as a sort of domestic National Liberation Front, these stories described scenes of “hit and run guerilla warfare” (Halverson “Chicago’s” 1) carried out by “insurgents” whose tactics were inspired by Che Guevara (“Cops” 1-2). Weatherman Shin’ya Ono would later write that during their

confrontations with police, “[w]e began to feel the Vietnamese in ourselves” (quoted in Anderson 328), a trope the mainstream media felt equally drawn to and equally capable of exploiting. In various media accounts the Weathermen became domestic versions of the Viet Cong and other Third World “revolutionaries” who did not fight like civilized Westerners, but instead emitted the piercing “war whoops” of “rebel Algerian women” (Kifner, “103” 1, 79)²³ before forming their “hit and run units” and engaging in violent “skirmishes” with police (Koziol and James, “Radicals” 2). These were no mere demonstrations; rather, they were “battles” in a “guerilla war” (“Cops” 1; Koziol and James, “105” 1); yet, in contrast to events in Vietnam, this combat had a clear victor. The Weatherman action had finally been able to “Bring the War Home” as its communiques had promised, but it was the mainstream media which primarily accomplished this feat and it was their version of a vanquished foe that constructed the dominant representation of events.

Andrew McKenna has remarked that, like an ancient deity, the modern “state jealously reserves its exclusive rights to violence,” that in fact, the state exists to disguise the real origins of social conflict and make the citizenry “love in the state [that violence which] they hate in one another and in themselves” (153, 151). Yet like that *Time* magazine photo of nearly mirrored police and “radicals,” like Allen Ginsberg’s remarks upon the connections between Weatherman bombs and those dropped by B-52s, such clear lines of demarcation between “good” and “bad” violence²⁴ are not always readily evident. Certainly in the context of events both domestic and international dominating the American body politic during the years 1968 and 1969, it seems reasonable to ask whether the state had, in the eyes of many, come very close to violating the very function McKenna argues it exists to uphold. How did one in October 1969 distinguish between state-sanctioned violence and the “illegitimate” violence it sought to control forcefully both here and abroad?

I believe that the media representations of the Days of Rage which we have examined give some indication of how a rehabilitation of the state’s exclusive claim to violence might begin to have taken shape. For whatever the excesses of the Weatherman faction during this week of protest (and there were, without doubt, many²⁵), the driving force behind all those harsh media accounts of their behavior was neither the quest for an objective reporting of the news nor a straightforward analysis of the day’s political events. Other imperatives must have shaped these stories, other explanations are needed to account for the persistent representations of the Weatherman faction as not simply another protest group, but as that dangerous Other who must be ritually expelled in order to reestablish order and resolve that “crisis of distinctions” described by Girard. Mainstream media renditions of the demonstrators were, as we have seen, somewhat multiform in nature, but all held in common this charge of otherness; sometimes they represented demonstrators as feeble or cowardly or sometimes as children who had no place in the political discourse of the community.²⁶ At other times demonstrators fulfilled their role as scapegoats under the more obvious

guises of “Mad Dogs,” or as alien “invaders” who, as the *New York Times*’s headline would declare, “Roam Streets” (Kifner, “Guard” 1) like some kind of uncaged animal let loose upon the population of Chicago. They were “shrieking” (Kifner, “103” 79) protesters on a “rampage” (Ward 1); capable of terrible “savagery” (Cooper and Ward 1), they were the irrational, the criminal Other. Within such a system of signification, efforts by the state to eradicate and expel the violence they embodied were represented as legitimate and justified. Any hint of an essential identity between the state’s violence and that of this Other was ultimately rejected,²⁷ hidden within a powerful grammar of violence that worked to redraw the clear lines of difference between good guy and bad guy, between the “legitimate” use of force and those “mindless and meaningless” acts carried out by the “rabble” (“Mad Dogs” 18).

I believe it is precisely in the *meaningfulness* of these representations of the Days of Rage that one can discover something of the cultural work performed by the mainstream media when confronted by instances of domestic political violence. The real “message” of this reporting was the “finality of the law,” the reassertion of a hegemony that would permit no rival claim to the legitimate exercise of political violence (McKenna 147). Such a conclusion, of course, implies that the mainstream media worked directly in support of the state’s interests, an assertion that seems to fly in the face of our long-standing tradition of an independent press and the media’s own claim to a non-politicized “objectivity.” The conclusion in a 1969 story about political protest would seem especially suspect, given the widespread reservations about the war effort expressed by the mainstream media (DeBenedetti 200) that search for “moderate alternatives” (Gitlin, *World* 205) to administration policies described earlier in this paper. But just as Hallin’s study of television coverage of the War warns that critical stories in the press are not necessarily indicators of the media’s abandonment of its traditional role “in the legitimation . . . of political authority” (4), so too does my survey of coverage accorded the Days of Rage suggest that the media supported the interests of the state in fundamental ways that transcended any divisions occasioned by labels like “liberal” or “conservative.”²⁸ Hallin concludes that an “opposition media” never really materialized during the War years and that “the intimate institutional connection between media and government which characterized American journalism before the turbulence of the sixties and seventies . . . persisted more or less unchanged” (19). In October 1969, representations of domestic violence worked to reinforce that “intimate institutional connection,” and they provide an especially clear example of what Gitlin terms the media’s overriding strategy “to guide the whole society toward a stable environment in which the media corporations may flourish” (*World* 282).

It is possible to argue that mainstream media coverage of the Days of Rage constituted a return to the early years of the antiwar movement, when the press broadly denounced protesters as unpatriotic showboats (DeBenedetti 126), and when more conservative outlets like the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily*

News forthrightly declared that the government should respond harshly against any resistance to its laws (Anderson 144). But I believe the representations of domestic political violence on display in October 1969 can tell an even more important story, for they suggest something of the way the media works to resolve the contradictions inherent in any act of political violence that mimics the state's own violent actions (McKenna 158). I have tried to argue here that there is a manner of mythologization²⁹ at work in the telling of the story which tends to conceal and mystify the essential identity between state-sponsored violence and its mimetic twin appearing on the domestic scene. During the Days of Rage, "objective" reporting took second place to a ritualized narrative structure because in ritual one gains access to the mechanisms of sacrificial displacement that aim, above all else, "to keep violence *outside* the community" (Girard, *Violence* 92). With the violence of the Weathermen safely banished to the margins and with the calculus of difference restored through a recuperation of police authority, the threat contained within that *Time* magazine photograph of nearly indistinguishable adversaries locked in mimetic struggle could finally be addressed. Little wonder then that Allen Ginsberg would complain of the fundamental misreading of the Weathermen's "lonely little antirobot bomb" (Colbert 304); it only had meaning within a ritualized system of interpretation that insisted upon an absolute difference between the state's violence and the actions of those who would both oppose and imitate it.

Notes

1. It includes not only the war-making capacities of the state, but also other forms of institutionalized violence, such as the justice system and capital punishment. For more on this connection, see Girard, *Violence*, 23-24.

2. In the aftermath of campus disturbances arising in response to the American intrusion into Cambodia, the FBI had come to brand almost any violent opposition to the War as an example of "the New Left's terrorist philosophy" (quoted in Lader, 266). By early 1971 even left-learning periodicals like the *Partisan Review* would characterize Weatherman actions (especially bombings) as "deliberate terrorism" and warn against their impact on the Movement (Jay, 95).

3. For a critical discussion of how notions of "objectivity" during the Vietnam War years supported the broader ideological purposes of the corporate media and the state, see Hallin 19-23 and Gitlin, *World*, 249-282.

4. At the Weathermen's December 1969 National War Council in Flint, Bernadine Dohrn commended the revolutionary example offered by Manson and his followers (Gustainis, 96), a gesture that made rather reasonable the decision of the *New York Times Magazine* to include in its January 4, 1970 edition feature stories on both Manson and the Weathermen.

5. Todd Gitlin remarks that in the wake of "the Chicago police riot of August 1968, [young reporters for the elite media] were still less inclined to assume that the police were the legitimate enforcers of a reasonable social order" (*World*, 274).

6. Hallin's words refer particularly to those times when the media takes up "those political actors and views which journalists and the political mainstream of the society reject as unworthy of being heard" (21), an element of the political discourse into which the Weatherman faction most readily seemed to fit.

7. Thomas quotes these "leaders" without specific attribution. But Harold Jacobs, editor of the primary sourcebook for Weatherman writings, also confirms these hopes in his editorial notes by concluding that "the Chicago street actions made Weatherman a national force. The media created a Weatherman myth: Weatherman soon became known as the most militant and omnipresent of white revolutionary organizations" (144).

8. Throughout its coverage of the Weatherman action, as in its coverage of the Democratic National Convention, the *Tribune* would be distinguished by its frequently hysterical attacks on the protesters. It ardently supported Daley's get-tough tactics, and, even in the midst of the 1968 police

riots, had declared the demonstrators to be little more than “bearded, dirty, lawless, rabble” (quoted in Anderson, 225).

9. Gitlin points to the Columbia action as a turning point in media representations of SDS and the real beginning of the consistent portrayal of the organization as a dangerous “public bugaboo” (*World*, 189).

10. The article does conclude, however, by judging the prospect of violent political revolution in the United States as relatively small, even while the author admits that the “counter-culture” has had, and will have, “a revolutionary effect” on American society (Kern, 78). Nonetheless, it seems indicative of considerable public anxiety that an iconic mainstream periodical like *Life* would even take up the issue of domestic revolution as part of its cover story.

11. There was another possible reference in this title, for in 1968 Richard Goldstein had written a sympathetic story on Abbie Hoffman (one of the Chicago 8 on trial at the time of the Weatherman action) and entitled it “Wild in the Streets” (Raskin, 148). However, the film would have been far more widely known amongst *Newsweek*’s readership, and is almost certainly the “intended” referent.

12. The distinction between these clean, upstanding types and the unruly “mob” (“Cops,” 1) of Weathermen bears an interesting resemblance to J. Edgar Hoover’s directive issued after the 1968 Convention that FBI agents “publicize ‘the depraved nature and moral looseness of the New Left’” (Anderson, 227).

13. It is of course more than a bit ironic that these “moderate alternatives” should be built upon the expulsion of the Weathermen from participation in the nation’s “legitimate” political conversation. For as Stuart Daniels explains, interviews with Weathermen revealed that many of them had converted to the more radical style of the Weathermen only *after* they had judged their initial work as moderates and reformers as fruitless (445). Likewise, John Kifner, in his feature piece on the Weathermen for the *New York Times Magazine*, even began his essay with the example of Bill Ayers who, only a “couple of years and a lifetime ago,” had founded the Children’s Community, “a small, gentle, widely acclaimed experimental elementary school in Ann Arbor, Mich.” (“Vandals,” 15).

14. Admittedly, some of this emphasis on the youthfulness of the action’s participants was encouraged by the Weatherman’s own strategies, since they were explicitly targeting high school students in their recruiting efforts. Nevertheless, the trope of the “bad child” misbehaving carried much more significance than simply alluding to the Weatherman’s recruitment plans (which were, quite frequently, left out of these accounts).

15. Elrod had actually been injured attempting a head-long tackle of a demonstrator, striking his head against a wall in the effort. The courts found that no assault or attempted-murder (as was charged against Flanagan) ever occurred (Sale, 611).

16. I follow here Girard’s terminology, understanding ritual as a social rite aimed primarily at deflecting and defusing cultural tensions that might otherwise result in an outbreak of unchecked mimetic violence (*Violence*, 121-122).

17. This AP photo also appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and a number of other local dailies.

18. *Reader’s Digest* had gone so far as to use this highly evocative (at least in terms of anthropological theory) term in its title for a rather colorful story on SDS, “SDS: Engineers of Campus Chaos” (October 1968; quoted in Sale, 402n).

19. Girard’s term for this is “sacrificial crisis” (*Violence*, 39).

20. Suggestively, the rather frantic voice of the *Chicago Tribune* would go so far as to describe events in the street as a “carnival of violence” (“Mad Dogs,” 18), thereby unintentionally invoking one of the primary cultural activities which Girard points to as promoting this ritualized re-establishment of order (*Violence*, 121-122).

21. The line is ambiguous because it is also available to a reading that suggests the *Tribune*’s acceptance of “pigs” as a term designating the police. As in any struggle over interpretation, the battles are not easily won.

22. John Kifner reported that as the Weathermen violence escalated in the streets of Chicago, “Frank Sullivan, the police director of public relations, was shouting: ‘Where are the cameras now?’” (“Vandals,” 27).

23. In his later piece for the *New York Times Magazine*, Kifner suggests that these “war whoops” were done in imitation of scenes from the film, *The Battle of Algiers* (“Vandals,” 24), a context absent from most newspaper accounts, including his own.

24. The terms “good” and “bad” violence are from Rene Girard’s description of a continuum of violence that obtains within social bodies such that certain violent acts are seen as “protective” and hence “good” because they are believed to constrain outbreaks of violence that seem only to destabilize structures of difference due to their origins in mimicry and reciprocal violence (*Violence*, 52-53).

25. A reality often remarked upon by elements of the underground press, which saw the action as foolish and counterproductive to the goals of the Movement. Sometimes these accounts even employed some of the same tropes favored by the mainstream press, though to rather different interpretive and political ends (Kifner, “Vandals,” 28).

26. They were thus like Girard’s stereotypical sacrificial victims—the weak and the feeble,

child or elderly. Indeed, all the characteristics I describe here are part of Girard's topography of victimage (*Scapegoat*, 1-15).

27. Of the major print outlets I survey, James Glassman was the most prominent exception to the rule, for he gave considerable space to detailing instances of police brutality.

28. Gitlin argues that "even when there are conflicts of policy between reporters and sources, or reporters and editors, or editors and publishers, these conflicts are played out within a field of terms and premises which does not overstep the hegemonic boundary" (*World*, 263).

29. For Girard, mythologization is the transformation of a text such that the persecutor's point of view determines the way an event is represented and leads to the Other being labeled as guilty of a variety of socially disruptive crimes (*Scapegoat*, 24-44).

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