Postmodern WAR

The New Politics of Conflict

Chris Hables Gray
POSTMODERN WAR
To Carl Harp, cofounder of Men Against Sexism,
Walla Walla Federal Penitentiary. Dead of state terrorism.
Love and rage, Carl.
While the arguments of this book may seem contentious, they actually rest on many agreements. I agree with Noam Chomsky that there is "a persistent fair probability of nuclear war" (1986, p. 39). I agree with Richard Lebow and Janice Stein that we all lost the Cold War (1994), although we did win the one thing that we needed most, time. I agree with many specific things that historians and others have said, and I cite them at length in this book. But there are a number of intellectual dogmas that I don't ascribe to.

I reject simplistic accounts of the Cold War, and of all wars. In the book that follows I challenge much received wisdom. If you disagree, I'd love to hear from you. Write me care of this publisher.

There is one dogma, of the history profession, that I want to challenge here in the Preface, as it is a meta-issue not really addressed in the main text. It has to do with the idea of progress. I believe in progress, of a sort, even though history has its cycles. History does repeat itself, as tragedy and farce, but not always. New things happen. Many historians argue against the idea that history can be progressive; that it is going somewhere. But I disagree with them. There are patterns we can see that clearly show a kind of progress, if we remember that love and cancer both progress, grow, and spread. Technoscience, and the human impact on nature, where we can see progress of some type clearly, is obviously a mixture of healthy growth and something else. War is part of that something else. This is an account of its progress.

It is contested as are all stories. There is a place for stories in academia (Cronon 1992) and you will see that I mainly think in stories. For me, there are stories in everything. For example, I have dedicated this book to Carl Harp. Now there's a story, several stories. There's a story about Carl Harp, the beautiful anarchist activist who formed a Men Against Sexism group in prison and who was eventually murdered by the forces of order, as he called
them. I was fortunate enough to meet Carl a few times, and learned a great deal from him. And there is a story to the dedication itself.

Originally I dedicated this book to another wonderful person, a deciparacida in South America, presumed long dead in Argentina's Dirty War. But then, years later as this book was in press, I discovered he had recently come out of hiding in exile and that he had survived. So, a happy ending, in part. Just as war has its happy moments, especially in the stories of those who seek to end it.

The nature of these forces who seek to wage peace is an important part of the story of our present. The incredible mobilizations of women in countries as different as South Africa and Bosnia is one crucial example, and another happy story in the larger sad one of war (Lederer, 1995). I discuss peace activism at length towards the end of this book because it is part of the war story, as much as the effectiveness of machine guns or the madness of mutually assured destruction. There are many stories.

Science, which has offered us so many difficult tests in the area of war, also offers us one of these happy stories, hope in the power of life. Whether or not Rock 84001 really has signs of ancient life from Mars, the hope it offers is real. We might find life on other planets. We might have already. We might make peace on our planet. Peace could be breaking out all over. There is always hope, where there is life. Life writes stories just by living. Humans have formalized this, of course. Hence this book. I hope it holds your attention.

LOVE AND RAGE,
CHRIS HABLES GRAY, 8/16/96
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