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To Turn Over: Of *Surge* and *Insurgent*, by way of *Cunning*, *Restoration*, *Millennium*, and *Lost*

I do not wish to be *cunning* right now, and so before I get to *surge* and *insurgent*, I'd like to revisit the premises underlying this column. It has been written that, the term *cunning* implies secret purpose. It contrasts with the straightforward, simple, direct approach much as wit contrasts with direct proof. Consequently, it has nothing in common with methods of persuasion, of self-interest or of force, but a great deal with deceit, which also conceals its purpose. It is by itself a form of deceit, when it is completed.¹ This is not to denounce *cunning* altogether but instead to announce self-reflection as a useful opposition to a too *cunning* regime.

My premise has been that we are experiencing a revolution of Order, a revolution led not by rabble-rousers or star-gazers but by representatives of the Sun. A further premise has been that this revolution in particular operates through language: the tactical significance of etymology grows in response to a hegemonic strategy of policing language and redefining consensus through carefully generated *buzz*. The second premise led to a project of etymologically and poetically examining words swept up in this revolution, and searching for useful alternatives for words beyond repair.² The response to both premises led to this column, for I heard in many voices a basic abhorrence that a movement of the Right could ever be called a *revolution*, and an insistence upon the 17th-century term *restoration* or the 20th-century term, *rollback*.

Restoration comes from the Latin, *restaurare* (also the root of *restaurant*, a place where one finds refreshment.) Ever since the term was used for the *restoration* of Charles II in England in 1660, *restoration* has meant the reinstatement of a monarchy. The Bourbon Restoration in 1814 stamped the word suitable for general use. Insofar as the Bush regime is *dynastic* [from *dynastes*, adj., Greek: a hereditary ruler] *restoration* is at play. But on the whole, the neo-conservative movement has been at work establishing a completely novel set of social relations (a New World Order as the first Bush put it) so

¹ Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) (238)

² For more on this, see Regarding Virus F and Virus D in *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, Fall 2005.

why shouldn't we call it a revolution?

Etymologically, *revolution* comes from the Latin *volutare* [+ *re* (prefix)] to mean to roll-again, to turn over. Physically, *revolution* connotes a cyclical movement, a pursuance of a path around a center – hence *rollback* is but one-half of a wider all-encompassing movement. Before 1789, *revolution* simply meant an overturning of the current order and the establishment of a new regime. The overthrow of the Rump Parliament in 1660 before the Restoration of Charles II was called *arevolution*, as was the expulsion of James II in 1668 and the rise to power of William and Mary. Through 1776 and 1789, *revolution* became connected to an idea of linear historical progression, a forward movement towards greater and greater liberty. By the 20th century, as the zeros of 2000 loomed ever larger, *revolution* came to completely subsume the concept of *millennium*.

Written with a small *m*, *millennium* simply means one thousand years; the proper noun implies a certain interpretation of the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse of John,³ which speaks of one thousand years of the reign of Christ. Proponents of the literal prophecy of Christ's reign-to-come were known as *Millennarians*, and they exercised a trademark upon the utopian sensibility in the West until the Age of Exploration. Etymology makes apparent a hierarchy of *rebellion* [re- *bellare*, v., Latin: to make war again; armed resistance against generals or a ruler] in which *Revolution* indicates the noble practice of

³ The thousand years are mentioned throughout Chapter 20. Here follow the opening lines:

1. *And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*
 2. *And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,*
 3. *And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that she should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. [...]*
- [<http://www.plainbible.com/Revelation.htm>]

For some very interesting perspectives on millennium, the relationship between millenarianism and radical movements, and the collision of millenarian visions (e.g. Cortes and the Second Coming of Christ with Moctezuma and Ce Acatl, the return of Quetzalcoatl) see Colin Dickey, "Botched Millenniums" in Antebi, Nicole with Colin Dickey and Robbie Herbst. *Failure: Experiments in Aesthetics and Social Practices*. (Los Angeles: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press, 2007) (13-24)

new *Millennarians* – serious professionals (or people spontaneously ignited by mysteriously Providential – historical forces –) intent on completely changing the entire constellation of sovereignty. An incipient or limited rebellion – is known by the lesser term *insurrection*, that is, the uprising of an *insurgent*. One supporting reference for *insurrection* makes the hierarchy clear: Insurrections are generally wrong; revolutions are always right. ⁴

Revolutionary: **A.** adj., Pertaining to or connected with, characterized by, of the nature of, revolution. **B.** sb, One who takes part in a revolution.

Insurrectionary: adj., Addicted to insurrection.

Because we are in the midst of a world revolution that cunningly does not call itself one, resistance cannot be called *counter-revolution* but is instead characterized by the lesser term, *insurrection*, or in its protraction, *insurgency*.

So, what then does it mean to fight *insurgency* with *surge*? I'm curious to know what you, dear Reader, may think here, because such bright conjuring leaves me dazzled. Could *surge* really mean that the neo-cons have given up on – liberation, – on history, on conquest; that the Army of the Willing, while definitely not *vanquished* [from *vincere*, v., Latin: to conquer –] is in fact *lost*?

Lost [adj., past participle of *los*, v., Old Norse, – breaking up of the ranks of the army –] primarily means – that which has perished or been destroyed, ruined, especially morally or spiritually – : that is not what I mean here. *Secondarily lost* means – of a person, an animal or a ship: Having gone astray, having lost his or its way – ; and is that not an implication of *surge* [from *surgere*, v., Latin, – to rise –] *Surge*: primarily, to issue as a stream from its source, from underground; but also to rise and fall and toss on waves, to ride waves; to rise in great waves or billows; to swell or heave with great force, as a wave. *A surging ship* is essentially out of control, released from certainty, navigating while *overwhelmed*.

Overwhelm, [over + *whelm*, v., Middle English: to roll –]: to inundate; to overpower with emotion; to crush, to bury; to turn upside down, *to turn over*.

⁴ Attributed to an English author named Buckle in *Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 3rd Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955) (1020)