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Varma, Saiba

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BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

WILEY

THE DOCTOR AND MRS. A

Sarah Pinto

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If archival and ethnographic encounters are ethical encounters, what kind of ethical encounters are they? How we do history and ethnography now, in this moment of estrangement and suspension from fieldsites and archives? This essay responds to these questions by reflecting on Sarah Pinto's *The Doctor and Mrs. A*. (2020) alongside other recent works in feminist history and anthropology, such as Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives*, *Beautiful Experiments* (2019).[1] This essay does not compare these two works, given the impossibility of doing justice to the specificities of local moral worlds, place, and intellectual traditions (theories of Black feminist life[2] and feminist South Asian history) from which they emerge, but at moments it makes their braiding visible.

Though neither text is explicitly *about* historical or ethnographic methods, they carry invaluable ethical and methodological lessons for our contemporary moment. Both set up conversations about what counts as a research archive and how to engage it (or when to leave it behind), what are the stories that need to be told, who are the protagonists of those stories, and what analysis (both scholarly and psychoanalytic) itself looks like.

Both *Wayward Lives* and *The Doctor and Mrs. A* offer imaginative leaps forward in response to these questions. It goes without saying that imaginative leaps can be risky, and while perhaps taking risks might feel counterintuitive one year into a world-altering pandemic, this is precisely what these texts authorize us to do as historians and anthropologists. As works about the stakes of ethics and ethical lives, of doing and telling history otherwise, both open up *counter ethical* gestures in the disciplines of anthropology and history.

The archive is full of surprises

An engrossing and poignant work regardless of its moment of arrival, *The Doctor and Mrs. A*. happens to be a perfect offering now, when our social and ethical worlds—including worlds of research—are crumbling. How, and in what shape, will they be rebuilt? Though written before the onset of covid-19, Pinto and Hartman remake an anthropologically-inflected history or a historically-inflected anthropology by attending to those disciplines' "curves and edges," to borrow Pinto's phrase. Building on feminist inquiries and destabilizations of the "archive," both call for an engagement with *counter-archival* practices: This can mean creating or assembling your own archive when recovery is impossible (Hartman, 2007); embracing methods and materials that might seem obscure, esoteric, or unwieldy; or it could mean offering unconventional or experimental readings of those materials by drawing on reverie, poetry, or other imaginaries (cf. Arondekar, 2009; Burton, 2003; Cifor & Wood, 2017; Hunt, 2016; Narayan, 2015; Stoler, 2008; Visweswaran, 1994, to name just a few). Both *Wayward Lives* and *The Doctor and Mrs. A*. boldly exceed the empirical material at hand—a psychoanalyst's case histories in Pinto's case and official or legal documents in Hartman's case. Instead, fantasy, literature, myth, lyricism, and art fertilize these texts, producing richness and depth where a more conventional archival or ethnographic method would have revealed closure (the psychoanalytic or clinical gaze in Pinto) or violence (White lawmakers criminalizing nonconjugal desires and living in Hartman).

The Doctor and Mrs. A takes as its point of departure a book called *Objective Method of Dream Interpretation: Derived from Researches in the Oriental Reminiscence State*, a book self-published by an Indian psychoanalyst named Dr. Dev Satya Nand between 1944 and 1947. *Objective Method*, which contains Mrs. A's case history, did not emerge out of Pinto's archival research in Bangalore, India. She stumbled on it. While working on a project on the

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history of hysteria in India, Pinto found herself struggling with the sparse content of case files in the archives of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), India's premier psychiatric hospital. As she writes, "I found it is *exceedingly* difficult, almost impossible, to treat medical archives as my discipline seemed to want me to do, to enflesh them into stories and description" (Pinto, 2020, p. 32). As Hartman similarly puts it in regard to her archival search into young Black women escaping plantation life by migrating to northern cities in the early twentieth century, "the surveys and sociological pictures left me cold. These photographs never grasped the beautiful struggle to survive, glimpsed the alternative modes of life, or illuminated the mutual aid and communal wealth of the slum" (Hartman, 2019, pp. 19–20). A psychiatrist at NIMHANS offers Pinto a way out of this conundrum. One day, he hands Pinto *Objective Method*, promising it will "challenge everything you think you know about Indian women" (Pinto, 2020, p. 33). *Objective Method* is dense, difficult to understand, and obscure, receiving only a small (and mostly unfavorable) reception when it was published. But as Pinto dives in, the book "'giv[e]' so much more, and with much greater immediacy, than those of the cryptic yet apparently more 'private' case files" in the official archive (Pinto, 2020 pp. 33–34). *Objective Method ends up being more illustrative about a certain class of Indian women in the mid-20th century than hundreds of hospital case files.*

As with *Wayward Lives*, the lesson here is not only a loosening of what counts as the archive but also, a reminder (and permission) to put the archive *away* to embrace a counter-narrative and a counter-archive, one liberated from the judgment and classificatory logics of hospital psychiatry or carceral regimes of care. These are methodologically innovative books, about imaginative women occluded in the archive. Both celebrate young women dreaming boldly and living in unconventional, experimental social arrangements. In this sense, both are works of and about the imagination. Knowing when to put the archive away can be immensely rewarding. In the archive's wake, creativity and uncertainty emerge as feminist methods. Feminist historians and anthropologists have long been attuned to the silences, gaps, and aporias of the archive and to the unsaid and unspoken, asking not only what is missing or left unsaid, but why it is so (cf. Gal, 1991; Malhotra & Rowe, 2013; Visweswaran, 1994; Zengin, 2020). But until recently, these aporias were left untouched. They were to be remarked upon, observed, perhaps even mourned, but to fill them with the scholar's imagination was a form of epistemological violence. The very desire to excavate those voices was itself, Spivak (1988) taught us, a manifestation of our gluttonous appetites, continuing evidence of the coloniality of our structures of knowing. After all, the issue was not that the subaltern subject wasn't speaking, but that we, the reader-subject, were unable to meaningfully hear what she had to say, even as we were determined to excavate her voice. Yet *The Doctor and Mrs. A* presents a slightly different puzzle. Rather than turn on the politics of recognition—in which the demand to narrate a self by law, medicine or other regimes of truth comes up against the impossibility of doing so—in *The Doctor and Mrs. A.*, we are confronted with someone (markedly *not* a subaltern) who *has* a story to tell. What was she possibly thinking and talking about?

Both *The Doctor and Mrs. A.* and *Wayward Lives* offer us a new way to approach the archive's aporias, although they do so differently. They give us permission to fill in the gaps—but more importantly, to color outside the lines and engage the archive's contents in a speculative and subjunctive mode. As Hartman puts it, "I have pressed at the limits of the case file and the document, *speculated about what might have been*, *imagined* the things whispered in dark bedrooms, and *amplified* moments of withholding, escape and possibility, moments when the visions and dreams of the wayward seemed possible" (my emphasis, Hartman, 2019, p. xv). Both Hartman and Pinto reach for a fictive imagination in response to the gaps in the archive.[3] Like searching for the tenuous shoots of a newly planted seed, attending to the counter-archive requires a certain attunement. For Hartman, this attention means bracketing the plethora of court documents, investigative reports by social workers, and parole office reports that mark the *official archive*. In *The Doctor and Mrs. A*, there is a similar, deliberate eclipsing of the violence of Partition and Satya Nand's own analytic moves so that we may travel alongside Satya Nand and Mrs. A, as well as Mrs. A's daydreams. This is not a biography of *an Indian psychoanalyst, nor about a certain innovative method of psychoanalysis.* Even the book's title, *The Doctor and Mrs. A.* exemplifies the counter-ethical, challenging us to occupy a different grammar of listening and humming with archival others like Mrs A. Even Satya Nand, the "author," becomes an archival curio.

Whose stories?

The Doctor and Mrs. A explores how people unearth diverse materials from the past and present and use them to assemble possible futures. The book's two central figures—Dr. Dev Satya Nand, the psychoanalyst and one of his analysands, whom we only know as Mrs. A—are engaged in an experimental form of psychoanalysis in the 1940s, in pre-Partition India. In *Objective Method*, Satya Nand's aim was not to create a more authentically "Indian" psychoanalysis but to develop a more "objective" and universal science based on South Asian theories of mind (Pinto, 2020, p. 14). Though this ambition in itself did not necessarily distinguish Satya Nand from other European-trained non-European psychoanalysts working at the time, the book is distinctive. Instead of analyzing dreams like Freud, Satya Nand focused on daydreams produced while his analysands were in a deep meditative state (*samadhi*). Contra what he described as Freud's "unscientific" method of free association, Satya Nand developed a complex "correlative" method, composed of "dream smudges,' which might break a person's life experiences into segments they could associate with the themes generated by the [day]dream" (Pinto, 2020, p. 11), which were then reorganized into "long chains of association" including "mythic plot points in epic stretches" (Pinto, 2020, p. 87). If it sounds complicated, it is. Much of *Objective Method* is heavy going, marred by Satya Nand's writing, "at once brilliant and obfuscating, his syntax often difficult and strange" (Pinto, 2020, p. 10). Though the long passages of complex associations are certainly "where we are meant to look" (Pinto, 2020, p. 87), Pinto deftly guides our attention elsewhere, namely, to the conversations between Satya Nand and Mrs. A.

One of the intriguing experimental dimensions of Satya Nand's objective method is that he offered his analysands the opportunity to write rebuttals to his interpretations, a process that he argued led to a more rigorous science. Mrs. A, one of three analysands whose case histories make up *Objective Method*, is very present in the text. And, to restate, she has her own story to tell. Unlike most other psychoanalytic subjects, Mrs. A. is not a patient per se, but a coproducer of text and interpretation, even though she has "no claim for authorship" (p. 7) over it. Mrs. A's voice is interspersed throughout *Objective Method*, and in many cases, her words seem preserved close to how she said them. She and Satya Nand are friends, interlocutors, mostly equals. Through their back and forth, Mrs. A. and Satya Nand collaboratively interpret the dilemmas she is facing, resulting in an "imaginative, experimental, reflective" exercise of analysis (p. 8). To his credit, "Satya Nand noticed, and appears to have delighted in, Mrs. A's smart rebuttals…and her political acumen" (p. 6). Meanwhile, Mrs. A's rebuttals are not always stinging rejections of Satya Nand's interpretations. Rather than a conventional tug of power and resistance, *The Doctor and Mrs. A*. celebrates the pleasures of an unfolding, freewheeling conversation.

This conversation demands reflection on another genre of conversation, ethnography. Rather than ethnography as a form of analysis (cf. Borneman, 2011), in Satya Nand and Mrs. A's hands, analysis becomes a form of ethnography. Their back and forth is not only reminiscent of fieldwork encounters, but Satya Nand's dialogical approach to analysis itself becomes a possible model for ethnography. We know our interlocutors speak back, but what if their interpretative contributions were entextualized, marked, and became part of our analyses? Could that not be one small way of dismantling the coloniality of knowledge that marks our work? Acknowledging our indebtedness to others' insights might allow us to maintain accountability to our interlocutors, and make visible usually invisible contributions. *The Doctor and Mrs. A. had me fantasizing about ethnography as palimpsest*. Though I am not claiming that the coloniality of our disciplinary knowledge can be done away with through representational gestures alone, ethnographic representation can be *one* site of political intervention. Further, Mrs. A's textual presence in *Objective Method* is more than a stylistic or representational intervention alone; it signals the profoundly recursive, collaborative, and dialogical nature of psychoanalytic and ethnographic knowledge. Put simply, *The Doctor and Mrs. A*. could very well have been just a story about "the doctor," but in Pinto's hands, it becomes a story about the interaction between Satya Nand and Mrs. A, with Mrs. A's magnetic force gradually edging out Satya Nand's expertise. Through the course of the analysis, Mrs. A reflects on her future, on how a respectable upper-class woman can maintain

an intellectual and political life, and how the shape of that life might be in service of a postindependence India. Mrs. A daydreams, and Satya Nand, Pinto, and the reader dream alongside her.

The period of analysis unfolds sometime in the mid to late 1940s in north India (the exact dates are unspecified by Satya Nand). The moon of the British empire is waning, and aspirations for a new nation-state are waxing. Mrs. A. is a privileged, educated, upper-class and upper-caste young housewife, struggling to balance the demands of conjugality with her own political aspirations. Much like the protagonists in *Wayward Lives*, Mrs. A's daydreams weave together ethical claims, political aspirations, and erotic desires. When Satya Nand and Mrs. A begin their "little, intimate performances" (Pinto, 2020, p. 8) of analysis, Mrs. A. has been married for 3 years, an arrangement necessitated by a decline of her family's fortunes. The marriage is now on the rocks. Despite her privilege, Satya Nand describes her as "unsettled, ill at ease in her new home, in what should have been a comfortable, secure life during a heady time" (Pinto, 2020, p. 41). Mrs. A dreams of reigniting her passion for social work, activism (she is an ardent socialist), art, and theater—all of which were extremely significant to her before marriage, yet which she had to give up as a consequence of marriage. Pinto puts it perfectly: "the sum of all the losses must have felt vast" (Pinto, 2020, p. 45).

As in Pinto's other work, themes of gendered subjectivities, sexuality, marriage, and ethics—and the attendant existential questions they raise about identity, recognition, belonging, and meaning—are also resonant here. But where Pinto's previous ethnography, *Daughters of Parvati*, attended to the fallouts of kinship and medicine, noticing where they diverged or multiplied harm for women experiencing mental illness in north India, here, the possibilities of both kinship and medicine are different (Pinto, 2014). Mrs. A is not unwell, and unlike other stories of medicine, cure and its failings are not the main concerns. Although a "deep tone of anxiety" (in Satya Nand's words) (Pinto, 2020, p. 43) undergird their encounters, Mrs. A finds openings, turnings, and flights. For example, though there are many ways that patriarchal and patrilineal marriage obstruct Mrs. A's aspirations, her dreams remain ambitious, exemplifying how "revolutionary ideals [can] animate ordinary lives" (Hartman, 2019, p. xv).

Imaginative flights

For example, in Chapter One, *Singularity and Uncertainty: Draupadi*, we learn about the constraints that marriage has brought to Mrs. A's life, but we also find that nonconjugal, multiconjugal, and homosexual desire overlay and blur within the space of conjugality. Mrs. A. has shimmering erotic connections with both men and women, and both sexuality and marriage are flexible enough to accommodate these multiple lines of desire. Unlike the protagonists of *Wayward Lives*, Mrs. A. is not subject to legal or moral censure. Instead, she is able to enjoy the quietly subversive nature of these attachments, and they seep into "conjugality at every turn" (Pinto, 2020, p. 61). What we see is less a picture of "insides and outsides, threat versus containment, security versus abandonment" (Pinto, 2020, p. 68), or heterosexuality versus homosexuality, and more domestic scenes and social arrangements that turn out to be more capacious than they seem, offering many corners for desire and play.
Analysis too, becomes another scene of play.

In *The Doctor and Mrs. A*, we leave behind NIMHANS' official archive and the strange archival document that is *Objective Method*, in favor of dwelling in Mrs. A's imaginative archive. Empiricism gives way to myth. Instead of solely giving us the contextualizing gestures we might expect to locate Mrs. A's life, such as other social histories of Indian women in the 1940s, Pinto offers us, instead, mythic heroines. Pinto organizes each chapter of *The Doctor and Mrs. A*. around a mythic heroine that figures prominently in Mrs. A's daydreams. From a book about a conversation, we swim in a conversation about a daydream, and then from a daydream, we slip into myth.

The heroines—Draupadi, Shakuntala, and Ahalya—of Mrs. A's daydreams each reflect a different gendered and situated ethic. They also do ancestral work as pre-existing cultural and gendered repertoires for thinking through the dilemmas Mrs. A is experiencing. The myths also act as portals, offering unexpected openings through those dilemmas. Though the anthropology of ethics has been largely focused on "ethics in the making," that is, ethical practice grounded in everyday life, the dive into a mythic imagination (and particularly of a non-European genealogy) feels fresh. Old myths yield new futures. The mythic imprints

offered here are ordinary or everyday in the sense that they are well known among people versed in Hindu traditions, but they are also abstract and mysterious. They are part of an ethical repertoire, the "things people do, say, think, feel…that lean toward a purpose, goal, or ideal" (Pinto, 2020, p. 177). And at the same time, as Pinto shows, myths, too, have their limits.

For example, in her daydreams about the mythic heroine Draupadi of the epic story Mahabharata, Mrs. A uncovers a surprising "counter-ethical" precedent. As the story is usually told, Draupadi is a victim of gendered suffering, betrayed by one of her (five) husbands, who gambles her away in a game of dice that has cosmological effects. Though most accounts of Draupadi's story focus on the betrayal of the ethic of marital protection inaugurated by the game of dice (which lead to her almost being raped), Mrs. A tells the story differently, In her retelling, the part of the myth that has the most resonance comes *after* Draupadi and her husbands have lost everything and are exiled to the forest. While exiled, Mrs. A recalls, Draupadi "went to a few villages and reconverted them to the Cooperative Movement and improved their lot so much that other villages also came to them for help, and then more and more…" (Pinto, 2020, p. 51). In Draupadi, Mrs. A finds "socialism's progenitrix" (Pinto, 2020, p. 52). Draupadi represents for her a way of imagining "not only a livable life but also a life committed to social wellbeing" (Pinto, 2020, p. 75), a theme deeply resonant with decolonial social movements of Mrs. A's time, namely Gandhi's vision for a postindependent, decentralized India to be organized around collectively organized and self-sufficient (*swaraj*) villages.[4] The myth of Draupadi is also ethically transformative for Mrs. A. From an initially naïve, prejudicial view of the "village" as a place of unbridled, dangerous, and unruly sexuality, through dwelling with the story and its implications more deeply, she comes to embrace "the village" as necessary both for her and India's transformation and growth. Thus, it is in imagining the village--standing in here for a space of uncertainty and the unknown--that Mrs. A finds how "a liberating erotic might conjoin with social transformation and both with national independence and personal fulfillment" (Pinto, 2020, p. 71). Struggling against the given confines of marriage and the emplacement it demands of women in the home, Mrs. A finds a counter-ethic, built on finding pleasure and political possibility in uncertainty.

Inspired by Draupadi (and Shakuntala in Chapter Two), Mrs. A, thus charts a possible path for herself, one that does not forgo the stability of marriage, but which allows her to reconnect with her passion for socialist development. Draupadi shows Mrs. A that "Draupadi might be a good wife, but…that a good wife could go to the village" (Pinto, 2020, p. 56). Mrs. A does not need to invent a new path for herself; these are always already existing ways to be a woman, wife, and person. At the same time, because these are mythic figures and narratives, they exceed historical and temporal specificity. They tap into what is more existential and universal about Mrs. A's desires: To want stability and adventure at the same time, to be reassured and soothed that others have wanted this too, and yet to want to leave your own mark.

Counter-ethical bubbles

In *Objective Method*, social life, a postcolonial nation, psychoanalysis, and gendered ideals are all being reimagined. As the imaginations of Satya Nand and Mrs. A are running wild, Pinto encourages anthropologists, too, to run wild too. Her call to anthropologists of ethics is to go beyond discussions of ethical variability—that is, how ethical orientation shifts in different cultural contexts—to attend to the category of the ethical itself. For example, she shows how attending to marriage as an ethic can illuminate how normative social arrangements contain their own derangements and rearrangements (Povinelli, 2014). In Chapters Two and Three, the epics demonstrate how moral systems intended to redress injustice and violence sometimes fail. Yet, in their failure, these systems can open possibilities for life otherwise. Chapter Three, *Unconsciousness and Voice: Ahalya*, describes how Ahalya is cursed for a murky moral "violation" (lust/adultery, into which she was possibly tricked or forced) and as a punishment is turned into stone. The ambiguous nature of Ahalya's crime casts the punishment itself in doubt. Was the punishment a form of justice enacted or one which itself produced injustice? Though many versions of the story exist, most end with Ahalya being redeemed and returned to her human state through an act of generosity by the god, Rama. But in Mrs. A's version, relief is found not in Ahalya's return to a

human state, but in her habitation as stone. In other words, within the story's ethic—the righting of a wrong—we find a counter-ethic, in which freedom is found not by being righted by a moral order that has already proven itself unjust, but rather in being illegible to it, in living as a “stone,” and in not “trying to be visible to those who will not see” (Pinto, 2020, p. 116). In the faraway (from Mrs. A) world of militarized and racialized surveillance technologies, we could think of this as technologies that help migrant border-crossers avoid being tracked (that is, the power of remaining illegible rather than transparent to imperialistic border regimes).[5] Or, following J. Jack Halbertstam's (2011) argument in *The Queer Art of Failure*, turning to stone could be a way to refuse legibility within hegemonic frameworks of desire.

The counter-ethical, like Michael Warner's (2005) notion of the counter-public, is the product of frictive encounters, pressure points, and edges that push against the public (see also Tsing, 2005). Pinto also offers the mathematical image of the ethic as an asymptote, which is blocked from reaching the *x*-axis by *something* (the counter-ethic). The counter-ethic is that *something* that prevents the ethic's own completion: its potentiality lies *in*, not *in spite of*, the way it “gives form to the claims and limitations” of the ethic (Pinto, 2020, p. 181). We see this with Mrs. A's marriage, the troubled status of notions of justice and injustice in the myths, and in Satya Nand's experiment itself, where Mrs. A's corrections modulate Satya Nand's authoritative voice. At one point, Pinto describes the counter ethical as a “pocket of air…that bubble[s] precisely from the infrastructure of the ethic” (Pinto, 2020, p. 181). In my work, I find the ethical/counter-ethical relation present in the ways that Indian militarized care demands that Kashmiri Muslims embody gratitude and obeisance, but these demands always already assume that Kashmiris will fail this performance of deservingness (Varma, 2020). Yet, in that case, the impossibility of fulfilling the ethic and the presence of the counter-ethic (in the form of refusing to comply with the demand or faking it) is already taken for granted by Indian state forces. As such, the failure to adequately perform an ethic becomes the engine for more intervention, an example of the “strange, twisting, shape-shifting qualities of different sorts of power” that Pinto describes (Pinto, 2020, p. 185). The counter-ethical is not necessarily subaltern, romanticized resistance, nor does it necessarily bend towards justice, Pinto cautions. Rather, it demands that we attend to how power finds a way to reconstitute itself, even through failure or refusal.

Rather than view ethics as singular, the counter-ethical draws our attention to how ethics contain “multiple kinds of limit, failure, ending, and obstruction” (Pinto, 2020, p. 192) within them.

The affected reader-subject

At the same time, the counter-ethical is not necessarily a space of opposition. It is a presence, much like Mrs. A, that emerges from the ethic itself. Here, I extend the concept of counter-ethic to reflect, in conclusion, not just about analysis and Mrs. A's place within it, but to think about Hartman and Pinto's place within the archive. These works are pressed from encounters with the archive, but they are not entirely of them. These books force us to reckon with the archive and its violences, the ways they produce or foreclose certain kinds of knowledge, but they are not constrained by those limits. They offer flights, openings, turnings. They enact the imaginative capacities of their interlocutors through their own fantastic gestures, which transport us from scene to scene: from histories of the archive and its counter to the imaginations that may have lived within or beyond it, which require not just historical or ethnographic skills, but fictive or mythic imaginations too.

I, too, have taken inspiration from their approach, reading Mrs. A through Pinto through Hartman. And now, perhaps I can offer one final imaginative half-step, that of the affected reader-subject, who is being called upon to tell a different kind of research story, and who has also been shown a way (many ways).

Reading *The Doctor and Mrs. A.* in this contemporary moment requires not just learning, but letting go. At first, I struggled to familiarize myself with Satya Nand and Mrs. A's small moment of creativity and experimentation in the present: the unstoppable juggernaut of Brahmanical Hindu supremacy in contemporary India, marked by the 1-year anniversary of settler colonial rule cemented in occupied Kashmir, as well as the building of a Hindu temple for the god Rama on the site of a destroyed 16th-century mosque. Against the unbearable weight of these current events, I struggled to hold onto the possibility of an otherwise that these texts exemplify. On a bad day, I mourned the loss of Mrs. A. and the moment of possibility she represented. On a bad day, I became Spivak's hungry-ghost scholar, asking: was she real? Did

she live in Lahore or Amritsar (which side of the border)? Did she rediscover her passions for performance, dance, politics? What did her dreams *add up* to?

On a good day, I pull away from these questions and their attendant demands for accumulation and fixity. I let Mrs. A be, like the heroines she loved, peaceful in her mysterious being. On a good day, I feel bolstered to search for other imaginations, other micro revolts, and even if I can't see them, to find some comfort in the logic of the ethic and its counter, which tells me that those moments of rebellions and revolts are there, in different registers that might be immediately evident. On a good day, I feel encouraged to parse the world anew, to push the boundaries, take a breath and be brave.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Resonance implies “the intensification and enriching of a musical tone by supplementary vibration” (*OED*).

[2] Hartman's book must also be situated in the debate in US Black studies between (masculinist) Afro-pessimists and (feminist) Black life scholars (for lack of a better term). My thanks to Kalindi Vora for this point.

[3] The fictive is no less fraught with questions of the ethics and politics of representation, however. As Pinto notes several times throughout the book, through her analysis she fears placing “too much of a burden…on Mrs. A's young shoulders” (Pinto, 2020, p. 83).

[4] In Gandhi's vision, self-sufficient (*swaraj*) villages would be collectively organized, with “wells according to its needs and accessible to all…a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a cooperative dairy…produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi [textiles].” Available from: http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/Gandhionvillages.pdf.

[5] See the Transborder Immigrant Tool. https://anthology.rhizome.org/transborder-immigrant-tool.

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Saiba Varma
University of California, San Diego, California, USA

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SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR WHAT? BATTLES OVER PUBLIC FUNDING FOR THE "OTHER SCIENCES" AT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Mark Solovey

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For over sixty years, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has been one of the most significant patrons of social scientific research in the United States. Though generations of social scientists have sought its prestigious grants and fellowships, few know the agency's overall history or that of its perennially marginal and precarious social science programs. Mark Solovey's illuminating new book, *Social Science for What?*, presents this history in a highly readable and admirably synoptic way that significantly expands upon earlier accounts by NSF staff members (Larsen, 1992; Riecken, 1986) and sociologists of science (Gieryn, 1999). Solovey's meticulous analyses of national political debates over the merits of public funding for the social sciences in the U.S. have much to offer not only historians of science but scholars of Congress and public policy as well. Especially in this time of austerity, Solovey's story of social scientists battling for a small and often shrinking sliver of the NSF pie makes for sobering reading.

Solovey argues that those most concerned about the precarious position of the social sciences in the NSF responded by powerfully reinforcing what he calls a "hard-core" "scientistic" and unity-of-science epistemology (pp. 6-10; 12-13). A frequent corollary to this view presented natural scientific inquiry as the "gold standard" – a standard by which the strength of social science's currency ought to be measured (p. 293). Many social scientists affirmed this conception at a number of critical junctures in the NSF's history, convinced that this was the best way to defend their disciplines' still tenuous claims on NSF resources. Some who did so, however, also expressed serious reservations about the merits of this scientistic position in other contexts. Most notably, Harry Alpert, the first person responsible for the social sciences at the NSF, worried that the unity-of-science view would end up sidelining many worthy approaches to social inquiry (pp. 70-75). Similarly, Evron Kirkpatrick, the Executive Director of the American Political Science Association, who endorsed a posture of "open-minded eclecticism" for his discipline in other contexts, hewed closely to the scientistic line when he was pressuring the NSF to establish a program in political science (pp. 79, 90-100). In both these crucial cases, Solovey persuasively argues that when both men endorsed the unity of science, they did so for pragmatic reasons – Alpert, to open the door for a more explicit NSF commitment to the social sciences and Kirkpatrick, to give political scientists their first official toehold at the NSF.

These important exceptions notwithstanding, Solovey acknowledges that other social scientists connected to the NSF genuinely believed what Alpert and Kirkpatrick only endorsed for pragmatic reasons. This was true of Alpert's successor, Henry Riecken, who oversaw the creation of the NSF's division for social science in 1961 as well as Richard Atkinson, who in 1975 moved that division under a broader biological science umbrella. Solovey's analysis of Atkinson's NSF career is particularly illuminating, since Atkinson was the first social scientist to become director of the NSF. Strikingly, Solovey concludes that not only did the standing of the social sciences not improve during Atkinson's tenure; some policies Atkinson championed