



Julian Assange - The Unauthorised Autobiography

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In December 2010, Julian Assange signed a contract with Canongate Books to write a book - part memoir, part manifesto - for publication the following year. At the time, Julian said: 'I hope this book will become one of the unifying documents of our generation. In this highly personal work, I explain our global struggle to force a new relationship between the people and their governments.' In the end, the work was to prove too personal. Despite sitting for more than fifty hours of taped interviews and spending many late nights at Ellingham Hall (where he was living under house arrest) discussing his life and the work of WikiLeaks with the writer he had enlisted to help him, Julian became increasingly troubled by the thought of publishing an autobiography. After reading the first draft of the book at the end of March, Julian declared: 'All memoir is prostitution.' In June 2011, with thirty-eight publishing houses around the world committed to releasing the book, Julian told us he wanted to cancel his contract. We disagree with Julian's assessment of the book. We believe it explains both the man and his work, underlining his commitment to the truth. Julian always claimed the book was well written; we agree, and this also encouraged us to make the book available to readers. And the contract? By the time Julian wanted to cancel the deal he had already used the advance money to settle his legal bills. So the contract still stands. We have decided to honour it - and to publish. This book is the unauthorised first draft. It is passionate, provocative and opinionated - like its author. It fulfils the promise of the original proposal and we are proud to publish it.

Julian's statement on this unauthorised publishing by Canongate: <http://wikileaks.org/Julian-Assange-S...>

Julian Assange - The Unauthorised Autobiography Details

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From Reader Review Julian Assange - The Unauthorised Autobiography for online ebook

Miriam says

Verschrikkelijke schrijfstijl, ik zoek wel een ander boek over Assange.

James says

A Thousand Plateaus is required reading for Assange fans and enemies, as well as those who don't give a fig but carry a Master or Visa card or just have a particular bent for Continental theory.

According to Deleuze and Guattari Western thought is dominated by a structure of knowledge they call aborescence. This way of knowing is tree-like, vertical, and centralized. For instance, in biology, we have Linnean taxonomies. In chemistry, we have Porphyrian trees. In linguistics we have Chomskyan sentence trees.

Did they say Western? In China we have centralized, hierarchical government and Internet censorship.

Such trees show up worldwide, not only in the fields of biology, botany, linguistics, and anatomy, but also in philosophy, where we find metaphysical trees, theological trees, gnostic trees, The World Tree . . .

Such trees are hierarchical, imposing limited and regulated connections between their components. All such trees spread out like many branches, stemming from a single trunk--each radiating out from an original oneness or unity.

And don't forget Plato, who stands as the central trunk in Western thought--or his Ideal Forms: Doberman pinschers, German shepherds, collies, and poodles are all material manifestations of an immaterial Essence--an Ideal Form of what Plato might call Dogginess. Dogginess is the single Platonic Origin--the Trunk--of the tree of dogs.

Opposed to the vertical, tree-like structure of knowledge, Deleuze and Guattari proclaim a rhizomatic, radically horizontal, crabgrass-like way of knowing. Crabgrass, for instance, is a plant. But instead of having one central root, a rhizome (such as crabgrass or the Internet) has zillions of roots, none of which is central--and each offshoot interconnects in random, unregulated networks in which any node can interconnect with any other node. Whereas the tree seeks to establish itself and say "I am," the rhizome is always rearranging interconnections, providing lines of flight, ranging nomadically saying "and, and, and. . ."

Thus the tree is concerned with origins, foundations, ontologies, beginnings and endings--with roots. The rhizome is concerned with surface connections, lines of flight, with the "and."

For D & G, Kafka's work is rhizomatic. One might expect a novel named *The Trial* to have something to do with the law. But Deleuze and G. find that Justice in the novel is not legal but erotic, for the process of justice is really a process of desiring. Thus, Kafka's protagonist, K., encounters obscene drawings in the courthouse; an attorney equates being accused with being attractive; a series of suggestive encounters with sex, antifamilial women; and a painting of Justice as winged, and evasive. K., lost in the and, and, and, of the

judicial process, ever desiring Justice, never reaches Justice. "She" is never present, but always one room away from him in the rhizomatic, rat tunnel of the courthouse with its crazy corridors and perversely connected passageways through which K. is led by eroticized women. Thus, Justice, like the courthouse and desire, is rhizomatic, never reaching conclusion. We will see how this plays out in the Assange case.

The Internet, like a rhizome, is non-hierarchical, horizontal. Its nodes intersect in random, unregulated networks in which any node can interconnect with any other node.

D & G's notions of rhizome and nomadics inform much of the thought of the loose confederation of info-activists of which Assange is but one nomadic node -- to mix metaphors.

Plateaus lays out the underlying grammar of our postmodern info-wars, which, as the example below shows, are all about power. If info-activists and info-topians have a Bible, Deleuzian theory may be it, which many of these activists have swallowed hook-line and sinker as prescriptive rather than as descriptive of postmodern realities.

Notice, in the example quoted below, the heterotopian vision coming from an avowed member of a loose confederation of thinkers who claim to have disavowed metanarratives.

One must not forget, however, that although rhizomes are a trend, trees are not obsolete. The human nervous system is one such tree. If it operated like a rhizome, it would be operating without a brain.

Deleuze committed suicide by jumping from atop a tall, vertical structure--a building. We will someday see if Assange has been flirting with a legal system that is rhizomatic or vertical. So far he is following in K's footsteps--to a t.

A central theme of Deleuzian anti-centrists is the deconstruction of the Oedipal myth, which involves exploding the central image of the father into many, and thus distributing anti-authoritarian ire towards an array of other targets. For instance, in Kafka's "Letter to His Father," he inflates his father to laughably absurd, dreamlike dimensions, until his father's singular Fatherness balloons so huge that it pops--exploding into a vast rhizomatic network of father-like social connections represented by judges, commissioners, bureaucrats.

Sound familiar?

The following is an example of the info-topian mind-set, of strictly orthodox rhizomism, in which the author heralds a major victory in the info-wars:

"Patrick Lichty on December 11, 2010 2:39 pm Digital Anarchy and Wikileaks. Or, Skynet doesn't look anything like we thought it did.

"This is the first time I've posted in a while, but I think we're in significant times. Assange and the whole Wikileaks phenomenon is so important that it needs a little theory.

"To recap for those who have been unaware of the news, Wikileaks is an online Wikipedia-like database that "whistle-blow" against governmental/corporate wrongdoing by releasing controlled/classified documents. As of December 2010 they have been releasing huge numbers of cables relating to US foreign policy, which has the First World, especially the US State Department in a panic. Why? Because the leaks show the US in any number of gaffes, like calling Russia a "mafia state", disclosing precarious mentions of Middle Eastern

leaders. In addition, other undisclosed information, such as revealing transfers of weapons technology from North Korea to Iran, US drug companies targeting African politicians, and so on. This disclosure has sent the First World into diplomatic chaos, with geopolitical politics reconfiguring itself like a planet-sized Rubik's Cube.

"First World power has been bitten by its own child, or its own emergent system as typified in popular science fiction franchises, like the Matrix and Terminator. Infopower has begun to become autonomous of its material (atomic) roots. Instead of the robots, it is merely the infosphere that is asserting itself. In *The Porcelain Workshop*, Antonio Negri asserts that one of the three major shifts into the postmodern is the primacy of informatics/cognitive capital as central to the new order. As such, it is focusing of society on this flow of capital which has relocated the foundations of power in the new millennium.

"The Internet was conceived by the US military (DARPA) as a decentralized network for the sharing and redundant storage of information in multiple locations in case of nuclear attack. In such a case, one node can be destroyed, and the network can still function despite their loss. It is for this reason that I believe that material/conventional power should be termed as "atomic", as nuclear weapons are the ultimate extension of the nation-state, and as metaphor for material society, we can also double that this power situates in the world of atoms. However, this extension of conventional/"atomic" power has grown into a concurrent, distributed, heterogenous field of power that I will call the Infostate, that includes the Web, E-mail, and all functions of networked communications. Although the functionaries of conventional power have restructured themselves in terms of the informational milieu, the latter is not necessarily congruent with the former. The Internet spans most physical states, yet resides in no single one.

"Despite this, there are zones which the nation state has tried to territorialize and limit the flow of cognitive capital, such as Turkey and China, but the firewalls remain porous and slippery. This deterritorialization of the Infostate creates an asymmetrical power relation which, due to its amorphous nature, is problematic for the conventional nation-state to engage. Conventional power requires a face upon which to focus fear and hatred upon, such as Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden. Infopower is mercuric and morphogenic, and when confronted by the centralized, hierarchical nature of conventional power, it merely splits, morphs or replicates, sidestepping the metaphorical "army & general". This relationship signals the new balance of power between the nation-state and the Infostate as Krokerian Panic dialectic, in which the ability of the one to relate in terms of the other implodes.

"With the bleeding of information from the material to the infomatic rhizome through Wikileaks (i.e. the US diplomatic cable leaks), the Infostate has created an asymmetrical insurgency against conventional power. Negri's conception of cognitive capital as locus of power asymmetrically challenges that of material capital. This is analogous to previous mention of events as told in the movie, *The Matrix*, and the artificial (informatic) being overriding/supercedes embodied conventional power. As Deleuze, then Agamben assert that power is the separation of the subject from potentiality, and as such mitigates dissent, the nation-state is trying to exert power by separating the means of support and the figurehead from Wikileaks, but distributed, asymmetrical cyberwarfare by the net.community has already disrupted banks, credit, and networked sites. It has even awakened the amorphous hacker subculture of "Anonymous" which was last known for its mass protests against the Church of Scientology to rise against the opponents of Wikileaks. The Net, as child of the military (conventional power) has begun to turn on its masters, with expected reflexive responses.

"This knee-jerk reaction of the nation-state to asymmetrical power versus conventional power became evident in the case of 2001, where decentralized "cellular" physical social networks circumvented centralized power. Although the previous statement says decentralized physical power, this is merely an intermediary step to the development of asymmetrical distributed infopower. The centralized, hierarchical

nature of the material corporate nation-state has been unable to contain the decentralized flow of cellular power, which has become infopower, created by the emergency of distributed networks. This is seen as we look again at Matrix Reloaded, where in, as in The Matrix Trilogy, the informatic body/state (Agent Smith) reacts to the intervention of conventional human power (Neo, or “The One”) by asymmetry in massively replicating WikiLeaks sites (“The Many”). Conventional power now has a cloud of moving, replicating targets rather than one to aim at.

“The First World then reacts to being challenged by expediting material/physical diplomacy that would take months, days, or weeks by arresting Assange and possibly for extraditing him to the United States, his locus of challenge. But although the “head”, (the object of leverage of conventional power) is in custody, the “body” of WikiLeaks and the rest of its “computational cloud of dissent” stated on December 7th (incidentally, the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor), that it will continue to release information through the WikiLeaks network. Like the anthropomorphization of centralizing identity/placing a single “face” on challenges to hegemony (as in the Queens of the movies Aliens and The Borg in Star Trek), the true face of asymmetry is that of facelessness and morphogenic dissent. It is like trying to hold mercury, because as the Critical Art Ensemble states, decentralized dissent can only be addressed through decentralized means, and this is not the structure of conventional power.

“In Electronic Civil Disobedience, The Critical Art Ensemble also states that in the age of informatic power, physical resistance is severely limited in its potential for effect, if not useless, as the physical protester is corralled or elided entirely by authority. The real interventionists, CAE states, are the 20-something year-old hackers who punch through the firewalls and reroute flows of information, creating eruptions of redirection, disruption, and detournement of infocapital at will. The case of Ricardo Dominguez and the Electronic Disturbance Theatre’s virtual sit-in against the University of California was a relatively benign case of the disruption of data as political act. But the intervention in infocapital is explicated on a larger scale by Chinese governmental hackers’ compromise of Google (as revealed by WikiLeaks), as well as the infiltration of an Iranian reactor by hackers. All of these illustrate Negri’s idea that postmodern power/capital has shifted to that of the informatics and cognitive fields, and signal a primary shift of the balance power in the First World, if not globally.

“In light of this redistribution of power, what would the solution for conventional/”atomic” power’s reassertion of hegemony? This would be to contain the rise of informatic power by containing its means of distribution. This would be by the means of national firewalling, and trunk-line disconnection or limited Internet disabling, disrupting infopower, but also crippling the flow of digitized material capital as well. This is problematic at best, as conventional power and informatic power are in symbiotic, the latter being more nimble and a step ahead of the former, and to attack a symbiote always means to cripple its partner as well. The logical result of such actions would be the elimination of net neutrality (the free and open flow of data across the Internet) or even the severance of typologies and flows of information across the networks. The symbiotic effect is that conventional power/capital is also hobbled, as the physical is dependent on the same flows of information across the distributed nets, disabling itself in the process. It is for this reason that it cannot engage in this means of retaliation, as it would be the digital suicide of the First World nation-state.

“This is the brilliance of WikiLeaks – its use of infrastructure upon which conventional power relies as site of anarchic resistance proves the potentiality of infomatic power rendering conventional power impotent. In this case, bits trump atoms in the milieu of the Net. As nuclear detente created an “aesthetics of uselessness” in the ridiculously high numbers of times the world’s nuclear stockpiles could destroy the Earth, this potential reduction of the “atomic/atomic” to aesthetic nullity arises as the Infostate merely shuts down the control systems of the bunker. I nation of nuclear gophers, lifeless in their burrows.

"Power is reconfiguring in light of informational vs. conventional power, and this is why the rise of Wikileaks is significant, and why the geopolitical panic-site it creates is a singular event. It suggests that decentralized power renders hierarchical conventional power impotent, signaling the beginning of the 21st Century paradigm. In *The Coming Insurrection*, the French anarchist group, The Invisible Committee, posits a Communo-Anarchic insurgency to overthrow the conventional nation-state. What would replace it is the creation of a cybernetic proto-industrial model of networked communes with high tech microproduction that would be established during and after a mass armed insurrection. There is another view on this. The insurrection, as CAE states, will not be with guns, but with bytes. This is in line with Negri's assertion that capital in the postmodern has shifted to information/cognitive capital, and that conventional power merely marginalizes material (atomic) dissent. The real theatre of engagement is the infosphere, and Wikileaks has realized info-insurgency as real power first world/digital society has become informatic. Anarchy in its most powerful form is now in the disruption and release of data withheld by the nation-state."

(end of long quote)

""

So, does the future go to the oaks or the crabgrass? You can find the answer just by gazing up at the clouds. The lizard part of your brain will instantly begin searching for--and finding--familiar forms within those billowing canvasses. It's the same centric anxiety reflex that causes humans to look for leaders: lizards do push ups for the same reason guys do, to show they are the alpha iguana. Iguana babes may rally around such ass-kicking males, who in turn may be no match for a virus. Centrism and rhizome-ism are both embedded in nature. It's their interplay that helps drive evolution--and thickens the plot.

On rhizomatic strategic culture, as opposed to our Indo-European model of strategic culture:

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13...>

Michelle MacAleese says

This man is fascinating--he's the most super-intelligent car-wreck ever. And Andrew O'Hagen has done a great job.

Santosh says

Every person in this world is capable enough to leave his mark on this world. What kind of mark to be left is to be decided by the person himself. Many people don't decide so they leave a mark which no one notices. Few decide, and leave a strong mark, which will be noticed by many. But there are few who are so clear on what to do with their life and follow their gut feeling and are so truthful, that the mark they leave is noticed by everyone. And it will change the very life of each and every one of us. The world in which we are going to live in, will be changed world and a better world. This changed and better world will be very much

because of the people who come under third catagory.

While reading this Autobiography, I came across ideas of being a true reporter. How transperancy between the people who run a country and the countrymen should be. Life of a good person who takes the path of truth is not easy. Most of the time he might be alone. This is the time when one should rethink of his principle and stand for what he is. And most of his life Julian Assanage has done it and still doing it. I think this man is most gutsy person I have ever known.

A well written book of an extraordinary man with simple principle of truth and enormous courage.

Antonomasia says

Reads like the first draft it is, one based on interview transcripts. And given Assange's disowning the project in 2011, and ghost writer Andrew O'Hagan's LRB public stress-venting exercise/hatchet job in 2014, it's far from clear whether these 14 chapters of 'unauthorised autobiography' - that would have been a joke title from almost anyone else - represent Assange as he intended prior to abandoning the memoir.

NB. Paragraph 7 is about the Swedish sex offence charges. I've also put these /// at the start and end of it in case a numbering change gets lost in editing. It is not physically graphic but might be controversial in not absolutely taking one side or the other.

At any rate, it was the material about his life pre-fame that was most interesting. Especially hearing about the different areas of Australia he'd lived in, including bohemian places nothing like old *Neighbours* and *Home & Away* episodes. And a sense of what it was like, spatially, to be there, is conveyed quite simply: *a distant province in a country that was itself a distant province of the world. That would describe how it seemed to my mother's generation.* And the bigness of the Outback: *the sense you get in some parts of Australia that civilisation is elsewhere* - this was where cults used to thrive. His stories of life as a teenage hacker have all the sense of wonder of books like *Microserfs* - *You would look at the stars and get a certain notion of infinity, then at your computer, and think: infinity resides there, too, but much less remotely.* But there's a darker side those novels lack: *We started by breaking the commercial desires of some companies, and the thrill was exorbitant. It was like the first time you beat an adult at chess....you didn't especially feel like you were robbing anyone or engaging in any sort of crime or insurrection. You felt you were challenging yourself.* Walking around inside the systems of organisations thousands of miles away, *It was like being able to teleport yourself.* Among his early hacking mates, there was a strand of Australian anti-Americanism previously unfamiliar but entirely understandable. (A few other quotes I found interesting, but which are largely irrelevant to the review, are below in the status updates.)

The later, Wikileaks-era stuff I'd heard before from various angles in the press, and almost none of it was new. The episode of his dispute with the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* regarding the Afghan and Iraq war logs was exhausting: I've read about this affair now from three different first-person angles, all of them highly antagonistic. Assange's and Wikileaks' story in general is something I think will be best presented in the more neutral frame of the historian, with greater temporal distance and access to multiple views and awareness of longer range consequences - once that becomes possible - but the war logs controversy could do with that treatment even more than the rest. (This response to O'Hagan's LRB piece, written by one of Assange's publishers, is one of the most balanced accounts of him I've read: it doesn't deny he's difficult to be around, yet also acknowledges his useful and rare work.)

Can anyone really tell yet what Assange's impact on global politics has been? We may be too near events to see the wider perspective. Did Wikileaks revelations actually endanger people's lives, or is that negative PR

from governments? And did other releases spark revolutions or election wins that made life better in some countries? Sometimes these controversies already feel like a fraught episode from 3-6 years ago that's fading into the past, although WikiLeaks is still going with a lower day-to-day news profile; good opinion piece here.

Assange's basic concept of truth in demanding greater openness from governments and more privacy and autonomy for individuals is easy for many of us to agree with. He has been *described as the man who thinks all privacy is bad. But it was never my position that all privacy is bad: rather the opposite. We fought, as cypherpunks, to protect people's privacy. What I opposed, and continue to oppose, is the use of secrecy by institutions to protect themselves against the truth of the evil they have done.* It's in the fine detail, the exact placement of the boundaries, something that isn't his philosophical bag, where the significant differences of opinion lie. Composed four or five years ago, before legislative developments adversely affecting privacy, some of his optimistic proclamations about the internet sound sadly bathetic and dated already: *It was the cypherpunks, or the 'code rebels' as Steven Levy called us, who prevented the new technology from merely becoming a tool used by big business and government agencies to spy on populations, or sell to them. Computers could have come preloaded with commercials. Smartphones could have come embedded with surveillance devices. The Internet could have been repressive in a great number of its facets...* *it began to appear possible that what street riots, opposition groups, human rights gurus and electoral reform had always struggled to achieve, we could actually begin to bring about with science. We could undermine corruption from its dead centre.* Assange has, of course, written more recently elsewhere about relevant changes.

In this book, Assange displays more self-awareness than the press led one to believe he was capable of, especially with regard to his past, and his understanding of how his unsettled life (prior to being in the Ecuadorian embassy for three years), his paranoia, and his concern with the concept of truth, are all rooted in, and a form of repetition of, his experiences growing up. He knows there are things he's not good at. But he does get caught up in his paranoid, angry rants without any self-aware commentary; and there are more than enough mentions of the global significance of his work, which cumulatively come across as arrogant and grandiose. These negative impressions *could* be cleared out with sympathetic editing: more or less the same information and experiences (along with a little bit more about other people) presented in a different tone; but it sounds like O'Hagan wouldn't have been minded to do that, and who knows if Assange would have wanted to or understood how. But a person sounds more heroic and more likeable if they're modest: it's just one of those things. He's clearly not interested in producing spin, he knows he can be abrasive. He just thinks he's been portrayed with too overwhelming a negativity, and with too much of a celebrity focus on him, not on his work, but his personality can't help but contribute to that state of affairs. A person who does revolutionary things with a public angle, who goes against the grain to this extent, is likely to be stubborn, difficult and different, possibly pathologically so - otherwise they wouldn't be the person to try and change things most won't dare touch. Assange could though, it seems, do with considering how he might be *damaging* as well as damaged and hurt, and various sections of the media with the reverse. (O'Hagan's account, for instance, sounds exasperated and burnt out to the point of empathetic shutdown, and the author didn't convey the high stress his assigned subject was likewise experiencing because he displayed it outwardly in unlikeable ways. I was irritated by the *Ghosting* piece, when it first appeared, but now, a year and a half later notice O'Hagan's stress and limits of tolerance more than I did, can empathise with *him* more, although I do think the article could have tried to explain Assange more kindly, after three years' distance to make sense of things. In the essay, O'Hagan and Jamie Byng advocate memoir writing as a process kin to psychotherapy - I'd agree. In part due to that position, on first reading I'd considered O'Hagan as being short on understanding - forms of understanding that might be expected of a compassionate and experienced therapist... But that was never his job - and anyway, therapists rarely spend that sort of time with a client, let alone outside formal settings. If they did, some of them might be similarly fried, even several years later.)

///As for the business of sex offence charges in Sweden, it's impossible to know for sure. I'm inclined to believe there's something in it - whether it was exactly what reports say, or that something happened that was souped up for political reasons - just because of my understanding and experience of similar personalities; because he apparently has a number of kids from casual relationships, ergo had a lot of unprotected sex; and because the concept of boundaries, and breaking them, runs through his hacking and news career and these allegations - all could be seen to spring from the same mode of thinking. (I also think that if it did happen, there was something of a culture clash, that the Swedish women perhaps didn't see encounters with a man who behaved like this as something that might happen in their world where most men behave differently, and so although they were usually assertive in their relationships, they were confounded by this behaviour from someone of whom they otherwise approved politically, and didn't tell him to get lost asap - and that Assange wasn't acculturated to consider some of the things as actual offences, although one of the accounts does clearly read as violent.) But in any case, it's hard to see it as the issue it once was: he's been living in conditions tantamount to house arrest for about as long as Swedish sentences for the alleged crimes would last. (Albeit without the group therapy they probably do in prisons there... I'm imagining something like scenes in *Lillyhammer*. Assange could probably do with some therapy regardless, but given what he says about medicine in this book, he'd evidently be resistant if it were compulsory.) And millions of women would surely not want to be alone in private with him, unless for some reason they were actually looking for risky sex. The remaining issue now, is perhaps the cost of the police. (I'd be inclined to do what they did with that dissident in *Borgen* series 1 and secretly give the chance for him to go somewhere he was no longer our problem, and then not let him back in the country unless it was all sorted out.) I've been hesitant to post some of this in case it's upsetting or annoying to a couple of friends (that's not about offendness as an abstract concept, it's about possibly upsetting people I like and wouldn't want to upset) and it's a subject I wouldn't have started talking to them about directly.///

It's been suggested recently that Assange should step down from WikiLeaks to try and remove his negative associations from the organisation: this sounds like it may be a good idea, and something that a person who believed in the importance of the work over the self - the talk he talks though not necessarily the walk walked - could persuade themselves into doing. (*was trying to do my work under pressure and wasn't much aware of myself at all, not in the sense they mean. People nowadays love the play of selfhood: they think everything is a soap opera. But I mean what I say when I say my 'self' lies somewhere behind me: with a computer, and a lifetime's project, you no longer find yourself chasing from pillar to post the small business of yourself.*) Even if a separation from the organisation one created would be a great loss in a life of workaholism and few personal attachments, and took a while to adjust to, it might be the ethical thing to do. Although one suspects he still brings useful financial benefits to the organisation via celebrity contacts and funders.

I was already about halfway through this book when the latest headlines appeared about Assange possibly, finally being questioned - the timing in reading the book, from that point of view, was coincidental. The timing was probably, actually because O'Hagan's novel was longlisted for the Booker ... My subconscious has a thing about Assange - and stupidly, it also still thinks he looks like this. It's more like a bit of OCD than a crush: I can say I don't fancy him and feel entirely honest; and he looks outright [appropriately?] creepy with that new beard, but there's some funny little corner of my mind that's been fascinated by him for years though I think it's pathetic of it. Whilst I'd hardly read about Assange for ages, the O'Hagan longlisting seems to have sparked dreams. (I've had, or remembered, more asleep-dreams about him than about any other famous person.) Analytically, I can work out why: like elements of family personality tendencies, being unsettled, a couple of similarities to exes, fitting appealing archetypes, I'd always liked the name Julian ... and then later after the interest had developed, I was drawn, probably in part as a result of it, to someone else, someone else real, with a couple of other attributes similar to him. I've no illusion he'd be good company, or cares much about people around him, it's just... a minor weird thing.

Because I want to keep trying to debunk this mind-tic, without going for reactive bias one way or another, I want to find an academically rigorous and neutral analysis of Assange's and Wikileaks' activities. I bought this ebook idly because it was cheap in a sale. Something else, by someone else, would have been closer to the study I was looking for if it exists yet. This post covers little of the politics - but that's because most of that was material I'd seen so many times in old news it was commonplace.

Phillip says

anyone with even a passing interest in Julian Assange should read this book. For the record it is ghost written and basically a first draft of an autobiography that he pulled the plug on. personally I found it quite a good read. Yes it could be construed as propaganda on his behalf, but with entire governments and traditional media outlets portraying him as a traitor and sexual deviant, how else can he tell his side of the story?

Michael Riedyk says

A great book to get insight on the history and vision behind wikileaks and Assanges' life.

I recommend to read this book to get a better understanding what information technology, internet and privacy will mean to politics, peace, wars and the freedom of speech in the 21st century.

Assange is clearly is on the right side of history and deserves respect.

Stephen says

A compulsory read for an understanding of this fascinating character. Is it ego or altruism that drives Assange? It is a fast, interesting read and certainly shines a bright light in the face of governments who do not like to be questioned - and shouldn't we all be questioning our governments?

chris tervit says

This is not a book I would normally read- I tend to stay clear of autobiographies as they often end up being either dull, narcissistic or poorly written, or all of the above. This started out like that but got better towards the end, when we get to the parts about Wikileaks starting up & links with The Guardian and other global media groups. Since he presents himself & his band of 'vigilantes' as altruistic truth-finders we are left asking if we can trust them & him to really find the truth, especially in a world of information overload and misinformation we live in. So it would have been really interesting/helpful to have had a good insight into his childhood and his moral make-up but the writing is so poor it left me feeling unsure. The more times he repeats his mantra about doing (potentially illegal) acts in the name of 'truth' the more I find myself questioning this. I have a definite ghost writer feel and the text is clunky at times.

The themes are certainly very contemporary especially in a world of increasing social networking websites, reliance on IT for communication, on-going wars and journalists being arrested regularly. Is it safe to put things on Facebook? How will it affect our children as they grow up? Do wars really seem like computer

games as drones distance killer from victim? (Disconnections & dehumanising effects.)

How will journalism evolve from here? What should be kept secret, how can this be kept secure (certainly not in yer icloud!) & who decides (corrupt governments or wikileaks crew)? How do we decipher between truth and fabrication?

Overall I'd rather have read an article, by a good writer, about Julian & Wikileaks which gave a balanced viewpoint & took less of my time to read!

Teri Kelly says

Where to even begin unravelling, what is (when all of the giddy media propaganda is paint-stripped away), in reality, a simple tale of infamy and incongruity. Julian Assange has become, perhaps by his own actions, perhaps not, a somewhat disassociated caricature of himself. The question here however is just what the truth is in age of government and media sponsored lies, fabrications, falsifications, hypocritical justifications and condemnations? Can anyone place any credence on a book that arrives with a publisher's mitigation (plea) and a ghost writer's slant based on hours of "taped" recordings? Is Julian Assange's life fact or fiction or a careful blending of both? Is this book just another "scheme" dreamt up by Assange and his bug-eyed publishing cohorts to create sensationalism and boost sales – god knows he needs the cash.

One thing is for certain, this shoddy tome bears no relevance whatsoever to literature. As a podium for yet more Assange diatribe and pro-conspiracy homilies it bleeds mercilessly into Assange's own contention (upon his "withdrawal" from the publishing agreement) that all "memoir" is prostitution. If so, then this book has to be the biggest whore around and its publishers little more than a gang of avaricious pimps. To review it is to condone the charade, to comment on it is to partake in the craftily-scripted marketing angle that one "must" read it first (equals sales) and then decide (equals yet more press coverage). Clever wording again, after all, words are what brought us to this – words: clandestine coverts, pseudo- secret intelligence, techno spies, press-gang journalism and hearsay. Leaks aren't anything new; the world was built upon them – from Judas Iscariot up. If you believe that Julian Assange is the latter day champion of truth and justice for all then no doubt you'll revel in this book of almost maybes, if not, then it really doesn't matter at all.

Anonymous sources manipulate the world of misinformation we coexist in today – go leak that.

Sudheer Madhava says

Personally, this is one of the few books which will influence me for life. My sense of justice, freedom and human values perceptibly shifted as I went through this first person narrative. What makes it appealing in spite of some technical jargon and predictably self justifying statements of a person in distress is Julian Assange's intent of using his amazing ability with technology to attempt to make the truth known to humanity. The truth as it is and not the truth churned out by a conventional media blinded by political and corporate power. I am sure that as we look back at these times, this man will stand out as one of the few who had the ability, courage and most importantly the intent to attempt to change the world for the better.

Luke says

I know there are people out there who complain about this book, claim that it's not entirely based on truth.

And yeah, it was written by a host writer, there's no denying that.

However, that doesn't mean that the book is bad. The book is actually a compelling read. It's well written and it sheds light on a story which for some would be truly inspiring. It focuses on the story of WikiLeaks, and the backlash that Assange received, not on his family life. Perhaps the family life would have been of benefit, or perhaps it wouldn't

Either way, I kept reading. I should clarify that I am not someone who was overly interested in WikiLeaks, and nor was I the type of person who would read and enjoy autobiographies. However, this was an easy and entertaining read, containing important information about Assange's quest to reveal the truth and the hardships that brought upon him (and even comes with a few of the leaks themselves which I'll be reading soon). I can't ask for any more in the book, if I'm completely honest with you.

Megan says

We just got this into the store on Tuesday, and taking a look at it, I was pretty excited to read it, and to get a long inside account of WikiLeaks. I wasn't aware, however, of all the controversy over its publication. The note from the publisher in the beginning of the book suggests it, but still seems misleading, having also read this:

<http://wikileaks.org/Julian-Assange-S...>

Still, it was a compelling read, and great to have the WikiLeaks story all in one place, told (even if this telling is complicated by various authorial questions raised by the circumstances of the book's publication) from the person most intimately involved. In many ways, an inspiring piece, one that weaves together both a story of how the slow build-up of personal experiences over one's life may lead one to great insight on a particular piece of the world, with a philosophy of what it is to challenge power with technology in particular time and place.

Clare O'Beara says

This is a good read, showing us how this extraordinary man and body of works, is the sum of the upbringing and interests and choices made throughout his life and before it began.

The publishers state at the outset that the author spoke with a ghost author and made tapes for many hours, before deciding as the book was being prepared, with hefty pre-sales and with his advance cheque paid over by him to his lawyers, that he'd rather not publish an autobiography. That would seem rather late in the day to get modest. Honouring their written contract, the publishers went ahead and produced the book - rightly, I would say.

Assange is Australian, from a free-spirit mother who met his father at a civil rights rally and who married his stepfather a few years later. Both men have played a part in his life though he did not meet his father until he was grown. While the author never seems to have held down a steady job, and lived in squats, he nevertheless was able to study subjects of his choosing including quantum physics at university after a mediocre school result. That has to say something in favour of Australia's opportunities, though he doesn't acknowledge them.

The early years of hacking are best described as young teens played with basic computers, learning to write code and via a modem, to phone in to early bulletin boards and exchange messages on how to explore with their box of circuits and wires. This became obsessive in some cases and the kids were wandering around inside major firms, government and army systems which were poorly secured at that time.

The later years are more full of personal anger and attacks on major players in the world trouble zones, as well as on supposed colleagues who let the author down at times. I could not see why he did not understand the established media point - they were journalists and he came along with a couple of fellow hackers, claiming to be journalists too. Had he worked for any media outlet? Joined a journalists' union? Gained a journalism degree at college? No, he'd studied quantum physics when he got out of his sentence for cyber crimes. So they treated him as a source, and perhaps a loose cannon at that, rather than as a reporter or publisher.

As to the alleged sexual misconduct charges facing Assange, having read his account, it seems to me that there was considerable stupidity on both sides of the story, but no charges that I would expect to stick. The man was daft enough to sleep with two different newly-met women over the course of a few weeks after he'd been warned that the US would attempt to smear him and that a honey trap (attractive female) could be likely. The women were daft enough, so it seems, to sleep with this globe-trotter without insisting on protection. They may then have been used by manipulative forces. I think any sensible female or male judge would throw the matter out of court. However, given that governments, banks and many other major interests think the man and his team have released too many embarrassing documents, he is probably safer in the Ecuadorian embassy.

I noticed two spelling errors in the body of the book and several in the examples of leaked documents. This may be because WikiLeaks has been so rushed in preparing the vast volume of releases, or it may be because not all their staff are English-speakers.

Certainly it has to be said that these leaks paved the way for a British newspaper to release the scandalous expenses and house-flipping claimed by British MPs, most of it their technical but not moral entitlement. Though that didn't go via Assange, he'd shown that it could be done and that the public wanted to see such issues coming to light about their governments. What comes of the WikiLeaks releases may be still in the making. The clock cannot be put back, though some wish it could and want to live in the cosy, secretive past. Leaks on web platforms are here to stay. For that, the world will eventually thank this man, who seems to have no personal ambition of his own but may have matured further in the past couple of years.

Mat says

This book deserves to sell far more than the few copies it has reportedly sold. The publisher has probably done the book a disservice by calling it "The Unauthorised..." It does end pretty abruptly and has been conspicuously fleshed out with a few excerpts from WikiLeaks' leaks. Assange's story is vivid and deserves to be read if only to give his side to a story that many others have cashed in on, smearing him in the process.

Here are a few stand-out quotes:

Big Brother is home. He is installed in the
item you just dragged home from the Apple Store.
That was the threat, and we applied ourselves to it, quite

frankly, while everyone else was still trying to work out how to spell email.

[T]he things governments and diplomats do behind closed doors is entirely our business. The people elect them, pay for them, trust them, and are bosses of them. And governments who allow themselves to forget that will hear the voice of the people in every chatroom, on every blog, on every Twitter feed and, eventually, from every square, rising from Tiananmen Square to Tahrir Square, from Trafalgar to Times, with ripples through every letter of the alphabet. And governments who stand against this truth are done for.

What was freedom of the press for one organisation was not freedom for another.

They [the media] went to war with me and totally forgot what the opposition was.

Opponents past and present have the same essential weakness about them: first they want to use you, then they want to be you, then they want to snuff you out. It's a pattern that stretches in my life from toytown Feds to hacks at the Guardian: the old human pattern of someone needing something from someone else, getting it, denying they got it from them, then resenting the person for having been in a special position to give them what they needed, which is usually, by the way, an aspect of self-hatred on the asker's part for having needed any help at all. Usually it ends with these people enumerating one's personal faults, a shocking, ungrateful, unmanly effort, to be filed under despicable in my book. You'll meet more of these people in due course, but I've been meeting them all my life.

I'm told by industry-watchers that thinking is no great aphrodisiac when it comes to celebrity memoirs: then so be it, let us agree to let this book fail as a celebrity memoir.

Friendship, in my experience, will only buy you about nine hours of free labour.

We found early on what the struggles were going to be, and one of the biggest, one of the most persistent, was to do with journalists' apathy. You could open up all these new lines of

enquiry, these new routes to justice, and they would just shrug and say they didn't have the time to work through the material. It was frustrating. But I now see it as an important factor in the way we see the world through the media. The journalists don't just report: their assumptions and their apathy have a part to play in making the picture that comes down to us. And we saw ourselves as journalists from the start. Better ones.

I thought these were men of action and principle, not weaklings with a crush, and it was difficult to see the way they moved around me so gingerly and sometimes full of hurt, like I wasn't giving them enough attention or showing my best side.

Men in their prime, if they have convictions, are tasked to act on them.

I was left at the time, wondering if the mainstream of Western journalism wasn't just made up of – there's no other word – wankers.

To me, a great number of those working for liberal causes are not only shy but borderline collusive. They want change to happen nicely, and it won't.

People imagine I live out of a rucksack because I'm some kind of weirdo. Well, they're right, I am some kind of weirdo, but I'm also forced into a stressful, peripatetic lifestyle by the nature of the work and the facts of the organisation.

A lot of people who cover world affairs from Washington are basically stupid. They often know absolutely nothing about the subjects or the cultures they are reporting on; there's this kind of too-cool-for-school mentality among the older ones, imagining there's nothing they haven't seen before. These people are pretty desperate and they should be ashamed, most probably, of how much complacency and ignorance they have brought into the world. But that's that. Everyone's so frightened of the national press corps in America that pulling the rug from underneath their sorry, negligent arses hardly seems an option. They don't listen and they would be insulted to have to question their own categories.

The snap view of people who don't understand our work – who don't want to understand our work – is that we might

endanger lives. But the great thrust of our work is to save lives. By making a contribution, in the public interest, to the ending of wars, by supplying journalists with the means to keep a check on the excesses of power, we aim to limit the hunger for killings, skirmishes and invasions, as well as to limit the effectiveness of the lies that support them.
