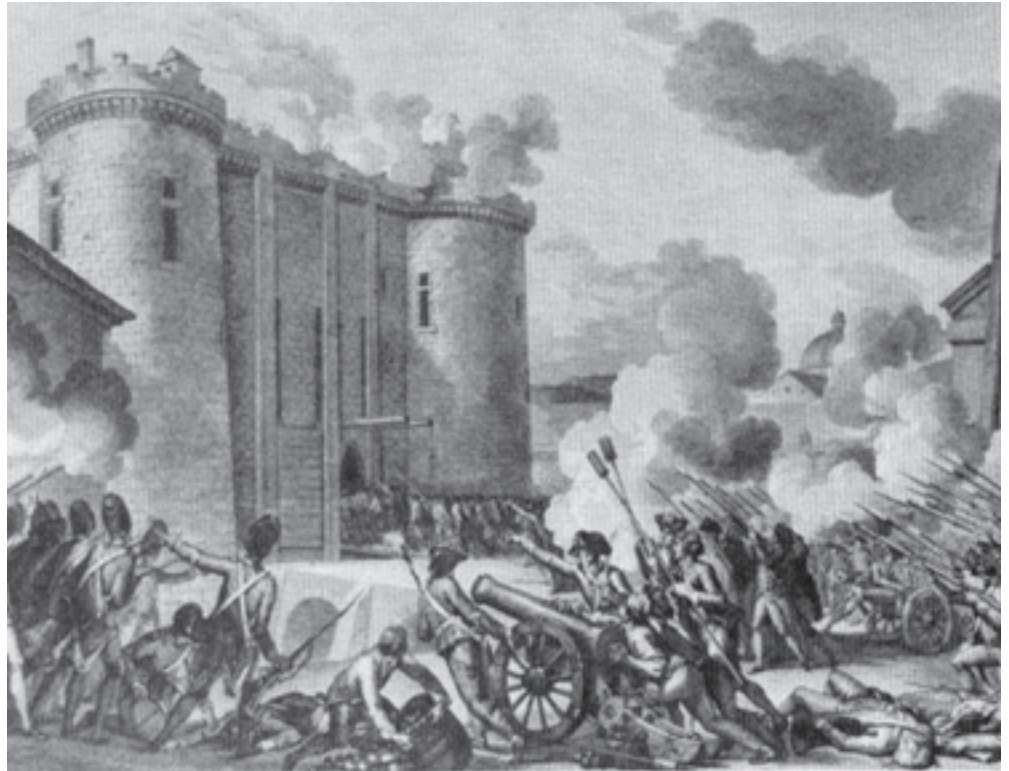


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## Challenging CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS hero of the Siege of Paris

# The Paris Hilton Syndrome

Fosco Bianchetti



I didn't know Christopher Hitchens, my fault I guess, but I have not "watched Hilton undergoing the sexual act" either, if this can be taken as a justification.

I discovered his existence reading a translation of his article -Siege of Paris-, "ridiculously placed on Page One" of a "major" European newspaper.

And you have to read that piece of writing to fully enjoy my reference to the "sexual act".

I immediately recognized another case of Paris Hilton Syndrome.

This is a disease that, contrary to common belief, affects intellectuals no less than ringleaders of popular culture.

The symptoms were all there: the ability to create a controversy out of thin air; a spiteful and arrogant casting of judgment on everybody else; defiant, eye-catching insults thrown at public figures, designed to amplify its own visibility by igniting a journalistic chain reaction.

So, who is this Chris?

I checked on Wikipedia and there he was.

Fifteen pages on a self-referential oppositionist that dwarfed the four pages of humble Paris (but be warned Chris, Googling the names you are no

match for her...!).

In there, you can find his all-encompassing views on anything on earth and his anti-views on the same subjects, always adjusted to sail against the prevailing cultural winds, never to go unnoticed.

This is the ailment.

In a striking parallel to the popular icons that occupy the "massified cretinization of the major media" with their unrestrained behavior, the unhappy victims of this disease suffer from a desperate craving for public visibility.

Therefore, blessed with neither profundity nor genius, they leverage what Mother Nature has given them.

A talent for writing for Mr. Hitchens, money and looks for Paris, brazen faces for the reality heroes. And thus they conquer their place, if not in history, in popular culture. It is only a symptomatic cure, but resolves their immediate suffering.

But what about the thesis of his article, a conceited dissertation on "the creepy populism surrounding high-profile defendants"?

Sorry, my interest was limited to the Paris Hilton Syndrome, as I don't think there is much to say on the obvious.



Le siège de Paris by Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier (1815 - 1891). Oil on canvas

Mr. Hitchens's piece, from the heights of his own "moral superiority", does nothing other than censor "the creepy populism" that surrounds the (rare) retribution of crime-perpetrating self-overexposed individuals.

Should we explain to Mr. Hitchens that acting in a reality show (played in TV or in real life it doesn't matter) has its pros and cons?

Or should we tell an ex-Trotskyist that there is nothing creepy in enjoying the extraordinary view of Justice stripping the rich and famous of the shields that, as a rule, put them safely beyond the law?

It would be like warning Miss Paris that showing her pudenda at a gala will land her on the front page of major media! They don't need my advice any more that an addict has to be told that drug is not healthy.

It is simply in the nature of their illness that their purpose is not in what they do or write, but in the attention that they will get from it!

PS

Curiosity is my own disease. After writing this essay I couldn't help reading something more of Chris's work.

I found much that was elegantly written, quite a few sharp considerations and also many positions that I could happily share.

I was tempted to soften my piece when I remembered that my analysis was not about the man, or his writing, but about the disease.

And the disease is definitely there.

But then, couldn't Paris be a cute and adorable creature between relapses of her syndrome? ●●

#### Editor's Notes

**1) Christopher** Eric Hitchens (born April 13, 1949, in Portsmouth, England) is an Anglo-American author, journalist and literary critic. Currently living in Washington, D.C., he has been a columnist at Vanity Fair, The Atlantic, The Nation, Slate and Free Inquiry; additionally, he is an occasional contributor to other publications and has appeared regularly in the Wall Street Journal. Hitchens is known for his iconoclasm, atheism, antitheism, anti-fascism and anti-monarchism. He is also noted for his acerbic wit and his noisy departure from the Anglo-American political left. He was formerly a Trotskyist and a fixture in the left wing publications of Britain and America.

**2) Quotations** in inverted commas refer to bits and pieces extracted rather loosely from the "Siege of Paris" article posted on www.slate.com of June 11 2007 that was quoted as the source of the quoted translation.

**3) The translated** article appeared in Italy the 13th of July 2007 on the "Corriere della Sera".