FAST CAPITALISM

An Interdisciplinary Journal

Volume 16 • Issue 1

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2019

Fast Capitalism is an academic journal with a political intent. We publish reviewed scholarship and essays about the impact of rapid information and communication technologies on self, society and culture in the 21st century. We do not pretend an absolute objectivity; the work we publish is written from the vantages of viewpoint. Our authors examine how heretofore distinct social institutions, such as work and family, education and entertainment, have blurred to the point of near identity in an accelerated, post-Fordist stage of capitalism. This makes it difficult for people to shield themselves from subordination and surveillance. The working day has expanded; there is little down time anymore. People can 'office' anywhere, using laptops and cells to stay in touch. But these invasive technologies that tether us to capital and control can also help us resist these tendencies. People use the Internet as a public sphere in which they express and enlighten themselves and organize others; women, especially, manage their families and nurture children from the job site and on the road, perhaps even 'familizing' traditionally patriarchal and bureaucratic work relations; information technologies afford connection, mitigate isolation, and even make way for social movements. We are convinced that the best way to study an accelerated media culture and its various political economies and existential meanings is dialectically, with nuance, avoiding sheer condemnation and ebullient celebration. We seek to shape these new technologies and social structures in democratic ways.

Publication Design and Formatting by Brittany Griffiths
Cover Design by Brittany Griffiths

Published and made openly accessible by:
University of Texas at Arlington Libraries
702 Planetarium Pl.
Arlington, TX 76019

ISSN 1930-014X

Mavs Open Press

Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019
ISSN 1930-014X

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* We invite contributions on these and related issues. Some papers will stick close to the ground of daily life and politics; others will ascend the heights of theory in order to get the big picture. The work we publish is both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, bridging the social sciences and humanities. Culture and capital are keywords. We are also interested in cities, the built environment and nature, and we encourage people who theorize space to submit their work.

ISSN 1930-014X

About the Authors

David Arditi

David Arditi is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Theory at the University of Texas at Arlington. He holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from George Mason University. His research addresses the impact of digital technology on society and culture with a specific focus on music. Arditi is author of iTake-Over: The Recording Industry in the digital era. Arditi serves as Editor of Fast Capitalism. In 2016, he developed MusicDetour, a local music archive available for everyone to stream free music.

Christian Garland

Christian Garland teaches precariously at Queen Mary, University of London and has degrees in Philosophy and Politics from the University of East Anglia (UEA) and Social and Political Thought from the University of Sussex. He has research interests include Marx and Frankfurt School Critical Theory especially applying this to the rapidly changing nature of work and how this can be said to embody social relations of atomization and individualization: the re-composition and restructuring of the capital-labor relation itself.

Henry A. Giroux

Henry A. Giroux currently holds the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department and is the Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy. His most recent books include American Nightmare: Facing the Challenge of Fascism (City Lights, 2018), and his forthcoming, The Terror of the Unforeseen (Los Angeles Review of Books, 2019).

Denisa Krásná

Denisa Krásná is a doctoral student of North-American Cultural Studies and Literatures in English at Masaryk University with a special interest in Indigenous issues and literatures. In her research, she focuses primarily on decolonization, colonial gender violence, environmental racism, animal studies, and exploitation of Native lands and the environment in general. In her doctoral dissertation, she explores the emerging framework of anarcha-Indigenism—an intersection between Indigeneity, anarchism, environmentalism, Indigenous feminism and other liberation movements—with special emphasis on decolonial animal ethic. Her case studies include Indigenous environmental and sovereignty movements in southern Mexico, Canada, and Hawaii. While she studies and writes primarily in English, she has also written and translated in Spanish, Czech and French. In both her work and personal life, she is committed to pursuing environmental and social justice as well as animal liberation.

Dean Ray

Dean Ray is a sociologist and social theorist. He is a qualitative and ethnographic researcher who considers how social forces express themselves in everyday interactions. His current research project focuses on how Indigenous

Peoples in Southern British Columbia, build and rebuild institutions as a form of resistance against settler-colonialism. Perhaps the greatest challenge we face, is how we collectively imagine our future. Therefore, all of Dean's research considers how people imagine the future and how this imaginary impinges upon everyday interactions.

Sagar Deva

Dr. Sagar Deva is a University Tutor at the University of Leeds. He holds a Doctorate in International Law from the University of Sheffield on the topic of global constitutionalism and global pluralism. His research interests center around the actions and influence of international organizations in the international system and the legitimacy of international legal and political institutions as well as around constitutionalism and global constitutionalism more generally. Holding master's degrees in both political science and international law, his research seeks to bridge interdisciplinary gaps in the social sciences around the study of institutions, power, legitimacy and constitutionalism with a view to the creation of a more cosmopolitan and just system of global governance.

Paul Smith

Paul Smith was educated at Cambridge and at the University of Kent in the UK and has a PhD in American Studies. Most of his working life has been spent in the US, including posts at Miami University Ohio, and Carnegie Mellon before his appointment to George Mason University in 1996. Between 1999 and 2002 he was chaired Professor and department head of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex in the UK. At Mason he has been director of the Center for the Study of the Americas and currently teaches mostly in the Cultural Studies PhD program.

Sandra Via

Sandra Via is an Associate Professor of Political Science, the Director of Graduate and Online Studies at Ferrum College. Her research currently focuses on political economy, globalization studies, and higher education. She is the co-editor (with Laura Sjoberg) of Gender, War and Militarism: A Feminist Perspective. Her publications include, "Gender, Militarism, and Globalization: Soldiers for Hire and Hegemonic Masculinity" in Gender, War and Militarism: A Feminist Perspective. Sandra's other publications include "The Hunger Games as text for the democracy, justice, and civic engagement classroom" in Critical insights: The Hunger Games Trilogy, "Big Blocks of Cheese and Other Lessons on American Politics and Government: 15 Weeks in The West Wing" (co-authored with Courtney Powell Thomas), and "Striking Back at Neoliberalism: Building Social Solidarity Through Liberation Theology."

Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019

ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.001

Introduction: The Contradictions of Opposition to Free Trade

David Arditi

When both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump featured anti-NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) rhetoric centrally in their respective 2016 campaigns, it struck me how relevant this trade policy was to how people feel across the United States. Opposition to NAFTA is strong on the left and the right, and in a previous issue of Fast Capitalism, Scott McNall states:

> There have been several mass demonstrations against the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). If you characterize the groups that show up to demonstrate in terms of left, right, conservative, or liberal, you have a hard time understanding people's motivations, because you will find members of conservative religious groups protesting right beside members of labor groups, farmers' cooperatives, environmental activists, etc. These disparate groups are, however, joined on the topic of individual freedom and autonomy, and often a desire to strengthen local and regional economies and cultures. Such groups would be seen as sources of **real** negativity, locking arms in the Great Refusal (McNall 2009).

The logic of opposition to NAFTA is clear on a political campaign, but the ripe fruit of opposition to it soon spoils when you try to understand the collective disagreement. In many ways, the debate over Brexit parallels these global forces. David Harvey links NAFTA and the European Union as attempts in the current capitalist regime to "reterritorialize" regions (Harvey 2006:105). Reterritorialization creates the opportunity for the capitalist class to generate more profit using reduced trade barriers to exploit labor. For Harvey, uneven capitalist development creates instability within state boundaries (Harvey 2006) and the state needs to reconfigure to create new enemies. The problem is that the impact of trade agreements on everyday lives quickly lends itself to scapegoating and xenophobia while the perpetrators of global inequality reap the benefits of animosity, disorganization, and apathy.

As a kid growing up in Virginia, I witnessed first-hand the devastation NAFTA wrought on communities that sustained themselves on the textiles industry (a topic Sandra Via covers in this issue). However, the gap between the opposition the Trump and Sanders campaigns displayed to NAFTA brought me back to a situation I experienced on former Rep. Rick Boucher's 2006 campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Following a stint in Rep. Boucher's congressional office in Washington, D.C. as a legislative assistant (thanks to the Virginia Tech Graduate Congressional Fellowship), the Boucher Campaign recruited me as a field organizer after I returned to Blacksburg, VA. My experience with Boucher gave me first-hand knowledge about the Ninth Congressional District of Virginia and his position on certain issues. In 1993, Boucher was among the majority of Democrats who voted against NAFTA, and he remained opposed to the trade policy through his final term in Congress. While I worked on Capitol Hill, immigration was a heated topic, and we regularly received more than ten phone calls in a day from constituents about the topic. However, I did not realize how conflictual immigration was until I attended an event in New Castle, Virginia.

On a cool October night, I attended the Craig County Democratic Party's meeting in New Castle as a representative of the Boucher campaign. Upon arrival, the group's chair told me that she had been trying to reach Boucher to discuss a question she had about immigration. She informed me that she would ask me a question when I was addressing the group. Later, as I began addressing the group about the Boucher campaign, the chair interrupted.

Chair: What is Rick [Boucher] doing about immigration?

Me (thinking I am addressing a group of like-minded Democrats who would be upset by Boucher's votes): Rep. Boucher voted with Republicans for a stronger border bill because he knew that the bill would never be signed into law . . .

Chair: What?

Crowd: [groans of outrage]

Chair's husband: We need to do something about illegals [sic]. They are everywhere. If you go to Hardee's in Covington, they're there just hanging out every day. If you go to Blacksburg, where you live, they're everywhere.

Member #1: We can't get jobs here, and the Mexicans [sic] are moving in and there are no jobs.

Chair: I can't believe he would not support a tougher border because it is what we need! We need to get rid of the illegals [sic], we're being overrun.

Me: I understand that Craig County suffers from economic decline, and there are no jobs here because factories closed. Those factories closed because of NAFTA. Rep. Boucher opposed the passage of NAFTA in 1993, and has fought hard against the trade pact and its effects ever since that day. NAFTA took away your jobs!
[crowd relaxes]

Chair: I'm going to be following up with Rick.

Later, as I got into my car to go home, I had a slur leveled at my Honda Accord.[1] The tensions in the room that day were palpable. The members of Craig County's Democratic Party were willing to blame the "other" for their lack of opportunity even though they knew that the driving force of their struggles was the result of a trade pact—a trade pact built to exploit the very people they harbored animosity towards. The Chair's husband leveled some vile statements about human beings, and his examples of Covington and Blacksburg were both about an hour from New Castle. In other words, to find blame in the "other," they had to connect their community to communities at least an hour's car drive away. Following this incident, I never had to drive to Craig County again because the Campaign Manager assigned a different field staff member to the county. It also struck me how an issue like immigration could be so contentious at a meeting of the Democratic Party—the party I always connected with equality, respect for diversity, and the humanity of people. This meeting could easily signify the resilience of the old Democratic Party of the South (i.e., the segregationist party); after all, the Ku Klux Klan had marched in New Castle, VA less than ten years before this meeting. However, their recognition that NAFTA was the problem sustained another perspective; specifically, the tensions between NAFTA and Latinx immigration in rural America are closely knit together.

Craig County, VA is Trump country. The rural county embedded in the Jefferson National Forrest is over 98% white and the population is just over 5,000 people. According to the Virginia Department of Election's website, out of 2,794 votes cast in 2016, Donald Trump received 2,140 (77%) to Hillary Clinton's 541 (19%) (Virginia Department of Elections 2016). The 1992 presidential election was much closer with George HW Bush receiving 1,008 votes (44%) to Bill Clinton's 995 (42%) (Virginia Department of Elections 1992). By the 2000 election, the surge of Craig County voters toward the Republican Party was substantial when George W Bush won 1,580 votes (63%) to Al Gore's 851 votes (34%) – a divide very close to the votes received by John McCain and Barrack Obama, respectively (Virginia Department of Elections 2000, 2008). The shift in Craig County, while part of an overall shift throughout the South from Democrats to Republicans,[2] accelerated following the passage of NAFTA. Whereas President Bill Clinton received 42% of the vote in 1992, Hillary Clinton received only 19% 24 years later. This is an oversimplification of the complexities in Craig County, southwestern Virginia, and the US as a whole, but the correlation is not without merit.

When Donald Trump promised to rip-up NAFTA (Corasaniti, Burns, and Appelbaum 2017), he tapped into seething animosity among the white working-class, underclass, and unemployed whom NAFTA left behind over the previous 22 years. However, Trump's opposition to the trade agreement had little to do with opposition to neoliberal trade policy, and everything to do with the threat of the "other." It was no different from Trump's presidential announcement in 2015, when Trump pronounced, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us [sic]. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I

assume, are good people" (Trump 2015). What people often overlook is that this horribly racist statement is threaded into a discussion about trade deals. In fact, he mentions the word trade nine times and immigration only twice. Trump derides trade with China, Mexico, and Japan all while asserting that he is a "free trader," but a free trader who uses trade to put America's interests first. The logic will make your head spin, but the connection between NAFTA and immigration is clear. However, "one of NAFTA's central intended effects is to increase the hegemonic power of the American economy in the region" (Smith 1997:42). From Smith's perspective, Trump's desire to renegotiate NAFTA is firmly in line with the original intent of the act.

As Sagar Deva and Denisa Krásná outline in this issue, NAFTA and immigration are linked clearly, but not in the way Trump imagines. Rather, neoliberal forces unleashed by NAFTA restrict the movement of people (specifically Mexicans), while permitting goods, capital, and ideas to move with few barriers. To comply with NAFTA, the Salinas regime in Mexico eliminated its **ejido** land system, which forced peasants to either join the factory workforce or migrate to the US (See Sagar and Krásná this volume; Harvey 2005:101). In effect, NAFTA created cheap labor in Mexico, while restricting that labor from legally migrating north. People flee the oppressive labor conditions in Mexico, but the migrants who then arrive in the USA do not have recourse to labor laws because of their undocumented status; thereby further subjugating them to the harsh forces of neoliberal trade. Trump's rhetoric taps into a xenophobia that exists among many whites in the USA but does nothing to alleviate the structural problems that actually cause harm to all people on both sides of the US-Mexico border. The (im)mobility of immigrants highlights the structural problems of globalization. "Migrants demonstrate (and help construct) the general commonality of the multitude by crossing and thus partially undermining every geographical barrier" (Hardt and Negri 2004:134). While NAFTA attempts to exploit cheap labor in Mexico, it ejects people from their communities and unleashes the very opposition to globalization. Even though immigrants are forced from their communities by NAFTA, the supporters of NAFTA are "simultaneously stirring up xenophobic hatred towards the disenfranchised laborers who try to traverse these borders into the United States" (Kaye 2016). At the same time, NAFTA frees the wealthy to move and communicate across borders. "Trade agreements such as NAFTA have eased restrictions on corporate and business executives, professionals, and highly skilled workers as they move from one country to another" (Goldman, Papson, and Kersey 2006). In fact, the wealthy "transnational capitalist class" in Mexico, Canada, and the US led the passage of NAFTA (Sklair 2001:101–5). These contradictions generate a lot of animosity towards free trade, and NAFTA in particular, but rarely see the exploitative origins of the paradoxes.

In a recent issue of Rolling Stone magazine, the strange contradictions created by opposition to NAFTA become visible. Since Rolling Stone is a proud lefty magazine, the editors take every opportunity to stick it to Donald Trump. Josh Eells' article, "Why We Need Mexico," highlights the extent to which the left (and I do not mean moderate Democrats) finds it difficult to parse the contradictions of opposing NAFTA. As an attempt to lay bare Trump's xenophobic immigration policies and his desire to build a border wall using a national emergency declaration, Eells demonstrates that the vibrancy of McAllen, Texas is largely a result of Mexico and Mexicans (Eells 2019). The general idea is that McAllen has a larger tax base per capita than most places in Texas because Mexicans (legally) travel across the border to shop, which the locals call in Spanish "**macalenear**, or literally 'to do McAllen'" (Eells 2019:50). Since Texas generates most of its tax revenue from sales taxes, this is a boon for McAllen. This is a comforting perspective, we need Mexico because Mexicans come to the US to shop; however, the article becomes decidedly darker from there.

Eels interviews Keith Patridge, the CEO of the McAllen Economic Development Corporation, a group that operates much like a local Chamber of Commerce. Patridge describes himself as a tax cut-loving, Trump-voting Republican who "believes Trump's stance toward Mexico is counterproductive" (Eells 2019:51). It turns out that Patridge's group used the McAllen free trade zone to market Reynosa, Mexico instead of McAllen, Texas to the transnational capitalist class. Reynosa is the much larger sister city to McAllen that sits just across the Rio Grande. After the implementation of NAFTA:

> according to Patridge, the average wage in the maquiladoras just across the border in Reynosa was about 80 cents an hour — and because of the rapid devaluation of the peso, in a few months it was headed down toward 35 cents. "So I said, 'I know what will attract companies here,'" Patridge recalls. "It's not McAllen — it's that 35-cents-an-hour labor rate, right across the river from the largest market in the world" (Eells 2019:51).

Factories moved from other parts of the United States to open maquiladoras in Reynosa and exploit a comparative advantage on wage rates. The benefit that Patridge sees is that the factories could move to Reynosa and

the engineers and managers can live in McAllen. The article describes a form of apartheid where wealthy Americans can drive across the Rio Grande to exploit cheap labor, then return to America to live each night. Of course, the cheap Mexican labor does not receive the same rights to work in America for a higher wage and commute back to Mexico at night. Here, the reality of how "la Frontera" is not the US, or Mexico, but its own liminal space where, as some say money marks the border. The article ends up supporting NAFTA as a windfall for McAllen and cheap goods for Americans, but underneath is raw exploitation.

In late March 2019, Trump threatened to close the US-Mexico border and highlighted some of the problems with claiming to be a "free trader" in-chief at the same time that he is lauded by white nationalists as the xenophobe-in-chief. The reaction to closing the southern border from people of most political persuasions was swift, and the debate about the border turned quickly toward the impact on the economy (Paletta and Dawsey 2019)—especially to avocados. Before Trump backpedaled entirely to a warning for Mexico to slow the "flow of drugs and migrants into the United States" (Sonmez 2019), there was much ink spilled on the economic impact of closing the southern border. One idea was to continue to allow trains and trucks to cross the border (Paletta and Dawsey 2019) – note this would do little to alleviate drugs or people crossing the border. This highlights that the threat was more spectacle than substantive—Trump wanted to gin up his base, which has always supported him because of his regressive views on immigration.

In fact, the new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) designed to replace NAFTA points to the spectacle of Trump's presidency. Since he promised to eliminate NAFTA and renegotiate a "great deal" because he says the US is "losing" as a result of NAFTA, he followed through by creating USMCA. Yet there is little difference between the USMCA and NAFTA except for a couple of points where Trump thinks the US lost. Instead of focusing on the details of this deal here, I think it is important to state that the agreement changes very little. In fact, one major opposition to the bill comes from Democrats who want to see labor laws strengthened in Mexico to support workers at home and in Mexico (Mauldin 2019). This was always the problem with NAFTA—it created free trade with Mexico thereby allowing things to be made cheaply by exploiting cheap labor across the border and importing those goods back into the United States without tariffs—and it was the reason why the three North American countries created the agreement in the first place. Here Trump tangled himself in a knot of promises that do not speak to the problems experienced by those who oppose NAFTA. I have come to think that when Trump claims to be "the best" dealmaker (and liberals laugh at him), he speaks to the deals that he made to his voters, not the great deals he will make as president. Deal-making is transactional politics to Trump. This is a weird rhetorical twist because he views deals not as outcomes of negotiations, but rather as giving one group of people what they want in return for him gaining power or money. However, he caught himself in a Faustian bargain by promising to get rid of a trade agreement he (and the GOP) strongly support – again, in his own words he is a "free trader" (Trump 2015). In order to save face, and claim that he eliminated it, he has conducted a charade of "tearing up" NAFTA and replacing it with something "great," but the USMCA looks exactly like the original agreement. He bets that he can eliminate NAFTA and run for reelection on it before some white working-class voters realize the deal did not improve their lives.

By interrogating NAFTA, USMCA, and Brexit, we hope that this issue of Fast Capitalism provides policymakers, academics, and the public with some intellectual heft to think about the implications of these policies on people. Too often capitalists and corporations set the field of debate about these policies through think tanks and the press. "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling **material** force of society, is at the same time its ruling **intellectual** force" (Marx 1978:172). The goal of this special issue is to provide a counterhegemonic intervention on the discourse about NAFTA, USMCA, and Brexit. When Trump opposes NAFTA in support of something better, he does so by blaming Mexico and Mexicans for all the problems that poor and working-class whites face in the United States. His solution is to make the other pay through arbitrary xenophobic means. The ruling class perpetuates racial/ethnic divisions as an ideological means to obscure the true direction of exploitation of trade pacts. We hope that the readers recognize that the debates about these policies are in motion. To wait until after the dust settles would make more accurate accounts of the policies, but this would miss the opportunity to offer a counter-narrative. We welcome lively debate about these issues.

This special issue on NAFTA and Brexit begins by exploring Neoliberalism. Specifically, Henry Giroux explains that underlying Neoliberalism is a fascist tendency to squash democracy. Giroux lays out the theoretical underpinnings of populist authoritarianism in which citizens internalize neoliberal logic that leave subjects powerless to the economy. This faux populism provides the support for leaders to remake international policies (ex. NAFTA and Brexit) that further disempower and exploit people.

Sandra Via provides a first-hand account of the devastation caused by NAFTA in "Twenty-Five Years and Still Recovering: A Brief Reflection on NAFTA's Impact on Southside, Virginia." In this polemic, Via provides important on-the-ground details about life in rural Virginia after NAFTA. Sagar Deva and Denisa Krásná move the discussion of NAFTA from the United States to Mexico and describe the dehumanization of life in Juarez, Mexico in "Neoliberalism, NAFTA, and Dehumanization: The case of femicides in Ciudad Juárez." Deva and Sagar demonstrate the social, cultural, political, and economic changes that happened because of NAFTA and have resulted in femicides. In "Abject Futures: The (re)Negotiation of NAFTA and the Canadian Power Elite," Dean Ray takes the discussion north to Canada. Ray's essay moves the issue from those exploited by free trade agreements to those who benefit. He argues that Canada negotiated the USMCA agreement to benefit Canadian economic elites.

In "Taking Back Control of Nothing: Elites Denouncing Elites to Mobilize Populism in the Service of Power - from NAFTA to Trump, Brexit, and the EU," Christian Garland demonstrates the similarities between Donald Trump and the Brexiters. Garland's article helps straddle the discourse between NAFTA and Brexit. The issue concludes with Paul Smith's "The Antinomies of Brexit." By exploring the left-right tensions over inclusion in the European Union and the European Economic Community, Smith shows that the history of British inclusion in the Europe Union has been fraught for complex reasons from the start. Furthermore, Smith connects some of the themes over fake populism started in Giroux's article. Smith's essay not only explores the specificities of Brexit but places this within the colonial legacy of Britain. All discussions of free trade stand in the shadow of colonialism.

New Times, Marxism Today, and the Public Intellectual

During the Thatcher era in the United Kingdom, scholars associated with the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies published a series of essays in Marxism Today trying to make sense of Thatcherism while her policies began to wreak havoc on British people. Their project aimed to reimagine the Left in what they called "New Times," Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques later published this series in a volume by the same name (Hall and Jacques 1989). While Hall et al. tried to make sense of Thatcherism, they began describing in real time the policies and logics of what we now call neoliberalism. The subtitle of New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s pointed toward the future because Hall and Jacques published the volume in 1989.

As I assume duties as Editor of Fast Capitalism, Timothy Luke and I would like to take the journal in a direction that regularly allows commentary from academics on the current moment. Of course, this is something that Ben Agger and Luke always committed as part of the mission of the journal. In 2007, Agger and Luke published a special issue (3.1) on the tragedy at Virginia Tech that went from idea to publication in the same year as the shooting. This serves as a model on which we can build special calls for papers/proposals to comment on the changing world of fast capitalism (Agger 1988). While conventional journal formats often have a lag between acceptance and publication (even longer for print publication), these restrictions do not apply to the online format of Fast Capitalism.

Please look for our special calls. Sometimes these may be short issues with short timelines (like the present issue), while other times they may call for more cerebral analyses of changing structures. In any case, we hope to provide a forum for intellectual discourse and discussion about issues that impact the structure of society.

Endnotes

1. Coincidentally, in terms of global trade, Honda Accords have been made in Marysville, OH since 1982, so my car was, in fact, "American Made." This is similar to Toyota Tundras, which to clarify the point, include stickers that read "Born in Texas, Built by Texans" emblazoned on a Texas flag.

2. Furthermore, the southern shift from Democrats to Republicans in federal politics predates this shift by 10-20 years.

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Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019

ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.002

Neoliberal Fascism as the Endpoint of Casino Capitalism[1]

Henry A. Giroux

Every age has its own fascism
— Primo Levi

Neoliberalism as the New Fascism

The war against liberal democracy has become a global phenomenon. Authoritarian regimes have spread from Turkey, Poland, Hungary, and India to the United States and several other countries.[2] Right-wing populist movements are on the march spewing forth a poisonous mix of ultra-nationalism, white supremacy, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia. The language of national decline, humiliation, and demonization fuels dangerous proposals and policies aimed at racial purification and social sorting while hyping a masculinization of agency and a militarism reminiscent of past dictatorships. Under current circumstances, the forces that have produced the histories of mass violence, torture, genocide, and fascism have not been left behind. Consequently, it has been more challenging to argue that the legacy of fascism has nothing to teach us regarding how "the question of fascism and power clearly belongs to the present."[3]

Fascism has multiple histories, most connected either to failed democracies in Italy and Germany in the 1930s, or to the overthrow of democratic governments by the military, as in Argentina and Chile in the 1970s. Moreover, the history between fascism and populism involves a complex mix of relations over time.[4] What is distinctive about this millennial fascism is that its history of "a violent totalitarian order that led to radical forms of political violence and genocide" has been softened by attempts to recalibrate its postwar legacy to a less liberal democratic register.[5] For instance, in Hungary, Turkey, and Poland and several other emerging fascist states, the term "illiberal democracy" is used as a code to replace a "supposedly outmoded form of liberal democracy."[6] In actuality, the term is used to justify a form of populist authoritarianism whose goal is to attack the very foundations of democracy. These fascist underpinnings are also expanding in the United States. In Trump's bombastic playbook, the notion of "the people" has become a rhetorical tool to legitimize right-wing mass movements in support of a return to the good old days of American Apartheid while appealing to a reactionary ultra-nationalism.[7]

Democracy is the scourge of neoliberalism and its ultimate humiliation. As the ideas, values, and institutions crucial to a democracy have withered under a savage neoliberalism, which has been fifty years in the making, fascistic notions of racial superiority, social cleansing, apocalyptic populism, hyper-militarism, and ultra-nationalism have gained in intensity moving from the repressed recesses of US history to the centers of state and corporate power.[8] Decades of mass inequality, wage stagnation, the collapse of the manufacturing sector, tax giveaways to the financial elite, and savage austerity policies that drove a frontal attack on the welfare state have further strengthened fascistic discourses and redirected populist anger against vulnerable populations and undocumented immigrants, Muslims, the racially oppressed, women, LBGTQ people, public servants, critical intellectuals, and workers. Not only has neoliberalism undermined the essential elements of democracy by escalating the mutually reinforcing dynamics of economic inequality and political inequality-- accentuating the downhill spiral of social and economic mobility--it has

also created conditions that make fascist ideas and principles more attractive.

Under these accelerated circumstances, neoliberalism and fascism conjoin and advance in a comfortable and mutually compatible movement that connects the worse excesses of capitalism with authoritarian "strong man" ideals—the veneration of war, a hatred of reason and truth; a celebration of ultra-nationalism and racial purity; the suppression of freedom and dissent; a culture which promotes lies, spectacles, scapegoating the other, a discourse of deterioration, brutal violence, and ultimately erupting in state violence in heterogeneous forms. In the Trump administration, neoliberal fascism is on steroids and represents a fusion of the worse dimensions and excesses of gangster capitalism with the fascist ideals of white nationalism and racial supremacy associated with the horrors of the past.[9]

Neoliberal structural transformation has both undermined and refigured "the principles, practices, cultures, subjects, and institution of democracy understood as a rule by the people."[10] Since the earlier seventies, the neoliberal project has mutated into a revolt against human rights, democracy, and created a compelling narrative that refigures freedom and authority to legitimize and produce massive inequities in wealth and power.[11] Its practices of offshoring, restructuring everything according to the dictates of profit margins, providing tax cuts for the rich, , eliminating corporate regulations, propoting unchecked privatization, and the ongoing commercializing of all social interactions "inflicts alienating misery" on a polity newly vulnerable to fascist ideals, rhetoric, and politically extremist movements.[12]

Furthermore, the merging of neoliberalism and fascism has accelerated as civic culture is eroded, notions of shared citizenship and responsibility disappear, and the forces of civic illiteracy replace reason and informed judgment. State-sanctioned attacks on the truth, facts, and scientific reason in Trump's America are camouflaged-- as one expects of the first Reality TV president-- by a corporate controlled culture of vulgarity that merges celebrity culture with a non-stop spectacle of violence. Neoliberalism strips democracy of any substance by promoting an irrational belief in the ability of the market to solve all social problems and shape all aspects of society. This shift from a market economy to a market-driven society has been accompanied by a savage attack on equality, the social contract, and social provisions as wages have been gutted, pensions destroyed, health care put out of reach for millions, job security undermined, and access to crucial public goods such as public and higher education considerably weakened for the lower and middle classes. What has become distinctive about neoliberal capitalism is its attack not only on all vestiges of the social contract, but its culture of cruelty in which more and more individuals and groups are considered excess, waste, contaminated, and subject to forms of racial and social cleansing.

In the current historical moment, neoliberalism represents more than a form of hyper-capitalism, it also denotes the death of democracy if not politics itself. Anis Shivani's articulation of the threat neoliberalism poses to democracy is worth quoting at length:

> Neoliberalism believes that markets are self-sufficient unto themselves, that they do not need regulation, and that they are the best guarantors of human welfare. Everything that promotes the market, i.e., privatization, deregulation, mobility of finance and capital, abandonment of government-provided social welfare, and the reconception of human beings as human capital, needs to be encouraged, while everything that supposedly diminishes the market, i.e., government services, regulation, restrictions on finance and capital, and conceptualization of human beings in transcendent terms, is to be discouraged....One way to sum up neoliberalism is to say that everything—everything—is to be made over in the image of the market, including the state, civil society, and of course human beings. Democracy becomes reinterpreted as the market, and politics succumbs to neoliberal economic theory, so we are speaking of the end of democratic politics as we have known it for two and a half centuries.[13]

What is particularly distinctive about the conjuncture of neoliberalism and fascism is how the full-fledged liberation of capital now merges with an out-and-out attack on the racially oppressed and vulnerable populations considered disposable. Not only do the oppressive political, economic and financial structures of casino capitalism bear down on people's lives, but there is also a frontal attack on the shared understandings and beliefs that hold a people together. One important and distinctive place where neoliberalism and fascism converge is in the undermining of social bonds and moral boundaries. Displacement, disintegration, atomization, social isolation, and deracination have a long history in the United States which has been aggressively exploited by Trump, taking on a distinctive right-wing twenty-first-century register. There is more at work here than the heavy neoliberal toll of social abandonment. There is also, under the incessant pedagogical propaganda of right-wing and corporate controlled media, a culture that has become cruel and cultivates an appetite for maliciousness that undermines the capacity for empathy, making people indifferent to the suffering of others or, even worse, willing participants in their violent exclusion.

Irish journalist, Fintan O'Toole, warns that fascism unravels the ethical imagination through a process in which

individuals eventually "learn to think the unthinkable…followed by a crucial next step, usually the trickiest of all." He writes:

> You have to undermine moral boundaries, inure people to the acceptance of acts of extreme cruelty. Like hounds, people have to be blooded. They have to be given the taste for savagery. Fascism does this by building up the sense of threat from a despised out-group. This allows the members of that group to be dehumanised. Once that has been achieved, you can gradually up the ante, working through the stages from breaking windows to extermination.[14]

What is often labeled as an economic crisis in American society is also a crisis of morality, of sociality, and community. Since the 1970s, an increasingly unregulated capitalism has hardened into a form of market fundamentalism that has accelerated the hollowing out of democracy through its capacity to reshape the commanding political, social, and economic institutions of American society, making it vulnerable to the fascist solutions proposed by Trump. As an integrated system of structures, ideologies, and values, neoliberalism economizes every aspect of life, separates economic activity from social costs, and depoliticizes the public through corporate controlled disimagination machines that trade in post-truth narratives, fake news, enshrine the spectacle of violence, debase language, and distort history. Neoliberalism now wages a battle against any viable notion of the social, solidarity, the collective imagination, the public good, and the institutions that support them. As the realm of the political is defined in strictly economic terms, the institutions, public goods, formative cultures, and modes of identity essential to a democracy disappear along with the informed citizens necessary to sustain them. In this discourse, the grammar of social responsibility disappears, opening the door to a criminogenic culture of capitalism. In the United States, Trump's obsession with militarism, his disdain for the rule of law, his charge of treason aimed at his critics, and his disdain and daily threats against an oppositional press make clear the fascist principles at the heart of his political mode of governance.

Freedom and the Crisis of Reason

As more and more power is concentrated in the hands of a corporate and financial elite, freedom is defined exclusively in market terms, inequality is cast as a virtue, and the logic of privatization heaps contempt upon civic compassion and the welfare state. The fatal after-effect is that neoliberalism has emerged as the new face of fascism.[15] With the fifty-year advance of neoliberalism, freedom has become its opposite. Moreover, democracy, once the arc of civic freedom, now becomes its enemy since democratic governance no longer takes priority over the unchecked workings of the market. Neoliberalism undermines both the social and the public and in doing so weakens the idea of shared responsibilities and moral obligations. As Zygmunt Bauman argues, "ethical tranquillization" is now normalized under the assumption that freedom is limited to the right to only advance one's interests and the interests of the markets.[16] Freedom in the neoliberal playbook disavows any notion of responsibility outside of the responsibility to oneself.

Neoliberalism's flight from social responsibility was made clear by Milton Friedman, one of the prominent architects of neoliberalism, in an article written for the *New York Times* in 1970. He argued unapologetically that social responsibility was anathema to capitalist ideology and was at odds with the more important search for profits. For Friedman, any reference to social responsibility was both subversive and tantamount to advocating for socialism and had to be avoided at all costs. According to Friedman, "the doctrine of social responsibility [is] a "fundamentally subversive doctrine in a free society, and… there is one and only one social responsibility of business--to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits."[17]

As Wendy Brown argues, politics and democracy are now viewed as the enemy of markets and "politics is cast as the enemy to freedom, to order and to progress."[18] Politics now becomes a mix of regressive notions of freedom and authority whose purpose is to protect market-driven principles and practices. A kind of pornographic celebration of self-interest now merges with a disdain for social welfare, if not any notion of a democratic social imaginary. What disappears in this all-encompassing reach of capital is the notion of civic freedom which is replaced by securitization organized to protect the lawless workings of the profit motive and the savagery of neoliberal austerity policies. Moreover, as freedom becomes privatized, it feeds a lack of interest in politics and breeds moral indifference. Democratic passions are directed towards private pleasures, the demands of citizenship are undermined, and the public sphere withers as self-interest becomes the primary organizing principle of society. As the terrain of politics,

agency, and social relations loses its moral bearings, the passions of a fascist past are unleashed and society increasingly begins to resemble a war culture, blood sport, and a form of cage fighting.

In this instance, the oppressed are not only cheated out of history, but they are also led to believe that under neoliberal fascism, there are no alternatives and that the future can only imitate the present. Not only does this position suppress any sense of responsibility and resistance, but it also produces what Timothy Snyder calls "a kind of sleepwalking, and has to end with a crash."[19] The latter is reinforced by a government that believes that the truth is dangerous and that reality begins with a tweet that signals both the legitimation of endless lies and forms of power that infantilize and depoliticize because they leave no room for standards of language capable of holding power accountable. Even worse, Trump's war on language and truth does more than limit freedom to competing fictions, and it also erases the distinction between moral depravity and justice, good and evil. As I have said elsewhere, "Trump's Ministry of Fake News works incessantly to set limits on what is thinkable claiming that reason, evidence, consistency, and logic no longer serve the truth, because the latter are crooked ideological devices used by enemies of the state. 'Thought crimes,' are now labeled as 'fake news.'"[20] In this instance, fake news wages an assault not merely on traditional sources of of information, it also functions as a verbal gimmick to hide the brutality of the policies unleashed by the Trump administration. Functioning as a kind of dystopian legitimacy, fake news does not merely produce and legitimate misrepretations and lies. On the contrary, as Phil Torres argues, it reports " a distortion of the truth either for ideological or commercial reasons, accompanied by total carelessness and/or a dogmatic refusal to acknowledge one's mistakes once revealed as such."[21]

Timothy Snyder is right in arguing that "To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is a spectacle."[22] The post-truth society is a state-sponsored diversion and spectacle. Its purpose is to camouflage a moral and political crisis that has put into play a set of brutal neoliberal arrangements. Rather than view truth as the currency of democracy, Trump and his acolytes view it and democracy as the enemy of power. Such arrangements put both democracies at risk and create an educational and political project receptive to the political currency of white supremacy. As a master of schlock performance, Trump tweets and speaks largely to his angry, resentful base often using crude language in which the threat of violence and repression appears to function for his audience as a source of "romance, pleasure, and fantasy."[23] These core supporters represent, at best, what Philip Roth once generously called the "uneducated and overburdened." However, they also cultivate what Erin Aubry Kaplan calls "the very worst American impulses, from xenophobia to know-nothingism to disdain for social necessities such as public education and clean water [and their] signature quality is racism."[24]

Restaging Fascism Within Democracy

Rather than disappear into the memory hole of history, fascism has reappeared in a different form in the United States echoing Theodor Adorno's warning "I consider the survival of National Socialism within democracy to be potentially more menacing than the survival of fascist tendencies against democracy."[25] Theorists, novelists, historians, and writers that include such luminaries as Hannah Arendt, Sinclair Lewis, Bertram Gross, Umberto Eco, Robert O'Paxton, Timothy Snyder, Susan Sontag, and Sheldon Wolin have argued convincingly that fascism remains an ongoing danger and can become relevant under new conditions. In the aftermath of the fall of Nazi Germany, Hannah Arendt warned that totalitarianism was far from a thing of the past because the conditions of extreme precarity and uncertainty that produce it were likely to crystallize into new forms.[26]

What Arendt thought was crucial for each generation to recognize was that presence of the Nazi camps and the policy of extermination should be understood not only as the logical outcome of a totalitarian society or merely a return of the past but also for what their histories suggest about forecasting a "possible model for the future."[27] The nightmare of fascism's past cannot escape memory because it needs to be retold over and over again to recognize when it is happening again. Rather than fade into the past, mass poverty, unchecked homelessness, large scale rootlessness, fear mongering, social atomization, state terrorism, and the politics of elimination have provided the seeds for new forms of fascism to appear. The renowned historian of fascism, Robert O' Paxton argues in his Anatomy of Fascism that the texture of American fascism would not mimic traditional European forms but would be rooted in the language, symbols, and culture of everyday life. He writes:

> No swastikas in an American fascism, but Stars and Stripes (or Stars and Bars) and Christian crosses. No fascist salute, but mass recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance. These symbols contain no whiff of fascism in themselves, of course, but an American fascism would transform them into obligatory litmus tests for detecting the internal enemy.[28]

Given the alarming signs that have come into play under the Trump administration, it is hard to look away and condone the suppression of both the history and language of fascism and its relevance for understanding America's flight from the promise and ideals of a substantive democracy. This is not to suggest that the only template for addressing the legacy of fascism is to point to Nazi, Germany, the most extreme of the fascist states or for that matter to Mussolini's brand of fascism. Not only does the comparison not work, but it tends to understand fascist ideals only against its most extreme expressions.

While it is true that the US may not be putting millions in gas chambers or promoting genocide, there remain, nonetheless, reworked elements of the past in the present. For instance, there are already echoes of the past in existing and expanding infrastructures of punishment--amounting to a carceral state--that have been in place but have grown exponentially, for the past four decades. In fact, the United States has the largest prison system in the world, with over 2.5 million people incarcerated. Astonishingly, this figure does not include immigrant detention centers and other forms of encampment around the US border with Mexico. The visibility of this state-sanctioned punishing apparatus and its similarity to a fascist history was on display more recently with the caging of young immigrant children who were forcibly separated from their parents at the southern border for months at a time.

Reports of widespread abuse of imprisoned unaccompanied migrant children separated from their parents are increasingly being reported in the press. Detained under inhumane and cruel conditions, many of these children in government detention centers are being drugged, sexually abused, and subject to a range of inhumane actions. In Texas, a federal judge ordered a Texas detention center to stop forcing children to take psychotropic drugs such as Clonazepam, Divalproex, Benztropine, and Duloxetine in order to control their behavior.[29] ProPublica reported that sexual abuse is widespread in detention centers for children and cited "hundreds of allegations of sexual offenses, fights, and missing children."[30] Even the most vulnerable and youngest of children have not been protected from such abuse. For instance, according to The Nation, a six-year-old migrant girl who had been separated from her mother and placed in an immigrant detention center under the Trump administrations' "zero tolerance policy was allegedly sexually abused.[31] Needless to say, such actions, policies, and institutions resonate with deeply disturbing events of a dark past for which the violent separation of families was a hallmark feature of fascist cruelty, barbarism, and brutality.

Some have argued that the huge public outcry against the separation of children from their parents proves that the U.S. is not a fascist society. Actually, all it really proves is that the most extreme policies at work in Trump's America can still provoke moral outrage, but such outrage, when disconnected from warnings from a fascist past in which similar events took place, is simply an example of an isolated form of protest that ignores historical memory as a tool to understand how elements of a fascist past appears in different forms. One might say that Trump's zero-tolerance policy was simply a test run for measuring the speed at which he could advance his fascist agenda. It is also important to note that the protest did nothing to get the Trump administration to release hundreds of children who are still being held without their parents nor has it stopped the terrorist tactics produced by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement The new form of fascism updated under the Trump administration does not require the overthrow of democracy in one grand sweep, nor does it mean that the taste for savagery produced in numerous policies of suffering and cruelty won't be resisted by the public in some cases. Neoliberal fascism comes on by stealth, functioning as an accretion of events signaling an ongoing danger.

It is against this background that I believe that the current debates that dismiss whether the US under Donald Trump is a fascist society are unproductive. The argument against this recognition generally proceeds by claiming either that fascism is either a relic of the past, fixed in a certain historical period and has no relevance to the present or that the differences between Trump's policies and those of Hitler and Mussolini are different enough to make any comparison irrelevant. Many commentators denounce any reference between Trump and a Nazi past as exaggerated, extreme, or inapplicable. In this view, fascism is always somewhere else, relegated to a time and a place that suggests an accommodating distance, one that runs the risk of disconnecting historical memory and the horrors of another age from the possibility of fascism resurrected in a different form, newly attuned to its moment. We live in an age in which there is a terror on the part of critics to imagine the plasticity of fascism.

The Mobilizing Passions of Fascism

Fascism is neither a static nor fixed moment in history and the forms it takes do not have to imitate earlier historical models. It is an authoritarian ideology and a form of political behavior defined by what the historian Robert O. Paxton calls a series of "mobilizing passions." These include: an open assault on democracy, the call for a

strongman, a contempt for human weakness, an obsession with hyper-masculinity, an aggressive militarism, an appeal to national greatness, a disdain for the feminine; an investment in the language of cultural decline, the disparaging of human rights, the suppression of dissent, a propensity for violence, disdain for intellectuals, a hatred of reason, and fantasies of racial superiority and eliminationist policies aimed at social cleansing.[32]

The ghost of fascism has to be retrieved from history and restored to a "proper place in the discussions of the moral and political limits of what is acceptable,"[33] especially at a moment when the crisis of democracy cannot be separated from the crisis of neoliberalism. As a heuristic tool to compare different forms of state power, the legacy of fascism offers an opportunity to recognize when authoritarian signposts are on the horizon. For example, under Trump, the spectacle reigns supreme, harking back to an earlier time in history when bravado, armed ignorance, and theatrical performances provided a model of community that squelched memory, domesticated thought, and opened the door for strongman's followers to disavow their role as critical agents in favor of becoming blind, if not willful, spectators. With regards to the present, it is crucial to recognize the ascendancy of Trump politically within rather than against the flow of history.

Fascism in the United States has arrived slowly by subversion from within. Its roots have been on display for decades and emerged most visibly with Bush and then Obama's war on terror. Bush, in particular, embraced unapologetically a raw display of power that sanctioned torture, domestic spying, secret prisons, kill lists, laws sanctioning indefinite detention, warrantless searches, and war crimes. Obama did little to correct these legal illegalities and Trump has only breathed new life into them. Instead of the sudden appearance on American streets of thugs, brown shirts, purges, and massive state violence—the state violence waged against African Americans notwithstanding--fascism has been resurrected through the enabling force of casino capitalism, which has unleashed and mobilized a range of economic, political, religious, and educational fundamentalisms.

This is most obvious in the subversion of power by the financial and corporate robber barons, the taming of dissent, the cultivation of tribal identities, the celebration of orbits of self-interests and hyper-individualism over the common good, the privatization and deregulation of public life and institutions, the legitimation of bigotry and intolerance, the transformation of elections into a battle among billionaires, and the production of a culture of greed and cruelty. But, as Wendy Brown makes clear, it is also obvious in a populist revolt generated by neoliberalism's decimation of "livelihoods and neighborhoods," "evacuating and delegitimizing democracy," "devaluing knowledge apart from job training," and "eroding of national sovereignty."[34]

Orthodoxy, especially under Trump has transformed education into a workstation for ignorance where harsh discipline is metered out to poor students and youth of color; politics has been utterly corrupted by big money and morally deficient bankers, hedge fund managers, and corporate moguls. Also, many evangelicals and other religious groups support, or are complicit, with a president who sides with white supremacists and trades in the language of viciousness and brutality.[35]

The corporate state fueled by market fundamentalism and a long legacy of racial apartheid has imposed almost incomprehensible cruelty on poor and vulnerable Black populations. The merging of neoliberalism and fascist elements of white supremacy and systemic racism is particularly evident in environmental racism, dilapidated schools, and air pollution that have come to light recently.[36] The shortlist includes going so far as to sacrifice poor Black children in Flint, Michigan to the perils of lead poisoning in order to increase profits, subject the population of Puerto Rico to unnecessary despair by refusing to provide adequate government services after Hurricane Maria,[37] and creating conditions in which "America's youngest children, some 47 percent" under the age of five, "live in low-income or poor households."[38] W.E.B. Dubois notion of a "racial dictatorship" in his classic Black Reconstruction in America has been resurrected under Trump.

As U.N. special rapporteur, Philip Alston, reports, amid a massive concentration of wealth among the upper 1 percent in the United States, 40 million people live in poverty and 18.5 million Americans live in extreme poverty. According to Alston, such neoliberal policies are "aggressively regressive" in their promoting of harsh work requirements for welfare recipients, cutting back programs to feed poor children, and the willingness to both incarcerate young children and separate them from their parents.[39] All the while, the Trump administration has shifted massive resources to the wealthy as a result of a tax policy that shreds 1.5 trillion dollars from the federal budget. More recently, he has threatened to shift federal funds away from programs that serve the poor, children, and other in dire need of services in order to build a wall on the southern border, a wall that stands out as a state sanctioned symbol of modern day nativism.

Since the 1970s, wages have stagnated, banks have cheated millions out of their homes through rigged mortgage

policies, and the political power brokers have imposed financial ruin on minorities of class and race.[40] The war against poverty initiated by the Johnson administration had been transformed into a war on poverty by Reagan and has accelerated and achieved its apotheosis under the Trump regime. With a pathological enthusiasm, Trump's morally bereft Republican Congress has cut crucial benefits for the poor such as the food stamp program while also imposing harsh work requirements on Medicare recipients. There is more at work here than the self-serving and vindictive neoliberal belief that government is bad when it gets in the way of markets and does not serve the interest of the rich. There is also willfully savage support for massive degrees of inequality, human wretchedness, the criminalization of social problems, and a burgeoning culture of punishment, misery, and suffering.

One consequence is a beleaguered American landscape marked by growing opioid crisis, the criminalization of peaceful protests, race-based environmental poisoning, shorter longevity rates for middle-aged Americans, and an incarceration rate that ranks as the highest in the world. The war on democracy has also morphed into a war on youth as more and more children are homeless, subjected to mass school shootings, inhabit schools modeled after prisons, and increasingly ushered into the school-to-prison pipeline and disciplinary apparatuses that treats them as criminals.[41] Under the long history of neoliberalism in the United States, there has developed a perverse investment in the degradation and punishment of the most vulnerable individuals, those considered other, and an increasing register of those considered disposable.[42]

Rethinking the Politics of Inverted Totalitarianism

What is crucial to understand is that neoliberalism is not only a more extreme element of capitalism, it has also enabled the emergence of a radical restructuring of power, the state, and politics and in doing so converges with a style of fascism suited to the American context. Sheldon Wolin's book, Democracy Incorporated, was one of the first to analyze the transformation of a capitalist democracy into what he called an inverted form of totalitarianism. According to Wolin, the political state was replaced by a corporate state that exploits all but the ruling classes, empties politics of any substance through rigged elections, uses the power of capital to define citizens largely as consumers of products, and applies the power of the corporate state as a battering ram to push through policies that strengthens the power of capital.

For Wolin, neoliberalism was the endpoint of a long process "to transform everything—every object, every living thing, every fact on the planet—in its image."[43] He believed that this new political formation and form of sovereignty in which economics dominated politics was hostile to both social spending and the welfare state. Wolin rightly argued that under neoliberalism, political sovereignty is largely replaced by economic sovereignty as corporate power takes over the reins of governance.

The dire consequence, as David Harvey points out, is that "raw money power wielded by the few undermines all semblances of democratic governance."[44] The policy is now fashioned by lobbyists representing big businesses such as the pharmaceutical and health insurance companies going so far in the case of the drug companies to drive the opioid crisis in order to increase their profits.[45] Big pharma in its endless search for profits inflates drug prices, disregards human needs, and undermines the health care of millions. For instance, a report from the Health Care Cost Institute found that "individuals with type 1 diabetes spent, on average $5, 705 per person on insulin in 2016, an increase of $2,841 per person since 2012."[46] It gets worse, a 60 Minutes report exposed the drug companies as a major cause of the opoid crisis given its willingness to sell millions of opiods to doctors and pharmacies. Big pharma's political power is staggering and can be seen in the fact that "the pharmaceutical industry spent about $27.5 million on lobbying activities in 2018, federal filings show."[47]

Under neoliberalism, the welfare state has been largely dismantled while expanding the power of a punishing apparatus of an emerging police state buttressed by a pervasive culture of fear that exempts itself from the legalities and constitutional obligations of a democracy, however neutered. Wolin was keenly aware of the ruthlessness of corporate culture in its willingness to produce striking inequalities in an epical war on the promise and ideals of a substantive democracy.

Wolin's great contribution to theories of totalitarianism lies in his ability to lay bare the authoritarian economic tendencies in neoliberalism and its threat to democracy. What he did not do is associate neoliberalism and its enervating effects closely enough with certain legacies of fascism and in this absence, he was unable to predict the resurgence of strongman politics in the United States and the ascendant fascist investments in white supremacy, racial sorting, ultra-nationalism, a war on youth, women's reproductive rights, and a race-inspired eliminationist politics of disposability. What he underemphasized was that neoliberalism impoverished not only society economically while

serving the interests of the rich, but it also created a powerful narrative that normalizes political inaction as it shifted the weight and responsibility of all social problems onto the individual rather than the society.[48]

In the age of neoliberal myth-making, systemic deficiencies such as poverty, homelessness, and precarious employment are now relegated to individual failures, character deficits, and moral turpitude. Correspondingly, notions of the social, systemic, and public disappear, serving to expand the base of those who feel voiceless and powerless, opening them up to the crude and simplistic emotional appeals of authoritarian figures, such as Donald Trump. In truly demagogic fashion, Trump promises a new world order that will be fashioned out of the rhetorical bombast of dehumanization, bigotry, and a weaponized appeal to fear and hate. As the poor and discarded vanish from the political discourse of democracy, they become susceptible to a "volatility and the fury that [mutilates] contemporary politics that thrives on an appetite for authoritarian and fascistic impulses.[49]

Fascism by Trial in the Age of Trump

In a thoughtful analysis, Fintan O'Toole, asserts that neoliberalism creates the conditions for enabling what he calls a trial run for a full-blown state of contemporary fascism. He writes:

> To grasp what is going on in the world right now, we need to reflect on two things. One is that we are in a phase of trial runs. The other is that what is being trialed is fascism – a word that should be used carefully but not shirked when it is so clearly on the horizon. Forget "post-fascist" – what we are living with is pre-fascism. Rather than overthrow democracy in one full swipe, it has to be undermined through rigged elections, the creation of tribal identities, and legitimated through a "propaganda machine so effective that it creates for its followers a universe of "alternative facts" impervious to unwanted realities. .... Fascism doesn't arise suddenly in an existing democracy. It is not easy to get people to give up their ideas of freedom and civility. You have to do trial runs that, if they are done well, serve two purposes. They get people used to something they may initially recoil from, and they allow you to refine and calibrate. This is what is happening now and we would be fools not to see it.[50]

Ultra-nationalist and contemporary versions of fascism are gaining traction across the globe in countries such as Greece (Golden Dawn), Hungary (Jobbic), India (Bharatiya Janata Party), and Italy (the League) and countless others. Needless to say, they have been emboldened by Trump who has both displayed a close admiration for authoritarian leaders such as Russia's Putin, Turkey's Erdogan, and China's Xi Jinping among others. He recently praised North Korean leader Kim Jung-un for his "intellect and personality" and without irony stated "He speaks and his people sit up at attention. I want my people to do the same."[51]

Trump also used his power to pardon right-wing pundits such as Dinesh D'Souza, and former Arizona ex-Sherriff, Joe Arpaio, who defied court orders by refusing to stop racially profiling Latinos. Most recently, he has stated that he is considering pardoning military personnel accused of muder and other war crimes. The latter is unprecedented in the history of the American presidency. He has publicly accused Democrats in Congress of treason for not standing following his State of the Union Address and has conducted a foreign policy that trashes Western allies while celebrating authoritarian strongmen such as Jair Bolsonaro the fascist president of Brazil and Rodrigo Duterte, the president of the Philippines.

Also, Trump consistently promotes extremist policies, surrounds himself with far right-wing ideologues such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, John Bolton, and Stephen Miller--all hardliners on just about every issue. Steve Bannon's early presence in the Trump administration was symbolic of the extremism Trump brought to the White House. Bannon who served as former senior counselor to the president, ran Breitbart, a white nationalist tabloid. Now freelancing, Bannon continues to normalize white supremacist ideas in his endless speeches and public appearances. Trump shares Bannon's allegiance to white supremacy and has relentlessly catered to the racial fears and economic anxieties of an abandoned white working class; moreover, he has created a new synergy between his authoritarian demagoguery and an array of fascist groups that include the Alt-right, white nationalists, militia groups, and others who embrace his militarism, race-based law and order agenda, and his overt contempt of undocumented immigrants and Muslims.[52]

Trump has elevated himself as the patron saint of a ruthless neoliberalism. This is evident in the various miracles he has performed for the rich and powerful. He has systemically deregulated regulations that extend from environmental protections to worker safety rules. He has enacted a 1.5 billion dollar tax policy that amounts to a huge gift to the financial elite and all the while maintaining his "man of the people" posture. He has appointed a range of neoliberal fundamentalists to head major government posts designed to serve the public. Most, like Scott Pruitt, the former head of the EPA and Betsy DeVos, the Secretary of Education, have proved to be either corrupt,

incompetent, or often both. Along with the formerly controlled Republican Congress, Trump has vastly increased the military budget to $717 billion, creating huge financial profits for the military-industrial-defense complex while instituting policies that eviscerate the welfare state, and further expand a war machine that generates mass suffering and death.

Trump has reduced food assistance for those who are forced to choose between eating and taking medicine and prevents millions for adequate health care.[53] And last but not least, he has become a cheerleader for the gun and security industries going so far as to call for the arming of teachers as a way to redress mass shootings in the nation's schools. All of these policies serve to unleash the anti-liberal and anti-democratic passions, fears, anxieties, and anger necessary to mainstream fascism.

Trump's Politics of Disposability

Trump's neoliberalism aligns with fascism particularly through his embrace of white supremacy and his commitment to an expanding notion of disposability. Trump's view of disposability takes on a double register. First, he produces economic policies that support the neoliberal conviction that human beings without economic value, those who do not contribute to the market, are refuse, waste, excess, and have no possible social use. In neoliberalism's survival-of-the-fittest ethos, which amounts to a form of econocide, redundancy becomes code for disposability in economic terms. The only relations that matter are those compatible with economic decision making and the imperatives of capital. As Anis Shivani observes, "anyone not willing to conceive of themselves as being present fully and always in the market" who present a burden to the state, or "refuse to invest in their own future… will be subject to discipline and refused recognition as [a] human being."[54]

As I mentioned earlier, Trump extends the logic of redundancy and disposability beyond economic categories to all those others who cannot fit into a white nationalist script. This is particularly evident in his attack on immigrants from Mexico and his call for a wall on the southern border, which has become a symbol of his nativism. This is the language of the police state—one fashioned by the history of US apartheid. The endpoint of the language of white supremacy via a regressive crime policy is a form of social death, or even worse. What is frightening about Trump's racist vocabulary is that it registers a move from the coded language of benign neglect to policies marked by malignant cruelty that legitimates state violence. Trump's allegiance to white supremacy is hard to miss, though many deny it by focusing more on his economic policies rather than his white supremacist agenda. Ta-Nehisi Coates offers an insightful analysis of Trump's white supremacist ideology:

> It is often said that Trump has no real ideology, which is not true—his ideology is white supremacy, in all its truculent and sanctimonious power. ...His political career began in advocacy of birtherism, that modern recasting of the old American precept that black people are not fit to be citizens of the country they built. But long before birtherism, Trump had made his worldview clear. He fought to keep blacks out of his buildings, according to the U.S. government; called for the death penalty for the eventually exonerated Central Park Five; and railed against "lazy" black employees. "....Trump inaugurated his campaign by casting himself as the defender of white maidenhood against Mexican "rapists," only to be later alleged by multiple accusers, and by his own proud words, to be a sexual violator himself...In Trump, white supremacists see one of their own.[55]

Author John Feffer goes further and argues that Trump's hatred of immigrants is clear not only in his push for "extreme measures to keep them out of the United States: a wall, a travel ban, a zero-tolerance family-separation policy" but also signifies his view of them as a "threat that transcends the political. It is a matter of blood and soil, the touchstones of extreme nationalism"[56] What Feffer fails to acknowledge is that Trump's view of ethnic sorting is also reminiscent of a central policy of earlier forms of fascism. Under Trump's "zero tolerance" border crackdown, immigrant families in the language of a fascist past disappear, are lost, or categorized as "deleted family units."[57]

The United States is in a dangerous moment in its history, which makes it all the more crucial to understand how a distinctive form of neoliberal fascism now bears down on the present and threatens to usher in a period of unprecedented barbarism in the not too distant future. In an attempt to address this new political conjuncture, I want to suggest that rather than view fascism simply as a repetition of the past, it is crucial to forge a new vocabulary and politics in order to grasp how neoliberal fascism has become a uniquely American model for the present. One

way to address this challenge is to rethink what lessons can be learned by interrogating how matters of language and memory can be used to illuminate the dark forces connecting the past and present as part of the new hybridized political nightmare.

The Language of Fascism

Fascism begins not with violence, police assaults, or mass killings, but with language. Trump reminded us of this in 2015 while announcing his candidacy for president. He stated, without irony or shame, that "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending the best. They're sending people that have lots of problems and they're bringing those problems. They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime. They're rapists and some, I assume, are good people..."[58] This is more than the language of polarization or a strategic dog whistle; it is an overt discourse and theatrical performance in the service of white supremacy and racist violence, a logic largely missed by the mainstream press at the time. This initial blast of racist invective served to forecast how Trump's campaign and presidency would appeal to white nationalists, the Alt-right, and other neo-Nazis groups.

The language of fascist violence takes many forms and Trump provided another disturbing example of his use of language as a tool of power and domination that expands what earlier fascist regimes had done. Early in his presidency, Trump had his administration prohibit officials at the Centers for Disease Control from using words such as "vulnerable," "entitlement," "diversity," "transgender," "fetus," "evidence-based," and "science-based."[59] Banning words such a "vulnerable" "diversity," and "fetus" signals Trump's war on empathy, equality, and women's reproductive rights. Soon afterwards, the Trump administration started erasing all references to climate change and greenhouse gases from government websites as well as information about LGBTQ Americans.[60]

Such actions share a legacy of state censorship, the repression of dissent by banishing freedom of speech, and book burning, all of which was part of the playbook of fascist regimes. Ruth Ben-Ghiat is right in stating that each of the words on Trump's censorship list "is part of an ongoing war about the future of our democratic rights to speak and research freely, to control our own bodies and identities, and to live without fear of being targeted by the state because of our faith, skin color, or sexual orientation."[61]

It is worth noting that words are not just about the production of meaning but also about how they generate consequences, especially in light of how such meanings buttressed by state-sanctioned relations of power function in a larger context. Some meanings have a force that others don't, especially since power confers authority and can set in motion a range of effects. This is particularly clear, given how Trump uses the power of the presidency, evident in part in how he reacts to critics, especially those who garner some public attention through their criticism of him or his policies. His attempts to squelch dissent takes on a rather ruthless register since he often publicly humiliates those who criticize him, threatens their livelihood, and uses language that functions to incite violence against his critics. We have seen too many instances where Trump's followers have beaten critics, attacked journalists, and shouted down any form of critique aimed at Trump's policies—to say nothing of the army of trolls unleashed on intellectuals and journalist critical of the administration.

As a tool of state repression, language holds the potential to open the door to fascism. As Rose Sydney Parfitt observes, "the language, symbols and logic of fascism are being deployed today more overtly than at any time since the early 1940s."[62] Trump uses language that dehumanizes and makes it more acceptable for individuals to rationalize racist beliefs and practices. Under the Southern Strategy and later in the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations, racism was either coded in dog-whistle discourses or rendered unspeakable in the language of color blindness. Trump discarded such formalities by making racist language overt, shockingly deployed as a badge of honor, and pragmatically used as a nod to his base of support.

Reminiscent of Nazi tactics to dehumanize enemies, he has called some undocumented immigrants "animals," "criminals," and has used the word "infest" in referring to immigrants on the southern border. Aviya Kushner asserted that Trump's tweet claiming that immigrants will "infest our country" bears an alarming resemblance to the Nazi claim that Jews were carriers of disease.[63] In response to Trump's use of the term "animal" to refer to some immigrants, Juan Cole argues that the Nazis used the term "'animal' as a technical term, Untermensch or subhuman" in referring "to Jews, gypsies, gays, and other groups as well as the slaughter of Russian boys at the Eastern Front."[64] Making them appear as less than human paved the way "toward permitting their elimination."[65] A convergence between Trump's language and the race-based ideology of Holocaust-era Nazis was clearly heard when

Trump implied a moral equivalency between the violence perpetrated by white supremacists and neo-Nazis marching in Charlottesville and the presence of peaceful protesters demonstrating for the removal of a Confederate statue. Trump's scapegoating rhetoric of demonization and bigotry not only dehumanizes racialized others, it also prepares the ground for encouraging hate groups and an intensification of hate crimes.

The F.B.I. has reported that since the 2016 election hate crimes have increased in addition to a disturbing number of stories about Nazi swastikas being painted on school walls, synagogues being firebombed, and a spike of violent attacks on Muslims and foreigners.[66] Trump's use of dehumanizing language unites comparisons with the insidious rhetoric of fascism's past. Not only have his crassness, vulgarity, and humiliating tweets upended traditional standards of presidential comportment (to say nothing of governance), he has also revived a language of malign violence that echoes "the early warning signs of potential genocide and other atrocity crimes."[67]

Fascism, History, and Memory Work

Neoliberal fascism converges with an earlier form of fascism in its commitment to a language of erasure and a politics of disposability. In the fascist script, historical memory becomes a liability, even dangerous, when it functions pedagogically to inform our political and social imagination. This is especially true when memory acts to identify forms of social injustice and enables critical reflection on the histories of repressed others. This was certainly true given the embarrassing backlash that occurred when Ben Carson, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, claimed that slaves were immigrants, and when Education Secretary Betsy DeVos stated that Black colleges and universities were "pioneers of school choice."[68]

Unsurprisingly, historical memory as a form of enlightenment and demystification is surely at odds with Trump's abuse of history as a form of social amnesia and political camouflage. For instance, Trump's 1930s slogan, "America First," marks a regressive return to a time when nativism, misogyny, and xenophobia defined the American experience. This inchoate nostalgia rewrites history in the warm glow and "belief in an essential American innocence, in the utter exceptionality, the ethical singularity and manifest destiny of the United States."[69] Philip Roth aptly characterizes this gratuitous form of nostalgia in his American Pastoral as the "undetonated past." Innocence in this script is the stuff of mythologies that distort history and erase the political significance of moral witnessing and historical memory as a way of reading, translating, and interrogating the past as it impacts, and sometimes explodes, the present.

Under Trump, both language and memory are disabled as words are emptied of substantive content and the space of a shared reality crucial to any democracy is eviscerated. History and language in this contemporary fascist script are paralyzed in the immediacy of tweeted experience, the thrill of the moment, and the comfort of a cathartic emotional discharge. The danger, as history has taught us, is when words are systemically used to cover up lies, falsehoods, and the capacity to think critically.

In such instances, the public spheres essential to a democracy wither and die, opening the door to fascist ideas, values, and social relations: Trump has sanctioned torture, ripped babies from their parents' arms, imprisoned thousands of young immigrant children, and declared the media along with entire races and religions to be the enemy of the American people. In doing so, he speaks to and legitimates a history in which state violence becomes an organizing principle of governance and perversely a potentially cathartic experience for his followers.

Trump's language of disappearance, dehumanization, and censorship is an echo and erasure of the horrors and barbarism of another time. His regressive use of language and denial of history must be challenged so that the emancipatory energies and compelling narratives of resistance can be recalled in order to find new ways of challenging the ideologies and power relations that put them into play. Trump's distortion of language and public memory are part of a larger authoritarian politics of ethnic and racial cleansing that eliminates the genocidal violence waged down on Native Americans, Black slaves, and African-Americans.

Indifferent to the historical footprints that mark expressions of state violence, the Trump administration uses historical amnesia as a weapon of (mis)education, power and politics, allowing public memory to wither and the architecture of fascism to go unchallenged. What is under siege in the present moment is the critical need to keep watch over the repressed narratives of memory work. The fight against a fascist erasure of history must begin with an acute understanding that memory always makes a demand upon the present, refusing to accept ignorance as innocence.

As reality collapses into fake news, moral witnessing disappears into the hollow spectacles of right-wing media

machines, and into state-sanctioned weaponry aimed to distort the truth, suppress dissent, and attack the critical media. Trump uses Twitter as a public relations blitzkrieg to attack everyone from his political enemies to celebrities who have criticized him.[70] The merging of journalism as entertainment with a culture addicted to speed, brevity, and the pornographic exposure that digitization affords all has emptied speech of any substance and further legitimates the unspeakable. Language no longer expands the reach of history, ethics, and justice. On the contrary, it now operates in the service of slogans, bigotry, and violence. Words are now turned into an undifferentiated mass of ashes, critical discourse reduced to rubble, and informed judgments a distant radioactive horizon.

Under the Trump presidency, neoliberal fascism has restructured civic life that valorizes ignorance, avarice, and willful forgetting. In the current Trumpian moment, shouting replaces the pedagogical imperative to listen and reinforces the stories neoliberal fascism tells us about ourselves, our relations to others, and the larger world. Under such circumstances, monstrous deeds are committed under the increasing normalization of civic and historical modes of illiteracy. One consequence is that comparisons to the Nazi past can whither in the false belief that historical events are fixed in time and place and can only be repeated in history books. In an age marked by a war on terror, a culture of fear, and the normalization of uncertainty, social amnesia has become a powerful tool for dismantling democracy. Indeed, in this age of forgetfulness, American society appears to revel in what it should be ashamed of and alarmed over.

Even with the insight of history, comparisons between the older orders of fascism and Trump's regime of brutality, aggression, and cruelty are considered by commentators to be too extreme. There is a cost to such caution. As Jonathan Freedland points out, "if the Nazi era is placed off limits, seen as so far outside the realm of regular human experience that it might as well have happened on a distant planet – Planet Auschwitz – then we risk failure to learn its lessons."[71] Knowing how others in the past successfully fought against elected demagogues such as Trump is crucial to a political strategy that reverses impending global catastrophe.

The story of a fascist past needs to be retold not to simply make comparisons to the present, though that is not an unworthy project, but to be able to imagine a new politics in which new knowledge will be built, and as Arendt states, "new insights…new knowledge… new insights, … new memories, [and] new deeds, [will] take their point of departure."[72] This is not to suggest that history is a citadel of truth that can be easily mined. History offers no guarantees and it can be used in the interest of violence as well as for emancipation. For instance, as Ariel Dorfman observes,

When the white supremacist and neo-Nazis marched in Charlottesville they carried torches in the night in order to "to evoke memories of terror, of past parades of hate and aggression by the Ku Klux Klan in the United States and Adolf Hitler's Freikorps in Germany. The organizers wanted to issue a warning to those watching: that past violence, perpetrated in defense of the "blood and soil" of the white race, would once again be harnessed and deployed in Donald Trump's America."[73]

Trump's selective appropriation of history wages war on the past, choosing to celebrate rather than question fascist horrors. The past, in this case, is a script that must be followed rather than interrogated. Trump's view of history that is at once "ugly and revealing."[74] Such narratives undermine moral witnessing, transform agency into a weapon of violence, and use history as a tool of propaganda. All the more reason why, with the rise of neoliberal fascism there is a need for modes of historical inquiry and stories that challenge the distortions of the past, transcend private interests, enable the American public to connect private issues to broader historical and political contexts.

The production of new narratives accompanied by critical inquiries into the past would help explain why people participated in the horrors of fascism and what it might take to prevent such complicity from unfolding again. Comparing Trump's ideology, policies, and language to a fascist past offers the possibility to learn what is old and new in the dark times that have descended upon the United States. The pressing relevance of the 1930s is crucial to address how fascist ideas and practices originate, adapt to new conditions, and how people capitulate and resist them as well.

The Disappearing Social

Since the 1970s, the social structure has been under relentless attack by an assemblage of political, economic, and educational forces of organized neoliberal agendas. All the commanding institutions of corporate capitalism have enshrined a notion of citizenship that reduces individuals to consumers while promoting regressive notions

of freedom and choice defined primarily through the practice of commercial exchange. Freedom, in the neoliberal edition, has been transformed into an obsession with self-interest, part of a war culture that ruthlessly pits individuals against each other while condoning a culture of indifference, violence, and cruelty that rejects any sense of political and morals responsibility. This often takes the form of the freedom to be a racist, homophobe and sexist, to experience the liberty to hate and demonize others and to inflict violence and emotional harm under the guise of freedom of speech. Such values also mock any form of dependency, empathy, and compassion for others.

Atomization, fear, and anxiety are the breeding ground of fascism. Not only do such forces undercut the radical imagination and collective resistance, but they also situate language and memory in the vise of a politics of depoliticization. Neoliberal fascism insists that everything, including human beings, are to be made over in the image of the market. Everyone is now subject to a paralyzing language of individual responsibility and a disciplinary apparatus that revises downward the American dream of social mobility. Time is now a burden for most people and the lesson to draw from this punishing neoliberal ideology is that everyone is alone in navigating their own fate.

At work here is a neoliberal project to reduce people to human capital and to redefine human agency beyond the bonds of sociality, equality, belonging, and obligation. All problems and their solutions are now defined exclusively within the purview of the individual. This is a depoliticizing discourse that champions mythic notions of self-reliance and individual character in order to promote the tearing up of social solidarities and the public spheres that support them.

All aspects of the social and public are now considered suspect, including social space, social provisions, social protections, and social dependency, especially for those who are poor and vulnerable. According to the philosopher, Byung-Chul Han, the subjects in a "neoliberal economy do not constitute a **we** that is capable of collective action. The mounting egoization and atomization of society is shrinking the space for collective action. As such, it blocks the formation of a counter-power that might be able to put the capitalist order in question."[75]

At the core of neoliberal fascism is a view of subjectivity that celebrates a narcissistic hyper-individualism that radiates with a near sociopathic lack of interest in others with whom it shares a globe on the brink of catastrophe. This project is wedded to a politics that produces a high threshold of disappearance and serves to disconnect the material moorings and wreckage of neoliberal fascism from its underlying power relations.

Neoliberal fascism thrives on producing subjects that internalize its values, corroding their ability to imagine an alternative world. Under such conditions, not only is agency depoliticized, but the political is emptied of any real substance and unable to challenge neoliberalism's belief in extreme inequality and social abandonment which fosters fascism's deep-rooted investment ultra-nationalism, racial purity and the politics of terminal exclusion.

We live at a time in which the social is individualized and at odds with a notion of solidarity once described by Frankfurt School theorist, Herbert Marcuse, as "the refusal to let one's happiness coexist with the suffering of others."[76] Marcuse invokes a forgotten notion of the social in which one is willing not only to make sacrifices for others but also "to engage in joint struggle against the cause of suffering or against a common adversary."[77]

One step towards fighting and overcoming the criminogenic machinery of terminal exclusion and social death endemic to neoliberal fascism is to make education central to a politics that changes the way people think, desire, hope, and act. How might language and history adopt modes of persuasion that anchor democratic life in a commitment to economic equality, social justice, and a broadly shared vision? The challenge we face under a fascism buoyed by a savage neoliberalism is to ask and act on what language, memory, and education as the practice of freedom might mean in a democracy, what work can they perform, how hope can be nourished by collective action and the ongoing struggle to create a broad-based democratic socialist movement? What work has to be done to "imagine a politics in which empowerment can grow and public freedom thrive without violence?"[78] What institutions have to be defended and fought for if the spirit of a radical democracy is to return to view and survive?

Endnotes

1. Many of the ideas in this piece are drawn from my forthcoming, The Terror of the Unforseen (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Review of Books, in press).

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3. Federico Finchelstein, From Fascism to Populism in History (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), p. xi

4. Two excellent example can be found in Lawrence Grossberg, Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right (London: Pluto Press, 2018) and Carl Boggs, Fascism Old and New: American Politics at the Crossroads (New York: Routledge, 2018)...

5. Ibid. p. xiv.

6. Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Is there illiberal democracy?" Eurozine, [August 9, 2017] Online: http://www.eurozine.com/is-there-illiberal-democracy/

7. For an analysis of the complex legacy of right-wing and fascist forces that have contributed to Trump's election and his popularity among fringe groups, see Shane Burley, Fascism Today: What it is and How to End It. (Chicago: AR Press, 2017).

8. Neoliberalism has a long and complex history and takes a variety of forms. I am using the more generic elements of neoliberalism as I use the term in this essay. See, Kean Birch, "What Exactly is Neoliberalism?" The Conversation, [November 2, 2017] Online: https://theconversation.com/what-exactly-is-neoliberalism-84755. For an extensive analysis of neoliberalism in terms of its history and variations, see Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, Never Ending Nightmare: How Neoliberalism Dismantles Democracy (New York: Verso, 2019); Richard D. Wolff, Capitalism's Crisis Deepens: Essays on the Global Economic Meltdown (Chicago: Haymarket, 2016); Wendy Brown, Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution (New York: Zone Books, 2015) Henry A. Giroux, Against the Terror of Neoliberalism (New York: Routledge, 2008) and David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, (Oxford University Press, 2005).

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10. Wendy Brown, Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution (New York: Zone Books, 2015), p. 9.

11. One brilliant source here is Henrich Geiselberger, The Great Regression (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

12. Caleb Crain, "Is Capitalism a Threat to Democracy?" The New Yorker, [May 14, 2018]. Online: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/05/14/is-capitalism-a-threat-to-democracy

13. Anis Shivani, "This is our neoliberal nightmare: Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump. And why the market and the wealthy win every time," Salon, [June 6, 2016] Salon, [June 6, 2016]. Online: https://www.salon.com/2016/06/06/this_is_our_neoliberal_nightmare_hillary_clinton_donald_trump_and_why_the_market_and_the_wealthy_win_every_time/

14. Fintan O'Toole, "Trial Runs for Fascism are in full flow," Irish Times (June 26, 2018). Online: https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/fintan-o-toole-trial-runs-for-fascism-are-in-full-flow-1.354

15. See, especially, Michael D. Yates, The Great Inequality (New York: Routledge, 2016) and Joseph E. Stiglitz, The Price of Inequality (New York: Norton, 2012).

16. Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Fear (London: Polity Press, 2006), p. 89.

17. Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," The New York Times Magazine, [September 13, 1970] .Online: http://umich.edu/~thecore/doc/Friedman.pdf

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Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019

ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.003

Twenty-Five Years and Still Recovering: A Brief Reflection on NAFTA's Impact on Southside Virginia

Sandra Via

Reflecting on the 25th anniversary of the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), I cannot help but think back to my childhood in Southside, Virginia. I grew up in an area that was once considered the hub of the furniture and textile industries. While Martinsville, Virginia and the surrounding area of Henry County was never a metropolis, it was a vibrant community and small city that provided the workforce that built companies such as Bassett Furniture, Hooker Furniture, American Furniture, Fieldcrest Cannon, Bassett-Walker, Sara Lee, Dupont, Tultex, and several others. It was impossible to live in that area and not have family members and close friends who worked in one of those factories. For instance, many of my family members started working for Bassett Furniture in some capacity while in high school and planned for that job to be their lifelong career. One family member was instrumental in the establishment of the Bassett Furniture motor pool, which he managed until his retirement. Another was an executive assistant to one of the Bassett family members. These family members were lucky and were able to retire before the effects of NAFTA and neoliberal globalization started to take hold. Other family members and close family friends, however, were not so lucky. Eventually, there came a time when people in that area wondered week to week, or even day to day, whether they were going to be part of the next round of factory layoffs and closures. Unfortunately, the effects of NAFTA's push to increase global competition and deregulation ravaged this once prosperous Southern community.

Even before NAFTA was enacted, Southside was beginning to experience the effects of neoliberal globalization. Neoliberal globalization is characterized by policies that promote deregulation, privatization, and commodification of everything in favor of expanding free and open markets and increasing unfettered capital accumulation for corporations (Harvey 2005). In other words, neoliberal globalization is a form or "brand" of economic globalization in which corporate values are prioritized above all other forms of values at the expense of the social welfare of citizens and laborers (Agger and Luke 2012; Cavanagh and Mander 2004: 33). David Harvey notes that as neoliberalism becomes entrenched in the neoliberal state, politicians engage in an all-out assault on all forms of social solidary, particularly trade unions (2005). By eliminating the collective bargaining capacity of unions, economic elites are further able to increase their own class power and promote the profit of the corporation over the welfare of the worker. As political elites launch attacks on unions, corporations are further emboldened by the increased mobility of capital and the physical plants provided by neoliberal globalization policies, such as NAFTA. When workers attempt to unionize employers "routinely threaten that if workers vote for a union, the owners will close the plant and move it abroad, and this is a powerful weapon in the assault on unions" (Clawson 2003: 143). Therefore, unions at many manufacturing plants did not question decisions or complain about low wages for fear of losing their jobs.

In order to open markets, tariffs are reduced or eliminated completely and deregulation in manufacturing occurs (Harvey 2005; Cavanagh and Mander 2004). With the enactment of NAFTA, "unregulated consolidation in the retail sector was driving clothing prices down," which allowed for cheap textiles to be pumped into the American economy (Collins 2002: 152). As a result, American textile mills had to find ways to produce lower quality, cheap

goods, and reduce the costs of productions. These new challenges were further complicated when NAFTA was ratified, signed into law, and implemented in January 1994. Proponents of NAFTA only focused on the elimination of trade barriers and tariffs on all goods between Mexico, Canada, and the United States, which they believed would "produce nothing short of an economic renaissance in North America" (Martin 1993: 240). Opponents warned that the agreement would "cost hundreds of thousands of American jobs as manufacturers relocate plants south of the border, where cheap labor could make goods for duty-free export to the United States" (Gerstenzang 1993: para. 3). Corporations ensured government officials that they would not send jobs overseas or south and would keep jobs in manufacturing towns (Gerstenzang 1993). This was hard to believe considering the low cost of labor in Mexico. As Christopher J. Martin points out, Mexican manufacturing labor in 1991 averaged an hourly rate of $2.17 while American manufacturing workers averaged $15.45 an hour (Martin 1993: 241). Furthermore, foreign investors had already begun to take advantage of Mexico's newly instituted maquiladora program, which employed manufacturer workers at an average of $1.25 an hour (Martin 1993: 242). In other words, there did already exist incentives for U.S. manufacturers to relocate their factories to impoverished maquiladora towns. They could reduce their costs and increase profits by relying on cheap labor in Mexico. NAFTA's enactment provided even more incentive to relocate because it eliminated additional tariffs and eased rules for foreign direct investment in addition to available cheap labor (Martin 1993; 242).

Unsurprisingly, after NAFTA's implementation, these companies eliminated jobs and moved textile and apparel manufacturing plants across the border where they could exploit low-wage workers. Neglecting the social responsibility that these corporations had to the workers that had built their companies and made their products world renown, manufacturers closed their doors leaving workers without any other job prospects. The workers in these locally grown plants had perceived that an implied contract, which can be a psychological and/or social contract, had been formed between them and their employers (Van Buren 2000). The psychological contract establishes unwritten terms and agreements between the employees and the employer that establish conditions or perceptions about ethical standards of fairness and morality that employers should follow, which in Martinsville and Henry County, included loyalty to the workers and community in which the corporations were founded (Van Buren 2000: 208). The social contract supplements the psychological contract through the establishment of unwritten ground rules and local values on economic morality that are expected for the corporation to be a good citizen within the community (Van Buren 2000; 208). As longstanding "members" of the community, manufacturers in Martinsville and Henry County were expected to keep these implied contracts and look out for the common good of the community as a whole and its employee stakeholders. The implied contract was even more important to these workers as unions were losing their bargaining power in the area. Such contracts emphasize "the conduct of business is not a purely private matter; businesses serve, and are thus accountable to, the common good" (Van Buren 2000: 213). Many workers in the Martinsville and the surrounding area felt betrayed when these implied contracts were broken as layoffs continued to occur and manufacturing was relocated in favor of cheap labor and profits over the wellbeing of the local community.

Some individuals did find jobs in other manufacturing plants in the area, only to lose those jobs as the carnage of NAFTA continued to make its way through Southside. As one factory closed, workers moved to other local factories, which in turn closed. This carnage was most visible when Tultex, an apparel manufacturer and one of the largest employers in the city of Martinsville, abruptly filed bankruptcy and immediately closed the factory in December 1999. Approximately 2,000 workers were left without jobs (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 9). In a town of approximately 15,000 people, this had a devastating impact on the population (U.S. Census Burearu 2003: 3). The city's unemployment rate skyrocketed from 9% to 20% after Tultex's closure (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 10).

To further exacerbate the situation, Tultex's bankruptcy filing resulted in a default on over $1 million in property taxes, leaving the local taxpayers to absorb the loss. The closure of Tultex also meant that the city of Martinsville would lose approximately an additional "$700,000 annually in tax revenues and nearly $600,000 in water fees," which the city had come to rely. (Collins 2002: 156). Not only did citizens lose their jobs, health insurance, pensions, vacation days, and any other benefits they may have accumulated while working at Tultex, those that lived in the city now had to compensate for the loss of tax revenues through increased water and sewage bills (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 11). The city and state had to rapidly find a way to deal with the overwhelming demand for local social services and the influx of unemployment claims (Collins 2002: 156). The reduction in tax revenues also meant fewer funds for local schools. Within five years of Tultex's closure, Henry County was forced to merge its

four high schools into two schools in order to reduce operating costs and avoid the elimination of course offerings for students (Allen 2004). Even more devastating side effect of these manufacturing closures in the region was, and still is, an increase in drug use. In order to cope with job losses and poverty, some people in the area turned to "drugs, alcohol, and suicide" (Knowles 2019: para. 20). In particular, opioid addiction and overdoses in the area have skyrocketed and as of November 2018, Martinsville and Henry County rank number one in Virginia for emergency visits due to opioid overdoses (Collins 2018: para. 1). Many people in the area are not able to get jobs or keep them because they are unable to pass drug tests (Knowles 2019: para. 26). Therefore, local officials must continue to contend with unemployment and a declining population, while also finding ways to fight a growing opioid crisis.

Some individuals that decided to remain living in the county or city looked for jobs in nearby areas or across the North Carolina border. Others had no other option but to leave their homes and uproot their families in search of new job opportunities. This was particularly devastating for people who had been born and raised in Martinsville and Henry County but were now faced with the choice between staying in a place that had been their ancestral home but offered no economic security or moving to a new, alien location that offered some prospect of a job and economic security. At the same time, relocation meant figuring out how to take on the cost of moving, including selling their house in an area that was saturated with the houses of others who were relocating. For example, local real estate agents reported that following Tultex's closure the housing market in the area declined because homeowners were leaving the area and there were no buyers for the homes (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 64).

A shimmer of hope was found by some workers that took advantage of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and the NAFTA-Trade Adjustment Assistance (NAFTA-TAA), which are programs designed to provide financial assistance and job training to workers that are displaced due to foreign trade and increased imports (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 5). The TAA program was initially created by the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 and later modified by the Trade Act of 1974, due to the opening of foreign markets and increased global competition that accompanied free trade policies (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 5). Policymakers knew that free trade policies would negatively impact U.S. manufacturing workers. Therefore, the TAA was created as a means to assist the workers that lost their jobs for "greater good" (Vijaya 2010: 2). In other words, policymakers created the TAA as a means of promoting corporate growth and a neoliberal economic agenda, while also trying to alleviate their own guilt about putting American workers out of a job. Anticipating layoffs resulting from shifts in production to Canada and Mexico due to NAFTA, the NAFTA-TAA was by the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act of 1993 (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 5; Vijaya 2010: 2).

Under the TAA and NAFTA-TAA workers in Martinsville and Henry County that had lost their job in either the textile, apparel, or furniture industry due to NAFTA or the increase of Chinese imports could theoretically receive financial assistance beyond unemployment with funds to seek job training. However, not everyone in Martinsville and Henry County that lost their job took advantage of these assistance programs. First, in order to even qualify for TAA benefits, a group of at least three individuals from the same place of employment has to jointly submit a petition the Department of Labor stating that they lost their jobs due to the import of goods or the shift in global production due to NAFTA (Vijaya 2010: 2). These individuals must then wait for their petition to be approved before they can apply for any benefits. Once those individuals were certified, however, that still did not mean that they were able to access the benefits of the TAA programs. According to a 2001 GAO report, residents of Martinsville and Henry County faced a number of obstacles in either obtaining or using TAA and NAFTA-TAA programs: many workers did not have a high school education and needed to obtain a GED before enrolling in a training certification or community college program; family responsibilities made it impossible to go to or continue schooling without income assistance; there was a lack of stable funding; applying for benefits was often difficult and confusing; and training programs did not align with enrollment deadlines (U.S. General Accounting Office 2001: 15-19). Not mentioned in this report is the fact that many people that did try, and are still trying, to take advantage of the TAA are not able to complete the job training programs because they do have the necessary skills needed to be successful in a college course that is most likely driven by technological changes. Others lost their jobs only years away from retirement or during mid-life. These individuals believe they are too old to be hired by other employers. Even today, people in the area still feel like they have no options after losing their jobs later in life. In 2016, one local told a BBC reporter, "I got to the point where here I am, 58 years old now, nobody will say this, but nobody wants to hire me at this age" (Lussenhop 2016: para. 38). Not only do these obstacles reflect the failures and flaws inherent in the TAA and NAFTA-TAA, but also the lack of understanding and disconnection from the populations and communities impacted by NAFTA by the political elites crafting and implementing these programs. Policymakers

ignorantly assume that these workers, many of whom never graduated from high school, could understand the complicated process of obtaining benefits or had the financial means even with some assistance from the program to support themselves and their families while attending a community college or trade program on a full or part-time basis. Individuals that did go back to school and obtain some new form of job training found that jobs were still not available to them despite their newly acquired job skills and education. Some did benefit and find jobs, particularly those that were able to complete their educational training or acquired skills in education or health sectors, which have become rallying sectors for economic development in the area (Dorsey 2017: para. 22).

Martinsville and Henry County have experienced some recovery in recent years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment in Martinsville was 4.1% in December 2018, and 3.3% in Henry County (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). This is a marked improvement from the 20% unemployment rate Martinsville saw after the collapse of Tultex. However, the decline in unemployment is in part due to many individuals are no longer trying to find work (Lussenhop 2016). The jobs left in the region are often low-skill and minimum wage positions at discount chain retailers, such as Dollar General or Family Dollar (Macy 2014; 325). The population in the area has also decreased to just fewer than 13,000 people in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau 2018), which ultimately contributes to a decline in unemployment. The decline in population is due in part to people relocating to find work as previously mentioned. At the same time, there has been an increase in "brain drain" in the region. Those that are highly skilled leave or originally from the area do not return after attending college instead of seeking to find jobs in locations with a variety of high-skilled jobs, attractions, and entertainment.

Local officials are trying to revitalize the area by trying to entice businesses to the area and through the promotion of tourist attractions such as NASCAR races at the Martinsville Motor Speedway, the Virginia Museum of Natural History, and surrounding national parks. The area has experienced some newfound attention due to Beth Macy's Factory Man, which chronicles the life John Bassett III while also shedding light on some of the individuals who worked and continue to work in the furniture manufacturing factories (Macy 2014). However, that attention is not enough to bring it back to its glory days, or even the days that I remember as a child. Even though Martinsville and surrounding areas are beginning to "recover" from the losses inflicted by NAFTA, the area continues to feel its effects and may feel those effects once again with the enactment of the recently introduced United State-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

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Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019

ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.004

Neoliberalism, NAFTA, and Dehumanization: The case of femicides in Ciudad Juárez

Denisa Krásná and Sagar Deva

Introduction

Today, we live in an uncertain world where long-held assumptions about the progress and advancement of human civilization along particular lines are being challenged. The assumptions of increased global prosperity under a Western-led liberal democratic order and most famously enunciated in Francis Fukyama's "The End of History," now seem to be increasingly under challenge. While the size of the overall global economy has unarguably increased, the distribution of that wealth has become increasingly concentrated within the top one percent of the global population. Inequality has grown exponentially in both the developing and the developed world since 1980, and it is now the case that the top 1% of the world's population own 50 % of the world's wealth (Neate 2017).

It is the contention of this article that this transfer of wealth from the lower economic echelons of global society to the top has consequences which are not just economic but definitively human, reducing the existence of human beings, particularly women (who are naturally disadvantaged) by such a system, to commodities, threatening not only their economic but human security. To make this contention, this paper will take as its key case study the effects of NAFTA on the security of women in Ciudad Juárez, in particular, those who work in the so-called **maquiladoras**. However, before undertaking this case study, which will form the mainstay of this piece, this article will offer a brief introduction to global neoliberalism in order to provide something of a foundation on which the main case study of the article can build.

Capitalism, Neoliberalism, and Dehumanization

"Neoliberalism" is a word often used to describe the underpinning economic philosophy that has dominated the international system and its related institutionalization over the last 40 or 50 years. Neoliberalism is, as George Monbiot argues, a philosophy that sees competition as the "defining component of human relations," and that the active and uncontrolled dynamics of the market provide the best model for human prosperity (2016). Neoliberalism emerged dominant in the 1980s from the earlier predominant philosophy of Keynesianism, which advocates for a form of capitalism but also for the free market to be controlled by political and institutional forces to protect social, environmental, or other human causes (Palley 2005:1-5).

While the idea of a "pure" form of capitalism was advocated as early as 1947 by Hayek, it was in the early part of the Thatcher/Reagan era that this philosophy became dominant and became espoused at a more global level (Hayek 1980). At its core, the idea of neoliberalism focused on the full liberation of the free market and the removal or minimal use of government intervention in the market to promote or protect social causes such as employment, housing, or healthcare (Harvey 2007: 24-34). The assumption made by advocates of such a system is

that the intrusion of external or governmental forces into the market reduced its inefficiency, therefore reducing "economic growth," or overall output (Rodrik 2017: 6-10).

Unsurprisingly, then, within this paradigm, there has been a substantive power shift away from states and towards multinational corporations as the dominant units of global capitalism and the key "profiteers" from any such move. Multinational corporations have benefited in two key ways from the massive spree of market liberalization unleashed by neoliberalism. Firstly, the removal of tariffs and regulatory protections from local industries opened up substantial new markets in developing countries for corporations to sell their products. Secondly, the liberalization of trade and the removal of barriers allowed multinational corporations to scour the globe for countries where goods could be produced at the lowest cost (Kostova, Kendall, and Dacin 2008: 994-1006). Such a procedure allows for considerable increases in profitability by substantially reducing labor costs for corporations; at least for these corporations, the neoliberal idea of opening markets without restriction was a guaranteed winner. As these corporations grew with the opening up of markets, their influence on powerful states and entities within the broader international system simultaneously increased, allowing them to re-implant this ideology through the system of international institutions created to regulate trade and the global economy (Robinson and Harris 2000: 11-54).

At the level of global governance, this philosophy has manifested across international institutions. For example, the World Bank and IMF frequently attached conditionality to the loans they offered developing countries that demanded that these countries remove trade barriers and open up their markets to global corporations, often at considerable cost to local and national economies, for example during the Latin American Debt Crisis in the 1980s (Vetmeyer, Petras, and Vieux 2016). The World Trade Organization (WTO) similarly seeks to remove trade barriers by "reaching inside borders" to open up markets by creating subsidy controls, strengthening global intellectual property rights (including in critical and controversial areas in the medical field), and creating a binding dispute settlement mechanism with the possibility of sanctions for those who defy these rules (WTO 2019). Many prominent scholars, including Sara Dillon believe that such policies substantially damaged the livelihoods of poorer individuals in both developing and developed countries by removing necessary protections provided by the state and further concentrated wealth in the hands of the major global corporations who benefited from increased access to cheap labor and smooth capital movement (Dillon 2018: 1005). This turn towards neoliberalism in international institutions is frequently defined and discussed as the "Washington Consensus," as a result of the vital role the United States played in conceiving it; perceiving untrammeled and open markets as hugely advantageous to the huge corporations present within the United States (Williamson 2009: 7).

Along with the IMF and WTO, NAFTA is seen as a cornerstone of the global neoliberal order and will be the core institution focused upon in this study. The brainchild of the Reagan's administration, NAFTA was conceived with the idea of removing barriers to trade between the US, Canada, and Mexico to increase the efficiency of cross border transactions and therefore (at least in theory) create greater prosperity for all three countries. The deal was eventually signed into law after six years of intense negotiation. With the negotiations dominated by the interests of the United States, the three fundamental tenets of NAFTA closely align with the neoliberal philosophy espoused through the Washington consensus (Broad 2004: 129-154). Firstly, NAFTA grants "Most Favored Nation" status to all three participants, which means countries must give all parties equal treatment and thus cannot treat one country differently from another. This means they cannot give domestic companies better direct investment than foreign ones and, importantly, means that governments must offer federal contracts to companies in all three countries. Secondly, NAFTA eliminates virtually all tariffs between the three countries, meaning that governments cannot protect domestic industries by leveling tariffs against foreign products to protect produce from local companies, farms, or suppliers. Finally, NAFTA demands that patents produced in all three countries must be upheld universally by other members ("Nafta: Objectives"). Overall, then, we can see that the structure of NAFTA closely follows the pattern of neoliberalism—in terms of seeking to open up markets without restriction and removing any protections or subsidies for local industry or commerce. In terms of impact on Mexico, which will be the key focus of this study, NAFTA may have contributed to a modest increase in overall GDP (Hanson 2003). However, many have suggested that NAFTA has been instrumental in dividing Mexico into two, one part increasingly wealthy, corporate, and strongly benefiting from trade liberalization, and another, poorer Mexico, which has seen little of the benefit of this liberalization and, indeed in many cases has been actively harmed by the opening up of the Mexican economy to untrammeled competition from corporations in the United States, who often seek to exploit them (Immison 2017).

Unlike states which have a more comprehensive set of concerns including human rights and democracy, multinational corporations are almost solely concerned with profit maximization. Therefore individuals are reduced

to economic units within the calculations of these economic behemoths; and they will generally choose to ignore or reject human rights norms if doing so makes the corporation more economically or financially efficient (Barfield 2001: 403). As Surya Deva points out, multinational corporations have been accused and convicted for every time of human rights violations imaginable under international law to maximize their profits (2003: 4). One particular egregious form of violation carried out by these corporations includes the unsafe dumping of toxic waste; for example, two oil spills from a Shell pipeline destroyed thousands of lives. Very frequently, human rights abuses and unethical business practices are carried out in developing countries by multinationals headquartered in developed countries due to the weaker legal protections and human rights law in said developing countries (Amnesty International: 2017).

Resultantly, the dominant form of capitalism unleashed by neoliberalism has the strong potentiality of dehumanizing those subject to its regimes. As neoliberalism emboldens corporations, they increasingly seek to work only within their company constitution and in the challenge to any state regulation, problems which are likely only to become worse. As well as weaker legal and political institutions within developing countries, those that exist tend to be more corrupt, allowing transnational corporations to leverage their considerable economic might to "buy" political and legal protection from states either through direct or indirect bribery and continue their relentless pursuit of profit relatively unopposed (Deva 2003: 4-8).

This article will now go on to look at a particular case study in which emergent neoliberal practice has led to the dehumanization of women by creating lawless economic spaces in which women are frequently subjects of violence. It will discuss how NAFTA, detailed above, has created uneven forms of development that prevented local Mexican factories from competing and instead of forcing Mexican women into **maquiladoras**, specifically designed factories owned by foreign corporations but operated on Mexican soil to reduce costs, made possible by NAFTA's removal of tariffs and protections from local industry. This has led to the reduction of Mexican women to economic units rather than human beings in possession of a full set of human rights and indeed in many cases their disappearances and deaths, supporting the assertions made in this introductory section and opening up important questions about the natural human consequences of Neoliberal globalism more widely.

NAFTA and Femicides in Ciudad Juárez

The Mexican metropolis of Ciudad Juárez is the largest city in the state of Chihuahua, with a population of almost 1.5 million. Juárez is a twin city of El Paso, Texas, with which it is connected by four international bridges that are vigilantly guarded by border patrol. The Río Grande river forms a natural US-Mexican border that splits the two cities. While El Paso belongs to one of the safest places to live in the US, Ciudad Juárez is regarded as one of the most dangerous cities in the world (Eastaugh 2018). Its high death toll has earned Juárez several unflattering nicknames over the years, from "murder city" or "the world's murder capital" to "the city where women disappear" and "the capital of murdered women" (COHA 2009). From 2009 to 2011, Ciudad Juárez dominated statistics as the most dangerous city in the world, excluding war zones (Driver 2015: xii). In 2008, the average number of dead bodies found each day was 4.4; in 2009 it was 7.5 and in 2010 disquieting 9.9.

Many of these murders have been femicides (Driver 2015: xiv). Femicide is generally defined as "the killing of a woman or girl, in particular by a man and on account of her gender" ("Femicide"). Jill Radford and Diana H. Russell extend this definition by pointing out that femicide is "often condoned by, if not sponsored, by the state and/or by religious institutions" (quoted in full in Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 1). In their study, they implicate Mexican government by showing how authorities derail the investigation of the Juárez femicides and downplay them by claiming that they are "an invention of some crazy feminists and the attention-grabbing mothers of a few dead prostitutes" (quoted in full in Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 2). This official rhetoric is reinforced by a lack of data as many of the missing women also disappear from official registers. Unrecorded violence is then "seemingly invisible" (Driver 2015: 3). Kelliher explains that official records encompass only those bodies that have been discovered and exclude all those that are still missing.

Moreover, even this distorted number is further manipulated by the authorities (Kelliher 2015: 9). However, many members of the public challenge this deadly silence and, among other things, keep femicide records that range from 500 to 3000 since the year 1993. According to the National Citizen Femicide Observatory, six women are murdered every day in Juárez (López 2018). After 2010, which was the most violent year in the city's history, Juárez seemed to be finally dealing with its rampant criminality. However, after a few calmer years, the homicide rate

skyrocketed again in 2016 and has been on the rise ever since. The year 2018 was especially violent, averaging as many as 15 murders on some days (Del Pozo 2018). The femicide rate increased as well, and the official number of 96 murders of women in 2017 left many inhabitants fearing that history may repeat itself (CEDAW 2018: 6). While the exact figures are debatable, researchers agree on one thing: while femicides certainly occurred before 1993 as well, their numbers skyrocketed after this year and, as female bodies started to appear in noticeable numbers in public places, Juárez began to face a femicide epidemic (Driver 2015: 18).

This upsurge in femicides coincides with the signing of the NAFTA by Mexico, the US, and Canada in 1992. This neoliberal agreement rapidly and drastically reshaped the Mexican economy, a change that called for a fundamental transformation of Mexican society. This paper will demonstrate that Mexico's inability to deal with this quick neoliberalization is one of the principal causes of the Juárez femicides. Furthermore, it will show that the exploitative nature of neoliberal capitalism that values profit more than human lives is another major factor that plays a significant role in the femicides.

The first critical change that commenced a chain of interrelated events contributing to the Juárez femicides was the reformation of the so-called **ejido** system in 1992. The **ejido** system refers to the communal ownership of arable land which came into effect after the Mexican revolution and ensured that land was kept in the community as it was protected by law from privatization and confiscation (Klein 2015: Loc. 209-10). This traditional Indigenous system was disrupted during the presidency of Carlos Salinas, who made amendments to the law which enabled the acquisition of communal lands by foreign corporations. These reforms came as a reaction to the NAFTA negotiations in 1992 as the **ejido** system did not correspond to the agreement's objectives (Klein 2015: Loc. 209-10). As a result, many rural farmers were left landless and jobless as they lost their means of subsistence. The figure of a displaced farmer became the new Mexican stereotype as whole families were forced to leave their traditional lands. In response to these dynamics, NAFTA promised prosperity and improvement of living standards and offered a seemingly ideal solution to the crisis (that it inflicted) by creating thousands of new jobs in newly built foreign factories—the **maquiladoras.**

Parallels exist between this process of essentially forcible expulsion of the Mexican rural peasantry towards urban centers and Karl Marx's discussion of land enclosure in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Chapter 27 of Das Kapital, Marx discusses how rapacious corporations (who dominated parliament) utilized the law to purchase agricultural land compulsorily, thus forcing agricultural workers towards urban areas and the factories owned by the capitalist class in order to provide a cheap source of disposable labor (the proletariat) to keep the capitalist machine running (Marx 1867: Ch 27). These workers were enticed to the city with promises of a better life- but instead found ruthless exploitation, dehumanization and squalor when they arrived. As we will see in the analysis below, much the same could be said of the **maquiladoras** that sprung up in response to the creation of NAFTA's tariff-free zones.

Maquiladoras, also known as **maquilas**, are big assembly plants owned by wealthy transnational corporations that employ cheap foreign labor to assemble their products from imported materials only to be later exported back to the country of origin and sold for greater profit. After NAFTA established tariff-free zones between the US and Mexico, a large number of US-owned **maquiladoras** were constructed on the Mexican side of the border. Over 300 of these **maquiladoras** were built in and around Juárez following the signing, operated by companies such as Sony or IBM (Driver 2015: 18-19). The immediate impact that NAFTA had on both the national and international economy was enormous. As local factories could no longer compete on the Mexican market, many workers were forced to leave their homes in search of a new job in **maquiladoras** (COHA 2009). Since NAFTA made it hard for southern peasants who had lost their land to self-sustain themselves, their immigration to the north of Mexico occurred as a means of survival.

Nonetheless, not all of the displaced workers found the promised employment in the transformed industrial north as their numbers far exceeded the numbers of available positions. Having more workers than could be accommodated is advantageous to employers as it gives them the chance to pick the most suitable candidates and, above all, to ignore labor rights. Substantial evidence exists that highlights the interrelation between the numbers of employees and their rights; that is, more workers means fewer rights. It is far more profitable to exploit the workers than to treat them with the respect they deserve (Otero 2011: 385). NAFTA, as a neoliberal agreement aimed at increasing economic prosperity, however, at the expense of generating exploitation in the Mexican market.

The most suitable candidates for labor positions in **maquiladoras** showed to be women. Taylor contends that employers look for "docile, undemanding, nimble-fingered, nonunion" workers (quoted in full in Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 127). As such characteristics are stereotypically attributed to women, corporations filled their

assembly plants with young female workers who are capitalized on and exploited. On average, they stay in the job for five years before being "disposed of" and replaced by their younger and more dexterous counterparts who are, for the time being, are more valuable as they generate more profit (Reinares 2010: 64). Not only do **maquiladora** workers have to endure inhuman working conditions, but they are also subjected to sexual abuse as their reproductive cycles are routinely checked. To secure their employment, women are required to present bloody tampons every month. As soon as a woman is suspected of pregnancy, she loses her job. At the same time, male supervisors who have been reported to sexually abuse female workers, are often those responsible for their pregnancy and subsequent dismissal (Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 127).

However, **maquiladora** workers' vulnerability extends beyond the plants where their economic exploitation translates into a serious life risk as these women are constrained to walk alone at night from and to work in dangerous zones of Juárez (Driver 2015: 1). A typical femicide victim is generally described as a young, poor, dark-skinned woman who migrated to the city from the south to work in a **maquiladora** (Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 1). Alternatively, in Amnesty International's words, "young women with no power in society, whose deaths have no political cost for the local authorities" (2003: 2). This serious threat to the **maquiladora** workers' lives is ignored not only by their employers but also by law enforcement and the state. Their disappearance and murders get primarily overlooked on both sides of the border as poor Mexican women's bodies are viewed as disposable in a neoliberal era where profit is valued more than their lives. In her study, Camelia Raghinaru critiques the neoliberal world that reduces marginalized women to "cheap, unskilled labor that is easily disposable" (2016: 157). She argues that neoliberal development goes hand in hand with the marginalization of minorities and that apart from being exploited, **maquiladora** victims are "completely excluded as the waste of contemporary postcolonialism" (Raghinaru 2016: 148).

Similarly, Laura Reinares affirms that "bourgeois privileges in the global North … are built upon the literal sacrifice of a disposable female workforce" (2010: 64). She links Karl Marx' theoretical analysis of the exploitation of seasonal workers who are entirely ruled by the market's needs with the disposal of female bodies. Once a woman loses her ability to work as effectively as her younger co-worker, she stops being valued and is soon "disposed of" (Reinares 2010: 53). The class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as explained by Marx, can be extended to include race and gender within the US-Mexican border context. Robert Mize explains that neoliberalism in the US-Mexico border context is highly gendered because the majority of **maquiladora** laborers are women, and racialized because it is mostly white people who benefit from the free-trade (2008: 143-144). Arguably, the racial aspect of neoliberalism might change over time with the estimated growth of Latinx[1] or mixed-race population in the US. At least for now, however, neoliberalism mostly benefits the white population.

Femicide victims are usually found with their bodies mutilated and violated, which indicates brutal torture, sexual abuse, and strangulation. López points out that their breasts are often cut off, which further points to the fact that gender is the main factor in these crimes. Many popular theories exist as to who benefits from the femicides, among which snuff film and organ harvesting theories remain the most stereotypical and persisting ones (Driver 2015: 22). However, while some of the victims may have been used for snuff films and/or organ harvesting, these are unlikely to be the primary or the only reasons for their murders but rather the result of capitalist resourcefulness, that is, making as much profit from the women as possible. Gaspar de Alba points out, "[t]he irony of it: an assembly worker disassembled in the desert" (2007: 255). The paradox is evident: the same women who assemble great numbers of products for the use of privileged middle-class consumers also serve as involuntary organ donors for the same group of people whose lives are considered worthier in this neoliberal era. Furthermore, violence is treated as a mere secondary effect that is somewhat unpleasant but not enough to be taken seriously and that only upsets part of a population.

Mexican women's increased vulnerability after the signing of NAFTA can also be connected to the elevated anti-immigration sentiments in the US that the agreement provoked. In his study on NAFTA's impact on migration, Gerardo Otero connects Mexican immigration to the US with the loss of labor sovereignty generated by NAFTA, in other words, Mexico's new dependency on its northern neighbor for both food and employment has led to a growing emigration as Mexico lost the ability to provide decently paid jobs for most of its population (Otero 2011: 385). Thus, those who failed to find a job on the Mexican side of the border decided to try their luck on the opposite bank of Rio Grande. However, as NAFTA made it harder for people to cross the borders, many immigrants have been forced to immigrate undocumented. Instead of accepting economic refugees after taking their means of subsistence away from them, the US treats them as the so-called illegal aliens (Mize 2008: 144). Racial profiling on the

militarized US-Mexican border is a prevalent issue that under the Trump administration has only intensified. Robert Mize uses the term "neoliberal nativism" to explain how neoliberalism, and more specifically NAFTA, defines the US-Mexican border region as raced, classed, and gendered (2008: 136). The term "neoliberal nativism" is defined by Mize as the meeting of "the political economy of free trade ideology [and] the state-sanctioned violence" (Mize 2008: 136). While NAFTA helped the free flow of commodities, it restricted the movement of people. Mize argues that neoliberal nativism leads to border militarization, the racialization of Mexicans, criminalization of "illegal aliens," class marginalization, labor exploitation, racial profiling, and increased endangerment of Mexican women and children (Mize 2008: 140).

Similarly, Gaspar de Alba connects the femicides of pregnant women with anti-immigration sentiments in the US society. Pregnant women's economic exploitation has already been discussed; however, losing their job is only the first sign of their increased precariousness. Gaspar de Alba explains that when a woman loses her job in a **maquiladora**, her biggest chance for a decent life is emigration: "they can *get* pregnant, and that's the threat they pose when they come this close to the border. Call it a side effect of NAFTA that has to be curtailed by whatever means possible" (Gaspar de Alba, Desert Blood 2007: 254, original emphasis). Gaspar de Alba suggests that NAFTA did not limit the immigration of Mexican women and children to the US, which is widely perceived as problematic. She echoes Leo Chávez' theory of the Latina threat. In his paper, Chávez discusses how Latina reproduction and fertility have been constructed as threats to American society. The paper demonstrates that "anti-immigrant sentiment, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, focused specifically on the reproductive capacities of a Mexican immigrant and Mexican-origin (U.S.-born) women" (Chávez 2004). As expected, Chávez' findings prove that Latina's "differences from Anglo women [regarding reproduction] were insignificant" (2004: 173). Nevertheless, these facts remain overshadowed by anti-immigrant propaganda, the sentiments that Gaspar de Alba reflects in her work: "More illegal Mexican women in El Paso means more legal brown babies. Who wants more brown babies as legal citizens of the Promised Land?" (Desert Blood 2007: 332). She thus proposes that Mexican women are killed, together with their unborn children, to prevent their immigration to the US.

Finally, Mexican society's inability to adapt to the fast economic transitions inflicted by NAFTA has been foreshadowed as a factor that plays a significant role in the femicides. Gaspar de Alba diagnoses Mexican society with what she terms "the Tres Marías Syndrome" (Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 81). She explains that in Mexican culture, it is believed that a woman represents one of the three biblical Marys, either the Virgin Mary, the Mother Mary, or Mary Magdalena, the prostitute. La Malinche also referred to as "La Chingada" (the fucked one) who is viewed as the traitor of Mexico, is said to be Mary Magdalena's descendant. Mexican women are expected to aspire to represent the first two Marys and thus have to obey a strict patriarchal code of ethics. The Virgin is expected to be innocent and obedient, to dress appropriately and discreetly, to live with her family until her wedding and to abstain from all sexual activities. The Virgin Mary then becomes the Mother Mary whose only function in life is to care for her family and renounce all other pleasures, including sexual activities with another purpose than to procreate. By contrast, Mary the prostitute is disobedient, promiscuous, humiliates her family, uses contraception, and enjoys sex. Moreover, she is the one who demoralizes men and therefore "deserves what she gets" (Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 81-82).

Reinares also elaborates on the role of women in Mexican society. A woman's place is at home where she is expected to take care of her husband or her father, and the femicide victims are therefore seen as women who "have transgressed established social norms" (2010: 59). Violence on women is thus viewed as their punishment by both the authorities and the public. As the Chihuahuan state attorney general infamously remarked in 1999, "it is impossible not to get wet when you go outside in the rain; it is also impossible for a woman not to get killed when she goes out alone at night" (quoted in full in Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 131). The attorney general's parallel implies that there is nothing the authorities can do to stop the murders, just like they cannot control the weather. No one is held responsible for the murders except for the victims themselves.

There is abundant evidence that the Mexican authorities adopted the attorney generals rhetoric of blaming the victim. Numerous testimonies from the grieving relatives of the missing women reveal the same pattern. The authorities told José Luis Castillo that his missing daughter must have been "hanging out with the wrong crowd" (quoted in full in Del Pozo 2018). They followed the usual narrative and insinuated that she was responsible for her own disappearance. Similarly, Suárez Padilla's daughter who was violently murdered by her ex-boyfriend was blamed by the police because "her cell phone contained 200 nude photos taken by the killer" who escaped punishment despite confessing (Matloff 2015). According to local activist group statistics, almost 100 young people have gone

missing in 2018 and nobody has been apprehended (Del Pozo 2018). Most cases are not adequately investigated, and those few that lead to trial are rarely sentenced which makes Juárez the perfect place for perpetrators of all kinds (Kelliher 2018: 10).[2]

Most often, impunity and corruption are blamed for this inadequate official response. Staudt and Campbell state that in the Mexican context impunity should be understood as a "codeword for inept, incompetent and/or complicit law enforcement personnel and institutions at the municipal and state levels of Mexican society" (2008). More than often, reports, as well as the actual evidence, are mishandled by the Mexican police, making it impossible for world experts to investigate the crimes (Staudt and Campbell 2008) further. Former Mexican government representative Marcela Legarde confirmed widespread corruption in Mexican higher circles when she accused them of complicity by defining femicide as "a crime of the state which tolerates the murders of women and neither vigorously investigates the crimes nor holds the killers accountable" (quoted in full in Carrillo 2015). The sharp increase in the femicide rate in the last few years has provoked human rights organizations to further examine the Mexican government's inadequate actions which are documented in a report released by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 2018). The state has been accused of violation of its obligations to address the epidemic of femicides and for providing an appropriate context for the crimes that are on the rise (CEDAW 2018: 5). Accepting violence as an inevitable part of life in Juárez and failing to provide a proper official response to the femicides further perpetuates the victim-blaming rhetoric.

The cultural clash between American and Mexican values that is at least partially responsible for the outburst of gender violence was inevitable after the neoliberal transformation of patriarchal Juárez. When female workers became favored by **maquiladora** employers, the patriarchal system was under threat which stirred resentment in men who blamed women for their suddenly changed societal role (Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 127). For the first time, women became the breadwinners while many men remained unemployed. Gaspar de Alba writes that "Juárez is not ready for the liberated woman, at least not in the lower classes. Their traditions are being disrupted in complete disproportion to changes in their economic status" (Desert Blood 2007: 252). As a consequence, working women are disrespected by men and seen as deserving of their tragic fate. It is apparent that Gaspar de Alba does not argue for the reaffirmation of **machismo** and patriarchy, but explains that forcing one's cultural values onto others only reinforces paternalistic attitudes.

The perception and treatment of female **maquiladora** workers are not dissimilar to that of sex workers. Naturally, city officials took advantage of the disillusionment among Juárez inhabitants and reinforced this public discourse by claiming that the murdered women-led "a double life," i.e., work both in **maquiladoras** and as sex workers (quoted in full in Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010: 131). While this is true for only a small number of women, it is worth acknowledging the link between both occupations. Cepeda and Nowotny's study reveals that most women in Juárez become sex workers out of financial necessity. Similarly to women employed in **maquiladoras**, the majority of sex workers also came to Juárez from the south of Mexico or other Central American countries in the hope for a more comfortable life. As many were unable to secure employment at the competitive job market, sex work remained as the last option of how to stay financially independent (Cepeda and Nowotny 2014: 1509). The most striking aspect of this analysis is that female (sex) workers' lives are seen as less worthy and even deserving of the violent death that many encounter.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that there is little concern for both **maquiladora** and sex workers' rights protection. Elvia Arriola links NAFTA to the indifference towards women by pointing out that the neoliberal agreement protects transnational corporations "from being held accountable for any harm done to workers in Mexico" (quoted in full in Kelliher 2018: 9). Lack of labor rights for **maquiladora** workers translates to a lack of respect for women in general despite the significant role they have played in the city's expansion. Melissa Wright writes that the city's economic prosperity has always been linked to women workers, be it those working in factories or in the streets (2004: 369). Hence, for the longest time, a visible female presence was welcome as it was seen as a symbol of development, especially in the eyes of foreign investors and visitors to the city.

This perception has, however, shifted in recent years as female (sex) workers began to be wrongfully associated with "economic stagnation and social degradation" (Wright 2004: 370). Wright's study unmasks the city officials' complicity by providing a compelling analysis of how the city regulates female bodies and puts (sex) workers' lives at risk (2004). She explains that as a response to international criticism and a decline in corporate investment, the city elites decided to eliminate the once desirable female presence from the streets to give an impression of a middle-class urban environment (Wright 2004: 370). Sex workers have been impacted in particular by this new strategy as

they now receive even less protection. Cepeda and Nowotny's research confirms that the frequency and severity of violence inflicted on sex workers in Juárez is dependent on location, i.e., official venues in downtown areas where sex work is quasi-legal tend to be safer than parts where sex work is illegal and often carried out in places such as cars, hotels, or dark alleys (2014: 1518).

One strategy employed by the police to eliminate female presence in the city was making sex work illegal in places where their presence was no longer desirable. The other strategy involves "such practices as kidnapping and harassment" (Wright 2004: 370). The official discourse "that equates any form of women's vanishing from public space with urban development and industrial progress" (Wright 2004: 370) not only reinforces the widespread rhetoric that sees women as second-class citizens but also encourages perpetrators to commit femicides that they may even consider as a service to the city. The circle of people complicit in the crimes continually expanding.

Finally, while it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the complexities of the drug war in Juárez, it is imperative to acknowledge its impacts on femicide rates. Like unregulated free trade, the drug war contributes to the creation of an environment that facilitates femicides. Gender violence is overlooked as a minor problem by governments on both sides of the border that like to make the war on drugs seem their top priority. As Kelliher contends, the government's military response "has both normalized violence and diverted attention from … violence towards women" that is rendered invisible as a consequence (2018: 10). Moreover, despite the government's reluctance to recognize this, it is the poor sector of Mexican society that is most often targeted by the drug cartels, making women even more vulnerable because of the intersection of their class and gender (Kelliher 2018: 10). Finally, Wright reveals that authorities have adopted the victim-blaming rhetoric that they use as a justification for femicides to explain the high numbers of civilians who died as a consequence of the war on drugs (quoted in full in Kelliher 2018: 10). Such disclosure further points to the high levels of impunity and corruption in Mexican higher circles whose behavior alone implicates them in the crimes.

Conclusion

Women in post-NAFTA Juárez are in a paradoxical situation. The city they inhabit is both an attractive and to-be-avoided-at-all-costs place. Most of them escaped to the north to survive but ran into a death-trap instead. Furthermore, as workers, they are both desired and condemned. The intersection of their gender, race, and class makes them vulnerable in this neoliberal world where profit means more than anything else and where big transnational corporations have political power and authorities protect their interests. As a result, workers are objectified as cheap labor and dehumanized in the process of becoming victims of violence which has emerged as a side-effect of neoliberalism. The femicides hare overlooked because the sacrifice of **maquiladora** workers bolsters neoliberal capitalism. To end the violence, misogyny and exploitation of marginalized workers have to be stopped. However, such a change is difficult in a world governed by the neoliberal market, which has exploitation at its core. Mexico, with its still very traditional society, serves as an ideal neoliberal colony as patriarchy is the driving force of neoliberalism. Alternatively, in the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, "the US.-Mexican border es **una herida abierta** where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (1987: 3). In the context of Juárez, this bleeding is very literal.

Endnotes

1. Latinx refers to "a person of Latin American origin or descent (used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina)" ("Latinx")

2. The National Citizen Femicide Observatory states that only about 1,6 percent of all investigated cases lead to sentencing (Matloff 2015).

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Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019

ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.005

Abject Futures: The (re)Negotiation of NAFTA, Chrystia Freeland, and the Canadian Power Elite

Dean Ray

Introduction: On Making Faustian Deals

If Toronto is a Faustian city, then Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland is Faust. I mean this bit of instructive reasoning not as a moral qualm with Freeland herself, but as a window into the social forces and class geographies which are expressed in her negotiation of global trade deals at the beginning of the 21st century, an era of ever-increasing inequality and global instability, that shape the frontiers of capital and inequality in spaces like Toronto. For better or worse, Freeland is a starring player in global events and her dreams will shape the future. This paper, then, is an examination of the Canadian political economy, Chrystia Freeland, and their interaction in the context of the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

In Faust, the European folk tale crystallized by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the protagonist is a wearied and sullen intellectual who attempts suicide (Berman 1982). Surviving the endeavor, Faust approaches Mephistopheles—the Devil's servant—and is granted access to special powers and pieces of knowledge that he uses to confront and transform the world around him. However, in exchange for these self-fashioning experiences which will irrevocably alter Faust, he must surrender his soul to the Devil after several years living on earth. While the Faustian byline exists in the narratives of all moderns, there is a particular resonance with Freeland.

Freeland was elected the Member of Parliament for University-Rosedale in October 2015 as part of Justin Trudeau's Liberal Government. As a riding, University-Rosedale connects the city's posh district around the University of Toronto to Rosedale—Toronto's most wealthy and influential neighborhood. Shortly after her election, Freeland became the Minister of International Trade. She concluded a free trade agreement between the European Union and Canada in October 2016. The EU deal—Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement or CETA—was the second largest trade deal ever inked by Canada, representing over 21 Trillion USD in Gross Domestic Product as of 2017. However, CETA is slightly eclipsed by the North American Free Trade Agreement which has a combined GDP of 22 Trillion USD as of 2017. Shortly after the ratification of CETA at the end of 2016, Freeland became the Minister of Foreign Affairs and began renegotiation of NAFTA. Within months, Freeland became integral to the negotiation and eventual ratification of two of the largest trade deals in global history.

However, Freeland did not begin her journey to the pinnacle of international trade as a political darling but rather as a dominant force in both the intellectual and journalistic worlds. After completing her bachelor's at Harvard and master's at Oxford as a Rhode's Scholar, she became the editor of Canada's largest daily newspaper The Globe and Mail before becoming the editor of Thompson Reuter's Digital and then The Financial Times. In 2000 she published her first book *Sale of the Century* which documented the fall of communism in Russia and the subsequent rise of oligarchic capitalism in that country. Her next bestselling book Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else was published in 2012.

The story of Faust has been used by several intellectuals to understand a paradox at the heart of modernity. The

best rendering of this comes in Marshall Berman's All that is Solid Melts into Air, where Berman uses the story of Faust to interrogate the way in which the self-fashioning of moderns both produces revolutionary transformation in the lived and built world and is produced by revolutionary transformation in the lived and built world—and the way in which our dreams for the future mediate these two things (1982). In the story, Berman finds three sequential archetypes—the dreamer, the lover, and the developer. He writes, "[Faust] starts in an intellectual's lonely room, in an abstracted and isolated realm of thought; it ends in the midst of a far-reaching realm of production and exchange, ruled by giant corporate bodies and complex organizations, which Faust's thought is helping to create, and which are enabling him to create more (1982, 39)." He continues, Faust is both "the subject and object of transformation," he is "not merely the hero, but the whole world (1982, 39)." For Berman, "Goethe's Faust expresses and dramatizes the process by which, at the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth, a distinctively modern world-system comes into being (1982, 39)." He continues, "in all versions, too, the tragedy or comedy comes when Faust "loses control" of the energies of his mind, which then proceed to take on a dynamic and highly explosive life of their own (1982, 38)." Faust is a metaphor for the transformations of moderns and of the world by moderns, as both the subject and object of transformation, ignited by their dreams for the future.

For Berman, the figure of Faust has much to teach moderns about themselves—about the way social forces shape them outside of themselves, but also about how their dreams, aspirations, and desires come to shape the world around them (2010). It is this paradox—that actors are both affected by and affect the social world—that sits at the heart of global trade deals in the 21st century. Do Faustian figures like Freeland express the class interests of a global power-elite—so-called corrupt 'plutocrats'—or are they actors bringing the "modern world-system into being" only to find that their mental energies "take on a dynamic and highly explosive life of their own"?

Freeland is no stranger to powerful forces, her emotional displays—public tears at the pinnacle of the ratification of CETA for example—launched an international media spectacle about the role of women in power negotiations. This display also, arguably, secured a more favorable receipt of the agreement by European holdouts to the deal. Nor is she a stranger to powerful elites and their built worlds, representing University-Rosedale, the heart and soul of class-power in Canada. However, Freeland is also not unfamiliar with social forces or dreams for the future which once unleashed become ungovernable, having written extensively on perestroika, the disastrous fall of communism in Russia. Still, we have yet to understand the role of these forces in changing the present global hegemony, concentrating wealth and transforming the world-system. It may be that Freeland's self-professed dream for liberalism which challenges the concentration of wealth may produce the death of freedom she fears.

Here we have three competing stakes to Freeland's heart which correspond to Berman's Faustian transformation. First, we have Freeland the dreamer, with her intellectual foresight and warning about a future governed by plutocrats who destroy freedom, quoting Marx and extolling the virtues of free trade. Berman says the dreamer attempts to answer the question 'where are we supposed to be going?' and for Faust, the answer is not whom we will become but the process of becoming that which we will be. For Freeland in her public writings the same can be said, she concentrates on the process of becoming free rather than on the product of freedom. However, as in Faust, the dreamer transforms into a lover.

For Berman, the lover is enmeshed in fantasy and in a particular lust for the destruction of the insular and brutal bonds of community to unleash the possibility of freedom. Berman writes, "[Goethe's] portrait should etch in our minds forever the cruelty and brutality of so many of the forms of life that modernization has wiped out (1982 60)." For Freeland the lover furthers the liberal ideology through her belief in a 'good' of freedom, extolling innovation and inclusion at the expense of tradition. For example, in her book Plutocrats, Freeland makes the argument that the Venetian City state was doomed by the rise of plutocrats who concentrated wealth and turned their back on traders, destroying their connection to the city and the good that their free movement had brought through their desire to safeguard their power and their wealth. However, the lover must eventually transform into the developer, whose fantasy must encounter the friction of the real world as the ideal descends into the sticky materiality of everyday life (Tsing 2005).

In this article, we present Freeland the developer, whose brilliance and mental energies as Foreign Affairs Minister comes to service the 'good' of liberal inclusion rather than extractive plutocracy through the negotiation of free-trade agreements. However, in Faust, the thirst for development comes to destroy the very things he dreamt and loved. For Chrystia Freeland, who actualizes her desire for a liberal order in a world hostile to such a dream—a world of tyrants and plutocrats—her mental energies, I argue, are implicated in the creation of the very abject future against which she fights. While she rallies against the closure of the world order, she acts to further the concentration

of wealth amongst an elite that she must nonetheless serve—a Canadian power-elite—the mephistophelian figure of this whole sordid tale.

This article proceeds through three sections—which parallel the three phases of Faust outlined by Berman—the dreamer, the lover, and the developer. The first considers the context which produced someone like Freeland. This is accomplished through a review of the political and economic tradition in Canada and a look at Freeland's district University-Rosedale. The second considers the renegotiation of NAFTA, Freeland's tactics and impression management, how she wields emotions as a useful tool to manipulate media attention and gain leverage in negotiation of significant trade deals. The final section considers Freeland the developer, having her mental energies engineer an abject future rather than the ideal Liberal outcome she desires.

The Political Economy of the Power Elite in Canada

To understand NAFTA, both in the past and in the present, it is necessary to examine the different trajectories of the political economy of Canada. As someone born and raised in what is termed a hinterland my life has been interspersed with the reality of resource extraction and its impact on class dynamics in Canada. Hinterlands are the remote site of resource extraction. A large part of my story is connecting the competing temporalities of my youth with those of my adulthood.

My parents were both working class. I grew up in the north where my father worked as a miner for Barrick Gold. Illiterate and Native, he regularly tried to convince his friends to unionize and to vote for the Canadian New Democratic Party—our version of the Labour Party. My mother was a baker and worked for Westfair Foods for fifteen years, the largest grocery chain in Canada. It was this start in life that would make me aware of the differences in class which pervade Canada.

These differences were intensified when I moved to Toronto and began working at a Diner in the neighborhood of Rosedale, in the heart of Toronto's downtown. The neighborhood was particular for its mix of wealth and poverty. In 2006 the average income in the neighborhood was $165,827 and the median income of $55,906. This average income is five times the Canadian average and one of the highest incomes of all Toronto districts (StatCan 2006). It is also the district represented by Chrystia Freeland.

As my days at the dinner began to grow, I started checking out the names of clients, googling them during weekend brunches. I realized that the clientele was a mix of hedge-fund managers, or those who worked in their wake (lawyers, brokers, bankers) celebrities (the lead singer of Rush), and nervous social climbers trying to impress new clients or new friends. One Saturday during brunch, 12 of the 17 credit cards I ran belonged to those who worked in the financial industry. Like its access to the best transportation and most coveted services, the neighborhood was the historical nexus of the Toronto elite.[1] It was through my work here that I began to realize that the wealthiest people, those most at ease with money, were connected to the financial industry, a zone called Bay Street, but living in and moving through Rosedale.

Baystreet and the Canadian Power Elite

Akin to Wallstreet, Bay Street is where Canada's five largest banks have their headquarters and it is the location of the Toronto Stock Exchange. In some ways, the story that I wish to tell is how this fraction connected to Bay Street became so powerful—the power elite of Canada (for background see Carroll 1982).

According to C. Wright Mills, a power elite is the expression of a particular order—it is not a cabal based on association or origin, but a fraternity based on collective action and common psychology. He writes, "The power elite is not an aristocracy, which is to say that it is not a political ruling group based upon a nobility of hereditary origin." He continues, "It has no compact basis in a small circle of great families whose members can and do consistently occupy the top positions in the several higher circles which overlap as the power elite." It is a group of people who share a common practical knowledge or as Mills writes a network that "has essentially to do with only the psychology of its members." Bourdieu called this a **habitus** or a way of understanding the world acquired from a multiplicity of spaces that become common only in the fruition of an action or set of actions. These are the interests that determine

Canada's stake in the renegotiation of NAFTA, and it owes to their partial hegemony in Canada (see Cox 1992)—their disguised relations of power—that these interests were never front and center in the negotiation but always distant, in its background. They are the Mephistopheles to Freeland's Faust.

Canadian Political Economy

While they may remain in the background of the public consciousness, their praxis is well-known to academics in the field of political economy (Chorny, Clement, Panitch, and Philips 1977; Carroll 1982; Coleman 1986; Clement & Williams 1989; Cox 1992). The discipline of political economy in Canada is distinct from iterations found in either England (Strange 1986) or the United States (Keohaneand and Nye 1977). While in England and America, political economy is associated with the field of policy or economics, particularly in the international context, political economy in Canada refers to a more eclectic mixture of ideas from Marxism, political theory, and history that are used to explain the development of the Canadian economy as distinct from that of other industrial economies like the US (Watkins 1989).

One of the defining features of the Canadian School of Political Economy is its focus on the agency of small groups, political actors, or classes and its emphasis on historicism—context and culture—as critical criteria. As Clement and Williams write "the best of political economy has avoided economism, which attributes all explanations to the laws of motion of capitalism, instead of impregnating materialism with 'human agency,' whereby the decisions and actions of people are integral to explaining the course of history (1989, 7)." While in the United States, economists and international relations theorists explain action and motivation through the laws of the market or a desire for economic prosperity (Keohane and Nye 1977), bracketing out culture, power, and conflict, in Canadian political economy, economic interests and culture are the key to explaining the motivations of political actors. This approach bears a similarity to Mills' The Power Elite and his writing on how groups act in the course of history to shape the whole structure of society (1956). This is why I have taken particular interest in what I term the Canadian Power Elite or the power, opinions, and attitudes of the Bay Street set.

In Canada, political and economic analysis, infected with Marxist ideas, has thrived. Owing to this flat structure of our University system, alternate systems of ideas have a chance to compete as explanations for understanding the relationship between Canada and America (O'Brien 1995, Behiels and Stuart 2010). The educational system in Canada funded the study the relationship of Canada to America and it is common for policy practitioners and those in government in Canada to be very familiar with the Canadian Political Economy and the critical schools of theory that drives it. This is the case even in places like Queens, the University of Toronto, McGill, as well as McMaster University and Carleton University. While there is still a reverence for Marxist ideas in places like sociology in America, Marxism was one of the driving forces of this very successful school in Canada.

Staples Development in Canada

Two of the defining theses of this school are what are termed the 'staples thesis' and the 'Clement-Naylor thesis' (Clement and Williams 1989, Watkins 1989). The staples thesis was pioneered by Harold Innis and explains Canada's combined and uneven geographic development as owing to subsequent waves of extraction of staple goods which as they unfolded produced both hinterlands and heartlands (Drache 1991, Innis 1999, McBride 2001). The early political economy of Canada was tied to England and France with extracted furs from Eastern Canada traded with First Peoples and shipped through the Maritimes back to England. As British North America expanded westward and French North America became a dominion of the British, grains in the prairies became the next 'staple' to be extracted. This involved the intensification of shipping networks along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway, as well as the violent forced expulsion of many First Nations Peoples for replacement with white settlers. As development moved further westward and railways were constructed the extracted staples became more valuable and the areas of Toronto and Montreal became heartlands for the emerging Canadian economy. These heartlands depended upon the extraction of staples like oil, lumber, and other commodities from the provinces furthest West like Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia, or what Innis termed hinterlands. These were then sold

on international exchanges headquartered in Montreal and Toronto.

The linkages between the hinterland and heartlands sustained economic growth with very little nascent manufacturing emerging (Bradford and Williams 1989). Even in places labeled heartlands—like Toronto and Montreal—the primary function was the export of resources to metropoles first in Europe and then eventually in the United States.

Clement and Naylor build on this pioneering thesis to explain the commercial rather than the industrial basis of the Canadian economy and the commercial basis rather than the industrial basis of Canada's capitalist class (Panitch 1981, Clement 1989). Their central question was how could Canada become highly prosperous economically without developing the mode of industrialization witnessed in the United States? While other countries desired modernization through policies of import-export substitution which sought domestic industrial production, often by erecting tariff walls that protected local manufacturers (Prebisch 1959, Gunder Frank 1966), Canada modernized rapidly through the expansion of resource extraction and the commercial sector which financed and sold goods. According to Jack Layton (1996), this owed in part to the financial linkages with England and import of their mercantilist economic system which used banking as a means to extract resources from peripheries. This same economic class, owing mainly to family linkages, came to dominate the early Canadian political economy. The commercial and banking sectors in Canada remain the most protected and insulated sectors of the economy—much more than industry. The dominant fraction of the capitalist class of Canada are a commercial fraction, according to the thesis extolled by Canadian Political Economy—bankers and resource barons—those with a pithy disdain for industrialism. These are the interests we should look for in the renegotiation of NAFTA.

Policy mutations throughout the interwar period worked to maintain the dominance of this class while protecting the commercial basis of class power in Canada (Clement 1989). As Canada became more connected to the United States and less connected to Europe resource extraction and the commercial export of unprocessed resources remained central to the economy, providing the raw material for America's postwar boom (Laxer 1986; Williams 1988). While Keynesianism functioned in other parts of the world to stimulate growth where local supply did not exist by creating demand through government expenditure, in Canada, the image was quite different.

The Canadian government stepped in to stimulate the production of domestic staples—grains, dairy, fossil fuels, minerals—setting up powerful boards, quotas and management systems where the Canadian government purchased large amounts of 'staples' at guaranteed prices and held them for sale on markets—foreign or domestic (Watkins 1989). Mel Watkins writes "it was that Keynesianism, the greatest innovation in economic theory and practice in this century, fraught with apparent potential to lead to greater emphasis on the domestic market as the prime source of growth, actually led to no alteration in the staples bias of Canadian economic policy (1989, 20)." With the Canadian government guaranteeing the price of staples in the post-WWII era and protected their exports, foreign global capital, mostly from the United States, flowed into the country, increasing the demand and extraction of these resources but seldom leading to an intensification of industries surrounding the resource base.

Transformation of staple resources into manufactured goods domestically is even less likely when the extraction is practiced by foreign corporations who use the staple in the manufacture of goods in networks of global production. As Canada became linked to the United States more and more of its staples became owned by foreign entities. However, owing to a well-educated and cheap labour force and proximity to cheap staple resources like steel and aluminum, US manufacturers in the 1960s and 70s began to set-up branch plant factories in Canada, producing goods for US corporations to sell on international markets—avoiding US tariffs on staple goods like steel (Laxer 1986). It is here that we see the beginning of continental integration and the origin of branching networks of production that would eventually facilitate the offshoring to Asia of so much of American industrial capacity (Maswood 2008).

At the same time, there have been domestic producers and they have sought the creation of tariffs to protect domestic manufacturing. However, domestic industrial producers have been consistently thwarted in their ability to achieve tariffs to protect nascent or developing industries (Layton 1976). These domestic industrial capitalists in Canada have remained in a weakened position opposite those who depend upon foreign sources of capital in their production or extraction. Moreover, they are also much weaker than the commercial basis of Canada's capitalist class, whose ties reach back to England and who depend upon sale and finance of the extraction of staples, having them sold on international markets, and feeding upon the return of international—but mostly American—capital for renewal of their life cycle.

Therefore, the Bourgeoise in Canada, if we are to describe it in that sense, is composed of three groups. The first and most powerful of these groups are the financier capitalists, offspring of the mercantilist bourgeoise in England,

and the owners of the domestic banking sector—the Rosedale set. Just five banks control 90% of the banking sector in Canada—Royal Bank of Canada, Toronto-Dominion Bank, Bank of Nova Scotia, Bank of Montreal, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (Huang and Ratnovski 2009). These banks also have considerable control over foreign markets. Royal Bank, Canadian Imperial Bank, and the Bank of Nova Scotia control a sizeable portion of the Caribbean banking sector and large amounts of the banking sector in Latin America (Alexander 2018). Toronto-Dominion Bank controls TD Ameritrade the eighth largest bank in America by market capitalization (NIC 2018).

What is interesting is the complete lack of foreign control in Canada. Less than 12% of the banking sector is controlled by foreign banks (Department of Finance 2016). Provisions for these protections were central to the negotiation of the original NAFTA and the Canadian United States Free Trade agreement before that. Moreover, while these banks are considered retail banks, in that they offer financial services to Canadians, most of their profits are driven by investment, corporate banking, and brokerage (Department of Finance 2016). The big five function more as a cartel than an industry, cooperating to stymy competition and consumer protection and using access to political forces to safeguard the Canadian market from foreign competition and entry.

The second group, both in terms of power and as part of this list, I describe as the extractive capitalists. This fraction of bourgeoise owes their success to the extraction of staples and their sale both domestically and internationally (Pineault 2018). The heart of this fraction is the extractive core of Alberta, where bitumen is removed from the ground and shipped globally as cheap fossil fuel—but mostly to the United States (Kellogg 2015). However, it also includes the extraction of other raw materials like forestry and minerals. This sect of the bourgeoise is dependent not only upon the sale of resources to foreign markets but also upon the flow of capital either from domestic sources or into Canada to finance costly extraction processes (Carter 2018). The capital costs for setting up a resource extraction operation, either in the tar sands or elsewhere, are quite intensive and Canadian Banks have in recent years made a significant investment in these extractive operations (Lee 2018). Like the banking sector which has sought control of foreign markets, these capitalists have also exported their brand of extractive capitalism to other areas.

The third group, far weaker than the previous two, but still relevant, are the industrialist capitalists. This fraction of the bourgeoise owes their power and success to domestic industrial manufacturing often through construction, infrastructure, transportation, communication technologies, or the aeronautics industries (Panitch 1981). They are primarily territorialized in Quebec, the second largest Canadian province. This has made the fate of this group a powerful political symbol and resource for parties seeking a substantial election victory through the many seats the Francophone province has to offer on Election night. Unlike the banking and extractive sectors which have become deterritorialized, practicing a type of soft imperialism in foreign countries backed by the government, the industrialists have remained domestic and have often sought tariffs and rents to protect their industry from international competition. An example of this sector is found in Bombardier—a Quebec based airspace, defense, and railway manufacturer with $25 Billion in assets.

Three Sects Determine Interests

These three sects of the capitalist bourgeoise—the commercial, extractive, and industrial—in Canada have been mainly aligned with a given political party (Layton 1976). For example, before the 2000s, the industrialists were represented by the Progressive Conservative Party, the commercial class by the Liberal Party, and the extractivists by the Canadian Alliance and Reform Party—Alberta based political parties. However, the distinction between all three classes and their linkage to the party have collapsed in recent times.

While the Liberal Party still appears to act in the interest of the commercial class, it has also acted to protect the extractivists. For example, in 2017 the government purchased an oil pipeline that served the interests of the Alberta oil sands for $7 billion—two billion over market value. This was not done on political grounds as the Liberals have never done well as a party in Western Canada and especially unwell in Alberta. Instead, some of the largest stakeholders in the pipeline operations in Canada were Canadian banks. The possibility that it would stop operation or not be expanded would mean a windfall loss for the banking sector (Uechi 2017). Therefore, then Finance Minister Bill Morneau—part of the Rosedale set and the former owner of the largest human resources services firm in Canada specializing in pensions and liabilities—stepped in to protect members of his own class when the

pipeline's future was endangered by the opposition in BC amongst Indigenous groups.

In acting to protect the extractivists, Morneau and the Liberals are acting to protect the commercial class which forms the base of their power. Owing to the investment by Canadian Banks into the oil sector, a sort of symbiotic relationship has grown up between the extractive and financial fractions.

The Liberal Party has a similar relationship of necessity with domestic industrialists, or what remains of them. For example, the Liberals protected Bombardier in 2017 with a billion-dollar bailout of its aeronautics division (Levitz 2017). This behavior can best be explained in terms of political calculus, the Liberals depend upon seats in Quebec to form a government, therefore protecting the industrialist interests in that province serve to ensure the liberals stay in power. A similar scandal involving the Liberals supporting industrialists surfaced in early 2019 when it was revealed that the Liberals had been pressuring their Attorney General to forego federal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, a Quebec based engineering and infrastructure firm, so they could continue to compete for Government contracts. According to testimony from the former Liberal Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould—an Indigenous Woman from British Columbia—this was done to ensure the Party's fate in Quebec (Meyers and Syed 2019).

Therefore, our analysis of political forces must be open to an alternative interpretation, both in terms of economic and political interests. This openness to multiple motivations is a cornerstone of the Canadian School of Political Economy. As Clement and Williams write "relations within political economy are not static forces. To the contrary, political economy seeks to discover tensions within society as it produces struggle and resistance (1989, 11)." They continue, "to know how societies are, and can be, transformed is the primary goal of political economy. Frequently this means challenging conventional wisdoms and ideological structures in the popular, academic, and political domains (1989, 11)."

The picture I have tried to show of Canadian Political Economy is of multiple and competing forces, all striving for hegemony, but none ever quite achieving it. This has created overlapping but differentiated machines driving economic and class power with variable inputs and outputs strewn across the many regions of Canada. These competing relations are crystallized in agreements like NAFTA and they, in some way, seal the destiny of the future. Today's trade agreement is tomorrow's (in)equality or (in)ability to respond to environmental degradation.

A Renegotiation in Appearance Only

On May 11th, 2017 the United States Senate confirmed Robert Lighthizer as the US Trade Representative. Support for Lighthizer crossed partisan lines with an 82-14 vote. Lighthizer was a veteran of the Reagan administration (Panetta 2017). This administration had negotiated the original Canadian-US Free Trade Agreement in the late 1980s, a precursor to the continental agreement ratified in 1993. His bipartisan confirmation signaled the broad support he and the renegotiation had from a multitude of interests within the United States. Two months later Lighthizer's office announced their priorities for negotiation to Congress (Needham 2017). Under the Trade Promotion Authority, the Executive Branch has broad power to negotiate trade agreements but must consult with Congress through the announcement of objectives (Congressional Research Service 2019). Many of the objectives had appeared under the Obama administration during the negotiation of the now defunct Trans-Pacific Partnership, which the Trump administration had axed only days after taking office.

Unlike the United States, Canadian officials have no requirement to reveal trade priorities before or during the negotiation of international agreements. However, with the implosion of TPP and the election of the Trump administration, the governing Liberals quickly reset their agenda for the negotiation and their understanding of US-Canada relations in the Trump era. On January 10th, 2017 Trudeau made Chrystia Freeland the Minister of Foreign Affairs—largely equivalent to the Secretary of State role in the US (McSheffrely 2017). Freeland is the Member of Parliament for University-Rosedale, the neighborhood discussed earlier and a center of the commercial class power in Canada. I snuck into her victory party with a group of my fellow NDPers the night she and the Trudeau were elected, sharing drinks with many of my Liberal friends. Freeland was wearing a sleek red dress, when I approached her she spoke genially, however the moment I asked "will you receive the Foreign Affairs position in cabinet" she summoned her body person with a slight hand gesture, before being flung to the next congregation of adulants. Two years after her election she would be in the Foreign Affairs post, facing-off against a new Republican Administration.

Freeland was a specialist in international trade agreements having recently concluded the emotional negotiation of the trade agreement with the European Union. This process had involved public tears from Freeland which

sparked international discussion of women in politics (Smith 2016). However, Freeland's tears were quickly followed by the signing and enactment of the European agreement. Freeland proved that she was adept at manipulating the media and bringing attention to key areas of the agreement through emotional displays and appearance management while minimizing others. This is no surprise given her pedigree. She was educated at Harvard and Oxford. However, her success came as a late-night regular and as an international journalist, editor of the Global and Mail—a sizeable Canadian daily—and the managing director of the Canadian-based International media firm Thomson-Reuters. Therefore, the strategic expectation going into the negotiation with Freeland at the helm was one of theatricality and managed appearances.

While Trudeau launched a charm offensive enlisting the president's daughter Ivanka to smooth their eventual meeting, he also convened a group of specialists to discuss trade in the era of Trump with his cabinet at a retreat on January 20th, 2017, days after Trump's inauguration (The Canadian Press 2017). While the Liberals had deep connections to the Democrats and some Republicans in Congress and Governor's mansions across America, they lacked any significant ties to Trump. His victory came as a surprise to them, as it did to many. The names on the attendance list for the retreat are especially telling of the interests of the Trudeau government sought to protect, perhaps more than any declared objective appearing on paper. They included Stephen Schwarzman the Chairman and CEO of the Blackstone Group a large private equity firm with holdings globally and a personal friend of Donald Trump (Derworiz 2017).

The Blackstone Group has deep ties to Canada's power elite. Former Progressive Conservative Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, a Quebecer, is a member of the board of directors of Blackstone (Blackstone N.D.) and his daughter—Ontario Attorney General Caroline Mulroney—is married to the Chairman of Blackstone's Canadian subsidiary. Unsurprisingly, both Mulroneys are friends of the Trudeaus. Brian Mulroney had crossed partisan lines to endorse Trudeau over his conservative predecessor Stephen Harper in the last parliamentary election. Mulroney was also a regular at Trump's Florida resort Maralago and was known to the Trumps before their ascent to the presidency. On April 5th, former PM Mulroney agreed to advise the governing Liberals on the trade negotiation. One week later, interim leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Rona Ambrose, sent a letter to the Liberals saying that she would suspend partisan bickering for the fate of the trade deal.

During his time as Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney proved especially adept at balancing the competing class interests of Canada. His predecessor Pierre Trudeau, Justin's father, had often vied for a nationalist economic policy through the maintenance of Canadian ownership of resources and the development of domestic industry (Laxer and Laxer 1977, Pratt 1982). Mulroney, on the other hand, took a different tact, tearing down much of the protectionism of the Trudeau era, opening the taps for foreign investment in resource extraction while protecting the banking industry from foreign competition (Watkins 1988). It was this combination of forces that were eventually crystallized in NAFTA. Even though the pot was sweet for the commercial sector, the Liberals campaigned against the agreement before the 1993 election based on labor reforms (Cairns 1994). They backtracked after the election and the agreement was ratified. The involvement of Blackstone during the retreat may have been an early signal of a similar gambit at play in the late 2010s renegotiation, that parts of Canada's staples economy that had been protected would be opened for foreign investment while the banking sector—the crown jewel of the Canadian power elite—would remain untouched.

With all of the major's actors in place the negotiation began. There were constraints from the outset. Enrique Penã Nieto would leave the Mexican presidency on December 1st, 2018, any agreement would have to be in place by September 31st, 2018 so that it could face review before his departure. The Quebec election, where the Liberal's provincial counterparts were in for a close fight, was scheduled to take place on October 1st, 2018. The United States midterm elections would follow shortly after.

The negotiation dragged out through the summer of 2018. Canadian media attention focused on back and forth barbs over steel tariffs which the Trump administration had imposed on a national security basis and duties on forestry products (Panetta 2017). These were hardly sacred cows to the Liberals, though attempts were made to soften the blow through investments by the Federal Government in these sectors, a policy move similar to post-WWII Keynesianism in Canada, protecting staple exporting industries in times of uncertainty.

The Americans never pursued opening the financial sector in Canada. Instead what followed were a spate of back and fourths about the country of origin requirements for automobile manufacturers, wages for Mexican autoworkers, Canada's supply management system for dairy, and the third-party dispute resolution mechanism in the original NAFTA (Freeland 2018). The supply management system, for both dairy and grain, was another Keynesian

innovation from the post-WWII days that the Canadian government used to prop up staples production during times of difficulty. However, the dairy industry was particularly important in Quebec, and Quebec farmers had already felt cheated after the European Union trade agreement inked a year earlier (McGregor 2017). A blow to the coveted supply management system could have cost the Trudeau government a Liberal-ally at the provincial level in Quebec with the election looming on October 1st.

At the end of August 2018, Trump announced a US-Mexico trade deal that excluded Canada (Blanchfield 2019). Showing no sign of weakening in their position, Freeland praised the deal even without Canada's involvement (Blanchfield 2018). Two weeks later, in September, she appeared on a panel titled 'Taking on the Tyrant' where panelists were invited to discuss tyrants like Trump, Vladimir Putin and Bashir al Asad (McCarten 2018). Later that month she was pictured at Reagan airport in a T-Shirt that said on the back 'Keep Calm and Negotiate NAFTA' on the front and 'Mama is not chopped liver' on the back (McCarten 2018). By the end of September, it was unclear if an agreement between all three countries would be reached by the deadline of September 31st created by Penã Nieto's departure. In the days before the final text was agreed to by all parties, Trump announced on September 27th that "we're very unhappy with the negotiations and the negotiating style of Canada. We don't like their representative very much (McCarten 2018)."

This is a particularly vexing moment in the negotiation. The deal was going to be inked only four days later and the details had largely been worked out. Insulting Freeland served no purpose for Trump, yet, it did serve a purpose to Freeland and the Liberals. She had staged an emotional outburst only days before the European Union agreement a year earlier, using the moment to appear as if the agreement was in danger. The outburst worked. It forced her European counterparts into last-minute negotiations and put pressure on hold-outs within the European government to ink the deal. A battle at this juncture in the negotiation between her and Trump would provide valuable cover, indicating that Canada had driven a hard negotiation and landed on the right side of the bargain and the wrong side of Trump without appearing too close to the administration. Therefore, her appearance at the 'Taking on the Tyrant' panel weeks earlier and her comments about Trump may have been meant to draw the ire of the President and provide an opportunity for her to sweep in at the last minute and seal the deal. Moreover, pushing the deal until the last minute and delaying the release of the text would soften the blow of opening Canada's dairy market to US and Mexican producers for the Quebec Electorate who voted to throw-out the Quebec Liberals on October 1st by an impressive margin.

The final deal included changes to the supply management system for dairy, reductions in the country of origin standards for automobiles, and provisions designed to allow Federal and State governments to add buy-American provisions in infrastructure bills (Freeland 2018). Months after the deal was approved several auto plants in Ontario closed down. However, it left the banking sector and the third-party dispute management system intact. It is possible that protecting established interests in the interim may harm future areas of economic growth.

On August 31st, Financial Post Reporter Kevin Carmichael—given to bouts of tremendous reflexivity about the class basis of political power in Canada—reacted to President Trump's desire for NAFTA to be renamed and 'free trade' to be dropped (2018). It was eventually styled The United States-Canada-Mexico Agreement. He writes "NAFTA might have felt like a free-trade agreement because it eliminated duties on things that we see, smell, taste, and touch. However, many less tangible sources of wealth — and political influence — remained mostly protected." He continues, "Financial services is a good example. The original NAFTA contained more than 2,000 articles, and not one of them required Canada to adjust the ownership rules that effectively shield the Bay Street banking oligopoly from international competition." Carmichael's critique was incisive particularly for its appearance in Canadian media. However, in the guise of traditional economic orthodoxy he calls for 'freer' trade.

While Canada lost very few of its sacred cows and maintained the protection of its Bay Street banking cartel, Freeland's constituency in University-Rosedale, the US silently reaped substantial concessions on battlefields of the future. Canadian personal data, under the new deal, can be stored remotely, and no-longer must rest in Canada, limiting access of the Canadian Government to Canadian data or Canadian communication technology firms competing for access to house data. This strengthened the position of Alphabet Inc., Amazon, and Facebook, already giant machines of economic growth, while potentially impacting Canada's vibrant financial technology sector (McGregor 2018). The intellectual property chapters weakened the ability of Canadian drug manufacturers to produce generic drugs on expired patents which had benefited consumers globally and looks particularly vexing with a microbiological revolution spurred by the development and production of monoclonal antibodies. Carmichael ends his piece on a more prescient note. He writes, "Trudeau's choices will show the extent to which he favors

established industries over next-generation ones."

In the final analysis, most of what was essential to Canada had been decided long ago and was never a declared objective of the Trump administration—protection for the banking and financial services sector. What was impressive was the ability of Freeland to manage appearances and use emotional intensity to provoke the President and to appear as if the negotiation was much more fraught and tense than it perhaps was. However, while the final agreement protects the commercial basis of the Liberal Party in the financial services sector as well as the banking industry, it comes at a potential cost to the future.

Abject Futures

In the conclusion to her book, Freeland contrasts two types of plutocrats using the example of the Venetian Le Serratta—which means the closure (2012). During the height of Venetian power in Europe, in the 14th century, the city state's open boundaries and financial system fostered trade and allowed for social mobility. However, as Venice became more powerful, its elite sought to safeguard their power. Freeland writes, "we think of social mobility as an entirely good thing, but if you are already on top, mobility can also mean competition from outsider entrepreneurs (2012, 466)." She continues, "Even though this cycle of creative destruction had created the Venetian upper class, in 1315, when their city was at the height of its economic powers, they acted to lock in their privilege (2012 466)." She concludes, "One reason La Serrata is such a useful example is that the Venetian oligarchs who closed off their society were the products of a robust, open economy…they didn't start out as oligarchs—they'd made themselves into oligarchs (2012, 467)." Freeland's observation is bright and spry and speaks to her liberal intellectual heritage and her capacity for original historical writing. Moreover, her use of La Serreta as an example four years before the election of Trump speaks to a vision of the future which now seems uniquely prescient.

Later in the same chapter, she distinguishes 'good' and 'bad' plutocrats (2012). The first set is affined to preserving an open society and through their works spur innovation and inclusion for which they are rewarded. The second set, the set she argues Marx warned us about, are the 'robber-barons' who collect rent from the poor and seek to safeguard their own power and privilege by closing off their societies as in La Serreta. (2012) She writes, "Dividing the plutocrats into the rent-seekers and the value creators is a good way to judge whether your economy is inclusive or extractive…and creating more opportunities for productive enterprise, and fewer for rent-seeking, is how you create an inclusive economic system (2012, 473)." Artfully she argues that such a distinction is hard to imagine and even enforce as innovators give way to oligarchs defending their fortune. Here she uses the example of Bill Gates and his antitrust case in Europe and the United States.

Earlier in the book, she argues that the way privilege was transmitted during La Serreta was through 'The Golden Book' or specialized pieces of knowledge that allowed for the children of oligarchs to learn the practices to generate wealth in their Venetian City State ecosystem. The same, she argues, happens now through elite educational institutions, channeling Bourdieu and Passeron nearly 45 years after the release of Cultural Reproduction (1971). She continues, stating deftly something which has become a talking point of Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders "another reason the twentieth century was the century of inclusion was that the business elite, particularly the Americans, who were its unchallenged world leaders, understood that they could prosper only if the middle class prospered, too." However, there is much left to be resolved between the transformation from Freeland the dreamer and the lover to Freeland the developer who must transform her visions into regulation—a significant number of paradoxes yet remain.

Her stance in the renegotiation of NAFTA protected the mercantilist impulses of the Canadian economy, its commercial basis in the banking sector. Though the Canadian power-elite may be turned psychologically toward inclusion and openness on all things—refugees, international trade—they remain tethered to protecting the source of their power in the financial sector and it seems they would act as a 'bad' plutocrat to protect themselves as they may have done in the negotiation—sacrificing the future for their power. They may indeed be the 'bad' plutocrats or robber-barons that Freeland herself warned us about only years before she became Foreign Affairs Minister.

This paradox that appears between Freeland's actions and her dreams seems particularly salient when we consider the possibility of the future. Will the new trade agreements she inventively used spectacle to negotiate and serve inequality or freedom? The answer may lie in the scale at which this question is considered. In the short or interim free-trade may indeed benefit Canada and even Canada's poorest. However, when this question is considered

in a broader temporal, spatial or ecological scale the answer becomes less noticeable. Spatially, such trade deals may serve global inequality by further deterritorializing elites from domestic populations and shifting the boundaries of production to increasingly precarious groups. All the while it may limit the ability of workers to organize collectively. Moreover, it may also lead to a growing standard of living at the expense of the biosphere from which all standards are derived without redistributing that standard equitably across populations. This speaks to a tendency in liberal analysis, to parse each realm into individual pieces without considering their effect upon the whole or the emergent properties of the pieces assembled together. In this sense, it may render the future abject—neither subject nor object, but beyond that which is imaginable. This answer itself may rest on whether Faust is beamed to Heaven for his optimism as in Goethe's story, or discarded to hell for his pragmatism as in the German folk-tale upon which Goethe's story is based.

Endnotes

1. For a historical description of urbanization in Toronto see Spencer 1975.

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Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019

ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.006

Taking Back Control of Nothing: Elites Denouncing Elites to Mobilize Populism in the Service of Power - from NAFTA to Trump, Brexit, and the EU

Christian Garland

Introduction

The title of this article begins with the favorite slogan of the UK Brexit campaign Taking Back Control but subverts its populist rhetoric with the addendum…of nothing. The article critically analyzes the top-down ideological substance of Brexit as well as drawing the distinct parallels with the Trump US presidency, these being a lowest-common-denominator populism of elites denouncing elites, but this presented as if it were from below and the will of the people. Brexit is a portmanteau of "British exit," and is something of a catchall for the complexities of the UK leaving the EU, and indeed the febrile political climate in the UK of the past three years. "Brexiters" as it is used in the article refers to those who maintain that the UK must leave the EU at any cost and who continue to push this as both necessary and desirable. The article uses these terms to identify those in the "Leave" camp who campaigned for the outcome which also resulted in a narrow victory for "Leave" that is, in the outcome of "Brexit," but does not also include all of those who may have voted for such an outcome.

The Brexiters' rhetoric has succeeded in mystifying a substantial section of what Thomas Frank calls "Rust Belt Britain"[1] similar to Trump's own crudely inchoate populism to mobilize a section of the US electorate which feels similarly ignored by Washington. At its worst, this has sought to tap into arbitrary collective identities of race and nation, willfully ignoring if not accepting the endorsement of the far-right.

Indeed, populism and traditionalism along with nationalism crossing into fascism, make use of pre-modern tribal loyalties based on race and where someone is from. For these being the go-to program for state leadership for the last two centuries, it has been a case of as and when depending on efficacy and locale of incumbent elites. Populism and traditionalism and all of the reactionary and conservative tribal loyalties these tap into are inherently opportunist, and it could be argued that tapping into them is the primary reason why the reaction of the last three years has been so successful in the top-down mobilization of the base by outliers of the same elites that are superficially denounced.

In the US, NAFTA which was of course signed off by Bill Clinton in the early-90s, was in many ways the paradigm example of Neoliberal Globalization in legislative form, similarly the EU's own fatally flawed commitment to its version of that can be seen in practice in the Troika's austerity punishment of Greece, and in many of the EU's core founding documents.

This article aims to incise the rhetoric of the Trump administration critically and indeed the fallacious ideological claims of the - mostly right-wing conservative - Brexiters who it must be said, inhabit their own fantasy world of a Merrie England that never was.

Legislating the 'vile maxim'[2] of neoliberalism: historicizing NAFTA

Noam Chomsky writing in 1993 on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its expected consequences cited Adam Smith's invocation of "the vile maxim of the masters of mankind": "All for ourselves, and nothing for other People"[3] to illustrate the instrumental logic of the US-led agreement between states and corporations to render all resources, raw materials, and indeed labor the length and breadth of North America subject to free trade. This of course meant that what at the time had been 15 years of neoliberalism[4] was enshrined in a supranational trade agreement to allow all public goods to be marketized and quantified with a market value, just as labor would have to be made flexible, that is, individualized accordingly and any capacity for collective action rendered all-but impossible: the US in open contradiction of its own edicts as well as those of NAFTA also practiced its own version of protectionism - as it saw fit, for itself but not other countries in the agreement.

Above all else, NAFTA[5] encouraged and facilitated the outsourcing of jobs primarily though not exclusively manufacturing from the US to Latin American countries and Mexico in particular - and could indeed be viewed 25 years from its inception as paradigmatic of Neoliberal Globalization[6]: predicated as it is on economic orthodoxy or what is also called Neo-Classical economics.[7] As such, in the populist tumult of the past five years, the incumbent US president Donald Trump has - so far - successfully presented himself and his vaudeville act as being representative of the hopes and fears of suburban and rural America, and the Republican Party has successfully managed to do what Thomas Frank describes thus "Republicans successfully inverted their historical brand-image as the party of the highborn, remaking themselves as plain-talking pals of the forgotten people who had so spurned them during the Great Depression. Republicanism's payload, however, was the same as it had been in 1932. Just look at what conservatism proceeded to do to those average people once they welcomed it into their lives."[8]

Trump's rhetoric, in the worst traditions of reactionary populism, has made cynical use of tapping into existing prejudices of its target electoral demographic and the ignorance fuelling those, in one sense a win-win game plan, using the same unprovable confirmation bias as conspiracy theory which it also unsurprisingly utilizes.[9] This section of the article mostly aims as the subtitle says to historicize NAFTA to help trace its background and the last 25 years of its existence to set out the contemporary political context better, so segueing into the nonsensical claims of the US president should not be seen as more than that, a minor excursus.

In the early-90s at the time it first came into being NAFTA was to portend globalized multinational capitalism at The End of History[10] that is, as agreed by multinational corporations and legislated by interchangeable politicians from interchangeable political parties. More than three decades later, after NAFTA first appeared as a signature piece of glib "post-political[11] macroeconomic policy prescription, and after the significant challenge of the "anti-globalization"/ "alter-globalization" movement of the late-90s[12]/early-2000s[13] the wholesale crisis of what became the Great Recession in 2007/2008 in part at least, upended such formerly bland policy assumptions, albeit the response of politicians, governments and para-state institutional bodies was mostly what could be described as Neoliberalism with Keynesian Characteristics, indeed as Chomsky notes "'free-market capitalism' is to be risk free for the masters, as fully as can be achieved."[14]

The early-90s consensus of political and financial elites on NAFTA, and the neoliberal policy models of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and G7, as well as the annual (self) congratulation of the World Economic Forum in Davos, found considerable ideological succor in the triumphalism of the end of the Cold War which the West had apparently won. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and with it German reunification, the collapse of Soviet satellite states, and the final confirmation of this with the collapse of the Soviet Union itself in 1991 underlined Fukuyama's End of History thesis it seemed. By the end of the decade and the end of the Twentieth Century, however, serious fissures had begun to appear.[15] The "anti-globalization/alter-globalization" mobilizations which found their first major public expression with the 1999 Seattle anti-WTO mass mobilization, and then throughout the early-2000s, albeit largely eclipsed by 9/11 and subsequent Islamist/Jihadist attacks and the War on Terror over the next two decades, were favored to the extent that they involved hundreds of thousands of people at their height, but hundreds of thousands of those already more or less politicized, and for all their many contradictions, were not what could be called populist: then or now. These events and the highly politicized actors who oriented them were infused by the necessity for trying to define a version of deliberative, direct democracy in their organizational practices or means, besides the ends these were aiming for, those being radically progressive social change **from below**.

The time of the "movement of movements" of the late-90s/early-2000s, was otherwise mostly one of economic equilibrium and relative social and political peace in the countries of the First World or Global North, specifically

those of the West: the US, UK, and Continental Europe. Nascent discontent was confined to the margins, and although **sections** of the general population of these societies may not have benefited from the promissory claims of their political classes and were aware of it, this was also the time of New Labor in the UK and similar incarnations across Continental Europe. In the US, George W. Bush consolidated his surprise presidential win in 2000, winning a second term in 2004 the Crisis of the late-2000s hitting in his last eighteen months of office, and although the US where it originated felt the effects at their most severe[16,17], its economy recovered faster than that of the UK whose own anemic recovery was far less apparent; in the EU in particular southern Europe, the Great Recession manifested in a further phase as the European Sovereign Debt Crisis, as states socialized private debt to refinance loans by bailing out banks and other financial institutions as in the UK and US but so too public borrowing from institutional lenders, the caveat being savage Austerity and cuts to every area of the public sector, Greece more than any other country continuing to suffer the diktats of the Troika: the European Commission (EC), European Central Bank (ECB), and the IMF, who demanded unending cuts and Austerity as the price for needing funding in the form of borrowing by the state.[18]

At the time of the Sub-Prime Crisis in 2007, which became a full-blown Financial Crisis over the next 12 months, there was no mass movement from below, or broadly speaking from the left by way of response. In neither the US or the UK where the contagion of the "Credit Crunch" of the economic crisis was felt instantaneously in 2007 as it was in its next phase in 2008, there were some signs of widespread anger,[19] and some left response, but these remained relatively inchoate.[20] By this is meant what was largely absent was an awareness of the reasons for the social consequences and consciousness of the class in society responsible for all of those and indeed the Crisis itself who while being protected from its knock-on effects in their entirety, also profited from these from the very start. State intervention to shore up banks deemed "too big to fail" took the form of course of the takeover of the government-sponsored Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac by the Federal Reserve and industrial enterprises such as General Motors and Chrysler in the US filing for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy as well as de facto nationalization. In the UK banks including Lloyds-TSB, Royal Bank of Scotland, and the Halifax all had the state acquiring majority ownership, as it had done to no avail in trying to prop up the heavily indebted Northern Rock in September 2007, whose value was mostly on paper if not overwhelmingly comprised of Fictitious Capital in the form of the toxic assets of unpaid and unpayable Sub-Prime mortgages through its US interests and the no less toxic assets of Iceland's Ice Save owned by Landsbanki.

In the decade since the late-2000s Crisis in its various formative stages of progression and the societal consequences foremost among these being unending Austerity administered by governments of all shades in countries across the EU, there has been little in the way of class analysis or even of the power relations at work: those being a massively unequal power differential of financial and economic elites wielding undue power over the rest of society to their advantage. To be sure, the left - such as it is - cannot be held solely responsible for the populist turn of the last five years, and it should be remembered that in the use of this shorthand is meant in thoroughly **unorthodox** Marxist terms.[21] Such an analysis calls into question the whole of existing society itself, and can identify its problems but does not pretend to offer instant quick-fix solutions to them, it also makes high demands of people: of both their intelligence and their capacity for empathy, unlike right-wing populism and fascism, and unlike them it does not find groups for apportioning blame and setting itself apart from.

In setting out the contemporary political context, this section of the article has endeavored to historicize NAFTA to better understand how the signature piece of early-90s neoliberal macro-economic trade policy which first came into being in 1994, embodies the post-political institutional policy assumptions of neoliberalism. Twenty-five years later in a state of ongoing crisis, political and economic elites are superficially denounced in the populist backlash which makes use of its own ideology's reactionary account of people, society and the world to supposedly explain them for its passive and inert target demographic who simply want answers they can believe and repeat regardless of how nonsensical or fallacious these may be: respectively, in the US those at Trump rallies wearing red Make America Great Again baseball caps, and in the UK those who voted for Brexit and believe the country crashing out of the EU with no deal is both necessary and desirable.

Make America Great Again…with populist demagoguery and nationalism

The incumbent US president Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election on a populist ticket of "Make

America Great Again," unexpectedly running for president as one of 17 Republican nominees, his winning the election was no less of a surprise. In the period up to early 2019, a continually changing assemblage of White House appointees have been either sacked or quit.[22,23] Trump's appeal is above all else to his base, and there is the belief among both this demographic base and his aides that a second term can be secured - thus necessarily winning an electoral majority taking in enough undecided voters by nudging them whether to vote for him again or for the first time by ramping up much of what is viewed as behavior beyond the pale for a public figure or that of a US president. Armed with his smartphone, the president's love of Twitter is like a child with a new toy his tweets being indicative of behavior unbecoming of a US president, but this just further boosting his appeal for supporters.

The long list of instances of behavior beyond the pale for a public figure or that of a US president is now so long it has been detailed in a database compiled by The New York Times[24] and although just a few of the 567 instances detailed would very likely spell the end of any other US president, for Trump supporters it confirms why they support him: "He tells it like it is" and "Isn't afraid of upsetting anyone," seeing this as cocking a snook to Washington insiders and East Coast elites. Trump presents himself as being for the "Other America" of forgotten post-industrial towns in the Rust Belt and impoverished - white - suburbs without employment or hope - both of which he claims to offer, as Deakin University Associate Prof Matthew Sharpe notes thus "He never seems to express any doubts. He turns complex problems into simple equations: build a wall, nuke ISIS. Simplistic, but compelling"[25] giving simple answers to complex problems but as US president, the most powerful man in the world, Trump "emotionally reassures his supporters."[26] Donald Trump has said "I love the poorly educated,"[27] not adding that this is because they will believe anything he says or tells them.

A big part of the emotional reassurance Trump offers his supporters feeds into their hopes and fears, tapping into these by playing up to existing prejudices and willful ignorance by framing these as common sense and something the president's plain speaking connects with and reflects. In having successfully projected this image, the Trump White House has, with glacial cynicism, made use of all sorts of nonsensical and defamatory claims about its opponents and critics, using various conspiracy theories - which are always unprovable either way - to confirm the confirmation bias of those who already had the same or similar views.

Of the now-defunct British political consultancy, Cambridge Analytica[28] which was hired by the Trump presidential campaign to harvest personal data from social media expertly distilled both its own and the Trump campaign's instrumental logic when former Managing Director of the company Mark Turnbull, was caught on camera saying "It's no good fighting an election on facts, it's about emotion and hopes and fears",[29] secure in the knowledge that "many of those are unconscious."[30] Elaborating further, "It has to happen without anyone thinking it is propaganda because the moment you think 'that is propaganda' the next question is: 'whose put that out?'"[31] Former Cambridge Analytica CEO Alexander Nix, in the final interview of the series of interviews secretly recorded by Channel 4 further effectively summed up the tactics of the now-defunct company a co-founder of which was Steve Bannon, with what also became the title of the short online article cited in this longer one, "It needn't be true as long as it's believable."[32] Trump's pandering to lowest common denominator hearsay and rumor-mongering makes use of the term "fake news" which was initially coined to describe the output of right-wing online publications and websites such as Breitbart News - another outlet Bannon helped co-found - which continue to present opinion pieces as if they were straightforward fact, as opposed to opinion, along with promoting conspiracy theories in the same terms.

The Trump White House could be seen as a very opportunist in terms of the tactics it is prepared to use in its strategy for retaining power. By this is meant it sees nothing problematic in contradicting itself and then doubling back on itself[33] at every turn. Trump and his appointees also display the same combination of jaw-dropping hubris and cynicism along with outright stupidity: the invention of "alternative facts"[34] being just one of the most well-known examples, the other being the readiness to call anyone or anything critical of the Trump White House fake news. Fake news meaning anything and everything critical of Trump or anything he says, just as issuing nonsensical statements **not** based in fact but contradicted by it, that is, **objective reality** is claimed merely to be a variation of it, in the same way, 2+2=5 and black is white and white is black.

In keeping with its use of instrumental reason to achieve whatever it deems necessary or desirable - the retention of political power above all else - the Trump White House also sees nothing wrong in accepting the endorsement of the far-right and alt-right, the latter it should be said is simply a politically savvy cultural re-branding of the former. The far-right and its re-branded "alt" face, is in the terms of fascism **inherently** opportunist and will do anything to expand its influence, the "alt-right" operating online as much as in the non-virtual world waging a cultural war as

much as anything making use of all of the weapons at its disposal. This article is not devoted to an analysis of the "alt-right," but will nonetheless make some passing critique of its strange and unwelcome reactionary manifestations, since they are both supportive of Trump and examples of it seeking to expand its influence in the populist backlash visible in the US and to differing extents the UK and Continental Europe. Besides different actual fascist and/or neo-Nazi groups endorsing Trump including the Ku Klux Klan, the culture wars waged by the different faces of the "alt-right" provide two standout examples: those sexually frustrated males who call themselves "Incels"[35] - who find themselves forced to practice involuntary celibacy because they believe feminism means no women are prepared to sleep with them - or unsurprisingly perhaps, talk to them. The reason why this example of the alt-right is prescient to the article, is because it is something relatively recent that has gained traction in the fringes of the right-wing base in roughly the last five years, which is also the timeframe of the populist backlash and the climate it has helped create, and which both Trump and Brexit embody.

The other manifestation of the cultural reach of the alt-right has some similarity with Incels, this being "pick up artists" literally men styling themselves as having the answers and sharing the secrets with other sexually frustrated and gullible men of how to get laid, making use of a profoundly troubling veneration and promotion of what has been described accurately as toxic masculinity.[36] This tawdry scam along with seeing patriarchy, traditional sexual roles, and misogyny as natural inevitable and immutable, sees sex as something done by the active male to the passive and servile female, just as all male-female relations are an adversarial contest in which the alpha male wins with conquest: the "alt-right" like fascism being big on pseudoscience, in this case taking a term from zoology and applying it to society, no longer remaining scientific at all but become Social Darwinism or sociobiology, that is, ideology. This again finds an at the very least uncritical if not accepting often welcoming home in more established conservative and neo-conservative groupings, which threw in their lot with Trump becoming president.

The incumbent US president being prepared to accept and not explicitly disavow the endorsement of the far-right was crystallized well in his slowness to condemn the murderous violence at the "Unite the Right" event in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12, 2017,[37] in which counter protestor Heather Heyer was killed by a member of the far-right driving his car straight into the crowd of anti-fascist counter-protestors. He offered instead that there were "very fine" people[38] present and that there had been violence on many sides. Trump's reluctance to explicitly condemn the murderous act of James Fields Jr. has not been forgotten 18 months later in which Fields faced Federal indictment and was found guilty of First-Degree murder then sentenced to life in prison plus 419 years for ten additional charges.[39]

So while the far-right and its "alt" re-branding support the Trump presidency which has at the very least been reluctant to distance itself from this endorsement, the inchoate populism of Trump and his rallies is what provides the cover for the far-right to expand its sphere of influence, and which of course also bears some resemblance to the ritual and ceremony of fascism: what could be called "the aestheticization of politics." Another way of describing Trump's populism in a direct inversion of Marxism and indeed the substance of democracy and anything like socialism in which the masses become thinking-doing individuals exerting agency, is what can be described as the "aestheticization of the masses-as-masses." This lowest common denominator populism bases itself on the passivity and inertia of those responsive to it: reliance on a Strong Leader who will make difficult decisions and get things done because they are incapable of doing either. All that is required of Trump's supporters is enthusiasm for Trump, whooping and chanting and wearing MAGA red baseball caps, and believing whatever he says.[40]

Following the 2007/2008 Crisis and social fallout from the Crisis, by the mid-2010s, there was the beginning of the populist turn typified by the Trump presidential campaign and victory and the former UK prime minister David Cameron's misguided decision to hold a referendum on EU membership narrowly resulting in Brexit. This has also found form in populist and reactionary collective identities, none more so than nativism and nationalism, both of which the US and UK examples the subject of this article lend themselves to, and indeed are infused with.

What US liberals and the Democrats should try to comprehend, is their part in helping elect Trump. By this is meant that his presidency - fantastical as it may still seem - cannot be seen as completely from out of nowhere, and that Donald Trump of all the Republican presidential candidates was the one who gained the Republican nomination in 2016 says a lot about that party, as it does about the Democrats and their paucity of credible candidates - the possibilities and limits of Hilary Clinton and Bernie Sanders - notwithstanding.

As with the present populist tumult in both the US and UK and across Continental Europe, a not insignificant number of the many casualties of the "post-political" End of History neoliberal consensus agreed by their political classes has found in the disruption of the existing status quo by Trump, Brexit, and especially in Continental Europe

the far-right what they feel offers them an "alternative". The veracity of the promises this "alternative" makes and these ever being realized is never seriously questioned.[41]

The fatally flawed "post-political" consensus of economic and political elites in the US and UK - and EU, over the last 25-30 years remains oblivious to how it could have contributed to the populist backlash embodied by Trump's presidency in the US and the terminal uncertainty of Brexit in the UK. Their assumptions are colored utterly by their class location, and they do not see how neoliberal globalization could have led to this. Theirs is Fukuyama's grey-on-grey technocratic worldview of capitalist society which accepts all of its social structures "as they are" and all of the homilies of neoliberalism including the claim of free market fantasists: the freer the market, the freer the democracy, and existence in these societies is that of Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man. Marcuse's original critique of One-Dimensional Man of the Twentieth Century understood that in a society in which social contradictions are flattened out into a wholly positive explanation of things, this is **ideological** and seeks as far as possible to eliminate even the capacity for critique, which is also applicable to its early Twenty-First Century incarnation, in which class consciousness is severely blunted at best, and atomized monads struggle to come together at all.

Taking back control…of nothing: Brexit a tenuous narrative

As populist reactions go, Brexit since 2016 and the ill-judged and hubristic whim of ex-prime minister David Cameron to call a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, has thrown the future of all of the four countries comprising it into question. The referendum was a straightforward yes or no to the question, "Should the UK remain a member of the EU?" The absurdity of something with such long term economic, social and political consequences being decided by referendum has in the three years since, been spun with cynical confirmation bias by right-wing politicians and three right-wing tabloid newspapers as "The will of the people,"[42] a substantial number of these MPs always have made up at least a slight majority of Conservative MPs.

The result of "Leave" was most pronounced in what as this article notes, is Thomas Frank's description "Rustbelt Britain."[43] In England and Wales depressed areas which heavy industry and manufacturing left forever 30 years ago, voted "Leave" by a 10% margin, as did rural areas: the small university cities of Norwich and Cambridge the only places in the whole of East Anglia to return a vote for "Remain." The same pattern is observable in the rural West Country: Bristol a sizable city and the two small university cities of Bath and Exeter, were alone in an equally vast rural expanse of "Leave."

In the post-industrial Midlands and North of England the pattern of "Leave" by big sometimes vast margins was perhaps crystallized best by Stoke-on-Trent which returned a Leave vote of 69.4%, a margin nearing 30%. Stoke is a small city but comprised of six different towns all of which are economically depressed, the ceramics or pottery industry – the potteries– once having been the biggest employer in the city along with steel and coal mining in the surrounding county of Staffordshire in the northwest Midlands now replaced by precarious, insecure minimum wage jobs in Amazon fulfillment centers and underemployed minimum wage slavery in bookmakers and fast food outlets. Stoke also has a population that relies on food banks well above the national average.

> In Stoke-on-Trent 60,000 people had been employed in the potteries industry as recently as the late 1970s, before manufacturing was largely switched to East Asia. In 2016 only 8,000 jobs were left. There, I walked past Stoke City's Bet365 stadium. Bet365, like most betting companies, relies on poorer people to generate a significant portion of its income. It had become Stoke's largest private employer. In a city where nearly 40% of households were living on less than GBP16, 000 a year and 3,000 were dependent on food banks, Bet365's owner Denise Coates was paying herself the equivalent of GBP594, 520 a day. 'There's a sense of powerlessness that pervades everything now,' the local YMCA chief told me. 'People are waiting to be rescued.' But he knew it was a forlorn hope.[44]

Stoke is just one example - but there are many more - of a place where the population "make do as best they can" in the aftermath of 40 years of neoliberalism, practically speaking this means trying to make ends meet with intermittent minimum wage jobs very often this means underemployment and/or the de facto wage supplement of welfare of some kind; now wholly conditional on Catch-22 games of compliance. That places such as this and many others in England and Wales should have returned a "Leave" vote in such high percentages and by such margins, is disarming to many but should also not be seen simply as confirmation of what Brexiters wanted all along, or straightforward right-wing jingoism and xenophobia - although as with Trump as US president, there are certainly those who see the climate of Brexit as allowing them to make public their reactionary and racist leanings in ways that

they would not have felt able to previously.

The UK of 2019 is a country which has suffered eight years of Austerity and successive Conservative or Conservative-led governments resolved to impose it. The coalition (2010-15) with some gusto set about a program of policies designed to benefit those in the top 10-15%, and to make those below it believe that this was also for their benefit in keeping with neoliberal and conservative ideology: what could be called a version of Thatcherism redux.[45] The practical results of Thatcherism redux have meant public services cut to the bone and all that entails: mass redundancies cuts, cuts and more cuts to everything in sight and charities expected to fill the social vacuum. Welfare -always minimal and increasingly punitive for decades - become an endurance assault course for the claimant the "sanctions regime"[46] meaning that they can and frequently do find their benefits cut off altogether by the Job Centre for the slightest pedantic reason, ostensibly for non-compliance with "the rules", and again being very much in keeping with the ideological worldview of the Tory party.[47]

Brexit has coalesced at the same time as the UK population - and a substantial section of the majority submerged from the view of Westminster - have continued to feel the structural violence of Late Capitalism, and as such is an inchoate and mistaken attempt to exert some sort of agency. Like the US, with which it has many similarities the UK bears an extraordinary resemblance to what Herbert Marcuse first defined in 1964 as One-Dimensional Society. The One-Dimensional society of 2019, and in its particular UK context is one which inculcates an ideology of passive acceptance and servility in its members from birth to death: everyday assumptions in its members for all of the commercial and institutional imperatives for the necessity and inescapable "reality" of "playing the game," a game it should be remembered which is rigged, but which all are nonetheless obliged to play and this always amounting to lose-lose for the conscripted player.

In the limbo of the last three years following the referendum result of 2016, Brexiters have repeated their slogan, "Take Back Control," ad infinitum in the tried and tested terms of propaganda. Brexit and the idiocy of the UK leaving the EU, of course, have not the slightest thing to do with taking back control of anything, but the slogan seeks to confirm the biases of those promulgating it and those repeating it.

The UK population as of February 2019 is 66,959,016.[48] According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) the total number of parliamentary electors as of December 2016 was 45,766,429. In December 2015 it was 44,724,004.[49] Of the total UK population in 2016 of 65,788,574[50] besides all those who voted "Remain," those not on the electoral register were 18,090,999, and those who were but did not vote numbered 12,948,018, meaning 47,189,258[51] did not vote "Leave" that is for Brexit in any form. The UK population has of course increased since 2016, but more notable still, is the fact that demographic changes in that timeframe mean at least 1.4 million young people who were too young to vote in 2016, are now 18 or over,[52] this is matched by at least 1.5 million "Leave" voters now deceased.[53]

In his article on Brexit a year later, the day before the UK's snap election of 8 June 2017 Thomas Frank visited Wakefield in West Yorkshire,

> The history of this part of England traces the history of industrialization, its rise and its fall. With coal and steel and textiles, Yorkshire witnessed the beginning of the industrial revolution 200 years ago. With politics and organizing, it is a place where the English working class came into its own. Then, with Margaret Thatcher and the big free-market beat down of the 1980s, this was the first corner of the western world to see how it would all come crashing down. Last year's referendum on the European Union was a hint of what comes next, and this time the hindmost were in the forefront. Like much of the rest of northern England, Wakefield voted to leave, and its residents did so by 66%.[54]

Frank's assessment of Wakefield is very accurate, as is his précis of recent English economic and social history. In the 40 years since the arrival of Thatcherism, the UK has been one of the two countries most at the forefront of undiluted neoliberalism, the other being the US. For London and the South East to some extent, this has been felt as the financialization and deregulation of the economy and like everywhere else, privatization of publicly owned industries, and especially now in the late-2010s, outsourcing of public services, internal markets in what technically remain public services but the provision of their delivery put out to tender, so "not privatization" as such.

In places like Wakefield and Stoke-on-Trent, and other formerly industrial areas predominantly in the North and Midlands - there is little now but structural unemployment and chronic underemployment in insecure minimum wage jobs, as such it is one of the contentions of this article that Brexit was and is in large part a displacement of class anger and consciousness. Besides right-wingers many of them Tory MPs whose lifework has been "Euro-skepticism" and the UK leaving the EU, and all of its earlier incarnations: the European Community (EC), the European Economic Community (EEC), or even ever having joined the Common Market in 1973,[55] there is the

blunted and inchoate rage of places that may as well not exist in the minds of The City or the other enclaves of The Capital inhabited by economic and political elites, including Westminster.

The referendum on UK EU membership effectively became a referendum on immigration in places like Stoke-on-Trent and Wakefield, meaning the displacement of working-class anger onto economic migrants Polish migrant workers doing minimum wage jobs in Amazon fulfilment centres the populations of Stoke and Wakefield were not themselves doing "explains" quotidian miseries by "Pointing sideways, kicking downward" rather than people looking up to those above them who in large part are responsible for and profit from these same miseries.

Conclusion: searching for the comprehension of practice

This article has sought to compare and contrast the similarities between Trump's populist presidency and the confused populism of Brexit, tracing the historical background of both examples. The UK leaving the EU on March 29 was postponed until April 12, but this has now been moved to October 31, and it is now looking quite likely like it will not happen at all. The embattled prime minister Theresa May continues to run down the clock claiming she is "negotiating a deal with Brussels," suffering a Vote of No Confidence by her party as leader but it closing ranks as it always does, in enough of a show of strength that she survived: 200 having Confidence to 117 having No Confidence[56] in her, she then survived a No Confidence vote by parliament itself in her as prime minister but survived 325 to 306,[57] the Conservative Party properly closing ranks to magically show Confidence in her and avoid a general election which would have been triggered had enough MPs voted "Aye" to the No Confidence motion.

In the past three months, the absurdities of the UK leaving the EU and all of the consequences[58] this would have, have begun to become apparent to many who had previously been indifferent to the issue.[59] The claims of the prime minister to "want a good deal "with the EU but refusing to rule out "no deal" which really would be cataclysmic for the UK are disingenuous, to say the least, and indeed it should be added, Machiavellian. "No deal" would mean the UK crashing out of the EU without any agreement on terms for trade with it or any imports or exports which pass through it, relying on World Trade Organization (WTO) rules which also is unsurprisingly the long-favored choice of right-wing Brexiters in the Tory party, who prefer to claim otherwise as they play their own free-market fantasy version of Game of Thrones. As of April 2019, an emergency Bill to make "No Deal" impossible was voted through by the House of Commons by one vote: 313 Ayes to 312 Noes,[60] and has also been cleared by the House of Lords with amendments, meaning the long-held enthusiasm of Brexiters for the UK to leave the EU without any deal being agreed cannot happen.

In April 2019 in the UK elites denounce anyone opposed to Brexit as an "elitist," and in the US the Trump presidency believes it can win a second term, despite America's divisions having been widened and deepened since he won the 2016 presidential election and assumed office at the start of 2017. The title of this article is Taking Back Control of Nothing: Elites Denouncing Elites to Mobilize Populism in the Service of Power - from NAFTA to Trump, Brexit and the EU and this it must be said, is an ongoing process of populist mobilization from above, in which those same elites of the title make believe that inchoate displaced class anger can be channeled into denouncing the EU and the campaign to leave, as well as selectively denouncing those other elites of the title - not least their number in The City or Mayfair Hedge Funds - with a reactionary and severely blunted class edge, carefully stopping short of ever putting this explicitly in terms of social stratification.

The **critique** of the absurdities of 2019 in which right-wing populism is mobilized from above by elites in the service of power to divert and mystify class anger as a way of shoring up that power is the task of our times, and could be defined in paraphrasing the eighth thesis of the Theses on Feuerbach,[61] searching for the comprehension of practice.

The subjects of this article Trump and Brexit can be seen as delayed responses to NAFTA and neoliberal globalization in times of crisis. In such times of crisis those who would develop and apply the materialist method theoretically and practically as **praxis** are aware of the odds they face, but the foremost task of our urgent present which this article has endeavored to contribute to is formulating its **critique**, nothing more overwhelming, nothing more daunting, nothing less.

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Fast Capitalism
Volume 16 • Issue 1 • 2019
ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.007

The Antinomies of Brexit

Paul Smith

1. Brexistasis

It is now coming up to the end of May 2019, as I finish writing this essay, and for the last few weeks there has been a kind of lull in this thing called Brexit, the process by which the United Kingdom was supposed to have left the European Union a few weeks ago, on March 29th. However, the departure did not happen. Nearly three years after a national referendum demonstrated a 52-48% preference for leaving the EU, the UK government had yet to conclude negotiating the terms of the divorce successfully, and after a frenetic several weeks of febrile politicking, the departure day had passed. An emergency extension to the exit deadline was agreed to by the EU, and the Brexit drama was suddenly slightly defused, no longer the inescapable, ever-changing main headline every day. Several weeks of parliamentary theatre and of scurrying renegotiations with the EU hushed a little. The witching hour had now moved to October 31st, and people in the UK could get a small breather from Brexit and could consider their votes in local elections in April and in the European Parliament elections in May. Those local elections did not turn out well for Theresa May's Conservatives, and the European Parliament elections (taking place as I write this) were expected to be similarly damaging for the major political parties. The Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May, after a few fruitless conversations with the opposition Labour Party in an attempt to thrash out an agreeable formula for departure, finally bowed to pressure from her own unhappy party colleagues and announced her resignation. That opens the door for a leadership struggle in her party and presumably also for another frantic round of Brexit negotiations under new management. Meanwhile, the EU's clock is ticking towards Halloween.

The 2016 national referendum had controversially offered the British people a straight up and down choice between leaving the European Union and remaining in it. No particular conditions were stipulated or voted on, and so it was left to Prime Minister May to try to negotiate the terms of the divorce with the EU. Although she did manage to forge a 'deal' with the EU, it could not pass muster in the House of Commons—and nor could any apparent alternative idea. The several weeks before departure day were taken up by a series of increasingly desperate and recondite votes in parliament, rejecting May's plan but never agreeing on any other feasible plan or prospect. Thus, a mere week before the assigned departure date, the object 'Brexit' still had no fundamental definition and no plan.

At that point, all kinds of options remained on the table which might have helped define Brexit: the revocation of the declaration of departure, Article 50; or oppositely, the extension of Article 50 to give more time for a deal to be cut; a no-deal Brexit, widely assumed to be the harbinger of political and, most of all, economic chaos; the possible passage of May's deal, even if it displeased or maybe infuriated numerous constituencies; a putative "people's vote" on any deal that happened to make it through Parliament; a brand new referendum as a kind of re-do; Theresa May's resignation or ouster, and perhaps a new general election. Or some combination of the above: anything was possible. But what looked most likely at the time was a no-deal Brexit—a prospect that appeared to dismay all concerned apart from the most extreme Brexiteers on the right wing of the country's political spectrum.

The multiple parliamentary votes in the run-up to the departure deadline led to a fundamental and debilitating conclusion: the divorce "deal" worked out by May with the EU could not win even a simple majority of votes in parliament, but Britain's politicians could not agree on any other plan either. So, now that we are coming up to the end of May, in this relative lull but with the clock still ticking, nobody knows, or knows yet, what Brexit is or will be.

In a way, this limbo seems fitting and even predictable, given that the original referendum gave no definition either: people voted without much of a clue what their vote would mean in reality. In a sense, it is this lack of definition, this non-identity, that is the very identity of Brexit. Brexit has become a kind of stationary storm, loud and unsettling, but not really going anywhere: Brexistasis.

Of course, there has been no shortage of efforts to try to imagine or predict what Brexit will look like on the ground. The direst warnings of a socio-economic meltdown to come, or blithe predictions that Britain will regain its greatness, and anything in between, fall foul of a simple fact: nobody knows, because the terms of Britain's departure are still to be defined. Necessarily, then, understanding Brexit entails trying to take stock of the current lack of definition, seeing how it is constructed, so to speak. My feeling is that the current stasis can be illuminated at least a little by looking at a longer history of Britain's relation to the project of European integration. That longer view reveals a set of difficult antinomies, of choices that you cannot or do not want to make.

2. 1975

The uncertainty and lack of definition that have been the consequences of the 2016 referendum are underlined by the fact that the final vote was a divided one: 52% to Leave, 48% to Remain. This is in stark contrast to the clarity that appeared to result from Britain's first ever foray into the dicey territory of referendums. That is to say, the first national referendum ever held in the United Kingdom, in 1975, was when the British public was asked whether or not the country should remain in what was at the time called the European Economic Community (or more popularly the Common Market), with which the UK had become increasingly entangled for a couple of decades and which it had finally joined in 1972. The 1975 referendum overwhelmingly affirmed the people's desire to stay in the Common Market, with 67.2% in favor.

At the time, I was an undergraduate, and also a member both of the Communist Party and of the National Union of Students (the latter led by a fiery radical, Charles Clarke, who later became a somewhat regressive Home Secretary under Tony Blair). Both of the organizations I belonged to advocated leaving the EEC, as did the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties and most Northern Irish politicians. On the face of things, it seemed pretty clear what path I should follow—especially since on the pro-European side was no less a monster than Margaret Thatcher, a newly installed as the Conservative opposition leader and already a hated figure for the left after her 15 years in Parliament and her tenure as Education minister. Thatcher's Conservative Party joined with the various centrist parties to enthusiastically endorse continued membership.

The left-of-center Labour Party, by contrast, was essentially divided. The Prime Minister, Harold Wilson (a moderate leftist at best), and his Cabinet advocated for a Yes vote, but the party itself voted against a Yes policy and eventually there was no official Labour Party campaign for one side or the other.[1] Nonetheless, one of the loudest and most persistent voices in the national debate was that of the Labour Party's Tony Benn, one of the very few Labour politicians that those of us on the radical left could tolerate. He was outspoken and lucid about the demerits of the EEC. He saw what was coming. His fundamental position was that the EEC was essentially a mechanism to entrench the power of capital and of the ruling classes across Europe, that it would be a machinery for increasing inequality amongst and within nations, and that its legal mechanisms would eventually land up superseding national legislation. He also warned of more expensive food supplies and decreased protections for workers, and increased EEC-related taxes and fees. He already partially blamed the EEC for the United Kingdom's industrial decline, pointing to "cheap EEC imported goods, expensive EEC agricultural products, and a huge annual Common Market tax demand" (Benn 1982: 158). Benn was sufficiently correct in his assessments that he could allow himself a 'told you so' in a book a few years later: "Britain is now," he complained in 1982, "in law and in practice, a colony of this embryonic West European federal state…. Britain has been reduced by successive governments to colonial status" (Benn 1982: 15).

In the run-up to the 1975 vote, it was Benn's position, in addition to the influence of my political affiliations, that made me pretty certain that I would send in my vote against membership. It turned out I would have been on the losing side, of course, but I would have been in good company with the likes of Benn himself and even the current Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, voting No.[2] But in the end, I was amongst the few who decided to boycott the referendum entirely. It was not difficult to conclude at the time—and still isn't—that the choice as it was posed in the referendum was really no choice at all: between remaining within what was self-evidently a vehicle for capitalist integration and rationalization on the one hand, and on the other hand, embracing a kind of go-it-alone nationalism

and insularity. The idea of boycotting the poll seemed less like a rejection of a democratic choice than a refusal to be fooled by the smokescreen that was being used to normalize the ideological assumptions and arguments on either side.

By the same token, it is true that even while I was boycotting the vote I felt that Benn's position was essentially correct. Throughout the many months of national debate, I developed a simple ideological objection to what I understood (and still now in 2019 understand to be) the essential nature of the European project as it is exemplified in its famous 'four freedoms.' The 1957 Treaty of Rome, which established the constitutional basis of European integration, committed member nations to the ideal of free trade across Europe, and codified that commitment in the enshrined 'four freedoms.' These principles guarantee the free movement of goods, services, money, and people across European national borders.[3] As an editor of The Economist recently put it, "the EU's veneration of the single market's 'four freedoms' is theological….[and] the notional indivisibility of these freedoms has been a central principle of the bloc since 1957" (Wainwright 2019: 23).

So, in 1975 I concluded that Karl Marx's words on free trade from way back in 1848 spoke exactly to the case at hand, where the borders between European nations were being erased for the convenience of capital:

> when you overthrow the few national barriers that still restrict the progress of capital, you will merely have given it complete freedom of action. But so long as you let the relation of wage labour to capital exist, it does not matter how favorable the conditions are under which the exchange of commodities takes place, there will always be a class which will exploit and a class which will be exploited. (Marx: 206)

3. Chiasmus

Anyone with even passing familiarity with the discourse around Brexit since 2016 will have noticed that the sides have radically changed since that moment in 1975. At the time of the first referendum, the Yes votes were mostly from the right, led by Thatcher and devoted to the blatant interests of capital, and joined by a whole range of liberal and centrist constituents. The No votes came largely from the far left and from the left wing of the Labour party, as well as from the regional nationalist parties. In 2016 it was almost the opposite. Much of the left and all the regional nationalist parties had migrated to a Remain position. Meanwhile, most of the impetus for the Leave vote came from the Conservatives and their increasingly extreme right-wing fellow travelers.

Without thoroughly rehearsing the history of Britain in the last half-century, it would be difficult to explain this chiasmatic shift in positions in any convincing fashion.[4] But some possible reasons do present themselves, nonetheless. The left's shift from No to Remain is, as Susan Watkins has pointed out, broadly consistent with what happened with other European "left parties who had initially read the Common Market as a Cold War project, or as a 'bosses' union', but had slowly come round to it: the Italian Communist Party from the mid-60s, the post-dictatorship social-democratic parties in Greece, Spain and Portugal from the 70s" (Watkins 2016: 11). That 'coming round' probably had everything to do with European spending on regional economies, as well as the codification of workers' rights across Europe, and with the freedom of movement and establishment of people vouchsafed in the 'four freedoms.' One might also suggest that leftist support for the freedom of movement has encouraged a rather strange outcome, namely that it is now misconstrued as a **de facto** individual freedom, allowing passport-free travel and removing all kinds of barriers to easy transactions with other European countries, and so on. Indeed, it is hard to escape the feeling that the left and many ordinary citizens of all classes have become so accustomed to the very conditions that the EEC-EU project was always likely to produce that a Remain vote would be intended to preserve their many attractive, cosmopolitan boons and conveniences.

In regard to the right-wing, the chiasmatic shift is perhaps slightly more mysterious. Why, after all, would the party of Thatcher and her pioneering proselytes of neoliberal faith in markets have become increasingly disillusioned with the EU? It would seem that some of the shift can be attributed to Thatcher herself, for whom, as Watkins has it, "the bureaucratic-diplomatic ethos of the EU was anathema to [her] Chicago School way of thinking" (Watkins 2016: 10). Thatcher's difficulties with institutionalized EU politics was allied to a growing sense in her party that the EU was a threat to national sovereignty—an idea that reached its full-throated expression in the right-wing anti-EU campaign in 2016. The commitment to free trade by way of European integration was undercut by an increasingly disgruntled sentiment about this loss of national sovereignty in the face of EU trade regulations, taxation, and (especially after the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty) the increasing sway of the European Court of Justice (all things, by the

way, about which Tony Benn had warned in 1975). At the economic level, and after Thatcher's departure, the creation of the Euro and the Eurozone in 1999 was seen by many as another sign of European encroachment on sovereign powers, and Britain's refusing to join the monetary union was an important measure of an increasing Conservative distrust of the EU and its institutions—or, bluntly, its power.

One of the central issues that guided the conversations in both 1975 and 2016, and around which the chiasmatic change that I am pointing to revolved, was this question of national sovereignty. But, as Robert Saunders has shown, in 1975 national sovereignty did not immediately involve an issue that it inevitably invoked in 2016. That is, one of the most important issues in 2016 was that of immigration—a word that was used in the campaign to refer to non-EU immigrants, migrant workers from within the EU, asylum seekers and refugees. As has been widely reported, discomfort with exactly the fruits of the freedom of movement within the EU proved to be a huge motivation for people to vote Leave. Apparently, that one of the four freedoms diminished British national sovereignty in that there was no longer national control over immigration and people were being denied the right to decide who could live and work in their communities. This is in stark contrast to 1975 when the idea that the free movement of European workers might one day prove problematic was hardly mooted at all. Indeed, the only region of Britain where immigration was an issue in the referendum was, according to Saunders, Northern Ireland where "the real concern focused on Catholic immigration from the South" (Saunders: 310). Whatever immigration anxieties existed generally concerned the brown subjects of the former colonies, rather than European migrants like the white Polish immigrants who were held to exemplify the problems in 2016.[5] The kind of xenophobia to which those Polish migrant workers were subjected was stirred up in the 2016 debates, principally by the right, and in particular by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), led by Nigel Farage (who is now the leader of the brand new Brexit Party).

In amongst all these shifting lines, at the fulcrum of the chiasmus, as it were, there is the official Labour Party. As I said earlier, in 1975 the party was divided between the Cabinet that wanted to stay in the EC and the party members who mostly wanted to say No. In 2016, and ever since then, while the Conservative government has tried to negotiate the exit deal, the Labour Party has been divided between Leavers and Remainers (though it should be said that Remainers are probably in the majority). Maintaining party unity has been a challenge for the leader, Jeremy Corbyn, and he has taken a lot of criticism for refusing to commit Labour to supporting Brexit or not. Rather, his strategy is to commit Labour to respecting the referendum result and putting forward Labour's own a plan for a deal—one that, apparently, Theresa May could not agree with when she and Corbyn tried to negotiate a way out of the Brexit impasse.

So, while this new chiasmatic structure remains in place, as almost the mirror image of 1975 and with Labour in the middle both times, and although there is a certain symmetry to the way sides and issues have changed (aside from irruption of the immigration issue), there is still one huge and hugely important difference between the situations after each of the referendums. That is, in 1975 two-thirds of the votes were for Yes, to stay in the EEC; in the 2016 referendum, on the other hand, there was a hugely different, much more ambivalent, result: 51.9% for Leave to 48.1% for Remain. While the particular conditions under which the two referendums took place were very different, those figures seems to me important in that the most recent poll almost predicts the kind of Brexistasis I have been talking about. At any rate, the figures show a more or less evenly split populace.

4. Demoticocracy

On the weekend before March 29th, Brexit day, London was taken over by an enormous anti-Brexit demonstration (its organizers claimed over a million people were present). Meanwhile, a people's petition to Parliament asking for Article 50 to be revoked was busy garnering millions of signatures. The petition was from the start obviously "an expression of dissatisfaction," not just with the Brexit vote itself but also with the subsequent bootless negotiations conducted by Theresa May (Leston-Bandeira 2019). It reached 5 million signatures in the weeks running up to Brexit deadline, becoming the largest such petition in the country's history. The weekend protests and the petitions had, and are unlikely to have much effect. (The last time I saw such a huge demonstration in London it was in protest to Tony Blair's upcoming war against Iraq. An estimated 4 million people failed to sway the prime minister's course… and the rest is history.) But from a certain standpoint that is how things are actually supposed to work. Britain is formally a representative parliamentary democracy in which the elected chamber makes decisions on behalf of the

'people,' rather than acting at their direct behest. Leston-Bandeira reminds us that "a petition is no substitute for representative democracy" (Leston-Bandeira 2019), and nor is a referendum.

Right at the start of his excellent history of the 1975 referendum, *Yes to Europe*, Robert Saunders points out that that first one—the first national plebiscite ever on any issue, as we recall—was a completely unprecedented and therefore abnormal irruption into British political life. What is more, he suggests, in practice it fundamentally "challenged the right and even the capacity of Members of Parliament to embody the will of their constituents." Saunders recognizes that this referendum—or indeed any referendum—is **de facto** an anomaly in a representative democracy exactly because it bypasses the representative function of elected politicians while purporting (pretending?) to give 'the people' a direct say in their political affairs. The 1975 vote, Saunders argues, had the effect of "striking a lasting blow against the sovereignty of Parliament" (Saunders 2019: 3). The force of that lasting blow was certainly felt again with the 2016 referendum, and this short-circuiting of the normal decision-making functions of Parliament is at the heart of Brexistasis.

The 2016 plebiscite is, then, what amounts to a democratic detour, but its result was taken by Mrs. May and her Brexiteers to be an inalienable indication of the *vox populi*. Indeed, they have claimed over and over again that to attempt to abrogate the Leave decision would itself be undemocratic, even though the margin of Leave's victory was notably narrow (52%-48%). Nonetheless, the government's strategy ever since the referendum has depended utterly on its unwillingness to challenge in any way at all the absoluteness of the Leave vote. But since the referendum's question was so rudimentary as to be stupid (a straight-up choice between Leave and Remain, with no guidance as to what kind of divorce settlement was acceptable), it left the government in the position of being able to define for itself the terms of exit. And equally part of their strategy has been an adamant refusal to subject any final deal to a second referendum. In other words, democracy means listening to the people's voice, then filling in the details of what you think they want, but then not asking them to speak again once they've spoken or checking back with them to see if they approve of what you have done.

Obviously the government's position here is specious and self-contradictory. They have been eager to cover the fact that Brexit can be described as a democratic venture only by dint of an abnegation of the proper role of Parliament and by encouraging a form of democratic participation that properly warrants the epithet 'populist' (at a moment when that term is being thrown around with abandon). In many ways this is an inevitable development from decades of what I have elsewhere described (after a phrase of Alain Touraine's) as our era of "meaningless politics," a way of describing the civil dysfunction that arises when "the political functions of contemporary Northern states have become more and more disjunct from the social and responsibilities that the state has traditionally assumed in post-Enlightenment modernity" (see Smith 2007: 71-75). I refer to this trend as the construal of 'demoticocracy,' a kind of populist elision of institutionalized democratic processes that nonetheless calls itself democratic.

The Brexit debates exemplify the tone and texture of what I mean by demoticocracy. The Leave campaign was remarkable for its disregard of procedural integrity and honesty, and its rhetoric was often so inflated as to be risible. Its exemplary moment was perhaps the 'Brexit Battle Bus,' plastered on the side of which was Brexiteer Boris Johnson's infamous (and baseless) claim that the UK was sending £50 million to the EU every day, money which after Brexit could be spent on the National Health Service instead.[6] Such false promises and misleading information became the norm for the Brexiteers, and to disseminate them the demoticocratic voice simply turned up its volume rather than aspire to logic or consistency. Indeed, it could be argued that Brexiteers such as Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage actually made a point of sounding and acting like bullies and oafs; they reckoned that their best tactic was to be loud, precisely, and to outweigh rather than out-argue their opponents.

Meanwhile, a more genteel, but perhaps more chilling version of the demoticocratic voice could be heard when Mrs. May, trying to win last-minute support for her 'deal,' went on British television and attempted to set up a direct conflict between her imagined audience, the people, and a static and indecisive Parliament. An editorial in The Observer newspaper commented on her performance:

> "I am on your side," [May] intoned to voters. "Parliament has done everything possible to avoid making a choice." She embraced populist language that could have been uttered by any tinpot dictator looking to trample the democratic institutions frustrating their personal agenda. In our parliamentary democracy, May's mandate to lead the country comes purely from any support she commands from the House of Commons. Her words were not only self-defeating but bordering on the dangerously unconstitutional.[7]

So, if the original referendum was a certain kind of mutation in the democratic process, then its verdict being taken to be written in stone is a mutation of a mutation. Very little has been done in Parliament to counter the

bludgeoning effect of the Brexiteers as they operate this double mutation. The Speaker of the House, John Bercow, has sometimes stood up for the traditional functioning of parliamentary democracy, and he has tried consistently to encourage MPs to take control of the process away from the government. His refusal to allow Mrs. May to ask for a vote for a third time on a substantially unchanged motion for her "deal" was perhaps his most significant intervention. His effort came during those particularly fraught (but finally indefinite) couples of weeks of votes in the House, including the so-called indicative votes that offered a choice of specific alternatives and options; yet all of them failed as the members declined Bercow's invitation to take charge of the democratic procedures.

The whole process has revealed a choice that few would ever have thought to actually be a choice: it has opened up a division between parliamentary democracy and popular democracy. It has shone an unflattering light on both, while at the same time setting them up as alternatives to each other in the most unhealthy manner, or in a manner that cannot possibly produce a resolution that satisfies.

5. Populists and Imperialists

In the space between the populist audience and a parliament that has been effectively declawed (or has declawed itself), Theresa May set up her laboratory, and she there has concocted the elements of her 'deal' with the EU. The politics that surround that work are complicated and there have been many, often conflicting requirements on the 'deal.' But two aspects, in particular, seem to have survived all the laboratory work. These have come to be known as May's 'red lines' that she will not allow herself or her 'deal' to cross. The ultimately non-negotiable elements for her are, first of all, the end to one of the four freedoms so dear to the EU's heart: the freedom of movement and establishment of people. The second is an at least temporary customs union between the UK and the EU such that Northern Ireland, as part of the UK, would not have to re-erect a hard border with Ireland (more on this later). Neither of these elements was mentioned in the 2016 referendum, of course, and it is merely a Conservative party conceit to suggest that Brexit **necessarily** entails any particular measure or stipulation over any other. Indeed, these two particular elements together demonstrate the difficulty of May's political position as she tries to play to several different constituencies at once while also claiming to be respectful of the will of the people.

The scrapping of freedom of movement plays directly to the nastiest elements of the politics of the Brexit debate, where 'freedom of movement' became synonymous with 'immigration' (and where, as I said before, immigration was a blanket term for refugees, asylum seekers, EU migrant workers, and non-EU immigrants). May here is trying to placate, in other words, the anti-immigrant/migrant sentiments that appear to have largely driven the Leave vote. Even though Britain has been less affected than most of Europe by immigration, by refugee and asylum crises, and so on, nonetheless anti-immigration sentiment before the referendum was consistently higher in the UK than elsewhere in Europe and was relentlessly nourished by many of the Brexiteers. Meanwhile, May's second 'red line' element, remaining in a customs union, seeks to satisfy a different political logic—one that says that Northern Ireland should not have to re-establish a border with Ireland. But the problem here is that staying in a customs union is seen by Brexiteers as tantamount to essentially staying in the EU, and it enrages them. But whatever the virtues or otherwise of one or the other position, it remains true that neither has been embraced by any known or demonstrable public sentiment.

May's political gamble has been that she can negotiate a 'deal' which has not been and would not be voted on by the very public whose views she says she will not countermand. One of the many dangers of this approach is exactly what seems to have happened so far: she could not negotiate the deal that would satisfy her various political constituencies, with the result that 'the people' see her as not delivering Brexit at all. It was clear that she could not get her 'deal' through parliament, and that the EU itself was giving her very little leeway in negotiating with them. Meanwhile, at the first opportunity they had after the passing of the Brexit deadline, the British people handed her a defeat in the local elections of May 2nd, when her Conservative party lost over 1300 seats across the country. Furthermore, Conservative prospects in the European Parliament elections (elections that are being held only because the prime minister could not deliver Brexit on time) are looking very dim, with Nigel Farage's Brexit party predicted to hand the Conservatives a further electoral humiliation. The political logic is clear here. While there is a stasis, an institutionalized indefiniteness, about Brexit, May's government was seen as having failed to deliver. May's appeals to the unimpeachable will of the people seem not to have been able to convince those very same people. Her populism, in other words, was not especially effective. Indeed her inability to get Brexit across the finishing line

was seen in some circles as exactly a defiance of the popular will. The Northern Irish branch of UKIP, for example, recently tweeted that "By brazenly defying the very people who elected them, those in the Westminster bubble have made a mockery of British democracy. They think they know better."[8]

If May herself failed to persuade the populists (and that failure more or less directly led to her resignation announcement on May 24th), some of the other politicians to her right seem to have succeeded in doing so. I refer to the Brexiteers in the Conservative party (and some outside of it, even further to the right). These are the politicians and public figures exemplified by Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage who have consistently propelled the Leave argument and resisted May's efforts in Parliament. These are the same people whom the commentator Bagehot in The Economist, confronted by the impasse over Brexit that they have helped create, called an "elite that failed." In Bagehot's analysis, "the country's model of leadership is disintegrating. Britain is governed by a self-involved clique that rewards group membership above competence, and self-confidence above expertise. This chumocracy has finally met its Waterloo" (Bagehot 2018: 48). To be more precise, this "chumocracy" is in fact made up of the entrenched British upper class, mostly male, mostly educated at a handful of expensive private schools and then at Oxford or Cambridge universities; the chumocracy is better described as contemporary Britain's aristocracy.

Bagehot might have been wrong about the chumocracy's Waterloo, since most of them seem to be managing nicely enough. Despite the inherent irony of the prospect of populists being led by a crew of aristocrats, the Brexiteers's central populist messages were effective throughout the 2016 debates—and indeed, judging by the current popularity of Farage's Brexit Party, they continue to be effective. As we have already seen, these messages largely revolve around the invocation of the diminution of national sovereignty as a result of EU membership. Brexiteers like Johnson persistently spread misinformation about various EU regulations that appeared absurd or unfair to the popular audience. The notorious myth that the EU had banned the sale of 'bendy bananas' (bananas with excessive curvature) was often repeated, along with false claims that various other unnecessary and excessive EU regulations cost the UK £600 million a week.

Those kinds of propositions were and still are the stock in trade for the Brexiteers as they seek to whip up popular antagonism around the EU's bureaucracy. But complaints about the loss or diminution of national sovereignty often come accompanied, not just by the predictable racist and xenophobic sentiments, but with a fully-stocked imaginary about Britain's former imperial greatness. That imaginary constructs a simple but comforting narrative that suggests that joining the EU diverted Britain from greatness and that leaving would allow the effort to re-install that greatness. Crucial to this fantasy is the British Commonwealth and the former colonies of the Empire. Those countries not only guarantee the greatness of the imperial past, but they can also act as convenient replacement trading partners once the UK has left Europe. It is this latter idea that is behind the Conservative government's adoption of the phrase 'Global Britain' to promote their vision of a post-Brexit renewal of links with the rest of the world, particularly with the former colonies (most of which have not yet been consulted as to their willingness and many of whom could be presumed to be reluctant to set up new trade links with their former master).

It is sometimes hard to credit that such hankerings and yearnings for—and indeed plans to re-animate—a lost Empire are really alive and well in British culture. But you do not have to look far to see them. For example, one of the leading Brexiteers, Boris Johnson (Eton, Oxford U.) long ago showed what he felt about British imperial power by suggesting that "[Africa] may be a blot, but it is not a blot upon our conscience. The problem is not that we were once in charge, but that we are not in charge any more." And as recently as 2016 he boasted of Britain's imperial role in the world, pointing out with pride that there were "178 nations of the world we either conquered or invaded" (quoted in Sarkar 2018).

These kinds of sentiment are at the beating heart of the Brexit movement. There is a refusal not only to understand the pernicious effects of Britain's imperial past but also an almost psychotic refusal to believe that it is all over. What is more, there seems to be an active agenda on the right-wing to actually rebuild Britain's empire once the inconvenient EU membership is curtailed. That project is behind a recent speech by the current British Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt (Charterhouse, Oxford U.), who recently assured an American audience that "once Brexit has happened, be in no doubt that Britain will retain all the capabilities of a global power" (Hunt 2019). (Both Johnson and Hunt, incidentally, have announced that they will run in the Conservative leadership election now that Theresa May has resigned.)

Mehdi Boussebaa has aptly criticized this idea of a 'Global Britain' and the imperial fantasies behind the phrase:

> Global Britain appears to be more of a neo-colonial fantasy. Rather than being motivated by a clear economic rationale, the project is largely motivated by a nostalgia for the UK's imperial past evident in the language used by the Brexiteers

in the last few years—for example UKIP's James Carver's assertion that, outside the EU, "the world is our oyster, and the Commonwealth remains that precious pearl within". This fantasy is symptomatic of, and directly fuels, the "post-colonial melancholia" that has afflicted Britain since the decline of its empire (Boussebaa 2019).

6. Ireland

Amidst the reanimation of so much obviously imperialist and colonialist fantasy in the run-up to Brexit, it is more than a simple irony that what is probably the central obstacle for Britain's 'deal' with the EU, and a crucial cause of the Brexit impasse, very much concerns "Britain's oldest colony"—Ireland (Hallas 1969). As if anyone needs reminding, Ireland had been under the British yoke since the 17th century before being partitioned by Britain in 1921. The border between the so-called Irish Free State in the south (renamed the Republic of Ireland in 1937) and Northern Ireland, which remains a part of the United Kingdom, was a site of contestation and violence for a large part of the 20th century. The so-called Troubles of the last decades of the 20th century, spectacularly memorable for the British deployment of atrocious police and military violence against Irish civilians, came to a point of truce with the1998 Good Friday Agreement. That Agreement remains in place in 2019 and as a result of it the border between the two political entities is now more or less non-existent. However, Brexit would mean that Ireland, as an EU member, would then have a border with a non-EU member in Northern Ireland. The political problem with that scenario seems almost totally intractable.

The EU's proposed solution—or at least, a temporary band-aid—for the border problem is known as the 'Irish backstop.' This is a provision in the May/EU deal that would rule out the re-establishment of a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. As an emblem of the political (and indeed, historical) impasse that Brexit constitutes the backstop is a remarkably freighted phenomenon. Once activated, the backstop would thereafter keep Northern Ireland in an operative customs union with the Irish Republic and thus with the EU itself. Northern Ireland would thence become anomalous in regard to the rest of Britain and would essentially still be **de facto** a part of the EU. This possibility, combined with uncertainty about how long such a backstop would remain in place, has given the Conservative Brexiteers conniptions. But none are more indignant than the Democratic Unionist Party, the group of ten right-wing Northern Irish politicians whose votes have for almost two years now provided the Conservatives with a slim parliamentary majority; but who yet have refused to support May and her deal so long the backstop is an article in that deal. A huge part (though by no means all) of the explanation for Brexistasis is right there, in this political stalemate whereby May's deal needed the votes of the DUP, but where the DUP could not countenance the backstop, at the same time as the backstop was a **sine qua non** for the EU. The EU has so far been adamant, appealing to the high moral ground of support for the "goal of peace and reconciliation enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement," and maintaining "the aim of avoiding a hard border, while respecting the integrity of the Union legal order" (quoted in Hayward: 14).

While the EU's appeal to the importance of the Agreement, and its frequent reminder of the EU's mission to maintain peace in Europe, are perhaps a little opportunistic, not to say disingenuous, it is not wrong to suggest that the prospect of a rebuilt border might threaten peace. Certainly it provokes opposition from Irish Republicans who naturally still entertain hopes of a united Ireland and for whom the border would constitute a renewed act of partition and signal a re-establishment of British imperial power. So when the British Parliament thrice voted down Mrs. May's 'deal' in March, the republican party Sinn Féin was dismayed and saw it as a sign of British disregard for the Good Friday Agreement. On their website they claim that "Sinn Féin and the majority of parties across this island, know there is no good or sensible Brexit. [May's] withdrawal agreement is imperfect but it is the only deal on offer. The 'backstop' contained is a guarantee that no hard border will be imposed on this island and protects the Good Friday Agreement."[9]

The 310 mile long Irish/Northern Irish border was, of course, a hated symbol for Irish nationalists for most of the 20th century and the prospect of its restoration is a blunt reminder of Ireland's colonial history. If the Good Friday Agreement had essentially brought a kind of postcolonial peace to the island, then British disregard for it automatically raises anti-imperialist hackles, and it does not take much for the accusation of British imperialism to get leveled. This is what we saw, for instance, in 2018 when the Conservative government's appointment of an egregiously incompetent political hack, Karen Bradley, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland seemed to demonstrate a certain nonchalance in regard to the agreement and indeed to the whole question of Ireland. One of

Bradley's first acts was to express her ignorance about the history and politics of her new bailiwick. And later, at the very moment that discussion of the backstop issue was shining a spotlight on Ireland, Bradley decided to pronounce upon the British killings of Irish civilians during the Troubles. She claimed that those killings "were not crimes, they were people acting under orders and fulfilling their duties in a dignified and appropriate way."[10]

This sort of carelessness from London presumably comes as no surprise to most Irish republicans. But it is particularly notable that it should be thrown in their face at the very moment when the Irish border has become a political lightning rod. Irish understanding of British imperialism has been deep for many decades. In previous decades the militant Irish Republican Army had targeted that imperialism fiercely and effectively, not least in their assassination in 1979 of Lord Mountbatten. Amongst that British aristocrat's imperialist crimes was another partition—the partition of India—which stands out as one of the most casually catastrophic moments in the whole history of British imperialism. For that action, if for no other, Mountbatten was seen by the IRA as a legitimate imperialist target. When he was killed, Sinn Feín, the political arm of the IRA, noted that "What the IRA did to him is what Mountbatten had been doing all his life to other people."[11]

So, even after the Good Friday Agreement, the shadow of British imperialism is never far away from Ireland. Indeed, since the Agreement was signed a new generation of radical Irish republicans appears to have been starting to grow. In the weeks of Parliamentary Brexit debate and voting in April, Saoradh, a small but vocal republican group, made its presence felt, as did the New IRA. Their appearance was, if nothing else, a bracing reminder of how fragile the postcolonial peace is in Ireland, and how quickly sectarian violence might re-ignite. Coincidentally, the week of Parliamentary votes had a somber but very much related backdrop. In Northern Ireland the prosecution services had been reviewing the official killings of civilians in Belfast on Bloody Sunday (January 1972) upon which Karen Bradley had already opined; the review led to only one officer (out of 19 investigated) being charged with civilian deaths.[12] Again, the specter of the imperialist past is very close to everyday proceedings in Ireland.

Both Saordah and the New IRA combine their antagonism to the Brexit process with an anti-imperialist critique. As Ellen Meiksins Wood has pointed out, in regard to the British relationship with Ireland in particular, "It is a distinctive and essential characteristic of capitalist imperialism that its economic reach far exceeds its direct political and military grasp. It can rely on the economic imperatives of 'the market' to do much of its imperial work" (Wood: 257). Thus, for these Irish radical groups, it is not just the direct imperialism of the UK, with its guns and policing, that is at stake. But also, they recognize the economic imperialism of the EU—it might be cheque-book imperialism, not supported by actual physical force, but it is a form of imperialism nonetheless. And for radical Irish republicans, there is surely not much to choose between one kind of imperialism and another.

7. "I Can't Register"

In this essay, I have been trying to forge a perspective on Brexit by way of the dynamics of its history, more than through its strictly current stasis. After all, both the definition of Brexit and the future trajectory of the narrative of Brexit are yet to be resolved—even as every day brings some kind of shift in the narrative direction or the definitional possibilities. And yet Brexit's central questions and issues, as well as its determinations and ideologies, seem to me tolerably easy to identify and have been so for a very long time. And they depend, I want to claim, on the longer rehearsal of the antinomies that I have been trying to point out. In taking a step back to 1975, and by invoking the air of British imperialism, for example, I hope to have pointed to some issues that clearly need to be taken into account if we are to eventually understand the Brexit process, whatever it becomes.

Indeed, it might even be worthwhile to go back even a few more years even than 1975 to help thicken this perspective and to help explain more what I am trying to get at. Tom Nairn does this in his 1972 essay, "The European Problem." That essay remains as good an exposition (adjusted for inflation) as we can get of the various fundamental antinomies—the Yes/No or Remain/Leave conundrums—that have swirled around for years in British culture in relation to the European question. Nairn, in fact, looks back to 1962, a decade before Britain actually joined the Common Market but a moment when the matter was being widely debated. He points to no less a figure than Raymond Williams giving his view in the course of a symposium put together by the magazine Encounter. Williams sees the question of joining Europe or not as a distraction for the left: "I'm sorry," he says, "but if you are taking a poll on the apparently existing choices—to go 'into Europe' or to stay 'out of the Common Market'—I can't register" (quoted in Nairn 1972: 106). Correctly seeing 'Europe' as a project of capitalist integration

and rationalization, Williams also correctly saw the dangers of a kind of nationalist recidivism.

Nairn, in fact, takes Williams severely to task for his 'plague on both their houses' approach. And I have some sympathy with that, even despite the fact that I myself effectively did not register when I boycotted the 1975 referendum! However, it is also true that Williams's position is characteristically careful: "apparently existing choices," he says, perhaps challenging us to find some new and different ones. Earlier I quoted Marx's Poverty of Philosophy to support my undergraduate notion in 1975 that it was best to boycott the referendum. But in that same text Marx offers a limited but rousing justification for registering one way or another:

> .... the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favour of free trade (Marx: 108).

Even if I think that Marx's optimistic outlook would not be shared by many on the left today, it is nonetheless a reassurance that it is possible to find grounds for making a choice. Marx's exhortation would, in my view, be a better justification for choosing Europe than, say, being reluctant to give up the many consumerists benefits that the EU's freedom of trade and movement has brought.

But on the other hand, the left case against choosing Europe is still enormously strong. That case is well represented by Costas Lapavitsas in a book that resonates with Tony Benn's fears about European integration that I cited earlier. Lapavitsas's argument against the EU is heavily filtered through the experience of Syriza in Greece during its financial crisis and in his account, the problems in that story derive mostly from the predominance of Germany within the EU and from the effect of the Euro and the Eurozone. The two things combined are what forced the surrender of Syriza to pressure from German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the EU. Indeed, there can be no question that the EU's treatment of Greece was an exercise of naked power and a ruthless strategy that did nothing to help Greece and everything to enforce the cohesion of the EU itself. It was, if you like, its own kind of imperialist policy. And the problems are exacerbated by the so-called democratic deficit in the EU and its institutions; in Lapavitsas's view what happened in Greece "provides clear evidence of the hollowing out of democracy in the EU as neoliberalism has marched on relentlessly" (Lapavitsas 2109: 113).

Lapavitsas's critique of the EU is echoed in many places on the left and here I shall point to just a couple. John Gillingham's book, The EU: An Obituary, makes a pretty watertight case that the EU is essentially dysfunctional, and he concludes that as a result "the EU cannot manage any of the present crises it faces" (Gillingham 2018: 245). His work analyses a whole host of those crises and the problems facing the EU: from the humanitarian problem of the current refugee tragedy, to the social and political one of inequality caused amongst and with nations by the one-size-fits-all Euro, to the financial one of a stressed banking system, to the general economic problem of slow European growth, to the political problem of the rise of authoritarian populist governments around Europe, to the institutional one of its own undemocratic and inflexible governance. And the list goes on, but the EU remains unable to handle its problems and crises because it is, ultimately, "undemocratic, inefficient, blinkered, inflexible, and unpopular" (Gillingham: vii).

Gillingham's objections to the EU often sound more pragmatically oriented than ideological. By contrast, Alex Callinicos, while he obviously recognizes the EU's dysfunctional characteristics as a flaw, makes a generally more ideological case:

> The EU today is best understood as a dysfunctional would-be imperialist power. We can see its imperialist character most clearly in its promotion of neoliberalism—through its expansion to incorporate Central and Eastern Europe, in its policies towards neighbouring states in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe and now, within the EU, through the disciplinary mechanisms enforcing permanent austerity. But the dysfunctional nature of this imperialism is evident both internally [the Eurozone] and externally [Ukraine] (Callinicos: 2015).

There seems to me no denying the power of these kinds of criticism. Any Remainer needs to take them seriously. Certainly, if it turns out that Brexit does not happen, or happens only in some partial or diminished form, these are the kinds of critiques of the European project that will need to be addressed immediately. It would necessarily be a case, in my view, of accepting Lapavitsas's position when he claims that "If the Left intends to implement radical anti-capitalist policies and effectively confront the neoliberal juggernaut of the EU, it must be prepared for a rupture" (Lapavitsas: 131). For him, such a rupture would involve undoing the Eurozone first of all, and this would be followed by a systematic rejection of the other components of the EU's institutional structure. The aim of such a rupture would be, of course, to find the space again for the kinds of radical anti-capitalist policies which the EU

currently stands in the way of.

On the other hand, if Brexit does happen, and in whatever form, surely the very same aims must apply. Britain has been subjected to an exceptionally cruel neoliberal regime which has applied unusually stringent austerity measures over the last decade or so. Yet the left opposition to such a regime can scarcely get off the ground and, since the 2016 referendum, has struggled to make itself heard over the din of the Brexit conversation. It is perhaps time now to remember that the left's expansive goals of economic and social justice do not depend upon the particular nature of the regime or regimes in which we find ourselves. The left in Europe and in the UK today should reject the imperialism of the EU as much as the imperialist fantasies of the British Brexiteers; and it should reject neoliberal austerity policies whether they are imposed on Greece by the EU or on the British working class by a Conservative government; it should oppose racism and xenophobia whether its symptom is Islamophobia in Paris or prejudice against Polish migrants in Manchester. The tasks and responsibilities for the left are, in other words, independent of the false choices offered by capitalism's idea of democracy.

I hope, as a final word, that this is something like the perspective that the Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has been espousing all throughout the Brexit drama. He is, at any rate, clearly impatient with the terms of that drama. While campaigning just before the European parliamentary elections in May, he posed a rhetorical question to his audience: "We could allow ourselves to be defined only as 'remainers' or 'leavers' ….But where would that take us? Who wants to live in a country stuck in this endless loop?" (quoted in Stewart 2019).

Endnotes

1. Tony Benn later described the division, while accusing the party membership of not being forceful enough in resisting Wilson's Cabinet: "...in March 1975 the Cabinet decided to recommend a 'Yes' vote.... There was no consultation with the parliamentary party which, when it met after the Cabinet had made its recommendation, came out in favour of a 'No' vote. The Cabinet took no notice. The special Labour conference also opposed our membership in the Common Market, yet those in the Cabinet who upheld party policy were described as 'dissenting ministers'." (Benn 1982: 189)

2. See https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/11859648/Jeremy-Corbyn-admits-he-voted-for-Britain-to-leave-Europe-in-1975.html

3. The four freedoms have also been further codified in the 1986 Single European Act that effectively established the beginning of the European Union itself in 1993; in the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, currently the central governing treaty of the EU; and in an attachment to all consolidated versions of the various EU treaties, Protocol 27, which lays out rules and guidelines on competition in the internal European market.

4. The best efforts seem to me to be Watkins 2016, and the Epilogue to Saunders 2018.

5. See Sudarshan 2016 for a helpful and lucid dissection of the way that Polish migrants have been treated in the UK since the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004. Sudarshan makes a brave attempt to explain how the prejudice faced by Poles (and other eastern Europeans) relates to—and differs from—the quotidian racism of British culture, and how their presence affected the populist imaginary in the run up to the referendum.

6. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/01/16/leave-campaign-bus-claim-britain-will-save-350m-week-brexit/

7. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/23/the-observer-view-on-the-brexit-march

8. https://twitter.com/UKIP_NI status/1105990081548967936

9. https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/52734

10. "Karen Bradley faces calls to resign over Troubles comments". BBC News. 6 March 2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-47471469

11. Quoted from Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Mountbatten,_1st_Earl_Mountbatten_of_Burma. Mountbatten was for me personally a very proximate object lesson in British imperialism and in the ways of the British aristocracy since I grew up in the shadow of his family estate, Broadlands, Romsey.

12. The Guardian. March 14th, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/14/one-soldier-to-face-charges-over-bloody-sunday-killings

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Essay completed May 25, 2019

ISSN 1930-014X