

FAST CAPITALISM

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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.

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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.

About the Authors

Christopher Altamura

Christopher Altamura is a sociology PhD student at The University of Kansas where he currently teaches Self and Society. At present, his research concerns the political psychology of authoritarianism, the political sociology of democracy and democratization, and sociological theory. He can be reached at chrisaltamura@ku.edu. Thomas Bechtold

Thomas Bechtold

Thomas Bechtold is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee- Knoxville where he studies critical social theory and environmental sociology.

Graham Cassano

Graham Cassano is an associate professor of sociology at Oakland University, near Detroit, Michigan. His books include *A New Kind of Public: Community, Solidarity, and Political Economy in New Deal Cinema, 1935-1948* (Haymarket, 2016) and, with Rima Lunin Schultz and Jessica Payette, *Eleanor Smith's 'Hull House Songs': The Music of Protest and Hope in Jane Addams's Chicago* (Brill, 2018). He is currently working with the labor historian, Daniel Clark, on a spatial history of Pontiac, Michigan, 1950-2010.

Harry F. Dahms

Harry F. Dahms is a professor of sociology working in social theory, critical theory, philosophy of social science, and sociology of science fiction at the University of Tennessee - Knoxville, where he is also co-chair of the Committee on Social Theory and co-director of the Center for the Study of Social Justice. He has been an affiliate in Sociology at the University of Innsbruck, Austria since 2010, and previously taught at Florida State University and the University of Göttingen, Germany. He is the editor of *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* and director of the International Social Theory Consortium, and currently in the process of completing a book, *Modern Society as Artifice: Critical Theory and the Logic of Capital* (Routledge).

Sascha Engel

Sascha Engel is Visiting Simpson Scholar at the University of Wyoming. He holds a PhD from the Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) at Virginia Tech as well as an M.A. in Political Theory from the Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany). Sascha's research focus is the Eurozone Crisis, along with its broader implications for the analysis of global financial and institutional economics.

Tony Allen Feldmann

Tony Allen Feldmann is a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas. His research interests are in social psychology, political sociology, and critical theory. His MA research focused on the social psychological roots of right-wing authoritarian attitudes. His PhD research is focusing on the experiences of teachers in Wisconsin after the passage of Act-10.

Mario Khreiche

Mario Khreiche holds a Ph.D. in Political and Cultural Thought from Virginia Tech. Currently, he is the Andrew W. Mellon Sawyer Seminar Postdoctoral Fellow on the topic of "Information Ecosystems: Creating Data (and Absence) From the Quantitative to the Digital Age" at the University of Pittsburgh. His research explores the relation between discourses on automation and processes of gigification, taskification, and gamification in various industries. Email: mariokhreiche@pitt.edu

Dan Krier

Dan Krier is Professor of Sociology at Iowa State University and organizer of Symposia on New Directions in Critical Social Theory. He specializes in critical social theory, political economy, and comparative-historical sociology. Books include *Speculative Management: Stock Market Power and Corporate Change* (SUNY: 2005), *NASCAR, Sturgis and the New Economy of Spectacle* (with William Swart, Brill SCSS: 2016), *Capitalism's Future: Alienation, Emancipation and Critique* (co-edited with Mark P. Worrell, Brill SCSS: 2016), *The Social Ontology of Capitalism* (co-edited with Mark P. Worrell, Palgrave Macmillan: 2017, and is currently completing *Economic Theology: The Religious Foundations of Capitalism* (Brill SCSS: under contract).

Charles Lemert

Charles Lemert will soon publish: *Americans Thinking America; The Bottom Turtle: Silence and Society*, and with Immanuel Wallerstein, *Living Progressively in a Transitional Time*.

Jennifer Miller

Jennifer Miller is an interdisciplinary scholar and cultural theorist who researches children's picture books. She has published in the *Journal of Homosexuality*, the edited collection *Heroes, Heroines, and Everything in Between*, and is currently working on a book length project under contract with the University Press of Mississippi.

David Norman Smith

David Norman Smith works at the point of intersection between political sociology, political psychology, and political economy. Before joining the KU faculty in 1990, he studied sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Ph.D, 1988) and economics at the University of California-Berkeley (A.B., 1974). He is keenly interested in all of the many ways in which people think and feel about democracy and tolerance, not only in politics but in culture and the economy. That interest, and a background in social theory, has led him to pursue an ever-expanding menu of research – on prejudice and intolerance, authority and authoritarianism, the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide of 1994; on charisma and crisis, capitalism and labor. In each of these areas, he seeks multi-faceted insight by whatever means are available – socio-historical study, survey research, and close reading, especially of texts by major sociological theorists.

Lukas Szrot

Lukas Szrot is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Bemidji State University. His dissertation research, completed in the spring of 2019, examined how the relationship between religious identity and environmental concern has changed over time in the United States. Szrot has a long-standing interest in how ethical and cultural shifts occur around environmental issues and beliefs about “nature,” but has also written, and conducted research on, the social psychology of belief, the relationship between publics and experts in democracies, and methodological issues in the social sciences. He can be reached at lukas.szrot@bemidjistate.edu

Andrew Urie

Andrew Urie recently completed his PhD in Social and Political Thought at York University (Canada). He specializes in American intellectual history and popular culture, and his research interests include cultural political economy, literary studies, and textual sociology. His dissertation is entitled *Turning Japanese: Japanization Anxiety, Japan-Bashing, and Reactionary White American Heteropatriarchy in Reagan-Bush Era Hollywood Cinema*. He has also published in *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*.

Mark P. Worrell

Mark P. Worrell is Assistant Professor of Sociology at SUNY Cortland and the editor of *The New York Journal of Sociology* (www.newyorksociology.org) and the author of the book *Dialectic of Solidarity: Labor, Antisemitism, and the Frankfurt School* published by Brill in 2008. Worrell’s research blends critical and classical social theory in the areas of antisemitism and authoritarianism research as well as issues in economic and political sociology. Recent and forthcoming publications include articles in *Rethinking Marxism*, *Telos*, *Critical Sociology*, *Fast Capitalism*, and *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*.

The Beatings Will Continue Until Morale Improves

Mark P. Worrell

The sociological absolute is society in general, but the problem of **absolute** sociology is society's concept of itself, i.e., the dialectic of dialectics, the syllogism of syllogisms, the consciousness of consciousnesses, or the "triangle of triangles" (Rosenkranz [1844] 2002). The universal point of view toward facts and things is no longer fashionable but, as H. G. Wells says, "it is no more pretentious to work upon the whole of life than upon parts and aspects ..." (1928: 7). Wells is also correct that, in itself, no idea is inherently more valuable than any other; just as there is no such thing as value **per se** (Adorno [1975] 2000: 41), and just as things in themselves are not actually capital (Marx [1867] 1976: 975), it is not until ideas are related (positively or negatively) that a sense of scale and value are registered.

To speak of the Idea of something in the Hegelian sense presumes a victory of sorts (or at least the anticipation of a universal achievement) but society is never an empirically unified thing, and, if anything, it appears to be sliding into an abyss. But integration and wholeness are meaningless without disintegration and partitions. Society, by its very nature as a moral being with its own autonomy over and above the life of individuals, "cannot be assembled all the time" and most of the time it exists as a memory in a dispersed state of semi-profanity (Durkheim [1912] 1915: 391). Nonetheless, because the current phase of universal profanation seems interminable, pessimists would be justified in assuming that teleological activity, if there ever was such a thing, has fallen short. Society is definitely not as it should be, and the persistent defects and backslidings have left many writers today unsure whether 'society' even exists as anything more than an empty signifier; some professional negationists have even joined the ranks of the intellectually departed by embracing, in one form or another, reductionism or transcendentalism. But the negation of Society only amounts to a capitulation to bourgeois nominalism and assists in keeping repressed that which has only sunken into unconsciousness (cf. Durkheim [1912] 1915: 387).

We know for a fact that the negative (bad) absolute of capitalism exists as an autonomous and determining necessity; otherwise commodities could not even circulate (Marx [1867] 1976: 146). We also know that the social domain is one of moral **polarities** and where there is a negative there must necessarily exist a corresponding positivity. The profane is diametrically opposed, even absolutely, to the sacred but the sacred is characterized by the polar oppositions of purities and impurities. For this reason, Moret and Davy say that not every "sacred principle is a social principle" ([1926] 1970: 52). Indeed, some sacred principles (the impure or negative) are essentially anti-social (e.g., magic, the pursuit of the unlimited, rugged individualism, and so on). Therefore, if the negative absolute exists, as it obviously does, the positive absolute also exists, sunken in the spiritual underground where concepts have their relations dissolved (Worrell 2019).

As a negative absolute, the capitalist 'superstructure' is a nebula of sacred powers but these forces are anti-social in nature; the reason deployed by capital is not merely a 'technical rationality' but an actual anti-reason. We know anti-reason as **hyper**-rationality, e.g., antisemitic conspiracies and mythologies that fetishize and preserve the rule of capital (Sartre, in Wilson 1982: 604; see also Massing 1949: 13; Worrell 2017; Worrell 2008) as well as **hypo**-rationality of the abstract schematics of garden-variety prejudices, common sense, and folk wisdom, etc. Therefore, within the negativity of anti-reason that separates and breaks relations (e.g., keeping white free of brown contamination), there is a 'positivity' that seeks to recombine elements in perverse forms (e.g., everything enveloped by the signifier of 'the

Jew' in deranged conspiracies). The value dimension under capital suffers twists and turns just as any other moral substance does.

One could argue that **exchange**-value is not directly the enemy of society and is not necessarily an abuse of reason, but the drive for the accumulation of **surplus** value (underpinned by surplus or excess labor) is the negation of human values. The drive for accumulating surplus value harbors a self-defeating logic of self-delusion, hauntings, and concrete liquidations (Szrot, this volume; Worrell 2009). If money is dead people, the imperative to make and accumulate as much as possible (the capitalist **ideal**) is necrophilia in almost ideal-typical purity. The billionaire stands atop a mountain of corpses. The pursuit of surplus value, or 'Value' (as if there is now only one worthy of the designation) devalues the remainder of ideals and what should be a system of self-limiting and self-containing forces devolves into an energetic and morbid whirlpool of destruction (Durkheim [1912] 1915: 233). But if the negative seems to have the upper hand, surrounded as we are on all sides by death and disintegration, it might very well be that the enemies of society are unintentionally engaged in actions that raise positivity into the sphere of conscious reflection. The bad and the wrong keep us in myriad chains, but the effects of terror and repression are simultaneously causes of their own energies that mobilize populations around the values of freedom, general welfare, democracy, and peace, etc.

It is often the case that the enemy of X (let us call it the -X) is itself negated by the compression effect that arises from its own propagation and multiplication. This presupposes that the negative cannot only negate itself but that it contains some positive element(s) and this is hard to swallow after the horrors of the 20th Century. It seems impossible that a nightmare can embody reason. Where is the reason, for example, in the Holocaust or the Sandy Hook massacre? The slaughter of children and the concept of 'reason' cannot make contact without disgust. The common solution is not to search for the reason 'in' a thing but, rather, the reason 'for' the thing. But Hegel says that a real dialectical method develops the reason within the thing, not by attributing an external, subjective reason to it, but developing the actual, inner kernel residing within the thing ([1821] 1991: 60). But this inner kernel is not reason in its positive mode. We arrive now at the realization that the negative and positive absolutes are not two separate things but two dimensions of one absolute. Reason is evil (anti-reason) where the actualization of the Idea has been perverted and we are led to the conclusion that the beatings will continue until morale improves. Reason and evil are inseparable; one need only read Goethe's *Faust* to see that the only character in the story with reason on his side is Mephistopheles (Dahms, this volume). The devil in *Faust* is not only the spirit of negation but also the voice of reason.

It is possible to fight fire with fire, bullets with bullets, and demons with demons, but once these dynamics get wound up, they know no limit and lead to widespread destruction. That leaves us with the struggle over the negative with the positive and that means knowing the positive within the negative, which seems impossible, though we are all too familiar with the inversion. The negative freedom of individuals under the reign of capital "is the freedom of the void" that, when it becomes active, manifests itself as fanatical destruction, fury, suicide, murder, and terror (Hegel [1821] 1991: 38-39) and these phenomena fall within the odyssey of the concept, not outside of it, and we will make no headway until we embark on discovering the ideas and causes for which people are killing and dying for (Hegel [1821] 1991: 102).

The easiest rationalization is the one that individuates the problem, avoiding the social causes, through psychological reduction and devaluations. Every day, at least one mass shooting is rationalized with the magic phrase "mental health issues." With Durkheim, the solution lies in the direction of grasping that **what is abnormal and morbid are only exaggerations of what is considered normal and healthy**. This insight is the most difficult to hold to consistently: the virtuous and the vicious are not compartmentally sealed off from one another but exist on a continuum and separated analytically by degrees. As Leonard Nelson once said, "good is the evil we choose to ignore" ([1917] 1957: 90) and, by extension, the evil is merely the good we cannot get enough of. Disease is inseparable from health and life is meaningless without death. With that being said, however, those that would promote the health of society over egoism and greed themselves prohibit the critique of the sacred principle of the modern system by normalizing the predication of capitalism with the sign of 'society.' We know from Hegel that the predicate provides what is essential in this relation between two self-subsisting totalities ([1812] 1969: 624-25) and that capitalism is essentially anti-social. Anti-capitalism is the way back toward real society but the unpleasant truth about American politics is that it is defined and wholly dominated by a one-party system consisting of two wings, both capitalist, and while Red and Blue politicians may personally dislike one another, they are nonetheless business partners and their collaborations are, if not devoid of animosity, still necessary and destructive to democracy. Whatever "progressive"

elements one might find in the party system are easily contained by capital and exhausted in populist miasmas.

Dialectical necessity has been penetrated by a more powerful necessity of a different species, from another domain of life, that has diverted the course of Spirit away from the goal of conceptual, rational unification. Concreteness is misplaced, and mimesis devolves from social emulation into imitations (Bechtold, this volume). For this reason, it appears that necessity has given way to pure contingency, but where we can still speak of causes and effects there is still the inevitable and the predetermined, at least in a ‘subterranean’ sense. Where there should be society and reason, what Durkheim calls the “consciousness of the whole” (1961: 277) we instead have capitalism (anti-society) and instrumental rationality (Bechtold, this volume) that breaks the whole down into a negative mechanical totality and further into disjointed abstractions. Yet, even though the positive concrete universal has never realized itself in a permanent condition, it nonetheless exists at least as a concept in a kind of ‘fourth spatial dimension’ (to appropriate an image from Mauss). All the same, even anti-society is, in its own way, still a social form in the same way that anti-capitalism has so far inclined towards capitalism. It should come as no surprise when altruism turns into egoism, yesterday’s communists are today’s investors, critical academics dream of equity prices, good becomes evil, or magenta chaos delivers us to the threshold of umber fate. These kinds of transpositions are really inevitable in a world of moral polarities. Still, if anti-society is a kind of society (defective, abstract, evil) it nonetheless possesses all the resources needed to resume its conceptual odyssey. We do not have to wait for something extra or a supplement to reorganize the thing.

If the building of a new city in a waste land is attended with difficulties, yet there is no shortage of materials; but the abundance of materials presents all the more obstacles of another kind when the task is to remodel an ancient city, solidly built, and maintained in continuous possession and occupation. Among other things one must resolve to make no use at all of much material that has hitherto been highly esteemed (Hegel [1812] 1969: 575).

The fact that society is a conceptual being (Durkheim [1912] 1915: 386) has been lost to generations of sociologists who have for the most part abandoned or misinterpreted their classical roots (Smith, this volume). Most self-professed ‘dialectical materialists’ oscillate between ordinary materialism and transcendental idealism. Sociologists have renounced concepts for variables, have given up explaining the complex through the complex (Durkheim 1974: 29), and chased titles and prizes by emulating the methods of the physical sciences. The techniques seem objective, but the results are purely subjective (Adorno 1976: 72). Instead of relations and dialectical matrices, we see only individuals, brains, descriptions, and the dipping of sticks into prejudice. **Ipsa facto**, it is refreshing to see the old concept of alienation approached in a new way, i.e., from the standpoint of the logical moments of the **sylogism** (Altamura, this volume), which might sound quaint, but what this really means is that **dialectics** or the **dialectical** possess a unified method and a precise structure beyond academic jargon.

It is certainly true that the only active elements in society are individuals (Durkheim [1897] 1951: 310; Durkheim [1912] 1915: 386; Hegel [1807] 1967: 160). In fact, everything is an individual (even the last of the Scholastics admitted this much) but the decisive fact is how individuals logically relate to one another as well as their institutional functions. Even an individual work of art that is self-contained, closed, and inseparable from its cultural horizon (Bechtold, this volume) has other potential functions both particular and universal, and, in relation to the psyche, as Altamura (this volume) reinforces, it is social organization and collective consciousness that determines the structure and the disposition of the individual mind. Anywhere we find an actual individual of sociological importance we are interested in its **singularity** rather than its subjective infinity.

The ‘singular’ is not what it is commonly imagined to be but the moment where a plenitude has been sacrificed for the sake of a social function, or, lacking subordination to a concrete universal, submission to the facts of the master (Cassano, this volume). Put simply, piety is rewarded, and voluntary integration is a sign of credibility (Smith, this volume). Being a **function** lacks the kind of glamour we seek in the bourgeois hologram (Bageant 2007) but being a function means being a fact (Worrell 2018) and while social facts in our world are not as they should be, fraught with contradictions, they are nonetheless essential moments of teleological activity — as such, if one fantasizes about Radical Transformation™ without going **through** the facts, one will be forever disappointed. The road to heaven runs through hell and we will need facts in the future even as we are restrained by them — this is especially pertinent when one dreams of the authority of democracy or the authority of positive freedom; there is no such thing as society without the facticity of the social (see Feldmann, this volume). I suspect that if we did arrive at a world of general democracy, we would want to not only preserve the **facticity** and authority of democracy but make it absolute and inviolable. And, admittedly, the facts of bourgeois society have not precluded the enjoyment

of genuine, creative individuality and concrete personality for some, even as most are reduced to one-sided beings (subjects) pushed around by impersonal forces and alien desires; the reigning spirit of **individualism** leads people away from actual **individuality** and into the waiting arms of heteronomy.

Apropos the process of mono-valuation and the drive for infinite accumulation people are invited to imbibe in the spirits of limitlessness and hyper-individualism, compressed into the negative unity of **infinity** disease (Durkheim [1897] 1951: 287; Altamura, this volume; Worrell 2015; 2018; 2019). When one stops to question the wisdom of blindly pursuing an alien goal the subject is beset with guilt for lack of faith (Szrot, this volume). Insofar as the invitations are accepted, society, like any 'being,' begins to question the value of existence: to be, or not to be? The negative absolute of the modern world is an autonomous subject that bends the wills of individuals to suit its own fancy; it even pleasures itself for no other reason than for its own self-enjoyment. Just as positive society lives on sacrifices, negative society runs on not only partial death but total and mass death. We have lost sight of the fact that collective representations were born from ritual ecstasy and the frenzied mayhem of self-destructive acts that often teetered on the edge of death (Krier, this volume). Collective representations are born in blood, fire, beatings, lacerations, and excruciating pain that mundane life does not engender. Every explosive but futile act of destruction is, in a way, an attempt to recreate the fury of the rite that generates the energy of the objective social phantom but, ironically, functions to preserve the abstractions and dysfunctions of the prevailing negativity. As capitalism 'works' for fewer and fewer people, with whole classes falling under the wheels of the planetary juggernaut, the estranged and the deranged act out. Their acting out is inspired by the very thing that hates them and that directs their animosity toward substitute targets and scapegoats.

Every moment of every single day, subjects are communicated to in positive and negative tones (Durkheim [1912] 1915: 242). Demands are conveyed through averted eyes, slammed doors, dismissals, rejections, slights, insults, silence, broken promises, the lure of fame, the promise of wealth, impossible dreams, insatiable desires, unrestrained fantasies, holy allegiances, sanguine passions, revenge in the name of justice, blocked endeavors, the impenetrable wall of destiny, and 1001 other things — not least of which is the fate of being struck down by gainful employment and having the means to transform the means into ends. In the ups and downs, augmentations and negations of emotional life, most people (more or less) manage to actively (see Feldmann, this volume) harmonize the pluses and minuses and keep their chins up as they navigate daily routines. They suffer the divisions of alienation but enjoy the reflected multiplications, summon enough courage to temper their self-destructive impulses, and accept the claim on the part of their superiors that to succeed they should model their thoughts and actions on those that have preceded them through dedication and hard work, i.e., they should identify with their betters and desire what is in reality a constellation of alien desires (Cassano, this volume). Never mind that 'dedication' and 'hard work' are all too frequently mere euphemisms for luck and random connections. But the moral and immoral athletes among us cannot be fooled. They take things from another point of view and to extremes.

When we look back on 2019 we will find that something like 1.5 million people in America will have attempted suicide and that, give or take, 50,000 people will succeed in taking their own lives. The individuals themselves are not predestined to destroy themselves but the fact that more than one million people will try actually is predestined (Durkheim [1897] 1951: 325). Suicide is a conscious act, of that, there is little doubt but the social causes that drive individuals to dispose of themselves operate in an almost completely unconscious way. Social forces are not non-conscious but invisible to the mind. People do not know what forces are and, with a nod to Confucius, do not know what they do not know (Thoreau [1854] 1960: 12). Suicide notes are notorious for occluding true motives because the subjects themselves are virtually clueless to the underlying reasons for their symptomatic expressions. But just as consciousness is more complex and multidimensional than mainstream psychology leads us to believe, the unconscious is also more complex. Freud assures us that there is no such thing as a collective unconscious, not because it isn't real, but because the phrase is redundant. "It is not easy to translate the concepts of individual psychology into mass psychology," said Freud, "and I do not think that much is to be gained by introducing the concept of a 'collective' unconscious — the content of the unconscious is collective anyhow, a general possession of mankind" (1939: 170). In short, the unconscious is social from the very beginning.

Given the impoverished state of psychological understanding in critical philosophy and political economy, I think it is important to draw out what goes presupposed in Freud. For example, if one slogs through any of the top-flight analyses of Marx's theory of the commodity as a value-bearing object one quickly realizes that even the best writers are utterly lacking in what is meant by the ideal, the mental, and consciousness as they pertain to exchange-value. They would do well to revisit Freud but also Hegel and, perish the thought, seriously consider Durkheim's

theory of the sacred. This theoretical synthesis, let us call it the Marxheimian strain of critical theory, embodies an eight-sided psychological matrix: (1) individual / personal; (2) particular / mass / intra-group; (3) universal / social / inter-group; (4) profane / linear understandings; (5) sacred pure / positive; (6) sacred impure / negative; (7) consciousness; and (8) unconsciousness. An absolute psychology would be attuned to the interpenetrations of all eight dimensions.

It is not possible to grasp the logic of capital and negate the accumulation of surplus value until critique situates Value within the realm of the sacred and as it refracts through the various dimensions and spheres of the absolute psychological matrix. Value is not a category of the understanding restricted to the domain of political economy but is an ultramundane or ‘otherworldly’ principle (Smith 1988). If ‘the economy’ was a rational system restricted to the production and distribution of goods and services we could get out of it what we put into it. Further, if class exploitation were merely a problem of simple domination it could never sustain itself continuously. It is a fact that the rewards that accrue to sellers of labor power, in general, are inferior to the quantum of energy expended in the labor process so this inferiority must appear, at least in part, to be valid and fits with the logic of “sacrificial tribute” whereby “they give to the sacred beings a little of what they receive from them, and they receive from them all that they give” (Durkheim [1912] 1915: 383). These “sacred beings” are the avatars or personifications of capital. Marx is correct that **having a job means paying to work** but modern workers are not just ‘talking tools’ and do not like to think of themselves much in the degrading terms of ‘laborers’ or ‘workers’ and they certainly do not hate the personifications of capital. They may hate the signified component, but they have not connected the signifiers to that substance and, consequently, are of two minds (ambivalent) toward the problem of wealth distribution.

Durkheim is famous for amplifying the antique notion that people are double (**Homo duplex**, double-minded) but when one wrestles with Suicide one comes to the realization that Durkheim’s double is itself doubled, and perhaps even doubled again. If one knows Hegel’s weird disjunctive syllogism in the big Logic (or the money-price value form in chapter one of Capital) one gets the impression that we are on some kind of similar ground with Durkheim’s moral geometry (Worrell 2019) where the universal is capable of enveloping itself. What we need to know is if it is possible for not only individuals to commit suicide but if a concept is also capable of killing itself, either passively or actively, and, further, if there is life after death for the thing sacrificed.

Hegel famously concludes the Phenomenology at Golgotha, heralding a breakthrough for Spirit. The death of the man was a midway point (Hegel 1988: 463) in the **Bildungsroman** of the world spirit. However, we also know that every midway point is also an end as well as a beginning or a “sunrise” for a new concept (Hegel [1807] 2008: 731). So here was a man who embodied and gave expression to a new concept and was rewarded for his insight and inspiration with a brutal execution. But we do not need the gospel of Judas (Kasser and Wurst 2007) to see that this execution was just as much a suicide — a premodern version of ‘death by cop.’ Durkheim might classify the death of Jesus (either as an empirically existing person or as a mythological composite) as an instance of positive, indirect, optional altruistic total self-destruction. Jesus will come to live again as a symbolic force but not until decades later when ‘Paul’ (the first Christian) is engaged not in the rallying and the organization of the flock but in their **persecution**. Terror is no day at the beach, but it might contain more than we realize. This death is nothing less than conceptual autocide inflicted upon the positive by the negative. The autocide of the concept born by a charismatic leader functioning as a collective representation seems like a preposterous notion that ought to require a lot of ontological tomfoolery, but, I think if one approaches the suggestion of Absolute self-destruction from the standpoint of a consistent social realism, one that is attuned to the nuances and currents both positive and negative, what seems absurd at first is actually true — not self-evidently true but inevitable if we see our argument through to the end.

Within its contemporary horizon, Golgotha surely appeared to be an impossible beginning to what turned out to be a brilliant career. Few individuals can receive a beating for the ages, die from asphyxiation on a cross, be eaten by birds and dogs, and, within a few centuries, conquer an empire. It is entirely plausible that the successful career of Jesus as a collective representation lies in the sheer brutality of his death recounted in stories, icons, and passion plays. World-conquering gods are not normally born from the humiliating annihilation of their profane shells but the terror visited upon Jesus at the end (also a beginning) is relatable to millions of people and the horror of it can be encapsulated in the term ‘sacrifice’ apart from any collective ritual reenactments. The Jesus sect was subject to state terror because the conceptual breakthrough was politically unbearable and punishable as a crime. Where one finds the ‘criminal’ one is sometimes in contact with a ‘king’ (Foucault 1977: 29; cf. Badiou 2003: 56). Indeed, the execution of a criminal is frequently the terminus for royalty (Freud [1913] 1950: 56). The charisma of crime might

seem odd but the odyssey of the Idea and the dictatorship of reason (Freud 1939: 146-47) do not involve obedience to tradition and custom but disobedience, the demanding of reasons from those in a position of authority, and, quite frequently, unjust and even spectacular punishment.

Universal political oppression can lead to individual depression and the repression of the Idea but it is also possible for repression to lead not to a desublimation *per se* but what Jean Wahl referred to as a **transdescendance** (in Sartre 1950: 38-39). As such, as in the case of a charismatic group, repression can be followed by the growth of the positive concept rather than its annihilation. Where there is “terror and compression” (Durkheim [1912] 1915: 256) there is also an automatic counter-current that leads to the transcendence of the concept. A transcendental realm is our nemesis, of that there is no doubt, we do not want more alien gods and the noumenal realm is a pernicious holdover, however, “terror and compression” are simultaneously mechanisms that can reactivate the concept, liberating it from submersion in the unconscious, providing the opportunity for the critical spirit to project the concept back into its rational, positive ground. For example, terror attacks in the US come in external and internal forms that spur connections to politics, race, religion, etc., but, so far, the bourgeoisie have managed to prevent discourse from veering toward the essential concept: capitalism. Since the essential is taboo in America, “terror and compression” will continue unabated until, finally, there are no other dead ends and box canyons for Spirit get lost in. To bring a halt to the self-flagellation of society, the primary role of critical theory today is to connect the explosions of the sacred impure to the concept of capital as a system driven by, and expressing, an abstract, (negative) anti-reason.

The attainment of the Idea involves, perhaps not necessarily but as a historical possibility, the actualization on a tiny scale, a particularity that knows itself as the whole universe. We see this occur under conditions of tribal disintegration where each clan has universalized itself through retrogression and claimed everything under the moon and stars for itself all the while it is situated alongside other clans operating under the same logic. We find this even today among hyper-specialized academics who, seemingly oblivious to what has gone on around them in other disciplines, seize the Thing for themselves and, with willful ignorance, claim to have grasped some new insight all the while reproducing, in ever-more more flaccid and one-sided forms, ideas that have circulated for generations in other fields. As of 2017, the field of neuropsychology has, I kid you not, finally discovered the Concept. And how many times will social constructionism be reinvented, increasingly subjectivized, before our species goes extinct? While the descending wave is the norm, it also happens that, from time to time, some tiny group of thinkers ensconced in an increasingly stupid world, battle their way to the heights of universal comprehension. Here, a particular group embodies the positive universal and reflects their concept into the void of the reigning, abstract universal sphere. One might think that, in all such cases, the negation of the negation rises like a colossal hammer against innovation, yet, this outcome is not predetermined.

It is not difficult to see in Weber’s analysis of musical rationalization a concern for creative epochs when a “striving for expressiveness” can either burst the normative framework of an existing symbolic system or, by contrast, lead in the opposite direction toward a rational enrichment of the symbolic system. In the antiquities, the striving “led to an extreme melodic development which shattered the harmonic elements of the [musical] system” whereas “the same striving led to an entirely different result” in the west to “the development of chordal harmony.” The fact that separated the antique from the Occidental outcomes was the institution of polyvocality. “Expressiveness could then follow the path of polyvoiced music” (1958: 65). Polyvocality means that singers are not forced to perform unison within the same octave. The link to callings or vocations and a division of labor are easily connected to the logic of polyvocality. Each pursuing and developing their unique voice contributes to, rather than tarnishes, the collective product. Each voice, here, possesses a “melodic right” while preserving a “uniformity” of “the ensemble” (Weber 1958: 68). And sometimes what appears to be the blow of the mighty hammer of injustice fails not only to squash innovation but to propel it forward to new heights.

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Ignoring Goethe's *Faust*: A Critical-Theoretical Perspective on American Ideology

Harry F. Dahms

Introduction

In English-speaking countries, the singular importance to modernity of Goethe's work, in general, and of *Faust*, in particular, often goes unnoticed.¹ In Germany, by contrast, and as is to be expected, the situation is entirely different, and from this angle alone, to refer to "modernity" and to "modern society" in Germany is to infer a profoundly and qualitatively different meaning than it does in other countries, including in the United Kingdom and in the United States.² In some regards, this is due to peculiarities in the history of German society, culture, and democracy, as a "belated nation" (see Plessner [1935] 2001; Dahrendorf [1965] 1969). In other regards, peculiarities in the history of German society, culture, and democracy resulted from the inextricable nexus between Goethe's influence on the specific incarnation of modernity (and modern society) that took hold in Germany, and which was interwoven with a particular kind of critical consciousness. "Goethe" – his work, thought, and status – as a historical figure and as an intellectual phenomenon influenced both the experience of, and a spectrum of prominent stances and reactions with regard to modernity and modern society, in ways that were not entirely separate from other poets and playwrights, such as Lessing, Schiller, and Hölderlin, though none of them were able to approach. As Randall Collins (1996:626) put, "Goethe became the great energy star of German literature, and with all such figures his reputation casts a glare that makes it difficult to see how he became that way." Yet, acknowledging the centrality of Goethe provides us with a window onto tensions at the core of modernity and modern society **in general**, i.e., in all modern societies – tensions which facilitated a particular kind of critical reflexivity that became widespread in German-speaking intellectual circles, but which did not rise to the level of shaping German history and society in ways that could have prevented the rise of National Socialism. Rather, it is possible that in some regards, National Socialism emerged in response to the culture of criticism and social critique that took hold in a society which was politically and economically backward, compared in key regards to other modern societies, such as the U.K., the U.S., and France. Still, absent Goethe (the person, writer and public figure), and especially absent "Goethe" (the socio-cultural phenomenon), this kind of critical reflexivity may not have taken form (and hold, to the extent that it did) at all, anywhere, at any point, and it certainly would not have taken form in the distinctive register in which it did, first in Germany, and later on, in transformed fashion that reflected socially, culturally, politically and economically specific features in diverse societies. In essence, in Germany, this critical reflexivity manifested as the combined ability and readiness to acknowledge and confront the contradictions that are built into modern society, especially in Hegel's philosophy, in Marx's critique of political economy, in the critical theory of the early Frankfurt School, and in the works and projects of many other theoretically inclined scholars as well as artists. Arguably, the more or less notorious penchant for theory in Germany, including especially for **critical** theory, can be traced to Goethe the person and the phenomenon, not in the sense that either he or the phenomenon (or both) "caused" related inclinations, but that they prepared the requisite turf for an entirely new kind of critical reflexivity and modern consciousness. Thus, to appreciate theory, and even more so critical theory, requires an appreciation of the role

that Goethe played during the initial phase of modern society taking shape. In this regard, especially, Faust played a pivotal role, as an opportunity to address explicitly issues whose lack of resolution burdens us to this day, as well as who we moderns are exactly, and how we exist and coexist.³

Goethe did not leave much of an intellectual and cultural imprint in most countries outside of continental Europe. Moreover, conservative and reactionary efforts in Germany to celebrate his work and thought as the contribution of utter genius have detracted from Goethe's overall importance, by avoiding and distracting from their critical content and underlying impetus. Yet, Goethe may be most noteworthy for having stood for a commitment to the prospect of an **undamaged** life and to the imminence of an **unalienated** existence as both emerged as categorical corollaries and "objective possibilities" **with** modernity and in modern societies, both in the sense of a person's life, and life (in the sense of **nature**) in general – depending on which exact form modernity and modern society was going to take, and what kind of developmental trajectory it would follow.⁴ For instance, the subtitle of Rüdiger Safranski's recent book on Goethe – a minor literary event in its own right – refers to "life as a work of art," meaning **Goethe's life as a successful work of art** (Safranski [2013] 2017). At the beginning of his Adorno biography, subtitled "One Last Genius," Detlev Claussen addressed the problematic and paradoxical effort to write **any** biography, and especially a biography of a "genius," **after** what Horkheimer and Adorno referred to as "the decline of the individual" (Horkheimer 1947; Adorno [1951] 1974); referring to Goethe, he wrote:

Readers who take a look at Adorno's last great work, his Aesthetic Theory... will not need to search far before coming across the name of Goethe. Goethe's name is intimately connected not only with the bourgeois concept of genius but also with the model of a successful life capable of being captured in a biography. For the generation that, like Adorno, was born in the long bourgeois century between 1815 and 1914, Goethe stands at the beginning of this bourgeois epoch, to which even someone born in 1903 could feel he belonged. By the end of this period, of course, Goethe's works had long been buried beneath the Goethe cult dedicated to the worship of the artistic genius. (Claussen [2003] 2008, p. 2)

Continuing the theme of Goethe's importance to German culture, as well as to the members of the early Frankfurt School, Claussen turned to Horkheimer:

Goethe recurs constantly in Horkheimer's writings ... as the epitome of the successful individual. ... Reverence for Goethe, which [in 1961] ... was still accompanied by a knowledge of his works, continued to play an important role among the educated German middle classes throughout the nineteenth century. The Jews in Germany, however, who took a positive view of assimilation and who experienced their social ascent into the middle classes at this time, saw in Goethe's life a promise of human community made real. ... A familiarity with Goethe's Poetry and Truth belonged to the canon of bourgeois knowledge. (ibid., p. 3)⁵

In the English-speaking world, neglect of Goethe no doubt is owed in part to such trivial and predictable factors as theater directors and companies preferring to perform plays that were written in the language of the country where performances are being staged, for an array of reasons, including legitimate monetary concerns prevailing perceptions of audience preference and concurrently cultivated and reinforced audience "taste."⁶ Along similar lines, there is less of an inclination among school administrators and teachers at public high schools to invest time, energy, and expenses on seemingly mystifying foreign literature, despite an author's or work's reputation. By contrast, Shakespeare's plays in many countries around the world are notable exceptions to this rule, as they have been popular, widely performed, and influential for centuries, regardless of whether English is the official language or not. Yet, while this is also true for Goethe in general (and in many countries), it is not true in countries where English is the dominant language, including the United States.⁷ This is especially surprising with regard to Faust, which by general, near-unanimous agreement is Goethe's most important work, the most important work of German literature, and part of "world literature."

For present purposes, I will treat the dearth of Faust performances in countries where English is the primary or exclusive language, as symptomatic of a certain **Berührungsangst** (apprehensiveness; fear of coming in contact, usually with something unpleasant or undesirable) on the part of theater directors, audiences and readers alike, as well as non-specialized educators, with regard to demanding, disturbing and unsettling issues pertaining to **the modern condition**, which feature prominently in Goethe's entire work. Lack of interest in Faust cannot and should not be "explained" simply – as a common cliché would have it – with reference to the fact that the ravings of a frustrated academic are not particularly interesting to the wider public, as if that were all that the tragedy is about. This cliché only applies to the opening scene of Faust, in any case.⁸

Without doubt, Shakespeare's plays are (or, at least, appear to be) much more thrilling, attractive and compelling

than Goethe's work, as they are concerned with persistent dilemmas and challenges characteristic of the "human condition," as certain capabilities, concerns and challenges have guided, shaped and limited human existence, experiences, ambitions, responsibilities, and struggles, presumably since the beginning of (human) time, and as they continue to do so in the modern era. While it is possible and perfectly legitimate to read Shakespeare's plays in terms of how they highlight aspects of modern social, political, economic and cultural life, it is important to keep in mind that those aspects typically are neither unique, nor exclusive to modern existence, but instead characteristic of human life across time (history) and space (geography), including of modern life. Their **specific** manifestations, however, as they occur among modern humans without necessarily having also applied to pre-moderns, are likely to reveal hidden (unexpected, and possibly counterintuitive) dimensions of **modern** life, as long as they are detected in and for their specificity, and how exactly, **as a foil**, they provide insights into the contradictions of **modern** life. For instance, while *Macbeth* facilitates and encourages focus on the cunning, yet, short-sighted and hasty insidiousness and immorality with which many of those who are eager to – and in fact do – pursue power, Shakespeare's **current** relevance depends on us being able to explicate precisely what is uniquely modern about how power is being pursued today, within the matrix of modern politics, culture, and economy, i.e., especially within and via modern corporations, which evidently does not necessarily (or not at all) apply across the evolutionary arch of the species – if indeed there is a specifically modern aspect, e.g., to "pursuing power" that is being revealed in the process, as is highly probable. If *Macbeth*, as merely one occasion among many in Shakespeare's plays, is not conducive to doing so successfully, his relevance as a **modern** "literary dramatist" (Erne 2003) is bound to be limited, perhaps even non-existent. By implication, casting to one side, or ignoring entirely, both Goethe and *Faust*, and **their** modernity, is likely to be indicative as well as symptomatic of the operations of a particular kind of ideology that may be difficult, if not **impossible**, to discern without an effective and intriguing foil for comparison.

Boldly stated, my working assumption is that one important reason why Goethe's *Faust* is not being performed (or, according to my students over many years, taught) more regularly in the English-speaking world is that it puts forth and promotes a kind of **critical reflexivity** that is incongruous with Anglo-American thought, society and culture, and which – as a general rule – historically neither has been supported, nor cultivated, by the proverbial "powers that be," by institutions and organizations, except against their stated intentions, and despite the ubiquity of many of the best universities in the world.⁹ If my working assumption is correct, or at least justifiable as the reference point for a related inquiry, it would suggest a perspective on ideology as a different sort of "iron cage", in the spirit in which Max Weber employed this ideation – really, as a **casing as hard as steel (stahlhartes Gehäuse**, the term Weber used; as opposed to **eiserner Käfig** – which would be the translation of Parsons's "iron cage" into German, a term Weber never used; see Tiryakian 1981, Turner 1982, Baehr 2001): a casing grounded in cognitive and intellectual limitations that correspond with specific languages and terminologies being conducive, or not, to accessing the intricacies of various dimensions of reality, including especially the intricacies of modern **social** reality.¹⁰ In this sense, ideology is relevant less as a mental framework that imposes particular ideas on members of a society and compels them to think in a certain way (or ways), but rather, a framework perceived to be non-problematic, even though it prevents members of society, without their knowledge, from "accessing" certain layers and aspects of reality, especially where the latter are problematic, and where related awareness might impose constraints and the expectation of accountability on political and economic elites and decision-makers that they rather would avoid. **In other words, today, ideology is not so much about what people think, but about what they cannot conceive they ought to be able to think.** Yet, and this is where the perspective on ideology suggested here is most disorienting, those who benefit from the operations of ideology in this sense are bound to make efforts to reinforce this ideology or to distract from related critical reflexivity, but they are not likely to have been the progenitors of this ideology; rather, ideology of this kind tends to be an outgrowth of the underlying evolutionary logic of modern societies as it is defined and delimited by the material processes that sustain their stability – in Durkheim's sense of modern society as a reality "**sui generis**" (see Malczewski 2013) which follows and evolves according to its own principles and imperatives, in the interest of self-preservation and survival, rather than being a function of principles humans concocted and continue to adhere to, on the assumption that society should be what they – **we** – want it to be.

To be sure, it is difficult to conceive of, circumscribe and name real limits on critical reflexivity, since the general assumption is that all modern societies have in common practices and capabilities that distinguish them from pre-modern societies. Yet, since each modern society ought to be conceived of as a peculiar and simultaneous matrix of pre-modern, modern, and postmodern dimensions – especially since the latter part of the twentieth century, during the era that saw the rise of neoliberalism, i.e., since the 1980s – it is important to clarify exactly how and with regard to which aspects a particular society must be conceived of, viewed, and examined as such a matrix. Here, Goethe's

Faust and its neglect in American society and culture serve as precisely this foil.¹¹

Given that Faust is a professor, and that the play starts with a lengthy contemplation about the futility of knowledge, or rather, the futility of acquiring and accumulating knowledge, in relation to the experience of that which knowledge is about – nature, life, endeavors, status, success, etc., and above all, the effort to live a meaningful life – it is particularly astonishing that Faust is not performed at least at universities. For instance, the scene early in the play, when a prospective student in search for advice about what to study appears in Faust's quarters, would be highly instructive to many students today. After all, the student **does** receive useful advice, even though not from Faust, but from Mephistopheles. But it is the specific advice the student receives that suggests a particular kind of reflexivity and willingness to criticize preconceived notions that all societies, including American society, are based upon and run on, and from which – from the vantage point of “common sense” – students purportedly and ardently are to be “protected.” Thus, the neglect of Goethe and Faust, and the related Teflon-character of American culture, must have to do with how they stood for and broached a series of subject matters which are prevalent in and characteristic of modernity, perhaps especially of American modernity. Goethe and Faust collide with key tenets of American ideology, particularly as it undergirds more or less regressive social, political, and economic structures that are inversely related to the avowed principles of modernity, and extremely difficult to change, such as the refusal to face explicitly the multifarious social, political, cultural and psychological costs resulting from worsening economic inequality, or from persistent race-relations, and corresponding forms of discriminatory practices, and how they shape and mediate between the ideology and culturally condoned and reinforced coping mechanisms at the individual and group levels, in the form of cognitive-mental and emotional practices and rituals. Worse still, such features are not being confronted adequately and critically, in a manner that would be transformative with regard to national identity and national consciousness. Instead, they regularly are being reaffirmed and supported by segments of the population and elected officials whose incongruity with the breadth of modern principles has begun to become conspicuous indeed, in part because and facilitated by these features never having been confronted in ways that would be conducive to a more realistic perspective on American society and culture at the national level, not to mention that American society – like any other actually existing social order – relies on such features as **material** to maintain itself, in its specificity. To give this observation a literary spin, one might refer to it as evidence of modern society's “evil genius,” combined with its ability to rely on humans who are happy to do society's bidding. By implication, providing at least a glimpse of what Faust is about may reveal aspects of American ideology that warrant closer scrutiny, drawing attention to aspects which frequently are being ignored, or – in effect, perhaps even in principle – indiscernible from vantage points that are located within its immediate reach.¹²

Focusing on the Faust/Mephisto dynamic will serve the purpose of addressing the following question: what would it take for those concerned with the development of a (critical) theory of modern society that is capable of recognizing, and of confronting in productive fashion, the paradoxical, socially stabilizing role of contradictions in this type of social organization, to be cognizant of and sensitive to the distinctiveness of each modern society, specifically with regard to the nexus between the particular role contradictions play and the functions they fulfill, on the one hand, and the specific and counterintuitive form of ideology and the functions which it fulfills, on the other?¹³ Awareness of such distinctiveness appears to be essential to avoiding the pitfalls of trying to develop further and to refine the theory of modern society as the theory of an inherently irreconcilable **social system**, at a time when one type of contradictions have been allowed to fester for decades, while another type has been intensifying over the course of centuries, with their combination beginning to threaten the very integrity of a growing number of modern societies, including the United States and the United Kingdom.¹⁴ Is it possible to identify, in such a volatile context, the vanishing point of the trajectory that modern societies have been following, for better or worse?

Goethe vs. Shakespeare?

As already mentioned, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Faust is the pinnacle of German literature, and one of the pinnacles of world literature.¹⁵ Depending on the criteria one applies (to slightly overstate my point), Faust is to German literature and language what all of Shakespeare's plays combined are to English.¹⁶ Without overstating my point, Goethe was to modern German literature and language what Shakespeare was to English, especially if we consider all of Goethe's diverse literary works – including his novels and contributions to science, which add up to many volumes.¹⁷ Both Goethe and Shakespeare from their times forward have been looming “larger than life,”

and in both cases, subsequent literary works by other writers within Goethe's and Shakespeare's respective linguistic realms could not (and cannot) avoid relating back, and in certain regards still being a response, to Shakespeare's plays and to Goethe's writings, especially *Faust*. Yet, while both Shakespeare and Goethe exerted considerable and lasting influence on literature and languages beyond the English-speaking world, the same cannot be said of the reception of Goethe in the latter, especially when comparing the **amount and depth** of attention Shakespeare's work received in non-English-speaking countries, including Germany, with the extent of the acknowledgment and **presence** of Goethe's work, including *Faust*, in the English-speaking world. Whereas both Shakespeare and Goethe (especially *Faust*, but not only) left their mark in many other languages and cultures, in theater, operas (e.g., Verdi's adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Othello*, or Gounod's and Berlioz's of *Faust*, or Lili Boulanger's *Faust et Hélène*), and films (especially Kurosawa's adaptation of Shakespeare in *Ran* (1985), or the adaptations of *Faust* by the Czech director Swankmajer (1994) and the Russian director Sokurov (2011); as well as the odd, yet intriguing and exceedingly short exercise in puppetry by director Hoku Uchiyama and writer Steven Ritz-Barr (2008), both Goethe's work in general, and *Faust* in particular, might as well be non-existent outside of small academic circles in the English-speaking world, and beyond mere name-recognition. The most notable exceptions are Goethe's early novella, *The Sufferings of Young Werther* ([1774] 2012) and the poem, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," whose allegorical fit and utility with regard to a well-known pattern in modern social life – conjuring forces that are difficult or impossible to control, especially with regard to "unintended consequences" – is blatantly apparent and undeniable, but whose authorship is unknown to most.¹⁸ In countries where English is the primary language, performances of *Faust* continue to be rare occurrences (and frequently amount to **de facto** events), so much so that they even lead to related publications (e.g., at the University of Delaware; see Haus and Lovell 2016). There are no films that were produced in English-speaking countries dedicated to Goethe, despite his qualities as a sort of "Renaissance man," and there are no versions or adaptations of Goethe's *Faust* in English, nor even publicly available recordings of theater performances, either on CD, VHS, DVD/Blu-ray, or streamed online, which is even more telling.¹⁹

More or less pronounced ignorance regarding *Faust* in parts of the world that at one time or other were part of the British empire, and where its culture and language continue to exert a discernible amount of gravity, neither is likely to be accidental (without identifiable cause), nor an oversight (due to neglect, for whatever reasons), nor due to its foreignness (originating in a different linguistic and cultural realm), although it is undeniable that compared to many other cultures, Anglo-American culture may have a greater tendency to be hermetic, self-contained, and self-referential, despite its willingness and ability to draw – selectively – on forms of entertainment from many different countries. Rather, from a social-theoretical perspective, it is likely that there is a more intriguing reason for neglecting *Faust*, and that this neglect is related to the underlying impetus and "message" (or "messages") of Goethe's main work, compared to lessons built into many of Shakespeare's plays. Both bodies of work are typified by the kind of ideas and issues they raise, relay, and address, respectively, the sentiments they conjure, the sensitivities they touch upon or cause to resonate. Both in Shakespeare and in Goethe (whose dramatic work, in particular, in many ways, was greatly influenced by the former, though not to the same extent as Schiller's "quasi-Shakespearean history plays"; Collins 1998:626), the messages, themes, sentiments, sensitivities and resonances as they are being presented to or conjured in audiences are not necessarily or exclusively pleasant or elevating or reaffirming, but frequently critical in orientation, even if and when amusing, startling, or shocking. Where, then, lies the difference?

It would seem that what separates Shakespeare and Goethe the most is their position in relation to modernity, respectively: the question of how modern they are, how they were modern, how they had a bearing on or anticipated modern issues and challenges, and the kind of stance each represents with regard to the need to illuminate and scrutinize modernity, and which aspects of the latter.²⁰ Both Shakespeare's and Goethe's heroes and themes frequently are fraught with ambivalence. Yet, from today's perspective, it would appear that what is most noteworthy about *Faust* is that it is much more modern – more consonant with modern themes, experiences, conditions, and challenges – than Shakespeare's plays, which are often based on historical material, even though they did address themes with contemporary relevance at the time of their writing (as suggested, for instance, in the film, *Anonymous*). Yet, the temporal reference frame of most of Shakespeare's plays is located in the past, and how the past provides lessons for the present, without the future necessarily factoring in, in discernible fashion – especially as a future that is qualitatively different from the present or the past. Indeed, the **time-horizons** of Shakespeare's plays and Goethe's *Faust* (and many other works) are inversely related: for Shakespeare, it was the present in relation to the past that mattered; for Goethe, the past and present in relation to the future. Evidently, Goethe, who lived from 1749 until 1832, was writing at the beginning of the modern era, and during its early decades, while Shakespeare wrote well before the dawn of our age. Concordantly, the themes addressed in their respective works pertain to different subject matters:

to Shakespeare, they typically pertain to traditional issues and moral dilemmas relating to power, hierarchies, family relations, murder, inequality, legacy, etc., and how individuals are situated within circumstances shaped or determined by related realities or events, and how they cope with them. In these regards, Shakespeare is about the vicissitudes of what used to be referred to as “human nature” – aspects of human existence and human practices **in society** that are (or tend to be) constant, independent of time and space, i.e., **transhistorical**. By contrast, Goethe was eminently concerned with how the emergence of modern conditions will transform the meaning of “human” (as exemplified, for instance, in Faust’s student Wagner successfully creating the homunculus). In addition, to Shakespeare, of necessity, successful entertainment was a persistent and imminent need and goal, and not a secondary challenge, given his struggles with scarce financial resources and the need “to keep the money flowing.” The Globe Theater mirrored the hierarchical structure of society and necessitated serving at least two very different audiences to satisfy at the same time, which prominently reflected the very structure of the society at the time.²¹ By contrast, given his financial independence due to regular employment at the court in Weimar, success with a live audience was a not a major concern for Goethe, especially with regard to Faust, which is above all a literary work, though truly enjoyable only on stage, and whose first part in its final form was not put on stage until 1829, three years before the end of Goethe’s life (in Braunschweig).

Goethe’s Faust, and its protagonist, Heinrich Faust, tackle issues that are “post-feudal” and post-aristocratic, even post-religious, as Faust’s transition from disenchanted and alienated scholar at the beginning of part I – who has reached the limits of what can be known – to successful **man of the world** and powerful entrepreneur in part II (who, e.g., is involved in the invention of paper money, with Mephisto’s help) illustrates very well. Ironically, the evolution of the commoner Faust is much more consistent with the pursuit of individual professional success in the United States and its social, political, and economic structure, than with England during Shakespeare’s time, with “the Bard” being preoccupied, if not obsessed, with more or less glorious tales of the alluring or abhorrent lives and times of the noble-born.

Indeed, with Heinrich Faust, we encounter a character who has shed traditional perspectives on God and life, since he is no longer able to delude himself into expecting that life – even a good life – will lead to salvation (even though for him, it will, in the end), and who – as a consequence – is determined to draw conclusions from and take action in response to the fact that he is no longer able to frame his existence in terms of well-established traditions, notions and ideas. How else could he agree to make a pact with the devil? As Erich Fromm put, “[in] a poetic form the concept of productive activity has been expressed beautifully by Goethe... Faust is a symbol of man’s eternal search for the meaning of life. Neither science, pleasure, nor might, not even beauty, answer Faust’s question. Goethe proposes that the only answer to man’s quest is a productive activity, which is identical with the good.”²² Inevitably, by implication, Faust is a critique not just of patterns that determine social relations, especially the carnival scene at the beginning of part II, but of society in general as it compels individuals to expend large amounts of time and energy on the search for meaning, a search that must be frustrated, as it distracts human beings from understanding the circumstances under which they can develop and commit to a self, through productive activity that inevitably is eminently **transformative** in nature, rather than reinforcing existing conditions. Thus, Faust is both a critique of emerging **modern** society as an empirically discernible world and a program for how this society should evolve if it would allow or encourage members of society to be active agents. However, Goethe did not frame this critique in a manner intended to translate into a novel framework for controlling an increasingly complex and befuddling reality, either via democracy or socialism. Rather, just as he was critical of established religion, he also was critical of efforts to propagate solutions to the tension-filled condition of human existence under conditions of emerging modernity that are purported to engender a happier world, while depriving individuals of what we have been referring to as agency.

It is important, at the same time, to resist the temptation to infer that either Faust or Mephisto are Goethe in disguise. As Rüdiger Safranski, noted biographer of Schiller, E. T. A. Hoffman, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger and others, wrote in his superb chapter on Faust in his recent book on Goethe,

Goethe has not tidily apportioned the bright and dark side sides to Faust and Mephisto in the sense that Faust wants to do good and Mephisto turns it into evil. It’s not that simple. ... Mephisto is the deed to Faust’s thoughts. Faust’s competence casts a shadow, and the shadow is Mephisto. He makes it manifest that the competent, successful Faust becomes entangled in guilt ... Goethe’s world theater shows how, via long chains of causality, a successful life in one place sooner or later results in the destruction of life in another. The world is not fair, and the dead litter the course of Faust’s worldly career. If the causal connection between an action and its evil consequences is short, we speak of guilt; if somewhat longer, we speak of tragedy. If the causal chain is very long, guilt and tragedy can be attenuated to mere unease. Knowing ourselves to be

survivors because others have suffered and died, we cannot escape feeling such unease. (Safranski [2013] 2017: 538)

Thus, as Freud ([1929] 1961) observed, the history, the character, and the preliminary end result of modern societies is fraught with unease due to the requirement to continuously engage in active self-repression: **Unbehagen** is what characterizes modern existence, whether we are fully cognizant of it or not.²³ Concurrently, neither Faust nor Mephisto are simply “evil.” Rather, they are at the same time manifest expressions and means to reveal the underlying logic of modern society. Goethe was not comfortable with the category of evil; rather, he appears to be suggesting, in his many writings, and in ways that foreshadow key observations in Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ([1947] 2002), that facing modernity **and** modern society requires willingness to recognize that many of their principles, and even more of their consequences, are highly destructive, without it being justified to push their destructiveness, as it is inherent to modern society, onto “the devil” (or onto evil). As Safranski explains,

First, Faust and Mephisto: as for the devil, there was actually no room for him in Goethe’s worldview. He often said that he would not **institute** an independent evil power, and when Kant introduced “radical evil” into his philosophy, Goethe declared that the Sage of Königsberg had now **beslobbered the mantle of philosophy**. For Goethe, the devil did not exist. If you believe in God, you have to believe in the devil as well, and Goethe believed in neither a transcendent God nor the devil. He had been a Spinozist all his life, and his watchword was **deus ex natura**. God is nature in its entire richness and creative power. And man [in the sense of *Mensch*, human being; H.F.D.] can and should discover, preserve, and use his creative power, which also lives within him. Activity is thus the true service to God in nature, and the drive to create is absolutely never ending. ... Man fulfills his purpose when, as **natura naturata** (incarnate nature), he participates in **natura [naturans]** (creative nature). Goethe’s dialectical formulation is that of a creative process, nature means polarity and enhancement. Opposites create a tension that enhances what is alive without being locked in rigid dualism. Light and darkness together bring the world of color into being. (ibid., p. 526)²⁴

What might appear as the “evil” of modern society, then, is the result of a misinterpretation: it is neither that modern society at its core is an embodiment of evil, nor that humans are inherently evil. Instead, what is interpreted as evil is the result of the violation of nature (inner and outer) perpetrated by human beings who neither are capable of respecting, nor of recognizing nature, nor of applying their creative activity and of appreciating themselves in their productive activity. Rather, they are executors of a program there are oblivious to and which, by implication, they are in no position to understand. The compounding of this disrespect and the inability to recognize inner and outer nature across time and space manifests as what might be referred to as the evil of modern society. At the same time, as indicated in the earlier quote, creative and productive activity are neither inherently good or evil; what they require – indeed: demand – is a kind of awareness and reflexivity that must be conceived of, understood, faced, and struggled with. As a result, in *Faust*, the prospect of modern society appears as a warped reality.

[In the] interplay between the metaphysician Faust and the realist Mephisto, the proprietary secret of modernity [comes to the fore. What we are witnessing is] how the vertical striving of previous ages is redirected into the horizontal and becomes thereby a historical force of unheard-of power. [Modernity] no longer strives upward, since it has discovered that heaven is **empty** and God is dead. ... The passion formerly directed at God becomes a passion for exploring and taking possession of the world. That is exactly what it means to move “outward.” Instead of trying to approach God, man circles the globe. [Modernity] is no longer disposed to be cosmic, but to become global. ...

Goethe imagines all the things that [modernity] could do with man—including, for example, producing him in a laboratory. The homunculus scenes are his contribution to the discussion of anthropotechnology... (ibid., pp. 531-32)²⁵

There are many other instances in *Faust* where economic, organizational and technological developments are being anticipated that came to be realized later on, such as the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal. Both Faust and Mephisto enabled Goethe to relay insights into modernity as it was taking shape in England, France, and the United States, and beginning to transform society, politics, and culture – as well as economy – in German lands before *Germany* itself came to be, almost forty years after Goethe’s death, following the Prussian army’s victory over France, in 1871, a war that was unleashed and served the purpose of guaranteeing compliance of all parts of Germany with Prussia’s strategy for creating a German nation-state via unification, under the dominion of Prussian emperors, to be sure.

In his essay on Goethe and modern civilization, Gernot Böhme (2015) addresses the question of what is modern in civilization, to tackle the fact that in Germany, since the nineteenth century, civilization is being distinguished from culture, with the latter referring to the basis of national identity, and the former to the external regulation of life via politics, social order, and economy. This distinction also applied to Goethe, who did not regard himself as living in

modern civilization, and who perceived modernity rather as a threat than a promise. Still, one might add, from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, Goethe's perception of modernity as a threat is in the process of attaining unprecedented currency, especially if we consider that, as Böhme points out, Goethe's view of modernity also transformed his perspective on traditional forms of life and society. Böhme cautions that efforts to interpret Goethe as an author of a different kind of modernity (as in Kreutzer 2011), strictly speaking, should be confined to his ideas relating to a universal literature, a "world literature." Yet, at the same time, and in the absence of an explicit (and reliable) concept of **modern civilization**, Böhme set out to develop the outlines of such a civilization, as it were, in reverse, from Goethe's critical perception of traditional conditions of life. Suffice it to say that Böhme proposes an intriguing catalog of four themes that clearly were addressed by Goethe, especially in *Faust*, but also in other works: the imaginary society, monetary policy, artificial nature, and technological civilization. Briefly summarized, Böhme suggests that Goethe anticipated a social world that to an ever greater extent will be shaped and molded according to human principles, rather than to such principles as divine right (even though, one must add, humans are neither fully aware of this fact, nor capable of effective self-regulation, especially at the collective level). Further, the invention of paper money that occurs at the beginning of *Faust II*, at the behest of Faust and Mephisto, anticipates governmental monetary policy, i.e., strategic actions on the part of the state vis-à-vis society. Next, the strict opposition between nature and culture, as well as between nature and civilization, is being suspended in modern societies: nature no longer is accepted as given but tends to be subject to creation. Finally, nature ceases to be the established basis of human living conditions and relations, and is being replaced by domination of nature as the new foundation: "emancipation from nature tends to lead to life according to a plan on the basis of relations of exploitation" (p. 134).

Böhme develops each theme in greater detail, drawing on his analysis in his work on Goethe's *Faust* as a philosophical text (2013). He concludes as follows:

Following Goethe's critical analysis, what is the essence of modern civilization whose development he anticipates? Society no longer is a community, but an assemblage of carriers of [social] roles. Their status and social relations are constituted via reciprocal relations of recognition. The state no longer is a moral authority, but an abstract regulatory agency. Politics turns into policy, with monetary policy being most important. Human beings in modern society draw their self-understanding mostly from emancipation from nature, especially from their own, i.e., from their body. They try to replace what used to be given with what has been made, which leads to a technologization of all human relations. Domination of nature is being regarded as the material foundation of modern civilization. Industrialization of relations of production taylorizes human labor power or replaces it via automation (*Maschinisierung*).

Goethe's critique of the approaching civilizational development is devastating. Human relations are becoming abstract. Human beings lose their natural foundation. Labor relations are becoming repressive and the ideologies of liberty that are linked to modernization turn out to be an illusion. The project of dominating nature will lead to natural catastrophes. It is not possible to reduce this skeptical assessment simply to Goethe's conservatism. He does not glorify existing conditions at all, such as the feudal system, which he also frequently criticizes. Rather, here too, in the area of politics and society, Goethe must be regarded as a phenomenologist. He describes trends of his time with the greatest attention – and thinks them through to the end. Doing so fills him with horror. He can save himself from the latter only by the thought of emigration, in utopias of humane modes of life in America. (p. 140; my translation)

Is it possible to employ the neglect of both Goethe and *Faust* in the English-speaking world as a means to delineate a critical theory of American ideology which cannot be developed from within the perimeter of American society and culture? Given that the four themes Böhme identified – **imaginary society, monetary policy, artificial nature, and technological civilization** – may be more pronounced in American modernity than in modern societies that sprung from traditional social orders, do Goethe and *Faust* help us in circumscribing the role ideas play in sustaining a paradoxical social system in which forces of change and forces of stagnation produced a force-field that is experienced by most members as entirely normal and even natural, but which has been leading human civilization in a direction that in the long run is unsustainable – economically, socially, environmentally, psychologically – but which, at the same time, has been misdirecting the impetus to recognize fully related dilemmas and conundrums, thus thwarting efforts to prevent in the long term, and perhaps increasingly even in the medium term, the threat of ecological or societal apocalypse?

Critical Theory between Faust and Mephistopheles

In many ways, Goethe's overall stance with regard to modernity and underlying philosophy with regard to human existence precipitated and prepared, and was part of, the mindset shared by the members of the early Frankfurt School, as his "spirit" – along with the spirits of many others – became integral components of intellectual life over the course of the nineteenth century. Indeed, in the twentieth century, familiarity with his works was part of the **cultural capital** (in Bourdieu's terminology) of any self-respecting well-educated person, though not in a manner that would have compelled Germans, in general, to receive Goethe's message, especially about how to relate to reality. If they had, National Socialism would have been a categorical impossibility. Though Goethe certainly was not "without flaws," nor a "morally pure being"; such categories only exist within the realm of religion and ideology, in different ways, but they do not – or are extremely unlikely to – apply in reality. Rather, as a "citizen of the world," Goethe would have regarded the perverse strategies for destroying life the Nazis devised (and which, under different circumstances and in other ways, were committed at the same time, e.g., in Soviet Russia, or later on, e.g., in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979) – especially human life as living, embodied spirits – as the end of civilization.

The affinity between Goethe's thought and critical theory goes deeper, however; the link between his thought and German social and critical theory amounts to the latter **in a certain way and some regards deserving to be regarded as the execution of a sort of program underlying the former, as it was concerned with the issue of nature.** For instance, Goethe's theory of colors criticized Newton's preoccupation with the optical spectrum; Goethe was interested in human color perception as a living instantiation of the disembodied view of science that Newton represented, which effectively took life and spirit both out of inanimate and – more importantly – out of animate objects and processes: it kills them in order to understand them, the way the nature painter Audubon killed his animals in order to create perfect, and perfectly **static**, visual representations of them. In many ways, Goethe's critique of Newton anticipated the critiques of instrumental reason (Horkheimer 1947) and positivism (Adorno et al. [1969] 1976) developed by members of the first generation of the Frankfurt School.

To be sure, the affinity between Goethe and social theory, in general, has been obvious for almost two centuries. From early on, efforts in Germany to pursue and develop the theory of modern society have been interspersed with references and allusions to Goethe's works, especially Faust, so much so that the affinity between his thought and the project of formulating a theory of modern society is undeniable. Marx frequently cited Goethe and Faust, e.g., to illustrate, bolster or elaborate on points he made.²⁶ In Max Weber's work, references to Goethe are common occurrences, as well in the writings of Georg Simmel. Accusations that have been leveled at Adorno for being a "cultural conservative," or a "cultural pessimist," e.g., with regard to his writings about music and aesthetics, may be illuminated on the basis of similarities between his and Goethe's stances regarding the **destructive potential** of modern society, rather than regarding the totality of modern society which, while in need of close scrutiny, still deserves to be protected and preserved, not least because of its categorical and unique potential for qualitative transformation.

Critical theory, especially **early** or **classical** critical theory, as represented by Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Theodor W. Adorno, insisted that envisioning a future and qualitatively superior state of affairs demanded a departure from religion and the radical reconfiguration of the self-understanding and practice of science. In several regards, Faust anticipated the stance critical theory would develop with regard to both religion and science, and the purpose of theory, and frequently is stated explicitly by Mephistopheles, who has a penchant for engaging in negation. Though not all the early critical theorists discussed Goethe at length, as mentioned earlier, he made regular appearances throughout their works, including in several of their precursors. Andy Blunden (2018) has pointed out how Goethe's concept of the "original phenomenon" (**Urphänomen**) reappeared in Hegel's **concept** and in Marx's **capital**. One of the direct precursors of critical theory, George Lukács, who was present when the Institute for Social Research was founded in Frankfurt in 1923, explicitly wrote about Goethe (especially Lukács [1935] 1969; see also Vazsonyi 1997 and Bahr 1989). Walter Benjamin wrote a famous essay on Elective Affinities ([1924-25] 2004) and Adorno wrote a less well-known but also important essay on Iphigenia on Tauris ([1958] 1992). Leo Löwenthal, the Frankfurt School's sociologist of literature and one of the first members of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, and who spent the bulk of his career at Berkeley, wrote an essay on "Goethe and false subjectivity" ([1982] 1989), and frequently referred to him in other works. As mentioned earlier, Horkheimer and Adorno each frequently cited and referred to Goethe, as evidenced in their respective collected works.

The most obvious link between Faust and critical theory is with regard to the imminence of negation in

developing a critical theory of modern society. As Mephisto describes himself to Faust, “I am the spirit that denies forever! And rightly so! What has arisen from the void deserves to be annihilated. It would be best if nothing ever would arise. And thus, what you call havoc, deadly sin, or briefly stated: Evil, that is my proper element.” (Goethe [1808] 1988:82- 83); what makes Mephisto’s statement even more suggestive is that it follows his admission that he is “[a] portion of that power which always works for Evil and effects the Good” (ibid.). While “the spirit who always negates” (as the literal translation would have it: “**der Geist, der stets verneint**”) appears to be frightful and scary to those who are unwilling or unable to question the (social, political, economic) world **as it is presented to them**, this spirit also is a necessary precondition for facing reality in a manner that is congruous with the range of principles and patterns, and the material forces, that sustain it. **In a strictly dialectical fashion, the other of modern society is not just another type of society, but much more importantly, the prospect of no society.** In a variety of ways, Mephisto provided Goethe with the opportunity to present the outlines of modern society whose inherent problematic and destructive features entail the potential of the collapse of social relations, social integration, social order – and civilization. For decades (except in relation to the prospect of nuclear catastrophe, which is returning fast²⁷), contemplating the categorical possibility of societal collapse as the vanishing point of modern society was mostly an abstract heuristic device and venue for raising certain issues and formulating questions; today, refusals to consider this possibility are among the most reliable indicators that we are encountering an instance of ideology in operation that requires radical deconstruction and critique.

Goethe’s work was characterized, as a matter of principle, by a commitment to confronting reality, ideally on its own terms, and opposed to serving utilitarian or instrumental goals; and he was concerned less with the performance and performative aspect of his work, and more with truth and honesty regarding the subject matter. He generally was unwilling to entertain easily revealed delusions, and illusions generally, including, as mentioned earlier, the notion that democracy or socialism per se would have the capacity to resolve and overcome the inherent tensions and contradictions of modern society, as it is directly entangled with, and partly an expression of, certain features of the human condition that are disturbing, and inversely related to the prospect of the successful pursuit of a reasonable, “rationally organized” or “sane society” (see Fromm 1955, Cooke 2004). Goethe’s **qualified** rejection of romanticism, and his promotion of and adherence to classicist principles, did and do not jive well with American culture, and especially the role and functioning of the **culture industry**, including the spectrum of responses and coping mechanisms related to the persistent prevalence of social problems and their elimination; nor do his reservations about optimism, which American society, culture, and workplaces expects those who participate in an array of social contexts – expectations whose social and psychological costs are reflected, negatively, in the rampant practice of drug abuse, both legal and illicit. Goethe especially abhorred purposive optimism and favored the position of **romantic pessimism** (see Singer 2009).

Towards a Critical Theory of American Ideology: Another “Casing as Hard as Steel”?

“...the situation is too critical for an uncritical mind to be a match for it!”
—Nameless Visitor, in: Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus²⁸

“American ideology” is a phenomenon that by turns often is alluded to, implied, condemned, praised, criticized, blamed for an array of pathologies and perplexing peculiarities of American society, politics, and culture, and linked to the success of the young nation. It also has been described as having played a key role in ensuring that America became and continues to be “the greatest nation on the face of the earth.”²⁹ Yet, what exactly is American ideology? Is it possible to delineate it beyond vague suggestions, to identify its defining features, to specify its concrete and distinctive form and content (e.g., when compared to other ideologies, especially national ideologies)? Sociologists, social theorists, and especially critical theorists must guard against overlooking—and as a consequence, replicating and reinforcing—aspects of any ideology that is inversely related to, and which threatens to undercut efforts to do justice to, their central charge: the development of a theory of modern society that is conducive to enabling individuals to work together in a manner which would narrow the gap between the qualities modern societies purport to embody, and the corresponding realities, which are in conflict with the former.

The stability of each modern society depends on its ability to regenerate on a continuous basis a matrix of ideological operations which individuals persistently and “automatically” rely on and engage as they try to meet social

expectations and fulfill an array of responsibilities more or less successfully, but which they do not recognize as such, since these operations constitute both the basis and the perimeter of everyday life. Some of the ideological operations are more or less common to and characteristic of the genus, modern society, especially as opposed to pre-modern society (to the extent to which the distinction between “modern” and “pre-modern” is clear-cut, empirically speaking, which it is not, though relevant and unavoidable). Other operations are specific to individual modern societies, and inherent to what often is alluded to, implicitly or explicitly, in terms of “national identity.” For the most part, and as a matter of course, with regard to how most people live their lives, they are not aware of the different qualities and levels of ideological operations, e.g., whether they apply to all modern societies, or – in the extreme – are specific to one modern society only, respectively. In addition, the ideological operations do not occur in monolithic form, but rather, are spread out across different areas of social life and segments of the population, within a larger spectrum of ideological frames and fields, and may even appear to contradict each other or to be mutually exclusive. Still, within specific sections of a spectrum, they fulfill key functions relating to the protection and preservation of a particular “society” as a specific set of social, political, and economic structures and systems of power. Most social scientists, including social theorists, even though it is their charge to identify the characteristics of modern societies, also often fall prey to related pitfalls and lack of critical reflexivity, especially when their research area does not involve related curiosity and investigative stamina, as well as rigorous comparative-historical attentiveness. As a result, many researchers whose interests pertain to one society only **de facto** are in danger of being oblivious to the concrete feedback loops between modern and national operations, or underestimate their empirical importance, and often conflate both. In effect, without sufficient familiarity with at least one additional societal reference frame – i.e., another modern society – many nationally specific ideological operations often are assumed to be typical of all modern societies, and thus, impossible to distinguish from modern operations, which – by implication – effectively conceals them from detection, unless an imminent crisis or threat draws light to them.

Ideological operations that are prevalent in all modern societies tend to be invisible to most individuals socialized in this type of society – they simply are taken to be “normal” and “natural.” In many instances, to members of modern societies, not relating to the world on the basis of ideological operations provided by their societies would be truly “unthinkable” (see Lemert 2007). Yet, frequently the characteristics of modern ideological operations are evident to outsiders who were not socialized in (and into) one particular modern society, while the operations of their own society, in turn, tend to be invisible, if not inconceivable to them (see Hauck 2003). Individuals who were socialized in (to) more than one society, e.g., who spent parts of their childhood in two different modern societies, or in one modern society and another that is at an earlier stage of development – e.g., organizationally or technologically – are prone to noticing characteristics of their own and other societies, but still may be oblivious to the characteristics of modern society in general.³⁰

Social scientists and social theorists would be well-advised to start out from the assumption that primary and secondary educational institutions, churches, and political parties have a vested interest in thwarting critical reflexivity with regard to contested areas of social life, such as **the role** inequalities, injustices, forms of discrimination and violence play in protecting an existing social order **in its specificity**, and the corresponding reinforcement of patterns in society, culture, and individual identity. At the same time, it is important to ascertain whether there are other areas of social and public life that compensate for established efforts to undercut critical reflexivity, by encouraging, supporting, and even celebrating the latter without readily dismissing them as the grumbling of supposedly perpetually dissatisfied segments of the population or professional complainers. Along such lines, the **latent** national crises that became visible in 2016 during the lead-up to the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom and the Presidential election in the United States are likely to be symptomatic of societies not known for tying socialization and education to the development of skills which would be conducive to critical reflexivity as it must be applied to modern institutions and politics. The **manifest** crises that resulted from those events in both countries, and many others that followed, go to the very heart of the future of social integration and national cohesiveness, and suggest a longstanding pattern of discouraging the recognition and cultivation of critical reflexivity from the individual (i.e., with regard to proliferating experiences of cognitive dissonance) to the societal level (in terms of increasingly intensifying contradictions). In light of these developments, it is most intriguing that Germany and the United States, and to an increasing extent the United Kingdom, are the societies where critical social theory in the Frankfurt School tradition is more prominent than in many other modern societies, and worthy of further investigation, as this fact alone is indicative of the peculiar condition of critical reflexivity in these three contexts, which may provide venues for accessing variations in unusual constellations of historical, social, intellectual, and social-psychological resources and needs. Still, my focus here will be solely on the United States.³¹

The most productive opening for examining American ideology and its workings is likely to be a discourse that sociologists and social theorists scarcely have paid attention to: the ongoing debate about **American exceptionalism** that began after the Civil War, during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The issue of “American exceptionalism” has the potential of being as multi-faceted as any, to sociologists. It is located at the intersection of political ideology, comparative-historical analysis, political and cultural sociology, and social theory. Related debates range from the descriptive to the normative—from efforts to assess the relevance of the United States being unique (i.e., an exception among industrialized societies), to assertions that American politics, culture and society are truly “exceptional” (i.e., superior to and better than in any other society, including other industrialized societies). A further complication for sociological analysis relates to the fact that views on “America” (i.e., the United States) being exceptional reach from the most micro level of social life (individual identity and the shape of the self) to the most macro levels (especially in business and politics), thus permeating to the very core the configuration and content of everyday life (see also Kalberg 2013).

How, then, can sociologists engage in empirically oriented analyses of social life in the United States in ways that are not, more or less directly, influenced or shaped either by (unrecognized) assumptions about and prevailing patterns of American exceptionalism in everyday life? How should sociologists (and social scientists, more generally) navigate tensions between the desire to engage in sociological analysis and social research according to its own standards and principles, in ways that nevertheless are in accordance with everyday life assumptions about the uniqueness and/or exceptionality of U.S. American social, political, cultural and economic life, while avoiding accusations of elitism and intellectual arrogance? To date, there have been five recurring themes in the literature on American exceptionalism that are relevant to sociologists, social theorists, and critical theorists: the centrality and character of democracy (as presented by Alexis de Tocqueville [1835/40] 2016); the American “creed” (with a special focus on the role of “individualism”, as outlined by Seymour Martin Lipset 1996); the historical absence both of a national discourse about socialism and of political representation of the working class (as analyzed more than a century ago by Werner Sombart [1906] 2001); American exceptionalism as a “myth” (see Hodgson 2009); and the difficulties (impossibility?) to reconcile facts and norms in American society so that the latter will be able to move beyond an engrained and more or less insidious system of social inequalities and social relations (see Wuthnow 2006). With regard to each of these themes, the primary concern must be directed at implications for sociological analysis and categories, with a specific focus on the link between politics and economics; the second concern would pertain to efforts to theorize modern societies in general, and U.S. American society in particular, with regard to its distinctiveness.

Presently, modern societies are moving through the worst crisis since the end of World War II: we are observing the more or less rapid decline – if not disappearance – of democracy, of socialism, and of social democracy. This is an era during which the downside, if not the dark side, of how democracy politically as well economically did in fact take shape, is becoming impossible to ignore, embedded as it was from the beginning in a specific kind of **political economy**, and how it came to be normalized. Related dilemmas are captured very well in Astra Taylor’s recent book, **Democracy may not exist, but we’ll miss it when it’s gone** (2019). That socialism – i.e., “actually existing socialism,” as it took hold in various countries – to a greater extent emerged as a perverse system of power and of controlling and destroying humans and nature, rather than an enabling societal reference frame grounded in a different system of political economy that would have been truly empowering to all living beings, became evident decades ago. In Europe, the slide toward political irrelevance of social democracy, along with Social Democratic parties, has been precipitous indeed.

At the current historical juncture, progress appears to be increasingly precarious – especially if we differentiate between social, political, and cultural progress, on the one hand, and economic, organizational, and technological progress, on the other – so much so that it is beginning to seem doubtful, whether, **overall**, in sum total as opposed to in certain regards only, modern societies are progressing at all.³² If we further consider the manifold consequences that predictably will result from the proliferation of imminent crises, such as climate change, continuing population growth, the destruction of animal and plant life, automation, etc., and the increased need to manage truly unprecedented crises for which state and corporate actors are utterly unprepared – probably with multiple expected and newly emerging crises at the same time – modern societies will be entangled in highly disruptive processes that translate into a diminished (rather than enhanced) ability to face future challenges, at the expense of achievements like democracy, and while reaching for the “toolbox” of fascism and totalitarian governance. After all, the lack of civilizational progress in recent decades is undeniable, along the lines of an array of indicators (e.g., accelerating instrumentalization and industrialization of education for purposes of skilling, to satisfy the corporate machinery as it is increasingly ravenous for a mindless artificial workforce – human or not – i.e., a workforce incapable of

transgressing the cultural, social, ethical and intellectual confines of the neoliberal public-policy regime; progressive democratic governance; and the erosion of solidarity across race, class, gender differences, including the ability to recognize and anticipate its manifold benefits and overall value).

In 1959, Adorno ([1959] 2005) observed that the societal preconditions of fascism continue to exist; sixty years later, it appears that these preconditions still are in place, and not just in West Germany, which was his focus at the time, but also in unified Germany and Europe, but in modern and modernizing societies around the planet, including the United States.³³ And why would they not be? The societal processes of transformation that set the stage for the rise of fascism during the 1920s and 1930s still are at work, in many ways at higher levels of intensity, and more discernibly so, unless we disregard related evidence and information, based on the conviction that the end of World War II constituted a radical departure from those processes, such as the continuing accumulation and concentration of capital and wealth in fewer and fewer hands, the rationalization and bureaucratization of all aspects of life, urbanization, alienation, anomie, the combined meaningless of paid labor and its increasing importance with regard to social status, citizenship rights, and the ability to be a consumer, and so forth. Yet, to the extent that a departure from these trends – or rather, a detour – occurred after 1945, it was owed more to the temporarily emerging opportunities for different kinds of public policies and for national and international institution-building that resulted from the exceptional circumstances created by how World War II ended, and the imperatives of competition between two opposed military and economic blocs centered on the Soviet Union and the United States.

Indeed, today, social scientists and social theorists must be more willing and make more of an effort to acknowledge evidence revealing that the gap between the much-acclaimed **appearance** of progress in modern societies and the **actuality** of corresponding societal conditions is much greater than **mainstream views** (which took hold **during** the post-World War II era, and reflected corresponding conditions) would have allowed for; and in terms of national and planetary cost-benefit analyses, the costs certainly appear to have started outweighing the benefits some time ago. After all, mainstream views are defined by how they are tied to and often obscure existing systems of power and structures of inequality, along with the regimes of control and domination through which they reconstitute themselves.³⁴ For instance, it is typical of mainstream approaches that they decry the injustices – social, legal and otherwise – of persistent inequalities and forms of power in modern societies, without being capable of accepting their persistence as integral components of the stability of modern societies. Instead – and mystifyingly so – representatives of mainstream views and approaches often assert that, “evidently,” processes are at work in modern societies which point beyond not only the persistence of injustices but those injustices themselves. In light of evidence to the contrary, such paradoxical stances highlight the need to confront the affinities between “national” ideologies, i.e., **nationally distinctive** ideologies, and persistent systems of power and structures of inequality, and the entire array of discriminatory practices, myriad injustices, normatively spurious validity claims on the part of decision-makers at the top of institutions and organizations which form highly stable and seeming impenetrable fields of tension that resemble permanent feedback-loops.³⁵ Thus, it is essential to be cognizant of how each modern society is likely to rely on a particular ideology to maintain itself in its distinctive specificity. What are the ideology’s mechanisms, how does it reproduce itself? What role do socialization and education processes play in shaping individual selves and processes of identity formation, typically in ways that either are considered “normal” and “natural” by members of society, or which appear to be unnoticeable, and typically tend not to be noticed, unless the processes are fraught with tension, violence, abuse, or other disrupting circumstances – while noticing them has little or no bearing on overdue changes, especially improvements?³⁶ Is it possible, then, to delineate the specific operations of a national ideology in different areas and arenas of power, in politics and the economy – in **political economy** – in the world of corporations and public institutions, in the mental operations and social mechanisms through which an ideology is being maintained, or maintains itself?³⁷

Conclusion

“If once you scorn all science and all reason, the highest strength that dwells in man, and through trickery and magic arts abet the spirit of dishonesty, then I’ve got you unconditionally.”
— Mephistopheles, in: J. W. von Goethe, *Faust, Part I*³⁸

For modern society to be a social system that is in sync with itself, i.e., for there to be correspondence between

the claims its “it” makes about “itself” (especially with regard to its superiority over other types of social organization, as this superiority is integral to its legitimacy) and the social, political, economic and cultural conditions of human existence that prevail within its perimeter, it must refrain from imposing on its members persistent and manifest distortions of reality. Yet, as the distinctive social system that started to become discernible during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as a modern **bourgeois** society, persistent and manifest distortions of reality were necessary for its success as a new social order, and for the success of the social class that benefitted most from the novel socio-economic structure. In order for modern society to be able to maintain order, it must legitimate itself, which it typically achieves based on claims of superiority over all earlier and other types of society. Providing to its members a societal “self-description” (as Luhmann 1984 introduced the concept, though for present purposes turned in a manner that is consonant with ideology critique) that is widely and implicitly accepted as sufficiently justified, and which is being replicated through institutions and organizations, under “normal” circumstances suffices as what Durkheim referred to the necessary function the “collective conscience.”

Yet, it is the collective conscience that appears to be fraying, if not falling apart in modern societies, especially in the U.S. and the U.K., two of the main drivers of modernization processes that have shaped today’s world. In terms of its claims to legitimacy, the vitality and functioning of modern society depend directly on a majority of its members having the mental, intellectual and psychological skills to face unpleasant facts, and the emotional makeup, moral determination and political willingness to put those skills to work. Yet, as semi self-reflective biological creatures, and contrary to the generous view put forth by liberals, many humans – when given the opportunity – appear to be inclined and eager to resist more or less ardently (if history is any indication, at times even violently) the need to face unpleasant or inconvenient facts about their societal universe and, by implication, themselves and their own selves. Opportunities to buy into, and subsequently to staunchly hold onto notions whose empirical falsity in many instances is easily and quickly demonstrated, seem to have increasing appeal, presumably in part in response to the fact that it is a defining characteristic of modern societies that they are not able to provide authentic sources of meaning, unless they are linked to the productive activity of individuals, and their willingness to understand their circumstances and to make appropriate choices. Evidently, admitting the fact of ultimate meaninglessness puts a burden on every human being, and it is impossible to lift this burden by establishing and maintaining a system of distraction that prevents individuals from grasping that and how this burden is a fact of life in modern society, from which there is no escape, but which – with proper cognitive, intellectual, and normative adjustments and training – is conducive to an entirely novel kind of meaning which only modern society provides, and which must be rendered socially, and translated into a qualitatively superior form of solidarity and ethics (see Zuckerman 2019). Empirically speaking, the ideologies that have taken hold in modern societies, and which simulated meaning in their context and facilitated their (preliminary) march to victory, do not translate into non-regressive forms of solidarity, which instead must be superseded. Yet, non-regressive forms of solidarity are precisely what modern ideologies, including in its own register, American ideology, are inversely related and resistant to.³⁹

Encouraging humans to abandon resistance to facing facts, will, however, only be the first step. Moreover, it is a lesson to be accepted, learned, and disseminated, that intriguing empirically observable phenomena tend not to be **explainable** with reference to other empirically observable phenomena, even if we would prefer for this to be the case. Rather, there is a high degree of probability that individuals will jump at opportunities to avoid facing unpleasant facts, a factor that must be included in assessments of the possibility of qualitative social change, and of predictable difficulties. The reason may be quite simple: willingness to face facts on their own terms requires determined resolve to confront unpleasant experiences of cognitive dissonance in constructive fashion, rather than in terms and in the context of a preferred interpretive reference frame, especially if the latter is tied up with and supported by material power relations and structures of inequality in society, and regardless of whether those who adhere to a preferred interpretive reference frame support the actually existing material power relations and structures of inequality or not. After all, one of the defining features of life in modern society is that experiences of cognitive dissonance are both inevitable and ubiquitous. Yet, confronting experiences of cognitive dissonance constructively – along with their material social, political, cultural and economic bases – rather than trying to conceive of them in narrow psychological terms, involves curiosity about the tension-filled and contradictory operations upon which modern societies rest, and on whose operations – empirically speaking – the stability of societies of this type has depended and continues to rely.

Thus, Goethe’s **Faust** ought to be understood as a modern manifesto of sorts, which is especially relevant with regard to the American experience. The reason why **Faust** has been ignored to the degree that it has is not a consequence of its irrelevance in and to education, sociology and critical theory in the United States; rather, it could

not be more relevant. Avoiding *Faust* goes hand in hand with avoiding acknowledgment of aspects of American reality awareness of which is an indispensable prerequisite for agency – individually and collectively. Viewed from this angle, the prominence of Shakespeare's plays may have been fulfilling a key role in normalizing a mindset that has been integral to key aspects of American ideology, as his plays appear to jive well with views of American history as a sequence of glorious achievements, while disregarding, downplaying or sidelining disturbing events and patterns. This mindset, however, from the beginning, has not been conducive to the kind of qualified perspectives and careful modes of assessing historical progress that are required for truly meaningful productive activity and a successful life in the early twenty-first century.

Movies

- *Anonymous* (2011; Columbia Pictures); dir. Roland Emmerich (U.K.)
- *Fantasia* (1940; Disney); dir. Samuel Armstrong. (U.S.)
- *Faust* (1994; Athanor); dir. Jan Swankmajer. (Czech Republic)
- *Faust* (2007; Belvedere), dir. Peter Stein. (Germany)
- *Faust* (2008; Classics in Miniature); dir. Hoku Uchiyama (U.S.)
- *Faust* (2011; Proline Film); dir. Aleksandr Sokurov (Russia)
- *Macbeth* (1971; Columbia Pictures); dir. Roman Polanski. (U.S., U.K.)
- *Ran* (1985; Greenwich Film Productions); dir. Akira Kurosawa. (Japan)

Endnotes

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was born in Frankfurt. He worked on *Faust* over the course of 60 years, and finished the second part shortly before his death. *Faust* frequently refers to the first version only, but the work comprised both Part I (or *Faust I*, published in 1808) and Part II (or *Faust II*, published 1832). While *Faust I* is straightforward drama, with a linear and coherent story arch, and a mode of getting messages to the audience rather clearly, *Faust II* is much more intricate, demanding, many-dimensional, and open to myriad interpretations. There also was an earlier first version (*Urfaust*, 1772-75, published posthumously in 1887) and *Faust. A Fragment* (finished in 1788, published 1790). Long considered impossible to perform, and never seen on stage as whole by Goethe, there have been numerous performances since the end of Goethe's life, in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria; the first unabridged performance of both parts by professional actors occurred in 2000, during the EXPO in Hannover, with subsequent performances in Berlin and Vienna. The performance lasts 21 hours (with breaks; 15 hours without interruptions), and has been available on DVD since 2007.

2. While Goethe and *Faust* have been prominent in Austria and in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, too, Goethe's influence on their respective versions of

modernity and modern society was far less pronounced, and different, in any case. For instance, in religious terms, Germany remained split between Catholics and Protestants, with many regions where one confession was more prominent than the other; by contrast, in Austria, the counter-Reformation was victorious, securing the persistence of an essentially Catholic culture, whereas in Switzerland, the Reformation took hold; in both cases, more homogeneous cultural environments resulted than in Germany, not just in terms of religion.

3. I should clarify that my purpose here is not to add another lament decrying American culture and ideology for not **recognizing**, or "misrecognizing," yet another of aspect of the world within or beyond the United States and related practices and populations, but to take a stab at delineating, within the space allotted, the costs American society and, by implication, societies influenced by American culture have been paying for being oblivious to a key dimension of modern social life, and what it would take to engender related reflexivity across society pull it into consistent consideration – not in order to suggest that the latter is likely, but to asserts the importance of recognizing – and persistently being cognizant of – the importance of encouraging and cultivated such reflexivity, as a matter of principle.

4. Readers familiar with Adorno know, of course, that I am referring to his “reflections from damaged life” – the subtitle of *Minima Moralia* (Adorno [1951] 1974). One of the key messages especially of the early Frankfurt School was that in the age of post-liberalism (see Dahms 1999), an unalienated existence is about as “objectively possible” as a genuinely happy life, i.e., **highly unlikely**, given that “alienation” no longer refers to a personal experience (if it ever did), but a **structural condition** that configures all individuals’ lives and existence, not just those of exploited workers (see Dahms 2005). Evidently, it is possible for certain individuals to regard themselves as “unalienated” and “undamaged,” but it is highly probable that those who regard themselves along such lines are truly successful (and truthful) only if they are submerged within the regime and the logic of capital (see Dahms 2017b), and today, specifically within the ideology of neoliberalism (Brown 2019) as the current version of the ideology of capitalist economics (see Bonefeld 2017).

5. *Poetry and Truth* ([1811-1833] 1994) refers to Goethe’s four-part autobiography, which covered the first 26 years of his life.

6. Evidently, this “neglect” is relative rather than absolute. E.g., David Mamet (2004) has written a play that was inspired by Goethe’s *Faust*, and which constitutes a variation of the latter (see Lublin 2013). Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* ([1592] 2005) is evidence that Faustian themes have exerted a measure of appeal in the English language, too. For an example of a recent assessment in a prominent English-language news outlet, of the current relevance of Goethe’s *Faust*, see Ramm (2017).

7. This fact is especially striking in the U.S., if we keep in mind that in terms of rates of immigration between 1820 and 2000, Germans were the largest group with approximately 7 million, ahead of 6 million from Mexico, and 5 million each from Great Britain, Ireland, Italy and Canada (Siteeseen Limited 2017). At least in part, the neglect or marginalization of Goethe may be a residue of the rejection and concealment of all things German during the two World Wars, especially the Second World War, but this residue would not explain the **persistence** of the pattern. It is more likely that the themes Goethe was interested in did not jive well with aspects of American culture, as they suggest a mode of social critique that, for better or worse, has been anathema in the United States, especially with regard to the society-nature nexus, even though frontal verbal attacks on government and those who represent or embody it have had a long tradition, hinting at a peculiarity of the form and substance – and meaning – of American “society” as it is, in essence, an “exceptional” combination of polity and economy that is reflected in a peculiar form of sociality. We will return to both of these issues – the society-nature nexus and society qua political economy, below.

8. Summaries of *Faust I* (as well as of *Faust II*) are readily and easily available, relieving me of the need to add another. Suffice it to say that the play starts with the aging scholar Faust being tired of and disappointed by

the haphazard ways in which research and learnedness – futile as they are, in the end – remain removed from what living a full life would be like, to the point where he considers ending the one he lived, but in the pivotal moment is drawn away from doing so by fond memories of his childhood. The following (Easter) day, he finds himself in circumstances that enable him to make a pact with Mephistopheles, an amusing but still dangerous devil (who God refers to as a hardly burdensome joker in the “Prologue in Heaven,” which precedes the play), with Mephisto promising to enable Faust to live life to the fullest. As is well known, across the different versions of the Faust tale, the pact amounts to Faust’s willingness to sell his soul to the devil – in this version, if (and **only** if) Mephisto succeeds at fulfilling his promise that he will enable Faust to probe the heights and depth of life, and getting to the point of finding himself “to ever ... tell the moment: Oh stay! You are so beautiful!” (p, 104/105). Mephisto takes Faust on various adventures and to different locations; in the process, Faust’s body is rejuvenated with the help of witchcraft, he falls in love (or is it just lust?) with a young woman (Gretchen), and – with Mephisto’s less-than-eager and inevitably twisted help – is co-responsible for her death, and the deaths of his and Gretchen’s child, and her brother – but still gets away. *Faust II* is much more involved. Suffice it to say, in this regard, that Faust learns to appreciate the appeal, advantages, and pleasures, initially, of access to worldly power (at the Emperor’s court), before he meets the ideal woman (Helena, of Greek mythology) with whom he has a rather wild son who, like Icarus, flies too high and dies. After losing Helena also, he dedicates himself entirely to the pursuit of wealth and worldly power, is successful in this pursuit, but in the end, unintentionally – due to a (purported) misunderstanding on the part of Mephisto – commits a final sinful act, which renders him regretful and guilt-ridden, before he dies. His soul still is allowed to rise to heaven, and Mephisto remains behind, empty-handed.

9. In recent years, evidently, the mask has come off, for better or worse; see Blacker (2013).

10. There is an extensive literature on how different languages and terminologies open up or close off dimensions and readings of reality, e.g., Giang (2018).

11. The analysis presented here is informed by and draws on my book manuscript (Dahms forthcoming).

12. If space and time would have permitted, I would have added a secondary perspective intended to illustrate, empirically, frictions and tensions in the operations of American ideology, by drawing critical attention to the figure and role after World War II of Wernher von Braun, who was instrumental as a visionary, administrator and propagator of space exploration during the 1960s, after having played an important role in the Nazi’s V2-rocket program (see Pizskiewicz 1995, 1998; Neufeld 2007; Biddle 2009; Jacobsen 2014; Teitel 2016. Günter Anders, author of *The Obsolescence of Man* (*Die Antiquiertheit des*

Menschen; 2 vol.; [1956] 1992 and [1980] 1992) and the third recipient of the City of Frankfurt's Adorno Award, suggested such a treatment ([1970] 1994); regarding Anders' work and contributions, see Bischof, Dawsey, and Fetz (2014). The prominent position and celebrated treatment of von Braun in the United States especially in connection to the space program, when he gained access to the highest echelons of power in Washington, and his subsequent erasure of sorts from the official history (and public representations) of the Apollo program provides an intriguing glimpse of these ideological operations, which typically eliminates the possibility of critical reflexivity fulfilling an important educational and political function. In addition, the American space program (not to mention its Soviet/Russian equivalent) would provide an excellent reference frame for how the pursuit of progress in modern societies at its most ambitious (with regard to economic, organizational and technological challenges) has been playing out to date; sociologists have barely begun to examine this exceedingly fertile soil (e.g., Vaughan 1996, Fischer and Spreen 2014), especially when we consider how issues of race, class, and gender factored into its history (Weitekamp 2004; Stone, 2009), particularly with regard to success and failures (McConnell 1987; Cabbage and Harwood 2004; McDonald and Hansen 2009), as an endeavor to escape from earthly confines, as most recently in Mars-related projects, which von Braun advocated almost seventy years ago (Braun 1952), and which ultimately had inspired von Braun's vision of space exploration (Braun 1963, 1976). In addition, I would have considered Thomas Mann's mid-twentieth century novel, *Doctor Faustus*, to support further my stance with regard to the affinity between critical reflexivity as it originated in German society, culture, and intellectual life, and the imminent need for and consistent use of **negation** in the process of understanding and appreciating modern society as a contingent historical formation.

13. Regarding the concept of contradiction, see Conze [1932] 2016.

14. See, e.g., Jouet (2017) and Marietta and Barker (2019).

15. Since I cannot claim to be an expert on either Shakespeare or Goethe, nor of the breadth and depth of German or English literature generally, my stance in the following is similar to Vittorio Hösle's comparison of Dante's *Commedia* and Goethe's *Faust*, which he boldly refers to as "Europe's two most important philosophical literary works": "I undertake ...this comparison because I regard it as a problem of the academic system of our time that we specialize ever more narrowly, due to the legitimate fear of dilettantism, thus avoiding the task of discussing those questions that exceed the narrow horizon of our specialized approach. But these questions are legitimate, even indispensable for our existence as humans" (Hösle 2014:11; translation mine). To be sure, my social-theoretical intentions and conclusions are entirely different from his explicitly philosophical orientation.

16. If, for purposes of comparison, we only refer to Goethe's *plays*, combining them with Friedrich Schiller's plays – since both writers for a time formed a literary tandem of sorts, living in the same city (Weimar) – their combined plays might be compared to those of Shakespeare, with regard to their importance to the language of German and to Germany. Both Goethe and Schiller were invigorated by their encounter and friendship, after floundering for a while – Schiller, using his distinction between naïve and sentimental poetry (Schiller [1795] 1983) (in terms of the evolution nature-culture-ideal), referred to Goethe and Shakespeare as "naïve" poets (like those of Greek antiquity who wrote organically, as it were, without explicit self-awareness, with the exception of Euripides), while he himself was a sentimental poet wrote with utter self-awareness as an author– contrary to Nietzsche and Adorno, Hegel regarded Goethe and Schiller being on the same level (see Alt 2009: 253).

17. The standard, so-called "Hamburg edition" of Goethe's collected works comprises 14 volumes and over 11,000 pages (Goethe 1999).

18. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" served as the basis of the famous related segment of the Disney movie, *Fantasia*; the music was from French composer Paul Dukas, based also on Goethe's poem. The theme resonates strongly with aspects of *Faust*, whose title character first captures (or seems to do so) and then makes a pact with Mephistopheles, who is to serve Faust for the rest of his life, without the latter having an inkling of what this will entail, especially with regard to an array of unintended (and no less destructive) consequences, and his inability to control and contain Mephisto's actions. The theme evidently resonates with the modern experience as far as agency is concerned, in general: never being able to anticipate what the real consequences of one's actions will turn out to be, e.g., when developing, applying, implementing or making widely available a new technology.

19. In this context, it is interesting to note that the German poet, critic and Shakespeare translator August Schlegel (1767-1845; and brother of Friedrich Schlegel) was so proficient that his translations could be used directly useful for voice synchronization (dubbing) of film versions of Shakespeare plays, such as Polanski's *Macbeth* (1971), without the need for further adjustments.

20. On Goethe and enlightenment and modernity, see Kerry (2001) and Anderegg (2006), respectively. On Shakespeare and modernity, see Taylor (1934)

21. In short, prose for the plebeians and verse for the aristocrats and wealthy and powerful.

22. Fromm, referring to the "Prologue in Heaven" and the end of *Faust II* to back up his interpretation, cites Ibsen as another author who took this stance. See Fromm ([1947] 1990: 92).

23. Despite differences in translation, the German is the same in Freud and Safranski, even though **Unbehagen** in Freud often is translated as “discontents”, and in Safranski’s Goethe book, as “unease.” See also Ehrenberg ([2010] 2012).

24. As Horkheimer (1947: 14) put it: “Spinoza, for example, thought that insight into the essence of reality, into the harmonious structure of the eternal universe, necessarily awakens love for this universe. For him, ethical conduct is entirely determined by such insight into nature, just as our devotion to a person may be determined by insight into his greatness or genius. Fears and petty passions, alien to the great love of the universe, which is logos itself, will vanish, according to Spinoza, once our understanding of reality is deep enough.” Taking Spinoza’s and Goethe’s stance vis-à-vis nature as the standard, the **ungodliness** of explicit public policies directed at destroying nature – as opposed to actions whose indirect (and potentially unintended) consequence is the same – is manifestly obvious, as currently is the case with the prospect of opening up the Alaska wilderness to logging, mining, etc., or the burning of the Amazon, especially in Brazil. Related ironies (to put it mildly) are heightened further when purported Christians, for instance, more or less actively (if not rabidly) support and promote politicians and parties whose disregard for nature in well-known, and a matter of public record.

25. Dollenmeyer’s translation of Safranski’s book has its flaws. E.g., especially in the **Faust** chapter (33, pp. 521-542), Safranski repeatedly employs **Moderne** to make key points, a concept that typically refers to an era and a quality, which is usually translated as **modernity**, while “modernism” – Dollenmeyer’s preferred (and incorrect, in this context) translation – refers to an art form.

26. See the passage in “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts” where Marx (Marx [1844] 1978:102-4) relies on both Shakespeare’s **Timon of Athens** ([1623] 2006) and Goethe’s **Faust** to make a key point about money: “By possessing the property of buying everything, by possessing the **property** of appropriating all objects, **money** is ... the **object** of eminent possession. The universality of its **property** is the omnipotence of its being. It therefore functions as the almighty being. Money is the **pimp** between man’s need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But that which mediates **my** life for me, also **mediates** the existence of other people **for me**. For me it is the **other person**” (p. 102).

27. There are proliferating signs of an intensifying urgency to revisit – and to finally translate! – Günther Anders related work; see Anders [1956] 1992, [1980] 1992, [1960/62] 2014; see especially Dawsey (2014) and Röhrlich (2014).

28. *Mann ([1947] 1999), p. 256; in the original: “... **die Situation ist zu kritisch, als daß die Kritiklosigkeit ihr gewachsen wäre!**“ (Mann 1947, p. 371). The literal (as opposed to literary) translation of the statement

runs as follows: “...the situation is too critical for critiquelessness to be a match for it!“ The difference between the German original and the 1999 translation is subtle, but still significant insofar as in German, the exclamation made by the nameless visitor, presumably Mephistopheles, in the pivotal chapter XXV of the book, does not only apply in terms of an “uncritical mind” (which could imply an individualist perspective), but in the sense that without a critical mindset being present, prominent, encouraged, cultivated, and respected **in society or in civilization** – in social, political, and cultural public life -- it is not possible to confront constructively social, societal, or civilizational challenges and crises. In the first, 1948 translation, statement ran “...the situation is too critical to be dealt with without critique.” – and ended with a period, not an exclamation point; Mann ([1947] 1948), p. 240. Interestingly, the observation might have come from Adorno – if not the formulation, considering that in his “novel of the novel”, Mann (1949, pp. 42-3) almost literally incorporated parts of the short biography Adorno had supplied in a letter dated July 5, 1948 (see Adorno/Mann 2003, pp. 33-35), to acknowledge his reliance on Adorno’s expertise while working on **Doctor Faustus**; Mann admitted to making copious notes during his conversations with Adorno, especially with regard to the theory of music that informed **Doctor Faustus**, and to reading Adorno’s work, especially **Philosophy of New Music** (1948] 2006), which its author called (p. 5) a “detailed excursus to **Dialectic of Enlightenment**” (Horkheimer and Adorno [1947] 2002). Note also that the devil, who changes his appearance twice during the conversation with the composer at the heart of the novel, makes the above exclamation in an appearance that evidently was modeled on Adorno: “an intellectualist, who writes of art, of music, for vulgar newspapers, a theorist and critic, who is himself a composer, in so far as thinking allows” (Mann [1947] 1999, p. 253). Mann’s **Doctor Faustus** is one of the major works of (German) literature in the twentieth century.

29. Jouet (2017) frequently cites this phrase in his analysis demonstrating how American society really consists of two societies that are at loggerheads with each other, with one large segment of the population preferring to adopt a European-style social welfare state model, and another rabidly being opposed to any such prospect. See also Levine (2004) and Marietta (2011).

30. I am currently in the process of compiling a set of essays by current former graduate students who have examined the bearing their social upbringing in specific social environments, in different countries and/or different parts of the U.S. has had on their interests as social scientists, in order to engender the kind of reflexivity without which social research is in danger of replicating the social, political, economic, organizational, and cultural patterns it is meant to illuminate; see Dahms (in preparation).

31. For my treatment of Brexit, see Dahms (2017a),

as well as the collection in which this essay is included (Outhwaite 2017), with other essays by Craig Calhoun, Gurinder Bhambra, Colin Crouch and others. For the U.S., see Jouet (2017).

32. See the forthcoming volume of Current Perspectives in Social Theory, entitled The Challenge of Progress: Theory between Critique and Ideology (Dahms 2019), especially the main section on Amy Allen's The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory (2016) with review essays by George Steinmetz, Kevin Olson, Karen Ng, and Reha Kadakal, as well as a "reply to critics" from Allen; but also essays by Robert Antonio, Timothy Luke, Lawrence Hazelrigg, and others.

33. See also Adorno ([1967] 2019); other countries include Brazil, the Philippines, and Turkey.

34. Mainstream in this sense is neither a positive nor a positively identifiable quality, but an absence of comparative and historical reflexivity regarding the gravity concrete socio-historical circumstances exert on the process of illuminating those circumstances – i.e., on social research and social theory. See Dahms (2008) on how this is a central theme of the critical theory of the early Frankfurt School.

35. With regard to the United States, Daniel Immerwahr's (2019) recent book sheds light on such a key discrepancy, in his case between the official history "of the United States as a republic" (p. 19) and as an "[e]mpire [that] lives on" (p. 400).

36. Regarding the link between critical theory and the critique of what appears to be "natural" and "normal," but is everything but, see Dahmer (1994); regarding the production of the American self, see Block (2002, 2012), and Langman and Lundskow (2016).

37. See, e.g., Hedstrom and Swedberg (1998).

38. Goethe ([1808] 1988), pp. 114-115; in the original: "Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft, des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft, laß nur in Blend- und Zauberwerken dich von dem Lügengeist bestärken, so hab' ich dich schon unbedingt—" (ibid.). This edition includes both the German original and translation into English.

39. Hauke Brunkhorst's ([2002] 2005) probing inquiry regarding prospects for enhancing and strengthening solidarity in the twenty-first century, which was not exactly an exercise in eager optimism, in retrospect appears to have been more optimistic than justified. For a more recent assessment of the state of solidarity in America, see McCarthy (2017).

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The Master's Race: Phallic Whiteness in "The Young Savages"

Graham Cassano

This essay examines two parallel, historically contemporaneous, depictions of the Freudian master-slave dialectic. John Frankenheimer's first film, *The Young Savages* (1961), reconstructs Hank Bell's (Burt Lancaster) repressed transformation from Italian racial other into a white ethnic. In doing so, the film approaches the possibility that race itself may be a kind of social construction. To get at this notion, the film explores the meaning of race in an overtly psychoanalytic language. In fact, *The Young Savages* echoes the argument of Jacques Lacan's nearly contemporaneous essay, "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious." Lacan's paper, first delivered in 1960, and Frankenheimer's film, argue that the normatively socialized subject must sacrifice an essential part of themselves in order to achieve social recognition. In Lacan's language, every subject is castrated, and because of that mutilation, every subject desires completion through the symbolic phallus. To accept castration, and to desire the phallus, is to live under the dominion of the name-of-the-father. Hank Bell enters into this dialectic of desire, discovers his own lack (the history of his repressed racial identity), as well as his desire for the phallus (whiteness). In short, the film allows for an understanding of Lacan's dialectic as the unfolding of normative white supremacy, and Lacan allows for an understanding of the film as a dialectic of desire. At the same time, both Lacan's essay, and *The Young Savages* share the same fundamental aporia. For Lacan, the phallus is not a penis, but a structural position; nonetheless, rather than renaming the phallus as male domination, Lacan leaves the phallic language in place, unquestioned. Even as Lacan opens a path to the interrogation of masculine domination, he essentializes patriarchal language, and paradoxically takes refuge in a developmental argument to ground the significance of the phallus as a symbol. In the same manner, *The Young Savages* questions the concept of whiteness, recognizes race as a social construction, but pulls back from that recognition, and ultimately leaves the normative racial order intact.¹

Introduction

Between 1886 and 1925, 13 million new immigrants came to the United States from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe.² On the one hand, many of these new immigrants were recognized as legally "white," in the sense that they were considered fit for naturalization, unlike immigrants from Asia or Africa.³ On the other, many were considered unfit for whiteness by custom, nativist prejudice, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism. According to David Roediger, these "in-between-peoples" evaded the hard color line that confronted Black Americans, First Peoples, and Asian immigrants; but did not necessarily find full acceptance within the normatively white community. By the mid-twentieth century, racial boundaries had shifted.⁴ Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, Bohemian, Russian, and Czech Americans, became "ethnic" whites. At the same time, assimilation to whiteness had a price. These new immigrants, their children, and grandchildren needed to accept the demands of white supremacy, and thus to identify with anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Latina/o prejudices. In addition, they had to repress their own ethnic identity and to desire the trappings of what they imagined was the fully "white" lifestyle. Cinema dramatized this play of racial desire. From *Black Fury* (1935) to *Fort Apache* (1948), a process unfolds in which immigrants find a home in the U.S.

once they accept white supremacy and valorize white racial identity.⁵

Racial transformation requires a kind of socially constructed amnesia. As families cross into whiteness, they actively forget their prior racial status. This chapter examines the traces left once such a racial trans-substantiation has taken place. John Frankenheimer's early film, *The Young Savages* (1961), reconstructs Hank Bell's (Burt Lancaster) repressed transformation from Italian racial other into a white ethnic. In doing so, the film approaches the possibility that race itself may be a kind of social construction. To get at this notion, the film explores the meaning of race in an overtly psychoanalytic language. In fact, *The Young Savages* echoes the argument of Jacques Lacan's nearly contemporaneous essay, "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious."⁶ Lacan's paper, first delivered in 1960, and Frankenheimer's film, argue that the normatively socialized subject must sacrifice an essential part of themselves in order to achieve social recognition. In Lacan's language, every subject is castrated, and because of that mutilation, every subject desires completion through the symbolic phallus. To accept castration, and to desire the phallus, is to live under the dominion of the name-of-the-father. Hank Bell enters into this dialectic of desire, discovers his own lack (the history of his repressed racial identity), as well as his desire for the phallus (whiteness). In short, the film allows for an understanding of Lacan's dialectic as the unfolding of normative white supremacy, and Lacan allows for an understanding of the film as a dialectic of desire.

At the same time, both Lacan's essay and *The Young Savages*, share the same fundamental aporia. For Lacan, the phallus is not a penis, but a structural position; nonetheless, rather than renaming the phallus as male domination, Lacan leaves the phallic language in place, unquestioned. Even as Lacan opens a path to the interrogation of masculine domination, he essentializes patriarchal language, and paradoxically takes refuge in a developmental argument to ground the significance of the phallus as a symbol. In the same manner, *The Young Savages* questions the concept of whiteness, recognizes race as a social construction, but pulls back from that recognition, and ultimately leaves the normative racial order intact. I will argue in the conclusion of this paper that Lacan's insistence on phallic language represents an anxious evasion of the work of Simone de Beauvoir, but also, less obviously, of Frantz Fanon. Unlike Lacan, Fanon argued that through a shudder of violence, the old order could shatter. Lacan's reification of the phallus represented his anxious turn away from that possibility. In the same manner, *The Young Savages* attempts to tell the story of race, and yet entirely represses the most important social movement of its time, the African American led civil rights movement. Like Lacan's essay, the film avoids anxiety-provoking questions about race in America by turning itself into a valorization of the very whiteness it questions.

Lacan's Phallus

Systems of domination perpetuate themselves in multiple forms. They are social facts inscribed upon the bodily habitus of the dominated. They are modes of knowledge, epistemological practices, and ways of seeing that separate "insiders" from "outsiders." They are material classifications that mediate an unequal distribution of wealth and status within society. What all forms of symbolic and material domination have in common is the need for legitimacy. In order to function, systems of domination require the consent of the dominated. They achieve consent through various mechanisms. Through terror. Through material coercion. Moreover, through the use of hegemonic coordinates of desire. In order to secure authority over its subjects, domination imposes, brutalizes, bribes; but it also seduces.

Charles Horton Cooley's discussion of the "looking glass self" attempts to explain the social force of seduction.⁷ For Cooley, the subject emerges into consciousness through the gaze of the other. Put in more developmental terms, the biological infant becomes a socialized child by accepting the judgments, attitudes, and points of view imposed by caregivers. The language the child acquires comes from others. Its values and beliefs originated with others. Finally, its sense of propriety, shame, guilt, and pride, come from its own imagination of the other's point of view.

The reference to other persons involved in the self of the self may be distinct and particular, as when a boy is ashamed to have his mother catch him at something she has forbidden, or it may be vague and general, as when one is ashamed to do something which only his conscience, expressing his sense of social responsibility, detects and disapproves; but it is always there. There is no sense of "I," as in pride or shame, without its correlative sense of you, or he, or they.⁸

Socialization means coming to see oneself through the perspective of others. This basic proposition, however, contains a number of implied corollaries. First, since the subject sees itself through the (metaphorical) eyes of the

other, it knows itself primarily based upon this other's point of view. The self thus has no privileged access to itself. Further, to the degree that the subject seeks self-approval, it seeks the approbation of the other. That is, the other's judgment shapes the subject's consciousness. Therefore, the subject seeks the other's recognition (as this or that kind of subject) in order to come to know itself. In more Lacanian language, desire desires the others desire. For Cooley, that means that the social subject who desires normative approval (in order to approve of itself), takes on the social practices of prestigious others (caregivers, educators, ministers, political leaders, bosses) in order to gain their approbation. The subject's desire for the other's desire thus has at least two pathways: First, the subject desires the other's recognition (e.g., desire); second, the subject desires the same norms, ideas, commodities, that the other desires, in order to gain that recognition. Customs, beliefs, and attitudes spread through a society based upon this desire to gain the other's imagined approbation.

While Cooley never fully examines the implications of the decentered subjectivity he describes, in the European context, Alexander Kojève and Jacques Lacan, students of Hegel and Freud, develop a parallel but more complex dialectic of desire. Like Cooley, Kojève situates the subject as a social product of the other's desire.⁹ Desire is always directed toward the other's desire. "Desire is human only if the one desires... be 'desired' or 'loved,' or... 'recognized' in his human value, in his reality as a human individual."¹⁰ Human reality "can be begotten and preserved only as 'recognized' reality. It is only by being 'recognized' by another, by many others, or—in the extreme—by all others, that a human being is really human, for himself as well as for others."¹¹ As with Cooley, the subject recognizes itself in the gaze of the other, understands itself based upon the actions, reactions, and behaviors of the other. Thus, in its search for itself, the subject seeks the other's recognition. However, in order to achieve this recognition, it enters into a metaphorical contest, Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic.¹²

Following closely the argument presented by the *Phenomenology*, Kojève begins with two absolute subjects, each one desiring confirmation of its own self-image through recognition from the other. At the same time, neither desires "mutual and reciprocal" recognition. Each expects sovereignty. Recognition depends upon the adversary's defeat. The Master and the Slave make one another. "The Slave is the defeated adversary... Hence, he depends upon that other.... The Master is Consciousness existing **for itself**."¹⁴ Losing this "fight for pure prestige," the Slave "recognizes the master in his human dignity... [and] behaves accordingly."¹⁵

To return to Cooley's initial description of socialization, the Slave represents the socialized subject, accepting the Master's discourse, and recognizing the Master's authority. The Master takes possession of the Slave. "For everything that the Slave does is, properly speaking, an activity of the Master. Since the Slave works only for the Master, only to satisfy the Master's desire and not his own, it is the Master's desire that acts in and through the Slave."¹⁶ The Slave becomes the instrument of the Master's desire, just as a socialized subject serves the norms of their community, and obeys the laws, customs, and practices, of their people.

But the Master's victory is empty. "For he can be satisfied only by recognition from one whom he recognizes as worthy of recognizing him." While this dialectic initially reifies the Slave, transforming it into an instrument of the Master's will, the slave's defeat becomes victory. Because the Master appears worthy of respect, the Slave becomes human by imposing itself "on the Master," and thus being "recognized by him."¹⁷ This potential reversal becomes possible precisely because "The Master forces the Slave to work." Through work, "the Slave becomes master of Nature," and thus, "frees himself from his own nature."¹⁸ The Slave comes to recognize its power, and thus sheds the need for a Master. Through work in the world, the Slave transcends mastery and servitude.

Thus, through the mediating power of the other's gaze, the subject moves from sense certainty, through slavery, into self-knowledge. Written after Marx and after Freud, Kojève's interpretation of Hegel already anticipates Lacan's psychoanalytic redirection. The self is both Master and Slave. But Lacan rejects the dialectical resolution to the Master-Slave struggle. Such a resolution necessarily misses its mark by seeking the reality of an ego that is only ever an illusion, or **meconnaissance**. "What is this real, if not a subject fulfilled in his identity to himself?"¹⁹ Lacan retains the dialectic of desire but dispenses with Hegel's idealism. "There is nothing, then, in our expedient for situating Freud... that proceeds... from any phenomenology from which idealism may draw reassurance."²⁰ The reference here is most obviously to philosophical idealism, but, the text extends the meaning to cover the idealism of the activist, the resister, and the revolutionary. In fact, Lacan argues that if the task of the revolutionary is to overturn the Law, they fail before they begin. From the Lacanian perspective, revolutionism is an infantile disorder.

Let me take these two forms of idealism in turn since they structure the remaining portions of Lacan's argument. First, the philosophical idealism that posits a subject who transcends the master-slave dialectic. A "gap... separates those two relations of the subject to knowledge, the Freudian and the Hegelian." This gap emerges from Hegel's unwillingness to follow through the implications of his theory of desire. "Hegel's 'cunning of reason' means that,

from beginning to end, the subject knows what he wants.” In contrast, “Freud reopens the junction between truth and knowledge” by interrogating the process in which “desire becomes bound up with the desire of the Other.”²¹

The Slave desires the Master’s desire, and the Slave becomes the instrument of that desire. In this sense, Hegel attempts to break with the Cartesian subject. The Cartesian subject is an “I,” inhabiting a knowable world. Hegel’s Slave is a “we,” inhabited by itself, but also, by an Other. This Other shapes and controls the subject’s desires, the subject’s knowledge, and the subject’s self-reflections. While the Cartesian subject might come to know itself through thought, and perhaps even through activity in the world, the Hegelian subject divided by alterity never fully knows the Other who inhabits it--that is, until the dialectic is resolved. But, Lacan argues, this dialectic has no resolution. He offers an ancient allegory as an illustration. The subject is

like the ‘messenger-slave’ of ancient usage, the subject who carries under his hair the codicil that condemns him to death knows neither the meaning nor the text, nor in what language it is written, nor even that it had been tattooed on his shave scalp while he slept.²²

If the subject is inhabited by others, it can never fully grasp the contours of these Outsiders within. Instead, it is perpetually inscribed with an indecipherable otherness, and driven by a necessarily incomprehensible desire. Lacan’s radical difference with Hegel and Kojève emerges from two fundamental Freudian concepts: identification and ambivalence. Freud attempts an explanation of both in his (gendered and patriarchal) account of the Oedipus complex.

Identification is known to psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person. It plays a part in the early history of the Oedipus complex. A little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father; he would like to grow like him and be like him, and take his place everywhere. We may simply say that he takes his father as an ideal. ...At the same time as this identification with his father...the boy has begun to develop a true object-cathexis towards his mother...²³

As with Cooley’s “looking glass self,” the subject emerges as a social being through processes of identification and attachment. Recognition comes into play to the extent that the boy wishes, through identification, to be recognized as a simulacrum of his father. But identification transforms the father, idealizing him into a symbol (the Other’s desire). The boy desires the father’s desire, his father’s recognition. In order to achieve that recognition, he attempts to become what he imagines father to be. That means he wishes to replace the father for his mother. The unconscious understands that this identification is the equivalent of patricide and that desiring mother will invoke the symbolic father’s rage. Thus this symbolic father, as an ideal, desires to punish the boy for desiring the mother, and for desiring father’s death. Consequently, the boy, who desires the father’s desire, desires his own punishment and fears the complexity of his desire. Freud names this complexity “ambivalence.”

The little boy notices that his father stands in his way with his mother. His identification with his father then takes on a hostile colouring and becomes identical with the wish to replace his father in regard to his mother as well. Identification is, in fact, ambivalent from the very first...²⁴

The boy’s desire for his father’s desire is mingled with his fear and hatred of the punishing other. And the boy’s own love for himself is shaped in part by the stern judgment of this punishing father. The boy hates himself and wishes to be punished, even as he desires love and approbation.

Love and attachment produce identification, which is necessarily ambivalent. The Other is loved and hated, desired, and feared. To the extent that the Other inhabits the subject, those forces turn inward. The Other becomes the subject’s sadistic master. For Lacan, this Other both inhabits the subject and yet remains perpetually distant and dissatisfied, thus producing the “subjection of the subject to the signifier...for lack of an act in which it would find its certainty...”²⁵ Attachment and identification are the forces of socialization. However, in identifying with this symbolic father, the subject emerges as a permanent slave, instrument of a cruel Master’s desire.

The Other as previous site of the pure subject of the signifier holds the master position... For what is omitted in the platitude of modern information theory is the fact that one can speak of code only if it is already the code of the Other, and that is something quite different from what is in question in the message, since it is from this code that the subject is constituted, which means that it is from the Other that the subject receives even the message he emits.²⁶

In a deft intellectual maneuver, Lacan moves from a subject inhabited by an unknowable, sadistic otherness, through the identification with other social subjects as objects of desire, and thus, emulation, to the internalization

of a normative code that speaks through the subject. Despite Lacan's dislike of Emile Durkheim's ideas, the Master's code reads remarkably like Durkheim's description of social facts.

When I perform my duties as a brother, a husband, or a citizen...I fulfill obligations which are defined in law and custom and which are external to myself and my actions. ...The system of signs that I employ to express my thoughts, the monetary system I use to pay my debts, ...the practices I follow in my profession, etc., all function independently of the use I make of them. ...Thus there are ways of acting, thinking and feeling which possess the remarkable property of existing outside the consciousness of the individual.²⁷

For Durkheim, as for Lacan after him, the socialized subject is possessed by the discourse of dead others. Language, custom, and norm, speak through the self. But for Lacan, it is, specifically, the dead father who speaks.²⁸ When the subject identifies with an idealized, symbolic father, it reifies that identification into the "Name-of-the-Father," Lacan's allegory for the socially constituted set of norms, he calls "the Law."²⁹ Through identification (specifically with the Name-of-the-Father), the "symbolic dominates the imaginary."³⁰ This dominance of the symbolic over the real and the imaginary secures its force through the father's reified emblem, the phallus.

Although never mentioned by name, Simone de Beauvoir is the hidden presence in "The subversion of the subject." According to de Beauvoir, Freud

assumes that a woman feels like a mutilated man; but the notion of mutilation implies comparison and valorization.... the fact that feminine desire is focused on a sovereign being gives it a unique character; but the girl is not constitutive of her object, she submits to it. The father's sovereignty is a fact of social order: Freud fails to account for this...³¹

De Beauvoir's critique of Freud is devastating because she critiques Freud from within, and repeatedly charges him with failing to answer (or answer fully) questions that his own work provokes. He takes for granted what he should be able to account for. Precisely because of the irresistible force of de Beauvoir's critique, Lacan tries to account for what Freud took for granted, the significance of the phallus. While, symptomatically, he never mentions *The Second Sex*, Lacan incorporates de Beauvoir's insight that "The father's sovereignty is a fact of the social order." At the same time, Lacan's attempt to resurrect the castration complex returns us to his attack upon idealism that draws comfort from dialectics. His argument for the necessarily phallic character of the Law becomes an argument against revolutionary change.

Lacan addresses the gendered character of his schema, and by implication, the patriarchal language of Freud's description of the Oedipus complex. "The fact that the Father may be regarded as the original representative of this authority of the Law requires us to specify by what privileged mode of presence he is sustained beyond the subject who is actually led to occupy the place of the Other, namely, the Mother."³² Returning to a much earlier argument, Lacan posits a developmental sequence of socialization in which identification with the symbolic Name-of-the-Father supplants an original (and imaginary) identification with the mother. As Freud argues in his account of the Oedipus complex, this identification with the symbolic/social Father requires castration. In order to take the place of the Father, the little boy must accept the Father's judgment. Thus, Lacan argues, the Oedipus complex may be a myth, "But what is not a myth, and which Freud nevertheless formulated soon after the Oedipus complex, is the castration complex."³³

Society castrates every subject (male and female), in the sense that all lack the symbolic phallus that is the emblem of the Law. This phallus thus becomes the icon of the Other's desire. It is a **jouissance** (fulfillment) that is perpetually out of reach. Because the subject desires the Other's desire, and thus to take the Other's place, the subject desires the Other's phallus. In order to achieve the Other's recognition, "the subject here makes himself the instrument of the Other's **jouissance**."³⁴ As with Kojeve-Hegel, the Slave becomes the Master's instrument. But this instrumentality does not prefigure freedom. Instead, the slave pursues the Master's pleasure, for the sake of the Master, and infinitely defers its own desires. **Jouissance**, or fulfillment, only belongs to the Master. Thus, the Slave endlessly chases what it will never achieve, the Master's recognition.

Lacan's description of desire accounts for the ordinary obedience of the vast majority of social subjects living in authoritarian conditions. But Lacan never fully explains why the phallus becomes the valorized mediator of all desire under the Law. He could have argued that in a society dominated by men and by patriarchal traditions, mores, and everyday practices, the phallus becomes a symbolic metonym of male power. This was de Beauvoir's argument. But he does not. Indeed, as de Beauvoir says of Freud, Lacan continues to assume what he should explain. As a student of semiotics, he was always quick to point out the contingencies inherent in all signification. Yet his few attempts to justify this symbology on developmental grounds are hardly convincing. In the mirror stage, he argues,

the subject is captivated by an imaginary construction that misperceives the reality of the infant's dependence. This meconnaissance situates the subject's ego in a perpetually fictional direction. During this process, "the image of the penis... [as] negativity in its place in the specular image... is what predestines the phallus to embody jouissance in the dialectic desire."³⁵

In order to understand Lacan's reification and seeming essentialization of terms like "phallus" and "name-of-the-father," consider, again, his attack upon idealism inspired by dialectics. While Lacan may have been sympathetic to certain structuralist variants of Marxism, he seems to suggest that revolution, as the absolutely Hegelian contest with the other, represents a Lost Cause.

To whomsoever really wishes to confront this Other, there opens up the way of experiencing not only his demand, but also his will. And then: either to realize oneself as object, to turn oneself into a mummy, as in some Buddhist initiation rites, or to satisfy the will to castration inscribed in the Other, which culminates in the supreme narcissism of the Lost Cause... Castration means that jouissance must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire.³⁶

Lacan naturalized the phallus as a symbol of social power; he naturalized male domination in the form of the Law and the Name-of-the-Father; he did so, even as he had the theoretical tools to explore the social structures of domination that inhabited those words. From a psychoanalytic perspective, it would seem that Lacan pulled away from his own insights; that a certain anxiety provoked his phallic language. Perhaps his was simply a failure of (theoretical) imagination. But I think it was more than that. I think Lacan could imagine alternatives, and that provoked repression.

Further, while Lacan was threatened by the existentialism represented by Sartre and de Beauvoir, he was not so threatened as to entirely repress their presence in his work. Sartre is named often as a respondent, and it does not take much excavation to find de Beauvoir as the more or less conscious object of Lacan's arguments about the symbolic phallus. But I suspect there is another, far more threatening presence in Lacan's argument against the revolutionary transformation of the social order. The very fact that Lacan never mentions Frantz Fanon, at least nowhere in *Écrits*, suggest that Fanon represents the real threat to the Name-of-the-Father and that decolonization is the actual object of Lacan's phallic arguments. I will return to this fear of the wretched of the earth after a detour through a film that seems to be an unconscious adaptation of Lacan's essay, Frankenheimer's *The Young Savages*.

The Young Savages

Let me begin my discussion of *The Young Savages* with a synthetic synopsis. The film is a courtroom drama, in the sense that it ends with a climatic courtroom scene. But much of the picture unfolds in poor immigrant neighborhoods, and in spaces reserved for the New York elite (high rise apartments, well-appointed offices). It begins with the premeditated murder of a blind Puerto Rican teenager on his tenement stoop by three members of an Italian (and, presumably, Irish) gang, the Thunderbirds. A politically ambitious District Attorney assigns Hank Bell (Burt Lancaster) to prosecute the case. As the narrative progresses, a series of sub-narratives and flashbacks (from gang leaders, mothers, and neighborhood residents) complicate what at first appears to be a simple case. The first complication is Bell himself. While he lives in an expensive high-rise apartment, has a seemingly perfect blonde wife, and an obedient, poised daughter, the audience learns quickly that he came from Italian Harlem, and that his family name was originally 'Bellini.' At the same moment, the film also reveals that one of the young killers, Danny Dipace, is the son of Hank's old sweetheart from the neighborhood, Mary (Shelley Winters). The reels that follow these first revelations dramatize Hank's struggle with his conscience, and his wife, Karin (Dina Merrill), as he prepares the murder case. Throughout the film, when Karin pleads for the boys, Hank dismisses her, referring to her Vassar education ("here we go with the Vassar theories of social oppression"). Yet through Karin's arguments, and through his reconnection with Mary, Hank begins to rediscover his past, or, more correctly, to recognize the way in which his ambitions and success have caused him to repress his past. This return of the repressed leads Hank to a further recognition: he identifies the social construction of whiteness, and his own participation in that social construction; and, further, he recognizes that his passage to whiteness was mediated by his marriage to the unambiguously Anglo Karin. This recognition allows Hank to acknowledge his identification with the three murderous boys. Consequently, he intentionally sabotages his case. While they do not walk free, none face the consequences of first-degree murder (the electric chair).

At the same time, another parallel narrative explores the perspectives of the gang leaders, the Italian socio-path, Pretty Boy Savarisi, and the ambitious, charismatic, and intelligent Puerto Rican leader of the Horsemen, Zorro. The representation of Zorro creates central contradictions for the narrative. Unlike Pretty Boy, Zorro is not a sociopath. Indeed, he seems to have a clear understanding of the history of immigrant whiteness in the United States, as well as of the repressed cultural contributions of Spanish speaking peoples. Moreover, in a pivotal scene where Bell meets Zorro at home, the latter's tenement rooms have the stereotypical look of Jewish or Italian immigrants photographed by Joseph Riis. There is even an old woman in the foreground doing piece work in the central room. Zorro never demands more than justice, even as he understands that brown-skinned peoples don't receive justice in the U.S. Thus, the film, while clearly told from Hank Bell's point of view, also contains a meta-narrative about immigrants, race, and (in)justice. This meta-narrative competes with Hank's perspective and creates unconscious tensions. Even Bell sees the limitations in the outcome. When the film ends with the confrontation between the blind boy's mother and Bell, he responds to her plea for justice by saying, "A lot of people killed your son, Mrs. Escalante."

Thus, when Hank Bell comes to reflect upon and understand his transition into whiteness, it leads him to form an identification with those left behind. But it does not cause him to fundamentally question whiteness itself. As I will demonstrate below, the film depicts Hank's inclusion as a member of the white race as a castration in which he sacrifices his potential identification with other, non-white, communities, even as he is allowed to re-create himself through a "symbolic ethnicity" that knits together his past and present. In this sense, and not in this sense only, *The Young Savages* echoes the argument Lacan makes in "The subversion of the subject." Just as Lacan remains unwilling to relinquish the language of the castration complex, so too, the film deconstructs the question of race, and then anxiously pulls back from its own knowledge, finally reifying the racial categories it questioned.

Recognition

Throughout the narrative, the film projects a racial liberalism, equating the struggles of the descendants of the "new immigrants" from the 1890-1924 generation with the struggles faced by the newest generation of Puerto Rican Americans. Zorro understands these parallels. In an exchange that both underscores the gang leader's brutal authority and humanizes his character, Zorro explains the racialized order of the streets to Bell. About the Thunderbirds, "the others are bad, but they're the worst."

"You don't like 'em do you? Any of them." asks Bell.

Zorro hears "any of them" as a reference to the other racial and ethnic enclaves surrounding his 'territory.' "Well, man, put yourself in my shoes!" He starts counting on his fingers. "The niggers look down on us. The wops look down on us. The Irish were here before the Indians. Man," he puts his hand on his heart, "my people are a proud race. Puerto Rico ain't no African Jungle. And the wops, what did they ever have? Mussolini? A big stink. Michaelangelo? So what. You ever hear of a guy named Picasso? Pablo Picasso, man. I went all the way down to a museum to look at his paintings. Now that cat is great. The greatest artist who ever lived, man, he sings, and you know..." Zorro trails off as he is interrupted by one of his lieutenants, and together they step outside to beat a delivery boy late on his protection payments.

Zorro's racial soliloquy demonstrates that while racial liberalism may be an option for third-generation Vassar girls and second-generation Italian Americans, new arrivals learn the hard edges of American racial hierarchy from the ground up. Race is a social fact, with real boundaries and affects. But at the very moment that Zorro recognizes the social fact of race, he also recognizes its malleability. "The Irish were here before the Indians..." suggests that social status and racial classifications change over time. "And the Wops, what did they ever have?" As the most recent immigrant group to "become white," Zorro challenges Italian racial status precisely in order to assert his own claim to full American-ness, e.g. to whiteness. Yet even as he challenges racial oppression, for **his** group, he uncritically accepts other forms of racism ("Puerto Rico ain't no African jungle").

Moreover, in the sequence that follows, Zorro reveals the force behind this desire for full citizenship in a white republic. "We got three square blocks here, and we're busting to get out... But while we're here...people got to respect us." When he tells Bell that the money he took from the delivery boy isn't "the point," he emphasizes, once more, that what matters is **respect**. What Zorro seeks is recognition. What he desires is the other's desire. And, in a white republic, that desire is itself shaped by normative racial and physical boundaries ("three square blocks") that imprison those on the outside of white.

Phalluses

At the beginning of the second act, the film reveals its psychoanalytic orientation. The scene opens with a court-appointed psychiatrist on the telephone. Speaking to a disembodied other, he says “I don’t want you to run another Rorschach. ---I don’t care if he’s faking.---I don’t care! What he’s faking reveals just as much as his real reactions...” At that point, Hank barges into the office. In all likelihood, it’s an accident of history that the doctor’s voice echoes Lacan’s attempt to distinguish animals from human beings. “But an animal does not pretend to pretend. He does not make tracks whose deception lies in the fact that they will be taken as false, while being in fact true ones, ones, that is, that indicate his own trail.”³⁷ Nonetheless, the film represents the psychiatric/psychoanalytic perspective as the path to the “truth” that Hank pretends to seek throughout the film. While the film does not reveal this perspective immediately, from the first sequence on, it puts psychoanalytic techniques of representation to work.

From the film’s perspective, the materialized symbolic phallus (the knife, the cane, the pool cue, the harmonica) represents those outside the Law.³⁸ These materialized emblems are “transitional objects” signifying the subject’s fixation upon the image of the phallus, rather than the symbol of the Law. In Lacan’s terminology, these phallic substitutes signify the fixation on the mirror-stage. That is to say, these subjects remain captive to an imaginary **meconnaissance** that prevents their full recognition of the Law. They are members of communities, but not members of the Community. They have not accepted the Name-of-the-Father. Instead, they are a band of primal brothers, unable to achieve full status as Law-abiding citizens.

The film’s first shot: the blind boy, Roberto Escalante, playing solo harmonica beside his sister, an idyllic scene that shifts to a plain brick wall. Then, as the camera moves, the brick wall becomes Thunderbird’s territory, marked out by their emblem in paint. Three young men in leather jackets march toward the camera. The harmonica fades away and there are a few moments of silence as the boys march into the light. An orchestral jazz score inflected with Latin percussion announces their ominous intentions. The continuous tracking shot takes us through the streets of Italian Harlem, toward “Little Puerto Rico,” until the musical climax, then cuts to a shot of the backs of three leather jackets, and three arms simultaneously pulling switchblades from their belts. The camera shows their reflection in the blind boy’s dark glasses as they stab. The camera cuts to his broken glasses on the ground reflecting the boy, arms outstretched, his sister attending his dead body.

While the Thunderbirds remain ciphers throughout the picture, and the precise motivation for the murder is never fully revealed, the stakes involved in the struggle between the gangs is very clear. As Zorro tells Bell after shaking down a delivery boy, “it ain’t even about the money. It’s about **respect**.” What all the gangsters want is respect, the recognition of the other. But rather than seek that recognition from the Law, they seek it from each other. They are locked in poverty, the film argues, in part because they are locked in this struggle between one another. They cannot see what they have in common; nor can they accept their common subservience in the face of the Law. Hank, however, stands above this contest. The film shows that he is tri-lingual, speaking Italian, Spanish, and English with seeming fluency. He is a mediator.

Once again, this futile struggle over transitional objects is marked by materialized symbols. The switchblades are transitional objects representing the penises the boys cannot admit they’ve lost. Nor is this metonymic connection between switchblades and penises simply an interpretive imposition. The film announces the connection quite clearly. At one point, a police lieutenant’s phone call wakes Hank. The lost murder weapons, the knives, have been found. When Bell, angry, asks the lieutenant, “What could I possibly do with them at this hour of the night?” the cop responds “Want a suggestion?” thereby solidifying the connection between knife and penis. The film carries this symbolism further. Both gang leaders also hold phalluses in their hands. Pretty Boy Savarisi fondles a pool cue during his conversation with Bell, while Zorro carries a cane (presumably with a blade inside) as an emblem of his power. In addition, the film establishes an equivalency between the blind boy’s harmonica and the murderers’ blades (they all glint in the sun).

In the climactic courtroom scene, Bell’s final act of sabotage is to exonerate Danny Dipace. Lab reports show that one of the three knives used in the conspiracy had no blood. Bell wants to connect Danny to that knife, thereby demonstrate Danny’s relative innocence. As he badgers the boy, he continually waves the knife in Danny’s face. Bell holds Danny’s symbolic penis in his hand, but, simultaneously, appears to threaten Danny’s castration using that very penis. As the accused breaks down into tears, he declares, guiltily, his innocence, that he did **not** stab Roberto Escalante. This admission represents a break with his gangster community, and, through castration, and his one-year sentence in juvenile detention, a path toward acceptance of the Law.

Mirrors

In addition to metonymic phalluses, the film plays with mirrors in ways that reveal meaning. I've already mentioned the blind boy's glasses. They prefigure a repeated theme. When a group of Thunderbirds threatens Karin Bell in her apartment elevator, one of the boy's looks beyond her, into the elevator mirror, and combs his hair, as the other opens his switchblade. That is, one is fixated by his own imaginary reflection, while the other, again, compensates for his unacknowledged castration with a materialized symbol of what he lost. Another scene, in tenement rooms, has Zorro plead his case for justice as he looks for a few moments into the mirror, and like the Thunderbird, combs his hair. Once again, the stake is recognition. Here the boys look into the mirror, seeking recognition from the misperception that stares back. They want to be seen as this or that, as hard, as solid, as fixed things. The mirror reifies their image. They remain captive to their misperceptions, and thus captive to their poverty.

Some mirrors in the film are physical, some are human. Hank Bell has mirrors. Mary represents the reflection of his past, and his longing to recover some trace of what he's repressed. But Karin represents his present and his future. And her judgment matters to him. Like the image in Escalante's broken glasses, he sees himself through her eyes, and through those eyes seeks recognition as a certain kind of person. I've already indicated the constant tension between Hank and Karin. She attempts to call him to account, and he resists, often belittling her politics and her perspective with anti-elitist slurs. At a political party, Karin makes a drunken scene, ending with her sarcastic remark, "and I'm proud of ole Hank Bellini..." Hank then physically drags her from the party, scolding her: "you third generation progressive, sitting up at Vassar, getting your fat checks from Daddy..."

Yet, in the end, Hank's recognition of his racial transformation is also the recognition of Karin as his racial Master. His exaggerated masculine attempts to control her perspective don't work. He accepts her point of view and understands that she is the phallus that he sought. By internalizing her voice, he symbolically surrenders his own penis, becomes the pure incarnation of the Law, now signifying white supremacy. Hank Bell's discovery of his racial transformation begins with a beating he receives in the subway from a group of young gangsters. In the wake of his attack and her encounter on the elevator, Hank asks Karin, "what do you think of your little victims of social oppression now?" At first, she demurs. But he cross-examines her until she admits that she meant every word when she defended the young gangsters and when she drunkenly questioned Hank's moral compass.

Hank looks down, thoughtfully: "Something else you said. Old Hank Bellini. Danny Dipace said it too. 'Wassa matter Mr. Bellini, you ashamed of being a wop?' ---My old man was ignorant. He thought the way to be a good American was to change your name. It was always easy for me to explain. My father did it. Now I realize I not only went along with it, I was glad. I was secretly glad my name was **Bell** rather than Bellini. It was part of getting out of Harlem. Like marrying you."

Karin responds indignantly, "You married me because you loved me." But Hank is silent, his eyes to the ground. This pivotal recognition shifts the course of the narrative. In the courtroom sequence that follows, Hank intentionally throws the case, making sure the three boys can't be convicted of first-degree murder. Despite the premeditation, despite the racist motivation behind the crime, none go to the electric chair. With the words "A lot of people killed your son" the film evades the fact that premeditated murder went unpunished by attempting to situate that murder in the context of contemporary social and urban problems. But this situation cannot conceal the fact that Bell himself was driven less by a search for the truth of the case, than by a search for his own true identity. By allowing the young murders to escape full justice, he signifies his affiliation with his past, as well as his recognition of the compromises that shaped his path to full inclusion. Whiteness was Hank's castration, and the phallus he desired, Karin, was herself a metonym of white desire. At the same time, his newly discovered ethnic loyalty provides the basis **for racial injustice** against the Puerto Rican community in the form of a color-blind racial liberalism that intentionally ignores the racialized struggles of the city's newest arrivals, in the name of social justice for the children of white-ethnic Americans. Finally, Hank's renewed connection to his father, his family, and his past, through Danny Dipace, provides him with a symbolic compensation for what he'd sacrificed.

Yet the film also leaves one question unanswered: What happens to those left behind in Harlem? Those left out of the symbolic contract of the white republic? In a sense, perhaps the most interesting aspect of this film about race made in 1961 is the almost complete absence of any discussion or significant representation of African Americans. By leaving Blacks out of this discussion of race in America, the film becomes a simulacrum for U.S. social and political policy. At the same time, while Puerto Ricans represented racial others, and their perspective incorporated into the metanarrative of the film, that same perspective is repressed by the film's end, and by the film's acceptance

of a socially constructed, but seemingly inescapable, normative whiteness.

Conclusion

Both *The Young Savages* and “The subversion of the subject” proscribe subservience to socially constructed forms of domination. Both inscribe the inescapability of the Law. It’s not that alternatives to these reified forms of domination were unimaginable. Quite the contrary. Both the film and essay reveal their anxiety about the imaginable through their silences. *The Young Savages* ends with unanswered questions. In particular, what of Zorro and the Horseman? The film represses the concerns of the Puerto Rican community in the name of a racial liberalism that privileges a hollowed-out whiteness. Just as the film’s narrative echoes the theoretical arguments in Lacan’s paper, both conclude with the reinstatement of a reified social construct (the phallus, whiteness), and in doing so, attempt to repress the perspectives of the colonized and oppressed. Despite the importance of the US civil rights movement in 1961, African Americans don’t appear in *The Young Savages*, and, indeed, the only reference to the Black community comes from Zorro’s attack on “the niggers.” I’ve already suggested that Lacan’s most obvious unwritten opponent in dialogue was Simone de Beauvoir. But equally important, I suspect that Lacan’s reification of the phallus attempts to evade, repress, and silence Frantz Fanon.

Like Lacan, Fanon revises Hegel’s dialectic, but from the perspective of colonized desire. The colonized world is the Manichean world. The colonizer (the Master) has stripped the colonized of their culture and left them, instead, a set of impossibly insatiable desires. In particular, the colonized will never receive the Master’s recognition. To be colonized is to be “disreputable” by definition.⁴⁰ Trapped by the desire for an Other’s desire, yet incapable of achieving satisfaction, the colonized subject is constituted as an absence, a lack. This lack provokes envy. “The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonists’ sector is a look of lust, a look of envy.”⁴¹ At the same time, the totalitarian gaze of the colonizer puts the “colonized subject... in a state of permanent tension,” a “muscular tension,” that “periodically erupts into bloody fighting between tribes, clans, and individuals.”⁴² Thus far, Fanon’s description of colonization does not much depart from the Lacanian model of domination in “The subversion of the subject.” Fanon does add the element of embodiment, with the muscular tension produced by the Master’s constant surveillance. And Fanon’s description of the colonized subject’s envy and tension, would seem to capture something of Zorro and his Horseman. But unlike *The Young Savages*, and unlike Lacan, Fanon resists reifying domination. Instead, he returns to the Hegelian notion of praxis, but now in an embodied form. Recall that the Slave becomes the instrument of the Master. But through work, the Slave masters the world and so transcends slavery. Like Lacan, Fanon recognizes Hegel’s idealism and attempts to correct it. Like Lacan, Fanon argues that language forms subjectivity and enforces the normative order. But Fanon finds that it also provides resources for resistance.

The existence of an armed struggle is indicative that the people are determined to put their faith only in violent methods. The very same people who had it constantly drummed into them that the only language they understood was that of force, now decide to express themselves with force. In fact the colonist has always shown them the path they should follow to liberation. The argument chosen by the colonized was conveyed to them by the colonizer.⁴³

The code is the code of the other. But these colonized subjects use it to remake the world. The colonizer attempts to impose the sense that the colonial world is the only one possible. But neither the colonizer, nor Lacan, recognize the resistance they enable.

The work of the colonist is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the colonized. The work of the colonized is to imagine every possible method for annihilating the colonist. On the logical plane, the Manichaeism of the colonist produces the Manichaeism of the colonized.⁴⁴

If the phallus represents the whiteness of the colonizer, the machete, or the switchblade knife, has the potential to cut through those fabrications. The colonized subject, lost in envy and servitude, comes to recognize its new identity through action, through force, and through violence. Violence unifies the colonized into a new people. Moreover,

...violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence....Violence hoists the people up to the level of the leader.⁴⁶

For Lacan, the normative subject recognizes its castration, and therefore its dependence upon a phallic Law. For Fanon, through embodied force, the empowered subject overthrows the Law and establishes a new order where the "people" become the Law. In this description of Fanon's work, I do not mean to advocate for or against his argument. Instead, I am suggesting that this argument is the hidden subtext of both Lacan's "The subversion of the subject" and the film *The Young Savages*. Both the essay and the film attempt to "make even dreams of liberty impossible for the colonized," because both the essay and the film feared the alternative.

Endnotes

1. Author's Note: The following essay represents an expanded version of an argument from Graham Cassano, "Savage Whiteness: The dialectic of racial desire in 'The Young Savages' (1961)," in Delia Konzett (ed.), *Hollywood at the Intersection of Race and Identity* (Rutgers University Press, 2019). The author wishes to thank Delia Konzett for her editorial comments and Dan Krier for encouraging the publication of this paper in its present form.
2. David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 11.
3. David Roediger, 'Afterword: DuBois, Race, and Italian Americans' in Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (eds.), *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 260.
4. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, 57-133.
5. Graham Cassano, *A New Kind of Public: Community, Solidarity, and Political Economy in New Deal Cinema, 1935-1948* (Chicago: Haymarket Press, 2015).
6. Jacques Lacan, 'The subversion of the subject and dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious,' pp.292-325 in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977).
7. See also Graham Cassano, "Critical Pragmatism's Status Wage and the Standpoint of the Stranger," pp.217-239 in Daniel Krier and Mark P. Worrell (eds.) *Capitalism's Future: Alienation, Emancipation, and Critique* (Chicago: Haymarket Press, 2017).
8. Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1902), 151. It is worth noting that despite the fact Cooley uses "his mother" as an example in the passage, he does not assign a value to the "correlative sense of" she.
9. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 5.
10. Kojève, p.6.
11. Kojève, p.9. Here Kojève anticipates (and influences) Lacan's mirror-stage argument. If the imaginary might be recognition by another, then Lacan's symbolic nom-du-pere is recognition "by all others."
12. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. J.N. Findlay (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111-119.
13. Kojève, p.10.
14. Kojève, p.16.
15. Ibid.
16. Kojève, p.18.
17. Kojève, p.21.
18. Kojève, p.23.
19. Lacan, 296
20. Lacan, 297
21. Lacan, 301.
22. Lacan, 302
23. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), 46.
24. Freud, 47.
25. Lacan, 304.
26. Lacan, 305.
27. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: Free Press, 1982), 50-51.
28. Lacan, 310.
29. Lacan, 310.
30. Lacan, 308.

31. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany Chevallier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 52-53.
32. Lacan, 311.
33. Lacan, 310, 318.
34. Lacan, 320.
35. Lacan, 319.
36. Lacan, 324.
37. Lacan, 305.
38. Lacan, 312.
39. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004), 6-7; while Lacan may not have had the occasion to read Fanon's last work (published in 1961) before composing his paper, many of Fanon's arguments were introduced, first, in *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2008), originally published 1952.
40. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 4.
41. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 5.
42. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 16-17.
43. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 42.
44. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 50.
45. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 50-51.
46. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 51.

Shakespeare's Plays of Deranged Authority: The King's Three Bodies

Dan Krier

Shakespeare and Critical Social Theory

William Shakespeare wrote potent literary productions that reflected declining feudalism and emerging capitalism with uncanny veracity. Shakespeare's history plays are propelled by storylines that not only narrate sequences of historical events but also recognize the social ontology of the threshold of capitalism. The protagonists in Shakespeare are rarely one-dimensional characters, but complex individuals with subtle, essentially modern psychological structures who have become representative types in Western thought. This article focuses on one of Shakespeare's least-performed history plays, *John, King of England*, here referenced by the shorter title, *King John*, probably written and first performed about 1595.¹ Shakespeare frequently dramatized infighting among warring factions of privileged aristocrats and royals, but he also depicted the rising commons, an emergent bourgeois order of walled towns and cities, and the displacement of honorific statecraft with a new "politics of commodity," a concept featured prominently in *King John*. Shakespeare identified the central structures of both fading feudalism and rising capitalism, mapping the relationship between universal values, individual lives, and the mediating structures of social particularity. He was, in short, an early and remarkably fine sociologist. Shakespeare's phrasings, metaphors, characters, and sequences of action were so well crafted that they leapt off the stage to circulate widely through modern culture. Shakespeare's plays were not only performed but were published and read as literature. His audiences and readers were exposed to synthetic images that captured and preserved the feudal order as it disappeared and was canceled into emergent modern capitalism. Shakespeare depicted early modern social dynamics with such clarity and dramatic power that he made capitalist society comprehensible to itself. Modern society became aware of its own tragic potentiality in the mirror of Shakespeare's plays.²

Social Theory and Shakespeare's Hamlet: Studies in Deranged Subjectivity

Shakespeare played a pivotal role in the formation of German post-idealist philosophy, including movements of thought that culminated in critical social theory (Paulin 2003). *Hamlet* received an unusual amount of analytic attention during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Paulin 2003: 436-466; Jones 1949). *Hamlet* depicted an empire (Danish) in the midst of a political and economic crisis after Hamlet's father defeated Fortinbra's Norwegians, thereby securing tenuous colonial tribute. Upon the death of Hamlet's father, succession did not proceed to Hamlet (the oldest son under primogeniture) but passed to Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, under *tanistry*, in which the "worthiest" are elected to positions of high authority (Fischer 1989: 693-4). Under **tanistry**, the death of a sovereign necessarily generated a succession crisis until a charismatically qualified warlord was selected. Such participative procedures of election by co-equals was common to Danelaw England (Fischer 1989: 793) and in Nordic booty capitalism (Veblen 1919), where constant Viking warfare privileged leadership by charismatic warriors. While Denmark's economy was rooted in pre-capitalist extraction of tribute from client states, the play mentions contact with burgher capitalism in

the Rhineland, bringing individualistic capitalism into conflict with the fading but still dominant aristocratic honor system. Economic difficulties caused by England's slow remittance of tribute payments to Denmark hover in the background of the play, while an emerging market economy operates as an anomic force, threatening to upend the warrior tribute economy while destabilizing status orders by the rise of non-nobles. Hamlet remarks that the "age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe" (Ham.5.1.135-7). In *Hamlet* and the history plays, the language of town, trade, and profit frequently appear. Hamlet expresses his depressed mood in economic terms: "O God, O God, How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world!" (Ham.1.2.132-4). Hamlet criticizes his mother's over-quick marriage to Claudius as a result of business calculation: "Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (Ham.1.2.179-80). The merchant Polonius famously advises his son to dress as a sober burgher: "Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, rich not gaudy; For the apparel oft proclaims the man" (Ham.1.3.70-2). Polonius further warns against debt: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be, for loan oft loses both itself and friend, and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry" (Ham.1.3.75-7). Despite these intimations of burgherly conduct (Hamlet attended school in Wittenberg), aristocratic status honor dominates the education, life experiences, and heroic action in *Hamlet* and Shakespeare's history plays.

Beginning with Freud, psychoanalysts developed an extensive "Hamletology" as a primary way to comprehend problems of modern subjectivity. Freud's collected works contain hundreds of references to Shakespeare and his account of the Oedipus complex is based at least as much upon Hamlet as upon Sophocles' play. Ernest Jones (1910) developed Freud's treatment of Hamlet into a book-length study that documented a century of intense, mostly German, inquiry into the "mystery of Hamlet" by Goethe, Schlegel, Coleridge, and Herder. All were fascinated by Hamlet's vacillating character, overdeveloped introspection, infinite deliberation, and reflection that froze him in "melancholic inaction." Hamlet was no action-hero, but he made a fair archetype for Durkheim's Stoic-Egoist. Lacan's sixth seminar on Desire (1958-9) notes Hamlet's emotional impact upon readers and playgoers, especially in English and Schlegel's German. To all of these thinkers, there was something psychoanalytically representative about Hamlet, who prefigured Freud's aim-inhibited patients in his blocked desire, a man neurotically unable to act while remaining stalled in self-reproach. By almost any measure, the neurotic Hamlet would have made a rotten king, worse than the hysterical Richard II. Neurotic kings have difficulty fulfilling their symbolic mandate or exercising traditional authority. Kings who doubt their absolute position of authority or who attempt to act "ethically" upon the query of a sublime Big Other, who become mere tools of a higher authority, can neither reign nor rule. Hamlet, like Shakespeare's King John (below), Hamlet was not fit to be king.

Shakespeare's King John: Derangements of Authority

While Hamlet's deranged psyche inspired philosophers and psychoanalysts, King John, the Henriad, and many of Shakespeare's tragedies exhibit profound derangements of social order and disturbances of authority. Something is amiss with Shakespearean kings and fathers, protagonists perpetually searching for legitimate authority that they rarely, if ever, obtain in pure, unadulterated form. Derangements of authority in Shakespeare can be clarified through comparison with Max Weber's (1978) famous delineation of three pure types of authority: **legal authority**, traditional authority, and charismatic authority. The legal authority in pure form is based upon rational grounds and "belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands" (1978: 215). **Traditional authority**, in contrast, is rooted in "established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them" (1978: 215). **Charismatic authority** is grounded upon "devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him" (1978: 215). Legal authority is impersonal, associated with a formal office whose orders command obedience by "virtue of the formal legality ... within the scope of authority of office" (1978: 215-6). Both of the other forms of authority are personal. Obedience to the commands of a person occupying traditional authority is literally based upon the "sanctity of age-old rules and powers" that do not bind the traditional figure by "enacted rules" (1978: 216). Obedience to a person possessing charismatic authority is rooted in "personal trust in his revelation, his heroism, or his exemplary qualities" (1978: 216)

Clearly, all of Shakespeare's monarchs possess traditional forms of authority, and the irrationality of such authority lies on the surface of Shakespeare's history plays. King John, Richard II, Richard III, Henry VI are all

characterologically flawed, ineffectual or destructive monarchs who acquired sovereign power based solely upon primogeniture, rules of kingly succession that grant priority by a series of rather irrational and arcane rules to royal blood and symbolic legitimacy. Kings must be “right-born” to a lawfully wedded queen to legitimately rule as king. Illegitimate “base-born” sons of kings were barred from succession to the crown. Shakespeare’s plays were written during a period of enormous religious tension and revolution, when the rising commons and a new politics of commodity were openly challenging the privilege and unchecked prerogatives of the aristocracy. Hence, most of his sovereigns supplement traditional power with legal and/or charismatic authority.

In Shakespeare’s *Henriad* and *King John*, traditional crowns are contested from the moment they are placed upon royal heads, inspiring Kantorowicz’s analysis of the political theology associated with the “king’s two bodies,” which was based largely upon his reading of *Richard II* (1997: 24-41). To Kantorowicz, the corporeal body of short-lived traditional kings is distinct from the sovereign’s (social) sublime body that reigns without ceasing as sacred, collective representation of the state: “The King is dead, long live the King!” In *King John*, Shakespeare’s most profound play of deranged authority, authority is split, as Lacan would predict, into a triad. Here, the sovereign power of kings is fractured into three bodies: corpo-“real,” imaginary, and symbolic.³ Divided and animated by different characters, the king’s three bodies map onto and combine in complex forms with Weber’s three modes of legitimate domination: corpo-real bodies and their irrational rules of succession are bound with traditional authority, imaginary bodies of reigning and warfare correspond with charismatic authority, and the symbolic bodies of ruling, judging, and lawgiving relate to legal authority. In *King John*, two contenders for the throne -- King John and Prince Arthur -- struggle over the traditional power borne by corpo-real bodies. The “imaginary” body of the king – the character most capable of acting with noble warrior honor expected of Kings – is the charismatic “Bastard” who can never ascend to symbolic legitimacy. Finally, the papal legate, Cardinal Pandolf, personifies pure symbolic power associated with impersonal, rule-bound, office-holding, legal authority.

In the play, *King John* is not the play’s emotional point of identification nor its dramatic, action-hero: these positions are clearly occupied by his nephew, the bastard son of King Richard the Lion-Hearted (**Coeur-de-Lion**).⁴ At dramatic turning points in the play, the Bastard stands out as the sole character who fully embodies the (second) imaginary body of kings, the collective representation who reigns with nobility and fights with a charismatic power. In the play’s second act, only the Bastard maintains honorific dignity, desires heroic fighting, seeks vengeance for King Richard’s death, and resists debasement and compromise. King John, in contrast, weakly accepts a truce brokered by citizens of a burgher town, vacillates meekly during invasion, and kneels in submission before the papal legate. The Bastard wants the glory of war rather than dishonorable peace, a painful fight to the death rather than long life in dishonored comfort.

The Bastard is clearly charismatic in Weber’s sense: his authority does not derive from an office nor from traditional possession of symbolic legitimacy. Instead, he is obeyed because he exhibits a “certain quality ... by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (Weber 1978: 241). Shakespeare’s fracturing of authority animated by three distinct characters -- the corpo-real King John-Prince Arthur dyad, the imaginary charismatic Bastard, and the symbolic-legal Cardinal Pandolf -- not only sheds light upon early modern sovereignty but upon contemporary derangements of authority.

Bastardy and the Two Bodies of Traditional Authority

King John opens with a French ambassador insulting King John’s “borrowed majesty” to his face, alleging (correctly as it is soon revealed) that he sits upon a throne usurped from “thy deceased brother Geoffrey’s son, Arthur Plantagenet... [the] right royal sovereign” (1.1.8-15). King John’s mother, Queen Eleanor, acknowledges that John possesses the throne without the clear right to it: his reign is not supported by traditional rules of primogeniture, and therefore Arthur, not John, is the rightful bearer of the king’s first corpo-real body. Without clear authority recognized by proper title, war (the fight to the death) is the only traditional mechanism to settle sovereignty, and King John calls for “war for war, and blood for blood, controlment for controlment” (1.1.19-20). Queen Eleanor’s full awareness of the improper symbolic hold reminds John that success in war (strong possession) is the only means to secure the throne:

KING JOHN: Our strong possession and our right for us.

QUEEN ELEANOR: Your strong possession much more than your right,
 or else it must go wrong with you and me:
 so much my conscience whispers in my ear
 Which none but heaven and you shall hear. (1.1.39-41)

The Bastard and his half-brother enter seeking the king's judgment regarding inheritance of the estate of their legal father, Lord Falconbridge. This entire scene plays as a discourse upon inheritance, bastardy, and legitimate possession of the first corpo-real body of authority. The Bastard, knowing that traditional rules of primogeniture may not hold if it is proven he is illegitimate, states: "Heaven guard my mother's honor, and my land!" (1.1.70). The younger but true-born brother seeks to disinherit his elder but base-born sibling, leading the Bastard to complain that his brother has "slandered... [him with] with bastardy" and while not "true begot" he was surely "well begot," declaring: "fair fall the bones that took the pains for me" (1.1.75-80). Queen Eleanor recognizes the Bastard as Richard's illegitimate son:

QUEEN ELEANOR: He has a trick of **Coeur-de-lion's** face;
 The accent of his tongue affecteth him.
 Do you not read some token of my son
 In the large composition of this man?"
 KING JOHN: Mine eye hath well examined his parts,
 and finds them perfect Richard." (1.1, 85-89)

Falconbridge's father on his deathbed revealed that "my mother's son was none of his" and seeks to void the Bastard's legacy. King John, knowing the law, rules in favor of the Bastard: "Sirrah, your brother is legitimate. Your father's wife did after wedlock bear him, and if she did play false, the fault was hers, which fault lies on the hazards of all husbands that marry wives" (1.1.116-119). King John acknowledges that Richard impregnated the Bastard's mother (likened to a calf "bred from his cow") and his summary judgment is harsh: "My mother's son did get your father's heir; your father's heir must have your father's land" (1.1.128-30).

At this point, Queen Eleanor offers the Bastard a knighthood if he agrees to give up his land and join her retinue, to which he agrees. King John performs a simple dubbing ceremony, transforming "good old Sir Robert's wife's eldest son" into "Sir Richard and Plantagenet" (1.1.158-160). This new name and title do not stick, however, and he is not addressed this way again during the duration of the play, instead referenced by his bastard status in myriad degrading nicknames. Shakespeare makes clear that illegitimacy bars even the noblest character from full aristocratic recognition. After a brief meeting with his mother who confirms that he is indeed the illegitimate son of Richard **Coeur-de-lion**, and after repetitive, overdrawn, joking references to his bastard status, such as "Sir Robert might have eat his part in me upon Good Friday, and ne'er broke his fast" (1.1.234-5), he embraces his status as the illegitimate offspring of a powerful warrior king. The Bastard, in full possession of the imaginary qualities of character, appearance, and charismatic courage of his noble father, nevertheless will be denied opportunity to possess the traditional throne or acquire symbolic authority.

Act 2 opens at the closed gates of the walled town of Angers, where two war camps are formed. One is composed of King Phillip of France, protector of England's Prince Arthur and his mother Lady Constance, who seeks to defend young Arthur's claims to the English throne and its dominions. Among King Phillip's retinue is the Duke of Austria, who wears a lion skin taken off **Coeur-de-lion's** body after he was killed by the Duke. The second war party is comprised of an English invasion party, including King John, Queen Eleanor, and the Bastard. The burgher citizens of Angers, faced with two claimants to the English throne, refuse to lower the town gates to admit either party. King Phillip of France threatens the town: "Our cannon shall be bent against the brows of this resisting town" (2.1.37-42). In contrast to Major (1980: 163-4), who views the commons as a weak part of the European polity, impotent and servile in the face of aristocratic domination, Shakespeare's burgher-citizens assume sovereignty while forcing the two kings to fight to the death for recognition, promising to open the town to the victor. Eventually, the two camps engage in battle, and the resulting struggle to the death is short-circuited through a process that the Bastard calls the politics of commodity: self-interested avoidance of the sacrifice to honor. The resistance of this burgher town and its capacity to order kings about indicates the rising power of the urban bourgeois against the knightly aristocratic order. The effectiveness of the town's defenses exceeded the offensive capability of either claimant.

The derangement of authority is manifest in the dialogue between the opposing camps. France's King Phillip

argues that King John “hast underwrought his lawful king, cut off the sequence of posterity, outfaced infant state, and done a rape upon the maiden virtue of the crown” (2.1.95-8). Phillip overlays the first corpo-real body of the young Prince onto a picture image of the state, so that Arthur’s physical resemblance to his father is emphasized: “this little abstract doth contain that large which died in Geoffrey” (2.1.101). The action in this scene is framed by battle over legitimate authority, “the blots and stains of right” (2.1.113), with King Phillip claiming to draw authority from “that supernal judge that stirs good thoughts” (2.1.112).

Each claimant accuses the other of usurping authority and makes claims about the legitimacy of the first corpo-real body of Prince Arthur. Queen Eleanor directly accuses Constance of infidelity and Arthur of being an illegitimate bastard: “Thy bastards shall be king that thou mayst be a queen and check the world” (2.1.122-3). For her part, Constance defends the legitimacy of Arthur’s corpo-real body by asserting the physical similarity of father and son: “my bed was ever to thy son... [who is] liker in feature to his father” (2.1.123-4). Corporeal likeness of father and son serves as evidence against symbolic bastardy: the real resemblance guarantees traditional authority. In the end, what one sees in this scene is less a contest over usurpation than the fracking of authority itself, its devolution into three components. After the death of Richard, a crisis of succession occurred, such that authority itself was deranged in thirds, only one of which (traditional authority of the corpo-real body) is in contest.

During this dispute over traditional legitimacy, the Bastard focuses single-mindedly upon avenging his father’s death through combat with the Duke of Austria. The Bastard is the imaginary carrier of charismatic authority who remains above law and outside tradition, and unable to attain recognized symbolic status. He nevertheless fills the vacuum of power in scene after scene as the ineffectual King John stalls and concedes. The two parties -- King John-Queen Eleanor and Prince Arthur-King Phillip of France -- remain in contention for sublime authority in the sense of Kantorwicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies* (1997), but it is entirely rooted in claims surrounding legitimacy of each claimant’s traditional corporeal body. At the moment when the natural body of King Richard fell to the Duke of Austria, the second sublime body of the king – the king that “never dies,” the “mystic body of his subjects and nation” (1997, 32) detached in search of its next bearer (“The King is Dead, Long Live the King”). John and Eleanor seized the moment and forced a coronation while Arthur and Constance fled to France. Either natural “base” body, John’s or Arthur’s, could serve to bear the sublime majesty of kingship. Since neither party yielded to the other’s claims, warfare was needed to determine legitimacy. Warfare is needed for resolution. To avoid war, King Phillip ridiculously turns to the “men of Angers” to settle the disputed sovereignty: “Let us hear them speak whose title they admit, Arthur’s or John’s” (2.1.199-200), setting up a struggle for recognition of authority. In a bizarre Weberian inversion of power, the burgher citizenry of a walled town are given the power to determine royal sovereignty: the citizens refuse to recognize either corporeal body as sovereign, and while both natural bodies are present, both are potential bearers of the sublime second body, and until the dispute is resolved, sovereignty itself has been usurped by the town. The citizen spokesman for the town argues that “he that proves the king, to him will we prove loyal; until that time have we rammed up our gates against the world” (2.1.273-6).

And so, the battle ensues between the forces of King John and King Phillip. Such that Honor itself was wasted before the self-interest of a town that refused to recognize the illegitimate bearer of the sublime body of the king. A lull in the fighting led the combatants to appeal once more to the town to declare a winner, which the town refused to do:

CITIZEN: Heralds, from of our towers we might behold
 From first to last the onset and retire of both your armies,
 Whose equality by our best eyes cannot be censured
 Strength matched with strength and power confronted power.
 Both are alike, and both alike we like.
 One must prove greatest, While they weigh so even,
 We hold our town for neither, yet for both.” (2.1.325-332)

Without recognition by the town, and without a battle to the death, sovereignty is here literally suspended, proving Schmitt’s famous dictum: “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception” (Schmitt 1985: 5). The power to suspend the law, to declare a state of exception, generates sovereignty. In this sense, the citizens of Angers temporarily usurped power and functioned as sovereign authority. The town’s defensive wall (a symbolic crown) prevents successful attack by either adversary. The town will admit, recognize, and submit only to the winner of a struggle to the death. So, yielding to the town, the two king’s prepare to remount their attack upon each other. Until, that is, the Bastard derives a better plan.

The Bastard's Soliloquy on Commodity

The charismatic Bastard filled the power vacuum created by the contest of kings by convincing them to temporarily suspend their enmity in order to combine forces against the town: “be friends awhile, and both conjointly bend your sharpest deeds of malice on this town...till their soul-fearing clamours have brawled down the flinty ribs of this contemptuous city” (2.1.379-84). The kings agree to cooperate and “lay this Angers to the ground... this peevish town [with] saucy walls... that we have dashed them to the ground” (2.1.403-7). This further derangement of authority leads the town's citizens, who fear their imminent destruction, to deploy their burgher values and barter a marriage between King John's niece, Lady Blanche, and King Phillip's son, Louis. Rather than fight to the death (dying into traditional honorific values), the town engages in haggling, bargaining, and market discourse to seek material advantage in compromise for the mutual gain of all. Rather than die into values, the town encourages the kings to live with enhanced value.

A long scene of debased higgling ensues: eventually all parties accept the proposed marriage to secure material gain. King John, recognizing that this marriage will secure his crown from young Arthur, sweetens the deal by giving an exceptionally large dowry to Louis, and with hands joined, the now-peaceful parties enter the town to attend the brokered wedding ceremony. Only the Bastard resists, and disgusted by the display of “love so vile,” launches into the famous commodity soliloquy:

BASTARD: Mad world, mad kings, mad composition!
 ...France, whose armour conscience buckled on,
 Whom zeal and charity brought to the field
 As God's own soldier, rounded in the ear
 With that same purpose-changer, that sly devil,
 That broker that still breaks the pate of faith,
 That daily break-vow, he that wins of all,
 Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids, --
 Who having no external thing to lose
 But the word 'maid', cheats the poor maid of that --
 That smooth-faced gentleman, tickling commodity;
 Commodity, the bias of the world,
 ...this advantage, this vile-drawing bias,
 This sway of motion, this commodity...
 This commodity,
 This bawd, this broker, this all-changing word,
 ...resolved and honourable war,
 To a most base and vile-concluded peace.
 ...Since kings break faith upon commodity,
 Gain, be my lord, for I will worship thee. (2.2.562-599)

Traditional honor and warrior zeal were abandoned in debased, transactional dealing. In the Bastard's view, only death in battle, the full struggle to the death affirmed and energized values by sending warriors to the fall (vale) of death. In the town, and in aristocratic society touched by the town, traditional warrior gods were brought down by commodity while gain (profit) was worshipped.

He that Holds His Kingdom Holds the Law

In Act 3.1, a new player emerges on the scene: Cardinal Pandolf, the papal legate who represents the third division of the king's body, and the third of Weber's triad of power. Kantorowicz's distinction between the first, natural body of the king (the frail perishable corpse) and the second, sublime body of the king splits a third time. The natural body (the real body) remains, but the sublime body splits into the symbolic sovereign (the occupants of law who rules) And the imaginary body capable of fulfilling -- fleshing out -- the reign and warfare necessary to sovereignty. We have then:

- The first “real body” as the bearer of traditional sovereignty
- The second “imaginary body” who charismatically reigns and fights as a collective representation

- The third “symbolic body” ruling impersonally as an office-holding, legal sovereign

In the person of Cardinal Pandolf, a papal emissary sent by the pope to constrain King John, the law as Big Other, as abstract symbolic order of language and law devoid of personal, imaginary, or real supplement enters into the play's narrative. Pandolf initiates a long discourse on sovereignty, and the proper ordering of power such that the symbolic laws of the international church assume priority over the territorial power represented in the traditional authority of King John. Cardinal Pandolf embodies purely symbolic legal authority and orders King John to install Stephen Langton, the Pope's choice, as the Archbishop of Canterbury. King John's answer was famously quoted by Kantorwicz as an instance of the sublime body of the king:

KING JOHN: What earthy name to interrogatories
Can task the free breath of a sacred king?
... no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
But as we, under God, are supreme head,
So, under him, that great supremacy
Where we do reign we will alone uphold
Without th'assistance of a mortal hand.” (3,1.74-84)

King Phillip labels John's answer “blasphemy” leading John to answer in a blistering critique of the papacy that echoes Luther and other protestant reformers:

KING JOHN: Though you and all the kings of Christendom
Are led so grossly by this meddling priest,
Dreading the curse that money may buy out,
And by the merit of vile gold, dross, dust,
Purchase corrupted pardon of a man,
Who in that sale sells pardon from himself;
Though you and all the rest so grossly led
This juggling witchcraft with revenue cherish;
Yet I alone, alone do me oppose
Against the Pope...” (3.1.88-97)

Pandolf then deploys the Papacy's ultimate weapon: excommunication.

PANDOLF: Then by the lawful power that I have
Thou shalt stand cursed and excommunicate;
And blessed shall he be that doth revolt
From his allegiance to an heretic;
And meritorious shall that hand be called,
Canonized and worshipped as a saint,
That takes away by any secret course
Thy hateful life.” (3.1.98-104)

The Law of Christendom is enforced not only by legal but lethal power: anyone venturing to assassinate King John will be canonized, making John **Homo Sacer** in Agamben's sense. King Phillip and other territorial monarchs who hold power under papal authority are charged by Pandolf with the obligation to go to war against the offending English king. Pandolf orders King Phillip “on peril of a curse” to “raise the power of France upon his head, Unless he do submit himself to Rome” (3.1.119-120), to become a “champion of our church” (3.1.182).

After this further derangement of authority, an extended discourse on law unfolds, revealing that the standoff between King John and the Pope has generated a state of exception. After Pandolf declares that there is “law and warrant” for his curse upon John, Constance declaims that the “law itself is perfect wrong” because “When law can do no right Let it be lawful that law bar no wrong. Law cannot give my child his kingdom here, For he that holds his kingdom holds the law” (3.1.111-115). Constance here anticipates Carl Schmitt's state of exception by three centuries: when the Big Other fades or vanishes, “he that holds the kingdom holds the law.”

As the tension mounts, while King Phillip of France and King John of England stand side by side holding hands in political and military union, various characters weigh in on Phillip's pending decision, each giving reasons in support or defiance of the order to submit to Rome. The Papal Authority in Rome with the entire magical

apparatus of Mother Church (including the rampant Mariolatry that had spread throughout Christendom prior to the Reformation) appears not as the Lacanian patriarchal “Big Other” but as the maternal superego that dominates subjects without the limits of the law. Pandolf states that: “All form is formless, order orderless, Save what is opposite to England’s love. Therefore to arms, be champion of our Church, or let the Church, our mother, breathe her curse, a mother’s curse, on her revolting son” (3.1.179-183). Pandolf invokes the limitless, unconstrained, extra-legal powers of the maternal superego that punishes beyond the bounds of law: “France, though mayst hold a serpent by the tongue, a crazed lion by the mortal paw, a fasting tiger safer by the tooth” than contravene a papal order (3.1.184-6). Such a maternal superego does not carefully uphold law while respecting rational procedure but operates with an excess of fanaticism and vengeance. Pandolf ventures a theory of political theology by labeling this excess over and above the law **religion**: “It is religion that doth make vows kept; But thou has sworn against religion; By what though swear’st, against the thing though swear’st, And mak’st an oath the surety for thy troth: Against an oath, the truth.” (3.1.205-208).

A three-way contest plays out between 1) the territorial, traditional authority of England’s King John, 2) the transcendent, symbolic, and legal authority of the papacy as paternal superego that determines trans-territorial law and trans-local language, augmented by the surplus maternal (religious) superego propping up the law, and 3) charismatic power displayed and exercised by the Bastard. The charismatic Bastard, though physically present, remains aloof from the ongoing discussion, a split-off presence above and beyond the reach of tradition and law. The Duke of Austria, the man who had killed the Bastard’s father, was offended by Lady Constance’s suggestion that he should “doff” the lion-skin he wears as a trophy of combat, and instead shamefully “hang a calf’s-skin on those recreant limbs” (3.1.54-5). These are clearly fighting words, so the Bastard challenges the Duke to interpersonal combat by engaging in a character contest, delivering the line repeatedly to the Duke to egg him on into combat. The Bastard delivers five variants of the line, “hang a calf’s-skin on those recreant limbs,” interrupting and negating the Duke’s contribution to the unfolding discourse, disturbing the proceedings, while literally filling in the vacuum of power in this “state of exception” with demands for immediate, unconstrained, warfare. The charismatic Bastard, not quite the legitimate child of law or tradition, seeks direct access and immediate proof of power through combat.

King Phillip eventually relents, drops King John’s hand, and pledges warfare against England in the name of the pope. John, in response to this betrayal, speaks the language of charismatic authority “France, I am burned up with inflaming wrath, a rage whose heat hath this condition: that nothing can allay, nothing but blood, the blood, and dearest-valued blood, of France...to arms let’s hie!” (3.1.266-274). However, it is the Bastard who embodies the inflamed otherworldly fire of charismatic authority and is dispatched to lead the battle. Act 3, Scene 2 opens with the proof of the Bastard’s charisma: he enters carrying the severed head of the Duke, thus avenging his father’s death and in so doing, by killing his father’s killer, proving superior charismatic qualifications than **Coeur-de-Lion**.

King John dispatches the Bastard to “shake the bags of hoarding abbots” (3.3.7-9), in other words, to seize the assets of the church to pay for England’s war against France. The Bastard does not question the legality or traditional support for this move but says simply: “Bell, book, and candle shall not drive me back when gold and silver beckons me to come on” (3.3.12-13). The Bastard simply follows the charismatic line (first spoken by the Duke of Austria) that “courage mounteth with the occasion”. Pandolf describes these actions thus: “Bastard Falconbridge is now in England, ransacking the Church, offending charity” (3.4.172-3).

King John recognizes that the still-thriving body of Prince Arthur, a legitimate contender to his throne, poses a threat to him. He calls the “yon young boy...a very serpent in my way” (3.3.60-3) and orders Hubert, the guardian of Prince Arthur, to eliminate his rival for the corpo-real body of sovereignty. Pandolf, the papal legate functions less as a neutral patriarchal bearer of language and law, but as a rather nasty partisan willing to cut deals, act ruthlessly, and pervert the law in advance of victory. He recognizes and anticipates King John’s move to assassinate Prince Arthur. He does not act to prevent the murder, but gleefully anticipates the negative consequences: “This act, so vilely born, shall cool the hearts of all his people, and freeze up their zeal” (3.4.149-152). Pandolph anticipates that King John’s actions will drain away his follower’s collective effervescence and lead them to abandon him.

■ Gilding the Lily

In the next scene, King John attempts to secure his hold upon his traditional authority by restaging his own coronation. In a kind of renewal of vows, John forces the barons to witness the pomp and ceremony of an empty

ritual. The second coronation in which John is “recrowned” in a “superfluous” ceremony, angers the barons:

PEMBROKE: ... You were crowned before,
 And that high royalty was ne'er plucked off,
 The faiths of men ne'er stained with revolt;
 Fresh expectation troubled not the land...
 SALISBURY: Therefore to be possessed with double pomp,
 To guard a title that was rich before,
 To gild refined gold, to paint the lily
 ... is wasteful and ridiculous excess.” (4.2.4-16)

The second coronation had the opposite effect from John's intent: rather than strengthen his hold upon the crown, he weakened it. Salisbury remarks that: “It makes the course of thoughts to fetch about, startles and frights consideration, makes sound opinion sick, and truth suspected for putting on so new a fashioned robe” (4.2.24-7). By “making sound opinion sick” John's actions revealed that he was weak, afraid, and not legitimate. When the barons abandon him, and he learns that his mother, Queen Eleanor, has died, King John seriously falters and is unable to act with decision. The Bastard again charismatically fills the void of power, his courage again “mounteth with the occasion” and takes in hand the defense of England against the pending invasion of France with the disloyal nobles.

The concept of borrowed sovereignty, introduced at the beginning of the play, reappears when King John makes a desperate gamble: he submits to the pope. In a remarkable ceremony, King John hands his crown and traditional sovereignty to Pandolf, who hands it back again saying, “Take again from this my hand, as holding of the Pope, your sovereign greatness and authority” (5.1.3-5). John believes that the pope's symbolic-legal authority can be borrowed to fill in the void in his corpo-real traditional authority. In return for his submission, Pandolf promises to call off the invasion, saying: “It was my breath that blew this tempest up... but since you are a gentle covertite, my tongue shall hush again this storm of war” (5.1.17-20).

Courage Mounteth with the Occasion

John's traditional authority collapses in ineffectual doubt, leading the Bastard to swell with charismatic power, filling the void while attempting to stiffen the spine of the King by reminding him of nobility and sovereignty:

BASTARD: But wherefore do you droop? Why look you sad?
 Be great in act as you have been in thought.
 Let not the world see fear and sad distrust
 Govern the motion of a kingly eye.
 Be stirring as the time, be fire with fire;
 Threaten the threat'ner, and outface the brow
 Of bragging horror. So shall inferior eyes,
 That borrow their behaviours from the great,
 Grow great by your example, and put on
 The dauntless spirit of resolution. (5.1.43-52)

The Bastard tells John that he should be more like himself: “glisten like the god of war ... show boldness and aspiring confidence” (5.1.54-6). When the Bastard learns that John has bowed down to the pope in return for the end of the war, the Bastard's charisma pours forth. John is completely unable to rise to the occasion and hands effective rule over to the Bastard: “Have thou the ordering of this present time” (5.1.77). Pandolf was unable to stop the war, leaving the Bastard, not John, as the effective sovereign during the state of exception of the invasion. The Bastard becomes a Schmittian sovereign dictator making decisions and leading the state (Schmitt 2014).

The derangements of authority continue until the very end of the play after King John is poisoned by a monk and dies in the company of the Bastard. The charismatic Bastard was in the position to usurp sovereignty, to continue the state of exception and hold onto power. However, at King John's death, his son Prince Henry magically appears

on stage, and the Bastard knelt before him in submission, saying simply “Let it be so...I do bequeath my faithful services and true subjection everlastingly” (5.7.97-105). The Bastard has the last words of the play, as his charisma fades, as the state of exception ends, as traditional order is restored and the corpo-real body of the king assumes sovereign power, he espouses the honorific sentiments worthy of a king: “This England never did, nor never shall, Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror But when it first did help to wound itself.” (5.7.112-114)

Deranged Authority under Trumpism

The outcome of recent elections in the United States, England, France, Italy, and elsewhere signals a derangement of authority similar to that present in Shakespeare’s *King John*. Like *King John*, Donald Trump’s legitimacy as a sovereign has been in question from the beginning. Questions surrounding Trump include: the role of Russia in tipping the election scales, his loss of the popular vote, the suppression of his income taxes, payments to an actress in pornographic film, alleged ties to oligarchs, his unwillingness to divest his business interests, as well as his ongoing violation of the emoluments clause of the constitution. The Trump administration has been staffed with inexpert functionaries, many of whom remain unconfirmed, and are committed to the detriment of the very agencies they run. Like *King John*, Trump has been a divisive figure who has failed to unify the nation, while labeling as enemies the press, democratic opponents, and many categories of American citizens.

In terms of Weber’s three types of legitimate authority, it is clear that Trumpism and related authoritarian movements in the West have all but abandoned the legal authority and the bureaucratic apparatus of office-holding experts associated with it. While there is a strong element of traditional authority in Trumpism, rooted in arcane and time-worn usages of personal obedience to a leader, Trumpism has primarily based power on charismatic claims. Because, charismatic qualifications depend upon ongoing proof of extraordinary ability and power, charisma is an exceptionally unstable form of authority. A charismatic leader, like the Bastard, does not occupy an office nor uphold traditional power resting upon long-standing custom. Instead, the charismatic leader holds power personally only so long as their charisma is proven. The Bastard repeatedly proved his charisma through military success and could have seized the crown but instead submitted to the new king, reducing the derangement of authority while unifying sovereignty under a single, legitimate head. A charismatic leader who experiences personal weaknesses, political losses, economic declines, military defeats, and other obvious failures quickly dissipate the willingness of followers to obey their commands. The charismatic Bastard was capable of delivering the goods: organizing warfare, defeating enemies, securing church assets, and Trumpism has been sustained on similar successes, including a relatively strong economy, a booming stock market, and symbolic gestures toward delivery of campaign promises. However, the moment that Trump and his counterparts elsewhere fail to deliver the “goods,” when prosperity fades and problems mount, the unstable form of authority known as charisma shall vanish. Because they are rooted in a state of exception, authoritarian movements like Trumpism are insufficiently grounded in tradition or law to hold legitimate authority without the charismatic supplement. It is at the moment when proof of charisma vanishes that Trumpism will likely lose its hold upon power.

Endnotes

1. In the fall of 2017, critical social theorists from a variety of disciplines gathered at Iowa State University to contribute to a Symposium on New Directions in Critical Social Theory. The subject of the symposium was “The Threshold of Capitalism: Shakespeare, Goethe and Critical Social Theory.” Participants examined and critiqued capital as reflected in the mirror of great literature. This article was originally delivered at this symposium and I would like to thank the participants for their comments and helpful suggestions. I would also

like to especially thank David Arditti for his help and encouragement.

2. The Shakespeare secondary literature is impossibly large, even when confined to works relevant to Marxism and critical social theory. A very abbreviated list of works consulted for this article include a) edited collections of essays at the intersection of Marxism, broadly conceived, and Shakespeare studies include Dollimore and Sinfield 1985; Kamps 1995. b) Works

on social ontology, capitalism, politics, or religion and Shakespeare include Smirnov 1936, Dollimore 1984, Barber 1958, Mack 1993, Tennehouse 1986.

3. In a related remapping of Kantorowicz's categories, Santner (2011) transfers the two bodies of traditional authority onto modern democratic societies who possess the "people's two bodies."

4. King John is unusual among Shakespeare's English history plays. It is not temporally connected with the Henriad, and though popular through the 19th century

due to the spectacle and pageantry which predominate on stage, it fell out of favor in the 20th as audiences preferred the inner drama of deranged psychology as in Hamlet, Richard III, etc. In this sense, King John is the anti-Hamlet. Yet, King John like Hamlet himself, is a man who never should have been king.

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The Sorrows of Modern Subjectivity: Capital, Infinity Disease, and Werther's Hysterical Neurosis

Christopher Altamura

“What is this thing, the vaunted demigod, a man?”

— Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther

“Man’s characteristic privilege is that the bond he accepts is not physical but moral; that is, social. He is governed... by a conscience superior to his own, the superiority of which he feels. Because the greater, better part of his existence transcends the body, he escapes the body’s yoke, but is subject to that of society.”

— Durkheim, Suicide

Introduction

In this paper, I argue that Werther, the protagonist of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s novel The Sorrows of Young Werther, represents an extreme case of hysterical neurosis that results from the unique configuration of alienations present in modern societies. Especially important is the special fusion of anomie and egoism that Durkheim referred to as “the disease of the infinite” or infinity disease, which results from capital’s inherent systematic tendencies ([1897] 1979, 287). Further, I argue that Werther’s suicide was the (patho)logical consequence of his modernity-induced hysteria. I end with a brief discussion of what might be done today about the problems raised throughout the paper.

By using The Sorrows of Young Werther as an entry point into the sociological depths of modernity, this paper attempts to contribute to recent efforts to bring classic works of literature back into the purview of sociological analysis (e.g. McNally 2012; Worrell 2015; Krier and Feldmann 2017). Literature provides sociologists with a rich source of condensed, dramatized collective representations set up in varying relations with one another. In this sense, literature offers something of a sociological parallel to the manifest content of dreams for the psychoanalyst; it offers, in symbolic form, society’s unconsciously projected forces that emerge from (and through) social relations and practices. That is to say, literature offers the critical sociologist a “royal road” to the “structurally repressed unconscious” (Freud 1899, 604; Lichtman 1982, 252). The “chaotic aggregations” of collective facticities that appear in great works of literature should, therefore, be viewed as indispensable sociological data (Freud 1899, 161).

In Goethe’s works, society’s structural unconscious manifests in some of its most vivid and fantastic forms. The Sorrows of Young Werther is the novel that propelled Goethe to fame. The story of Werther is the story of a wandering artist, drifting aimlessly through the world, overflowing with passion and dreams. He meets a woman named Lotte, with whom he falls deeply in love, despite the fact (or, as I will argue, precisely because of the fact) that she is engaged. Eventually, Werther, “the turbulent heart,” as Durkheim called him, “[kills] himself from disappointed love” (Durkheim 1897, 286).

Goethe's novel was so influential in its day that many individuals adopted the fashion styles of its main characters, named perfumes, and other items after Werther, and some even went so far as to emulate Werther's suicide by shooting themselves while sitting at their desks (Belinda 2014). As Fromm has noted, "ideas can become powerful forces, but only to the extent to which they are answers to specific human needs prominent in a given social character" (Fromm 1941, 279). That Goethe's novel was capable of exerting such an influence on so many people is evidence that the ideas contained within it articulated important aspects of modern social reality.

Modernity and Subjectivity

Werther's malaise must be understood psychologically and sociologically. In order to adequately grasp the psychological, it is necessary to begin with the sociological, which is ultimately the cause of the former. Werther's psychological pathology is eminently modern, and so are its sociological roots. I, therefore, turn next to a brief sketch of the key features of modern societies that bear most directly upon my analysis.

Modern Societies: Capital, Infinity Disease, Asceticism

At the heart of the issue is the interlacing of mutually constitutive alienations that define modern societies. Mark Worrell has continually pointed to the complex nature of alienation in modern societies by mapping out the affinities between Marx's conceptualization of alienation in a capitalist society and Durkheim's modalities of self-destruction as they are worked out in *Suicide* (Worrell 2019, 248-53; Worrell and Krier 2015, 9-11; *passim*). The crux of the matter is the way that modern individuals are beset, simultaneously, by the alienating forces of heteronomy and autonomy (Worrell and Krier 2015, 10). Put simply, the problem of heteronomy is the problem of an excess of authority, whereas autonomy is essentially the problem of a lack of authority. In both cases, the individual becomes alienated. But this simple, abstract dichotomy does not count for much when we turn to social reality and its concrete complexity. Instead, we find that in society, heteronomy and autonomy "mutually attract one another, repel one another, fuse together, subdivide, and proliferate" (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 426).

Modern societies are plagued by a tripartite structure of alienation consisting of these three distinct but interconnected 'moments': capital (heteronomy)—anomie and egoism, i.e., infinity disease (autonomy)—asceticism (heteronomy). All three alienations are objective in the sense that their origins are social and therefore transcend the individual by definition. In other words, these alienations are objective because they are imposed upon individuals as coercive social facticities (e.g., capitalism, a lack of social integration and regulation, and Protestantism, respectfully).

While the ultimate cause of each alienation is purely social and therefore objective, each particular alienation takes on a different social form and therefore results in a different kind of alienation. Alienation at the level of capital is an objective situation where the individual worker is alienated from "all material wealth" such that "the conditions of his labor confront him as alien property" (Marx [1867] 1990, 1003). Alienation at the level of egoism and anomie is intersubjective and consists of individuals being alienated from one another, resulting in their thoughts and emotions confronting them as alien forces, respectively (Durkheim [1897] 1979, 287). Finally, alienation at the level of asceticism (i.e., self-denial) is subjective, with a part of the individual's own psyche becoming alienated from itself such that one's super-ego confronts the individual as an alien force that functions like "a slave driver" (Fromm 1941, 98). In the following passage from *Capital*, we glimpse these three alienations in the process as a whole:

Modern industry never views or treats the existing form of a production process as the definitive one. Its technical basis is therefore revolutionary, whereas all earlier modes of production were essentially conservative... it is continually transforming not only the technical basis of production but also the functions of the worker and the social combinations of the labor process... it thereby also revolutionizes the division of labor within society, and incessantly throws masses of capital and of workers from one branch of production to another... large-scale industry, by its very nature, necessitates variation of labor, fluidity of functions, and mobility of the worker in all directions. But on the other hand, in its capitalist form it reproduces the old division of labor with its ossified particularities... this absolute contradiction does away with all repose, all fixity and all security as far as the worker's life-situation is concerned... this contradiction bursts forth without restraint in the ceaseless human sacrifices required from the working class, in the reckless squandering of labor-powers, and in the devastating effects of social anarchy (Marx [1867] 1990, 617-8).

As distinct aspects of the social totality that is modern society, each 'level' of alienation is dialectically related to the other. We see from Marx's words above that capital, as an impersonal, heteronomous social force, reproduces

itself (that is, reproduces the social relations of alienation necessary for its existence) through the destruction of virtually any or all other social relations (resulting in anomie and egoism) and through the constant expenditure of human time and energy (requiring asceticism). For its part, a lack of traditional authority (or its potential destruction) makes capital accumulation possible,¹ and leaves the individual free to pursue nothing but the perpetuation of this accumulation by devoting him or herself to capital through ascetic labor in a calling (Weber [1920] 2011, 157, 176-7). Finally, the tremendous amount of dutiful sacrifice on the part of the individual reproduces not only the relations of his or her domination by capital, but capital's destruction of other social relations, i.e., capital's (re)production of anomie and egoism on a larger and larger scale.

In sum, we might well expand on and concretize Zizek's quip that individuals are "free to choose so long as [they] make the right choice" (Worrell and Krier 2015, 10) by stating: modern subjects are forced (by capital) to be left alone (egoism) to freely choose (anomie) to enslave themselves (asceticism) for the sake of capital.²

It is worth pointing out that capital necessarily produces social anarchy where tradition (or culture, in a narrow sense) is concerned, but this is not the case when it comes to the state. Rather, capital depends upon "Calculability and reliability in the functioning of the legal order and administrative system" (Weber [1922] 1978(a), 296). But the state does not and cannot 'fill the gap' in authority leftover from capital's momentous social upheavals. Instead, the state functions alongside capital as a twin source of objective, heteronomous alienation:

Sociologically speaking, the modern state is an "enterprise" just like a factory: This exactly is its historical peculiarity. Here as there the authority relations have the same roots. The relative independence of [pre-modern individuals]... rested on their ownership of... that with which they fulfilled their... functions and maintained themselves. In contrast, the hierarchical dependence of [modern individuals]... is due to the fact that in their case the means indispensable for the enterprise and for making a living are in the hands of the entrepreneur or the political ruler (Weber [1922] 1978(b), 1394).

Despite the size and strength of the state's authority, it is too distant of an authority to compensate for the social bonds that capital has destroyed. The state is too "far from [individuals], it can exert only a distant, discontinuous influence over them; which is why this feeling has neither the necessary constancy nor strength... Thus [individuals] inevitably lapse into egoism or anarchy... [and] without mutual relationships, tumble over one another like so many liquid molecules" (Durkheim [1897] 1979, 389). Weber was right when he declared, "The future belongs to bureaucratization" ([1922] 1978(b), 1401). Today, modern societies are essentially constellations of distant, overgrown bureaucracies (e.g., the state and the multinational corporation) ruling over "an infinite scattering of disparate individuals," a scenario that Durkheim characterized as "a veritable sociological monstrosity" (Durkheim [1893] 2014, 27).

Modern Subjectivities: Neurosis, Hysteria, Obsession

What, then, are the psychological consequences of the sociological situation outlined above? Above all: neurosis.³ Neurosis is a psychological structure or a "subject position" defined by the presence of an overbearing super-ego and an ineradicable Big Other (Fink 1999, 193).

On one level, Freud's super-ego and Lacan's Other are two terms denoting the same thing: the psychical agency responsible for an individual's fundamental, unconscious mode of relating to authority, i.e. how a given subject positions itself in relation to authority (197). However, on another level, the Other is not only (relation to) authority internalized; it is also (relation to) authority in fantasy. The latter is not reducible to the former, but it is dependent upon and greatly influenced by it.

The super-ego or Other as a psychical agency is formed out of an individual's earliest experiences with authority and the stance adopted toward it at that point. As Freud puts it, the super-ego is "the representative of our relation to our parents" (Freud [1923] 1989, 32). So, the super-ego, or Other, is the representative of our early relation to authority, i.e. the internalization of one's relation to an external social force.

For the neurotic, this internalization is accomplished by means of repression (Fink 1999, 76-7, 113). Repression is a mechanism of negation whereby thoughts are forced out of conscious awareness (113). At the root of every repression is a conflict, which is why repressed thoughts are **forcibly** removed and rendered unconscious rather than simply fading into latency thereby becoming preconscious (Freud [1923] 1989, 4-6). The formation of neurosis requires the early experience of a conflict between the pleasures an individual derives from some physical object and the dictate(s) of an external authority (an Other). In this situation, the individual sacrifices the object and its associated pleasure, thereby recognizing the legitimacy of the Other. This can only be accomplished, however, if the individual represses the thoughts attached to the emotions caused by the perception of the Other denying the

individual his or her pleasurable object (e.g., “I still want the pleasurable object,” “I do not want to listen to the Other,” and so on). Where neurosis exists, it is because this repression existed first.

The sacrifice of the pleasurable object does not become a problem for the neurotic if a sufficient replacement is provided. The neurotic individual requires a symbolic, socially dignified replacement for the physical object of pleasure that has been lost. A neurotic psychological structure only leads the individual down a pathological path when this symbolic equivalent is not provided; otherwise, neurotic individuals simply appear to be ‘normal.’ Neurosis, in a pathological sense, requires certain social conditions, namely, egoistic and anomic social conditions. “The neurotic,” says Fink, “has made the sacrifice... They gave up *jouissance* in the hope of receiving the Other’s esteem and got less than they bargained for” (Fink 1999, 69). That is the crucial point—the neurotic subject has given up personal pleasures because of the intervention of some external authority (undergone “castration”), but then does not receive an appropriate substitute in the form of social esteem (lacks a symbolic “phallus”) (172).

Even if the neurotic subject does not receive the social recognition that he or she was hoping for in return for his or her sacrifice, this does not deter the neurotic. Once the initial sacrifice has been made, there is no going back.⁴ The neurotic subject is the subject scorned by authority, forever chasing after recognition withheld. If there is no recognition to be found in the reality of the individual’s social situation (from a sociological Other), then he or she must turn to fantasy (turn to a fantasmatic Other). That is to say, some neurotic individuals will flee from the psychological inadequacies of social autonomy (egoism and anomie) into the arms of psychological heteronomy in fantasy. We are now in a position to piece together the entire process. Below, we see how modern societies produce neurotics *en masse* because of the way the alienating operations of sociological heteronomy—autonomy—heteronomy affect the individual at a psychological level.

Modern individuals are forced to make the initial ascetic sacrifice of their pleasures for the sake of capital (negate themselves via repression—heteronomy), but find no sociological compensation for their troubles due to rampant egoism and anomie (lack a socially certified signifier and valued position in the social order—autonomy), so they aspire to Other things, as it were, at the level of fantasy (neurotic pursuit of the Other’s desire in fantasy—heteronomy). Now we see the Other’s desire functioning as a fantasy-level replacement for a social authority’s recognition that was never received. This is exactly where we find Werther, brimming with infinitude, desperate for the desire of Lotte, the particular individual who, in fantasy, stands in as the Other for Werther.

Before turning to an analysis of Werther there is one final point to make. The neurotic seeks recognition in the eyes of the Other through fantasy, but there is more than one ‘strategy’ for accomplishing this. The two primary ways a neurotic subject goes about wresting desire from the Other are by chasing after the object that the subject believes will render him or her complete in the eyes of the Other, or by becoming the object that the subject believes the Other desires. In the case of the former, we have obsession,⁵ in the latter, hysteria. Werther is a character plagued by an extreme case of hysteria, and a critical analysis of this extreme case should prove fruitful.

The Sorrows of Young Werther

In what follows, I argue, first, that Werther clearly expresses the signs of an individual suffering from life in a world replete with egoism and anomie. I then argue that Werther turns to Lotte so that she might assume the role of the Other in his fantasies, which allow him to rip off recognition from the Other that was not available in his social reality. Finally, I argue that Werther’s suicide can be interpreted as the psychological, fantasy-level equivalent of a magical act, namely, a sacrifice that, through an imagined transfixation of his fantasy, allows Werther to expropriate desire from the Other in perpetuity.⁶

Enamored of Infinity

Infinity disease is the product of egoistic and anomic social conditions. Under these respective conditions, society fails to sufficiently integrate and regulate its members and their thoughts and emotions run wild. As Durkheim puts it, in egoism “reflective intelligence is affected and immoderately over-nourished... thought, by dint of falling back upon itself, has no object left,” and in anomie, “emotion is over-excited and freed from all restraint... passion, no longer recognizing bounds, has no goal left” (Durkheim [1897] 1979, 287). So, egoism is characterized by an “infinity of dreams,” whereas anomie is characterized by an “infinity of desires” (ibid). In both cases, the individual suffers from a morbid attraction to the infinite (271). Turning to Werther, we see that he is undoubtedly an individual,

“enamored of infinity,” as Durkheim described him (286).

Werther’s story unfolds primarily through the letters he pens to his companion, Wilhelm. In Werther’s exasperated ravings and lamentations, infinity disease shines through. Nowhere do Werther’s egoistic sorrows manifest more unambiguously than in the following excerpt:

It has seemed to many that the life of man is only a dream, and I am myself always accompanied by that feeling... when I see that all effective effort has as its end the satisfaction of needs which themselves have no purpose except to lengthen the duration of our poor existence, and that any contentment on one point or another of our enquiries consists only in a sort of dreaming resignation as we paint the walls within which we sit out our imprisonment with bright figures and vistas of light—All that, Wilhelm, renders me speechless. I go back into myself and find a whole world! Again, more in intimations and a dark desire than in realization and living force. And everything swims before my sense and I smile at the world and continue my dreaming (Goethe [1774] 2012, 10).

We see that Werther feels his efforts do not serve any purpose, and because there is nothing for him in the real world, he goes back into himself, into his internal world of dreams.⁷ At one point, Werther explicitly connects his fantasies to his isolation: “and so our happiness or misery lies in the objects we keep company with and nothing in that respect is more dangerous than solitude. Our imagination, naturally impelled to lift itself up and feeding on the fantasies of poetry” (53).

There are also clear signs of Werther’s anomic torments. We see that Werther’s emotions lack regulation when he tells Wilhelm, “My heart is in quite enough ferment of itself. I need lulling... for nothing you have ever encountered is quite so uneven and unsteady as this heart of mine” (7). Indeed, each of Werther’s letters contains its own emotional frenzy, characterized by an outside observer as “a most powerful testimony of [Werther’s] confusion, passion, restless drive, and striving” (88). Such is the exact predicament anomie produces: “Unlimited desires are insatiable by definition and insatiability is rightly considered a sign of morbidity. Being unlimited, they constantly and infinitely surpass the means at their command; they cannot be quenched. Inextinguishable thirst is constantly renewed torture” (Durkheim [1897] 1979, 247).

We can trace Werther’s tortured state quite directly to society’s insufficient regulating of his goals and its failure to provide Werther with a meaningful objective for his actions. At times, Werther cries out for social regulation: “I swear to you, at times I wish I were a day labourer just so that waking in the morning I’d have some prospect in the day ahead, some drive, some hope. Often I envy Albert, I see him up to his ears in papers and imagine I’d be well off being him” (Goethe [1774] 2012, 46). Individuals require—and, when they are wise, accept (Durkheim [1897] 1979, 256)—concrete goals and limitations to their actions, for “one does not advance when one walks toward no goal, or—which is the thing—when his goal is infinity” (248).

All of this leads Werther to “shift from sorrow to extravagance and from sweet melancholy to harmful passion” (Goethe [1774] 2012, 8). Here, Werther is oscillating between the effects of egoism and anomie, where “[egoism] is characterized by a state of depression and apathy,” but “Anomy, in fact, begets a state of exasperation and irritated weariness” (Durkheim [1897] 1979, 356-7). The dual forces of anomie and egoism leave Werther in a cage of freedom: “It is a calamity, Wilhelm, my active powers have waned to a restless lassitude, I can’t be idle but nor can I do anything” (Goethe [1774] 2012, 46). Ultimately, Werther is unable to accept his condition; he cries out, “Father, whom I do not know, who once filled all my soul and have now turned away your countenance from me, call me to you, **be silent no longer, your silence will not deter this thirsting soul**” (81, emphasis added). Unable to attain the recognition of any authority in the real world, Werther will turn to fantasy. As Durkheim explains:

At certain epochs, when disaggregated society can no longer serve as an objective for individual activities, individuals... will nevertheless be found who... aspire to other things... they seek some durable object to which to attach themselves permanently and which shall give meaning to their lives. Since they are contented with nothing real, however, they can find satisfaction only in creating out of whole cloth some ideal reality to play this role. So in thought they create an imaginary being whose slaves they become and to which they devote themselves the more exclusively the more they are detached from everything else, themselves included. To it they assign all the attachment to existence which they ascribe to themselves, since all else is valueless in their eyes. So they live a twofold, contradictory existence: individualists so far as the real world is concerned, they are immoderate altruists in everything that concerns this ideal objective ([1897] 1979, 289).

Of course, the ideal reality to which Werther submits is not made “out of whole cloth.” Although Werther’s relation to his ideal qua Lotte is a fantasized one, it is not one that he simply makes up of his own accord. Instead, it is, as outlined above, dictated by the structure of alienation in modern societies as it is inculcated in the individual. Simply put, this means that the relation Werther has to the Other in fantasy is of a hysterical nature.

Hysteria, Fantasy, and Impossibility

Since Werther has not been given a place within society's symbolic order, he escapes into fantasy. In fantasy, Werther constructs a scenario where the Other does recognize him as valuable, and in this way he can usurp what society has denied him. Since Werther is a hysteric, he goes about attaining this esteem in a very particular way. As Fink puts it, "the hysteric seeks to divine the Other's desire and to become the particular object that, when missing, makes the Other desire" (Fink 1999, 120). There are two important aspects to Fink's statement. First, the hysteric attempts to divine the Other's desire. Second, the Other's desire exists only while its object of desire is in sight, **but not in its possession**. Both aspects are essential in explaining Werther's hysteria and its culmination, his suicide.

Werther is absolutely consumed with divining the Other's (Lotte's) desire and this is most obvious in the way that Werther talks about Lotte's eyes:

"I sought Lotte's eyes. Oh, they passed from one to the next, but me, me, me, who stood there waiting and hoping for nothing else, they never looked at me!—My heart was bidding her a thousand goodbyes and she didn't see me. The carriage moved off and there were tears in my eyes. I watched it drawing away and I saw Lotte's hat as she leaned out and as she turned to look—oh, for me?—My dear friend, I am still uncertain. It is a comfort to me, perhaps she was looking back for me! Perhaps" (Goethe [1774] 2012, 31).

Here, Werther describes a time where he literally sought Lotte's eyes, hoping for one final indication of her desiring him as she was leaving his company. In the few moments when Werther does feel he has become the object of Lotte's desire, we see that her esteem briefly bestows upon him the symbolic "phallus" (i.e. the signifier of value) that he so desperately needs, but that when he imagines her desire is straying from him, his symbol of worth vanishes:

In her black eyes I read a real sympathy for me and for my fate. Indeed, I feel, and trust my heart in this, that she—oh, am I permitted to utter the heaven that is in these words?—that she loves me. Loves me!—And how I value myself, how... how I adore myself now that she loves me... And yet—when she speaks of the man she is engaged to, speaks of him with such warmth, such love—then I'm like a man stripped of all honor and status and whose sword has been taken from him (33).

The quest for Lotte's affection—for the Other's desire—dominates Werther's psyche. He has fled the alienation of social autonomy for the alienation of fantasmic heteronomy:

"How the apparition pursues me. Waking and dreaming it occupies all my soul. Here when I close my eyes, here in my head where the inner vision forms, are black eyes. Here, I cannot express it to you. I close my eyes and hers are there—like a sea, like an abyss, they lie before me, in me, they wholly occupy the senses in my head" (82).

As Werther seeks to divine the Other's desire through his compulsive interpreting of Lotte's eyes, he must also make sure that this desire remains unsatisfied. Indeed, in order for Werther's fantasy to continue, the Other's desire must always remain unfulfilled, for satisfaction brings about the end of desire. This point is crucial: fantasy presupposes, for its very existence, the impossibility of desire's fulfillment.⁸

Since hysterical fantasies depend upon not being realized, the hysteric's best bet is to find someone to play the role of the Other who is in a situation that precludes the person from acting on their desire. In other words, the ideal Other is the one that is already unavailable (either because this person is already committed to someone else or because the subject him or herself is already committed to someone else).

From the very first letter that Werther writes, his hysterical tendencies are apparent. As he recalls a previous relationship, he is clearly conflicted about the way that he led his partner's sister on:

Poor Leonore! And yet I was innocent. Could I help it that whilst her charming and heedless sister was amusing me, a real passion was forming in poor Leonore's heart? And yet—am I wholly innocent? Did I not foster her feelings? Was I not myself delighted by the wholly truthful expressions of her nature, which, though not in the least laughable, so often made us laugh, and did I not—? (5).

These opening lines hint at Werther's hysteria by providing a glimpse of the jouissance Werther derives from the desire he receives from this forbidden Other—he fosters the feelings of his partner's sister precisely because the desire cannot be realized and therefore will allow Werther to sustain his fantasy where he is desired by an Other.

Similarly, when Werther first hears of Lotte he is told she is beautiful and he is warned not to fall in love with her because she is already taken (17). Werther goes out of his way to note, "This information mattered little to me" (ibid). However, when we arrive at the denouement, Lotte delivers the line that reveals that this information mattered greatly to Werther; the impossibility of Lotte being able to satisfy her desires is likely the unconscious reason that

Werther was so drawn to her. She chastises Werther: “Can you not feel that you are deceiving yourself and with intention steering towards your ruin? Why me, Werther? Why precisely me, the property of another man? Why that precisely? I fear, I fear, it is only the impossibility of possessing me that makes this desire so exciting to you” (92). Strictly speaking, the phrasing of Werther wanting to “possess” Lotte makes him sound like more of an obsessive than a hysteric. But it should be clear from the foregoing that Werther’s relation to Lotte is that of a hysteric’s, and his attraction to Lotte stems from the fact that her desire (as the Other’s desire) cannot be realized.⁹

What’s more, it is actually Lotte who is the likelier candidate for an obsessive psychological structure. At the moment when Lotte is worried that Werther has left her, much is revealed:

Werther had become so precious to her... his going threatened to tear a gap in her existence that would never be filled... There wasn’t one [of her friends whom] she would let have him. Through all this thinking she felt for the first time deeply, without quite making it explicit, that her passionate and secret desire was to keep him for herself” (95).

Lacan’s well-known dictum, “There’s no such thing as a sexual relationship,” is clearly apropos (Fink 1995, 104). Neither Werther nor Lotte was engaged in a direct relationship with the other; rather, each individual was really engaged in a relationship with the Other, through the other. That is to say, Werther and Lotte used each other (however wittingly or unwittingly) in order to play out their fantasies with respect to a third term, the Other (fantasmatic authority). In many respects, this fact accounts for the success of Werther’s fantasy, and, by the same token, for Werther’s doom.

Werther’s Suicide: The Sacrificial Transfixation of Hysterical Fantasy

The sustained success of Werther’s fantasy brings with it the progressive imposition of the desires bound up in the fantasy on Werther’s psyche. That is to say, the longer the fantasy is allowed to go on, the more powerful Werther’s desires grow and the more they come to play a vital role in Werther’s psychical economy. So, at the same time that Werther’s fantasmatic desires demand fulfillment, so too does the dissolution of the fantasy that would result from the fulfillment of these desires become an all the more overwhelming and traumatic prospect. It is no wonder, then, that after Werther’s most desperate and direct attempt to throw himself at Lotte ends with Lotte sternly turning him away and telling him that he will never be allowed to see her again, Werther turns to suicide (Goethe [1774] 2012, 103). Werther turns to suicide because of Werther’s fantasy—and therefore Werther’s entire psyche—has been thrown into a state of crisis, and his suicide is his extreme solution to what he feels to be an extreme threat. Indeed, the best evidence seems to show that individuals turn to suicide “when they get into some kind of value trap or situation of excruciating social pressure which produces helplessness” (O’Keefe 1983, 306).

Werther saw suicide as a solution to his crisis because it could function as a sacrificial act. In sacrifice, the individual offers him or herself up to an authority by symbolizing his or her dependence upon the authority, and, in return, the authority’s recognition (i.e. the God’s mana, the Other’s desire, etc.) nourishes and encourages the individual (O’Keefe 1983, 214-7). By offering himself up to Lotte and killing himself to symbolize his dependence upon her, Werther imagines that he will become the missing object that is the cause of her desire for the rest of her life. By giving up his life, he gets his fantasy:

“I shall die.—It is not despair, it is the certainty that I have suffered my fill and that I am sacrificing myself for you. Yes, Lotte, why should I not say it? One of the three of us must go and I will be the one... So be it then.—When you climb the hill on a lovely summer evening, remember me so often coming towards you up the valley, and then look across to the churchyard and to my grave and see the wind in the glow of sunset waving the tall grasses to and fro” (Goethe [1774] 2012, 93-4).

Since the suicidal sacrifice is an irreversible act, this transfixes the fantasy—Werther dies fantasizing about how he has the desire of the Other, forever.

If O’Keefe is correct in his assertion that “Magic is, in general, a way of “expropriating social forces”” (1983, 124), then Werther’s suicidal sacrifice is best understood as an act of psychological magic whereby Werther was able to expropriate the Other’s desire by transfixing his fantasy in fantasy. Werther’s suicidal sacrifice is a way of fantasmatically ‘hacking’ one’s own psychological structure, just as magic is sometimes used to ‘hack’ society’s religious structure. In each case, one works within a pre-existing structure, using the system of moral-symbolic relations one finds there for one’s own ends. In this way, individuals are able to expropriate the forces generated by these structures, e.g. desire from their own psyches, prestige from society, and so on.

Conclusion

Werther's plight is a condensed, dramatized depiction of an extreme case of a neurotic individual's fantasies and sufferings, all of which resulted from the unique configuration of alienation in modern societies. Werther's sacrificial suicide was a magical attempt to expropriate desire from the Other in fantasy because there was no authoritative recognition to be found in his social world (again, because of the modern sociological configuration of alienation). A key takeaway from Werther's story is that, under conditions of alienation, sacrifice goes awry.

In a situation of alienation, the individual sacrifices for the sake of an alien force that rules over him or her. The individual gives up a part of his or her self to this alien force in the hopes of getting something back and being stronger for it. Actually, the individual finds that, despite whatever compensation is received, he or she is ultimately worse off for the sacrifice because, fundamentally, what is strengthened is the extent to which the individual is in a dominated and helpless position with respect to the alien force. Any psychological nourishment the individual might receive in the short run is undermined by its diminishing returns in the long run because it comes at the cost of a deepening of the individual's domination by this alien force and a concomitant exacerbation of his or her psychological and sociological impotence. Over time, then, the individual gives more than he or she gets. This means that under conditions of alienation, the sacrificial process by means of which the individual attempts to sustain him or herself contains a contradiction that tends toward a crisis point. This crisis point is reached when the individual feels utterly powerless,¹⁰ and the antagonism between the individual and the alien force (whether fantasmatic or sociological) then takes on the dimension of requiring a fatal solution—things can no longer continue the way they are. Suicide is the solution Werther felt would be most effective, and far too many modern subjects have apparently agreed.

Is The Evil Then Incurable?

Toward the end of his study of suicide, Durkheim asks, "Is the evil then incurable?" (Durkheim [1897] 1979, 378). Durkheim's answer is that suicide is not an evil that must persist everlastingly but is instead a social-psychological phenomenon with fundamentally social causes. Durkheim argues that in modern societies, the prevention of suicide requires the introduction of a more democratic social organization, specifically in the economic sphere of social activity (390-2).

Substantive democracy means the abolition of alienation.¹¹ In a democratic situation, individuals sacrifice for the sake of a group to which they freely belong and in which they participate as equal co-rulers. Under such conditions, it is axiomatic that sacrifice strengthens the individual since the strengthening of the group is really nothing but the strengthening of the collective aspect of the psyche of each individual that belongs to the group. So, the individual who gives up a part of his or her self to strengthen the group thereby strengthens a part of his or her self **and** the social conditions necessary for continued strengthening of all. The individual, therefore, gets back more than he or she gives.

Democracy's contemporary prospects may seem grim in the moment of Trump and Brexit. However, it is important to keep in mind that never before in human history have so many individuals valued democracy, freedom, equality, and caring for all of humanity (Welzel 2013; Inglehart 2018). What is more, these democratic values are overwhelmingly held by individuals belonging to younger generations, and the rise of authoritarianism in the West is, at least in part, a reactionary response to the cultural ascendance of the values of these generations (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

For better or worse, society is likely hurtling toward a crisis point where these democratic impulses will need to be capitalized on to avoid disaster. As the window for significant climate action narrows and authoritarianism rears its ugly head, a growing body of evidence points to the growing limitations, contradictions, and looming crisis of the current regime of capital accumulation (McNally 2011; Kliman 2012; Carchedi and Roberts 2018). It is telling that many thinkers feel it necessary to "conjure up into their service" (Marx [1852] 2003, 12) the spirit of Gramsci's words—"The old is dying and the new cannot be born" (see Carchedi 2018, 70-4; Fraser 2019, 28)—when making sense of the current situation.

So while subjectively (social-characterologically) the potential for democratization has never been greater, the objective (political, economic, ecological) stakes and difficulty of democratization have never been higher. The day no longer demands, but desperately cries out for genuinely creative thinking that emerges from rigorous empirical analysis and theoretically adept immanent critique of the social order (Antonio 1981; see also, Worrell and Krier 2015, 18-22, on critical poiesis). This paper is an attempt to make a small effort in such a direction.

Endnotes

1. Marx ([1867] 1990, 931-40, *passim*) and Weber ([1920] 2011, 169, *passim*) both make plain what a tremendous obstacle traditional authority is to capital accumulation.
2. This formulation is clearly a downgrade where literary value is concerned.
3. It should be noted that neuroticism and asceticism are not interchangeable concepts. For instance, asceticism sometimes goes hand-in-hand with authoritarianism. Individuals with an authoritarian disposition are often quite proud of the amount of suffering they can endure, but the cause of their suffering and self-denial is due to a fundamentally different kind of relation to authority than in the neurotic's case. The authoritarian relation to authority is perverse (specifically, sadomasochistic), which means that the authoritarian individual suffers (and doles out suffering) because he or she "gets off" on the **enunciation** of authoritative commands (e.g. "lock her up"), not because he or she respects authoritative commands in their own right. The neurotic's asceticism is rooted in the (unconscious) belief that authoritative commands are worthy of respect in their own right (e.g. "the law is the law"), and such neurotics therefore prefer dispassionate commands that are in turn executed dispassionately. So, perverts and neurotics can both be ascetics, but for different reasons.
4. Per Zizek: "by being filtered through the sieve of the signifier, the body is submitted to castration, enjoyment is evacuated from it, the body survives as dismembered, mortified... the order of the signifier (the big Other) and that of enjoyment (the Thing as its embodiment) are radically heterogeneous, inconsistent; any accordance between them is structurally impossible" ([1989] 2008, 136-7).
5. It is true that the obsessive refuses to veer any credit away from him or herself toward the Other's desire as the cause of his or her own desire, but the obsessive is nevertheless as hung up on the Other's desire as anyone can possibly be. Despite his or her seemingly exclusive preoccupation with the object cause of his or her desire, it is the Other that is responsible for the obsessive's maniacal pursuit of the object cause of desire. It is precisely because the obsessive refuses to accept this fact (refuses to subjectify the Other's desire that was the initial cause of his or her own desire) that the obsessive condemns him or herself to a perpetual state of psychological enslavement and alienation in service of the Other (Fink 1999, 118-9, 242-3).
6. My notion of transfixation of fantasy is meant to convey the opposite of the notion of traversal of fantasy. Traversal involves a going beyond or overcoming of the fantasy whereas my notion of transfixation implies that the individual submits to the fantasy. The difference is between life after fantasy and life for fantasy, respectively. The transfixing of fantasy is therefore the complete surrendering of life for the sake of the fantasy.
7. As Durkheim says, "the more the family and community become foreign to the individual, so much the more does he become a mystery to himself, unable to escape the exasperating and agonizing question: to what purpose?" ([1897] 1979, 212).
8. Neurotics are also especially concerned with not becoming the cause of the Other's *jouissance*, as distinct from the cause of the Other's desire. This is related to the resentful side of the neurotic's ambiguous feelings and thoughts toward the Other. On the one hand, the neurotic wants the Other's demands and desires. On the other hand, the neurotic never wants the Other to "get off" on him or her. As Fink explains: "The neurotic may follow his or her parents' demands to a T... but never let the parents know that: "I did what you asked, but I'll never give you the satisfaction of knowing!" Resentment is never relinquished" (1999, 69). The neurotic's grudge against the Other is important, but not fundamental. The neurotic would like to punish the Other by preventing enjoyment, but, more than this, the neurotic **needs** to prevent the Other from "getting off" on him or her in order for the fantasy to continue, and this is the essential point.
9. There are many other examples to support the interpretation of Werther as a hysteric. For instance, he tells Wilhelm, "no shape or form but hers appears in my imagination, and everything in the world all around me I see only in relation to her" (Goethe [1774] 2012, 48). Such is the hysteric's discourse, not the obsessives (see Fink 1999, 118-61).
10. Any "race for an unattainable goal can give no other pleasure but that of the race itself... once it is interrupted the participants are left empty-handed... Effort grows, just when it becomes less productive. How could the desire to live not be weakened under such conditions?" (Durkheim ([1897] 1979, 253).
11. Crucially, the abolition of alienation is not tantamount to the abolition of authority, since the latter leads to disaster, as this paper has shown (see also Worrell and Krier 2015). The abolition of alienation is not the elimination of authority, but, rather, authority's sublation (**aufheben**), such that authority is preserved but fundamentally transformed by being subject to rational and recognized control by the free and equal individuals who co-construct it through their social relations.

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Sociopoetics in the Work of Shakespeare

Thomas Bechtold

This article develops an immanent critique following the dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin in his literary criticism of socio-poetics.¹ Socio-poetics in the reception and composition of Shakespeare's works reflect the first intimations of social and political transformation to a modern nationalized society from a premodern feudal society. This article explores Shakespeare's use of metaphor through his dramatizations and characterizations at the dawn of modernity and the decline of feudalism: identifying contradictions and tensions that intimate this transformation in English society and language, and providing an approach to this globalizing language that partakes in simultaneous modes of confabulation and possible de-commodification of that language through an understanding founded in a socio-poetics. Shakespeare's unique historical position in delimiting later formations of the English language, his composition of modes of reference and literacy, also prepares a potential critique of the contemporary use of figurative language in the present socio-political moment.

Introduction

Adorno always understood that a work of art is realized through the social mechanisms of its reception and circulation: interpretation, commentary, and critique. These forms, he argued, are not brought to bear on works from the outside by those who care about them; rather, he claims, "they are the arena of the historical development of artworks in themselves, and thus they are [art] forms in their own right. They serve the truth content of works as something that goes beyond them, which separates this truth content—the task of critique—from the elements of untruth."
— (Bernstein 2018: 634)

The process of realizing the work of artists is not simply protective and curatorial. Critique, with which readers of Theodor W. Adorno are familiar, but also interpretation and commentary are vital in the socioanalysis of literature. Figurative language in its overstating and understating, with its surpluses and deficits, knowingly performs a mimesis of inimitable phenomena. When those phenomena are events, moments, contingencies, dependencies, relations and processes, never fixed and concrete in their givenness to our senses, we are rightly critical of that misplaced concreteness that we experience in their institutions, status, and reproduction.²

Unlike the hypothetical cases used in analysis of these events and moments, figures of speech are the un-like and imperfect mimesis that abstract these moments from context and gives them over to articulation and intelligibility. The distinguishing mark of using literature or art to inform social science appears first as interpretative of the evidence, not simply explanatory of it (Jameson 1981). With this form of evidence, interpretation is also an adoption of distinguishing criteria allowing for critique; and to do so knowingly, and that means reflexively, allowing for commentary.³

We cannot rely upon brute facts or the hypothetical cases used for abstract conceptualization without carrying out an imprecise reading of the texts that we encounter. By relying on the putatively literal and denotative we are not engaged in precision and rigor. Instead, we are engaged in a distortion that short-circuits understanding as to the yield

of an interpretative approach; we are instead engaged in the alienation of reason as functionaries of instrumental rationality.

All the following texts have predecessors and are effectively retelling of earlier stories.⁴ While I will limit myself to specific texts and specific discourses, a next step would be to do more than give the putative historical confines of the dramas their predecessors and their successive revisions, abridgments, and adaptations. For example, I will not discuss the supposed predecessor stories in “Naufragium” or *Colloquia Familiaria*, or *Peter Martyr’s De orbo novo*, *William Strachey’s A True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight* in relation to *The Tempest*. Nor will I pursue the better-understood emplotment of *The Winter’s Tale* from *Robert Greene’s pastoral romance Pandosto*.

Most important is the metaphor that can say at once and directly in the single-voiced⁵ drama what cannot be said otherwise. This is where the affectation, subjectivity, speech, and subjugation of the mute classes can be discovered most easily. The servants cannot speak, are forcibly denied in some cases, but their actions can speak and no doubt their performance spoke to the audience. Just as then, we need to listen to those voices.

The metaphor is of particular value in the single-voicedness of the medieval dramatist that Shakespeare follows. By using two disparate tropes and condensing them, we are forced into the unpacking of the metaphor in reading as a way of awakening our senses to the differences between even the most like and comparable of things. This is the ‘magic’ of literature, a fusion of difference into a single intelligible constellation; relational and knowable connotatively. It is evident then that such language can be easily construed as private when the metaphor requires learning or cultural familiarity. On the contrary, some metaphors are meant to reach into the plainly evident and readily available, teasing our ‘common sense.’⁶

A socio-analysis that takes literature for its evidence is faced with the surplus of meaning that figurative language proliferates. This surplus can be evaded by a kind of ‘short-circuit effect’ that Pierre Bourdieu notes in the too quick correspondence of social issues in a fictional text to ongoing class struggle (Bourdieu 1993). I will attempt to avoid this pitfall by diving headlong into another; the prolix work of Shakespeare allows that the ideologemes of his texts do indeed always say more than we recognize and generate ambiguity at their horizon.

The Ideologeme

We can compare the ideologeme to the mytheme of Lévi-Strauss related by Paul Ricouer: “...a mytheme is not one of the sentences of the myth but an oppositive value that is shared by several particular sentences, constituting, in the language of Lévi-Strauss, a ‘bundle of relations.’” (Ricouer 1991: 115). We are forced to speak of ideologemes in relation to one another, in a structural arrangement, disposition, or assemblage, that is, like the text, and often in metaphor.

For Bakhtin/Medvedev, the ideologeme is an ethic, psychology, or philosophy—a value system—only analytically separable from the text in which it appears. No plot (nor emplotment), no story, no theme, no motif is possible or concrete until it has been refracted through the ‘prism of the ideological environment.’⁷ (Bakhtin and Medvedev 1978:13-15) Here again, we can turn to Ricouer where he notes that we may speak of a literary world as ‘the Greek world,’ or the ‘Byzantine world,’ meaning the imaginary that comes from the texts that make up this literature. When we speak of an ideologeme we are not just speaking of these literary values as they reference these ‘worlds,’ we are speaking of **sociopoietically** formed values that are oppositional, again, Bakhtin/Medvedev: “This formula is composed of ideological conflicts, material forces which have been ideologically refracted. Good, evil, truth, crime, duty, death, love, victory, etc.—all are ideological values without which there can be no plot or motif.” (Bakhtin and Medvedev 1978: 17)

It is important to recall Julia Kristeva’s insight into the ideologeme here: “The ideologeme is the intersection of a given textual arrangement (a semiotic practice) with the utterances (sequences) that it either assimilates into its own space or to which it refers in the space of exterior texts (semiotic practices)” (Kristeva 1980: 36).⁸

Bakhtin/Medvedev points out that the characters, personae that we readily identify and are familiar with, are an ideological refraction: “...an inseparable element of the unified ideological horizon of the social group...” (Bakhtin and Medvedev 1978) and that they are particular to an era; we cannot identify the hero of a 19th-century romance with the hero of a classical Greek tragedy. The ideologeme also has another function, what Bakhtin/Medvedev refers to as its ‘poetic function’ in providing closure to the artistic work. This is the single-voiced authorial monologue that

closes itself to the multi-voiced substrate—the dialogue that this poetics is drawn from and this monologue obviates. This is a social statement; a tacit **political** statement of the authority of an author, and the mimesis of **authority**, as a reflection and refraction of a division of intellectual labor privileging the author as the final authority and origin of the work.

Prospero

The first ideologeme we will encounter here is that of the author as authority; Shakespeare's voice in *The Tempest* as Prospero—patriarch, duke, and magician—the authors' words form the texts of *The Tempest*.⁹ The story of the domination of nature is not merely the magical rule of an island; it is the domination of natures and desires through unchristian magic.

The protagonist, Prospero, is only possible from the horizon of his grotesques; Ariel, Caliban, silent Sycorax, and even the demonic Setebos, but also the clowns and characters that people Prospero's closed world.

First, Ariel:

ARIEL

Pardon, master;
I will be correspondent to command
And do my spiriting gently.

PROSPERO

Do so, and after two days
I will discharge thee.

ARIEL

That's my noble master!
What shall I do? say what; what shall I do?

PROSPERO

Go make thyself like a nymph o' the sea: be subject
To no sight but thine and mine, invisible
To every eyeball else. Go take this shape
And hither come in't: go, hence with diligence!

Ariel is the good servant, but alas poor Caliban whom Prospero introduces as: "A freckled whelp hag-born--not honour'd with A human shape.":

PROSPERO

Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.

CALIBAN

O ho, O ho! would't had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans.

PROSPERO

Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which
good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison.

CALIBAN

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

What Bakhtin recognizes as heteroglossia, multi-voicedness, and polyphony, Kristeva develops for its system and form.¹⁰ What are these systems? Plainly put, the value systems of a medieval society; the values of divine providence, of monarchy, of aristocratic excellence, and, of the grotesque subject in the over-statements of billingsgate, abuse, bodily comedy; of folk religion, magic and superstition; of the absurd, utterly fanciful, and the monstrous.

For Prospero to disabuse Caliban with vehemence in the preceding passage is to witness the play of Shakespeare's appeal to aristocratic affect and at the same time to avow a comedy of threats and abuse, and to tempt that comedy with Caliban's sexual interests in the chaste Miranda. This exchange also reveals attitudes towards magic, followed by Prospero's threats to curse Caliban. Magic is the property of the educated in renaissance Europe, the most notorious figure in England at the time of Shakespeare being John Dee,¹¹ and whether it is Prospero's teaching Caliban to speak or to rack him with cramps, it is a blurred line in the medieval imagination.

The art of Prospero is occasionally vengeful sorcery:

PROSPERO

Hag-seed, hence!
Fetch us in fuel; and be quick, thou'rt best,
To answer other business. Shrug'st thou, malice?
If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar
That beasts shall tremble at thy din.

CALIBAN

No, pray thee.

Aside

I must obey: his art is of such power,
It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
and make a vassal of him.

The magic of Prospero is the inverse of a human's relation to nature. It is possible to understand the overwhelming effects of nature in a drought or a plague and it is possible to understand that illness and health are not matters of individual art, the influenza of the ancient world is after all 'influence from the stars.' What is this magic then? It is the wish and the reversal of these conditions. To command the elements, to dominate nature, to reverse nature and culture, is the anthropomorphic art of Prospero.

Adorno and Horkheimer on this point:

"Enlightenment is always the critique of myth; what defines a content as mythic from the perspective of enlightenment is that it originates from an illegitimate anthropomorphism, the projection on to nature of what is merely human. In the first instance, identifying anthropomorphic projections was easy: gods, demons, spirits, in short all supernatural phenomena." (Bernstein 2000: 282)

The cultural vehicle of which, the spell, is of course spoken as an exhortation and in verse:

EPILOGUE**SPOKEN BY PROSPERO**

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint: now, 'tis true,
I must be here confined by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell;
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands:
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,

Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

For Bakhtin, the poetics of Shakespeare, although they contain the dialogical elements of sociopoiesis, are deficient in the self-reflexive and fully ideological sense that he cites in the poetics of Dostoevsky:

“But to speak of a fully formed and deliberate polyphonic quality in Shakespeare’s dramas is in our opinion simply impossible, and for the following reasons. First, drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony; drama may be multi-leveled, but it cannot contain **multiple worlds**; it permits only one, and not several, systems of measurement. Secondly, if one can speak at all of a plurality of fully valid voices in Shakespeare, then it would only apply to the entire body of his work and not to individual plays. In essence each play contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero, while polyphony presumes a plurality of fully valid voices within the limits of a single work—for only then may polyphonic principles be applied to the construction of the whole. Thirdly, the voices in Shakespeare are not points of view on the world to the degree they are in Dostoevsky; Shakespearean characters are not ideologists in the full sense of the word.” (Bakhtin 1984: 34)

The author function, to borrow Foucault’s phrase, is simply not fully developed in Shakespeare’s poetics in a literary (cultural) way because the Bard’s poetics have not shed the ideologeme of medieval dramatization. The author still bears something of the authority of the medieval symbol of authority in the Great Chain of Being, and is still a dominant ideologeme in the early modern era yet to be displaced. However, this is also to say that a sociopoiesis is still embryonic at this time in that the multi-voicedness of English literary imagination has yet to emerge in writing.

It is possible for Prospero to engage in the dubious practice of unchristian magic just as it is possible for Caliban to momentarily enjoy a scheme against his master and the will of providence. But Caliban can no more overthrow the art of Prospero than Prospero can deny the will of providence as his sole guide—nor the audience in a mimesis where they cannot deny their adoration of this magi and his mythification by them.

The magic of Prospero is the inheritance of the art of Sycorax and Setebos under divine providence. We can see this as the medieval consciousness in its nostalgia for social order under the great chain of being. And, we can see how this is allegorical in obviating the rise of modern science and technology¹² in an attempt to master nature and sway it to the flux of culture.

By Horkheimer and Adorno’s account, the drama reified as an allegory of medieval nostalgia is a ‘schema’: “In ‘Schema,’ Horkheimer and Adorno see the identificatory spell of the mass-cultural hieroglyph linked to the return of mimesis, as I suggested earlier, coupled with the resurfacing of archaic writing. “Mimesis,” they propose, “explains the mysteriously empty ecstasy of the fans of mass culture.” If this is clearly a perverted form of mimesis, it still feeds on its utopian opposite, the possibility of reconciliation. What “drives human beings into the movie theaters,” Adorno and Horkheimer observe, as it were, in the same breath, may be “the deeply buried hope” that one day the hieroglyphic “spell may be broken.” (Hansen 1992: 52)

However, the author has revealed his hand in the epilogue as many critics have noted.¹³ Shakespeare engages in a double-voiced¹⁴ reflexion on authorship through the poeticized narcissisms of Prospero, a point to be followed with Richard II. It is an effect that demonstrates an interiority from which a voice is supposed to originate and denied to foils and grotesques in their baseness and lack of reflexion.

Richard II

In Richard II we encounter a more dangerous and de-stabilizing language than the momentary allusion and crack in the fourth wall of Elizabethan drama that threatens to reveal the arbitrary and figurative in the early modern socio-political imaginary. In this history, we encounter the character of Richard as an inverted tragedy, the crime of a despot that threatens to reveal despotism, but also the narcissism of dramatization as signs of the private and interior. Here again, the ideologeme of the authority is challenged, more seriously.¹⁵

Richard II is true to Bakhtin’s sense of the poetic as a closed and centripetal structure in drama; heroizing

and tragic in that the center cannot hold. This anticipation of modernity is met within the stratagems of the monarch, Richard, and creative of the ideologeme of the tragic figure of the King unraveled as Terry Eagleton notes: “Something comes out of nothing, as Richard wrests his most elaborate fiction from the process of being dismantled.” (Eagleton 1986: 12). That nothing, the estranged sign, mutable in Richard’s narcissisms is the ironic seed of his destruction.

In *The Tempest*, the reversal of nature and culture resulted in an ideologeme that was not merely evidence of class-struggle, it is the struggle of nature against the (societal) impositions of Prospero as the successor of Sycorax and Setebos, the master of the grotesqueries of Caliban and Ariel—the less-than-human servants of Prospero—but we are fooled should we fail to see that everyone on the island is the servant of Prospero as the inheritor of the final word, in the magic wrested from Setebos in the name of a divine will. And, in a final seduction of art—this myth—the audience is given the comic closure that continues the important ideological task of suspending disbelief.

Here, the reversal is manifest in this as a tragedy, a tragedy not for Richard, but in the anglicized consciousness to the narcissisms of a king. Again, differently, culture and nature are reversed, such that a social nature is colonized by the alienated letter, and the poetics of Richard in his monomania. The symptom, of course, is the anglicized subject for whom this is a tragedy of betrayal and the ambiguity of feeling for a fallen monarch. Lest we are too tempted to euhemerization, recollect this exchange:

JOHN OF GAUNT

Now He that made me knows I see thee ill;
 Ill in myself to see, and in thee seeing ill.
 Thy death-bed is no lesser than thy land
 Wherein thou liest in reputation sick;
 And thou, too careless patient as thou art,
 Commit'st thy anointed body to the cure
 Of those physicians that first wounded thee:
 A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown,
 Whose compass is no bigger than thy head;
 And yet, incaged in so small a verge,
 The waste is no whit lesser than thy land.
 O, had thy grandsire with a prophet's eye
 Seen how his son's son should destroy his sons,
 From forth thy reach he would have laid thy shame,
 Deposing thee before thou wert possess'd,
 Which art possess'd now to depose thyself.
 Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world,
 It were a shame to let this land by lease;
 But for thy world enjoying but this land,
 Is it not more than shame to shame it so?
 Landlord of England art thou now, not king:
 Thy state of law is bondslave to the law; And thou--

KING RICHARD II

A lunatic lean-witted fool,
 Presuming on an ague's privilege,
 Darest with thy frozen admonition
 Make pale our cheek, chasing the royal blood
 With fury from his native residence.
 Now, by my seat's right royal majesty,
 Wert thou not brother to great Edward's son,
 This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head
 Should run thy head from thy unreverent shoulders.

What is the actual domination of nature—the replacement of nature with culture?

It is the replacement of peasants **and** their lands as we can recall from early enclosures in the 1640s in Kett's rebellion.¹⁶ This effectively rounds out the plays and their subterranean personages; the servants Ariel and Caliban and the role of magic appropriated by Prospero is the pastoral fantasy in its own feudal world—an island—and an enclosure of its own. Richard's narcissisms find a moment of revealing just this in the speech of Gaunt:

A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown,
 Whose compass is no bigger than thy head;

And yet, incaged in so small a verge,
The waste is no whit lesser than thy land.

The metaphor of the verge and the land **includes** the people—peasants—that make this land other than waste. The vehicle of the figurative language condenses the affect of a people who would doubtlessly not forget rebellion against enclosure. We here this metaphor again a few sentences later:

Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world,
It were a shame to let this land by lease;
But for thy world enjoying but this land,
Is it not more than shame to shame it so?
Landlord of England art thou now, not king

Here the suppression of this metaphoric meaning by aristocratic single-voicedness is obvious, only kings may rule the world and the land, and all that live on it are their inheritance.

Autolycus

Finally, we turn to the rogue Autolycus¹⁷ in *The Winter's Tale*; the ideologeme of the bandit as an instrument of providence does not merely conceal the outlaw that would be created in the religious wars and the fallout of the English civil war to come. The drama serves an imaginary of the past used to cover over what Giorgio Agamben has problematized in *Homo Sacer*; the life that anyone can take (Agamben 1998).

The margin of life here is the grotesque of the trickster, not that of the dying Gaunt, nor the rustic servants of Prospero. Autolycus declares his marginalization through theft and impersonation. He is also the model of a clever, industrious, and entrepreneurial 'spirit', what a later period will come to recognize in the colonizers, factors, and mercenaries, that are the first transnational forms of various India Companies that would change the world into a global economy.

Autolycus interests us as the concrete product of class fraction in a medieval figure **and** in a proto-modern anticipation of a new lawlessness, an anti-authority that is contemporary in populist libertarian imaginaries following the mythemes of the liberal Anglo-sphere in 'free-markets,' and liberal politics.¹⁸

However, most important in Agamben's assessment is the indeterminacy that a figure like Autolycus represents as cast out of society; his trickery is carefully mediated by Shakespeare as semi-magical and a remnant of paganism. Here again, magic is appropriated in the providential fortunes of the rogue during a time of rustic festivity. Nevertheless, this time the appropriation is the silent inevitability of the divine; no less uncanny than that *deus ex machina* in the sudden and strange pursuit and consumption by a bear.

In a passage echoing the trickery of Odysseus we are given the narcissism of Autolycus and a fellow Shakespearean grotesque:

Clown

What manner of fellow was he that robbed you?

AUTOLYCUS

A fellow, sir, that I have known to go about with
troll-my-dames; I knew him once a servant of the
prince: I cannot tell, good sir, for which of his
virtues it was, but he was certainly whipped out of the court.

Clown

His vices, you would say; there's no virtue whipped
out of the court: they cherish it to make it stay
there; and yet it will no more but abide.

AUTOLYCUS

Vices, I would say, sir. I know this man well: he
hath been since an ape-bearer; then a
process-server, a bailiff; then he compassed a
motion of the Prodigal Son, and married a tinker's
wife within a mile where my land and living lies;
and, having flown over many knavish professions, he

settled only in rogue: some call him Autolycus.

But we cannot settle here, the cheat gives his genealogy: “My father named me Autolycus; who being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.” Bakhtin provides an understanding of the double-voiced character that is Autolycus as a satirizing character, and a destabilizing agent of the drama. This is a more complex subjectivity and a dangerous one. In this short analysis, other than Caliban, and the brief and insurrectionary tone of Gaunt in Richard II, Autolycus is uniquely positioned at the margin of society and is spoken in such a way to reveal the antagonism of class. This is sedimented in the appeal to aristocratic values throughout these plays, but Shakespeare undoubtedly in appealing to an audience of mixed loyalties, and in speaking to his contemporaries allows some of this to slip through in the clowning of Autolycus.

Shakespeare explores the life of the subject in Autolycus, who has the distinction of being the grandfather of Odysseus a figure that is as important to critical theory as to the metonymic sign of the artful wanderer in The Winters Tale. Adorno and Horkheimer explain the use of narcissisms like this:

“The man who, for the sake of his own self, calls himself Nobody and manipulates resemblance to the natural state as a means of controlling nature, gives way to hubris. The artful Odysseus cannot do otherwise: as he flees, while still within the sphere controlled by the rock-hurling giant, he not only mocks Polyphemus but reveals to him his true name and origin, as if the primeval world still had such power over Odysseus, who always escaped only by the skin of his teeth, that he would fear to become Nobody again if he did not reestablish his own identity by means of the magical word which rational identity had just superseded. His friends try to restrain him from the folly of proclaiming his cleverness but do not succeed, and he narrowly escapes the hurled rocks, while the mention of his name probably brings down on him the hatred of Poseidon—who is hardly presented as omniscient. The cunning by which the clever man assumes the form of stupidity reverts to stupidity as soon as he discards that form. That is the dialectic of eloquence.” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 53)

The figure of Autolycus, the predecessor of Horkheimer and Adorno’s mythological Odysseus, is for Shakespeare the mythological trickster. His appeal in The Winters Tale is a combination of aristocratic learning—the classical reference to Autolycus—and the profanation typical of carnivalesque. Unlike the other ideologemes of author and authority, this one, the low and satirical poetry of a rogue and a cheat is raised into relief through comic crimes. These crimes, spelled out in the case of Horkheimer and Adorno’s Odysseus is eloquence, the performative speech that allows the estranged sign to overtake nature through culture. Autolycus is strangely saved the tragedy of Shakespearean characters such as Richard through his own satirical reflexions as his narcissisms are mimetic of a nature that is authentic in its naturalness because divine.

Myth

We are still living with this mythologeme: the outlaw, the wolf that is denied the city, denied becoming a zoon politikon has been inverted in the modern era as the entrepreneur, the privateer, the autonomous and self-sovereign sea-stealer, the plutocrat that simply buys political power. Providence has since been revealed for what it has always been, the myth that allows power relations as the sole determinate of social relations.

This last inversion reveals the social relations of Prospero to have been the allegory of aristocratic valuation of good and bad servants (Ariel and Miranda are the good servants, Caliban and Prospero’s scheming adversaries are the bad servants), and that allegory of Bolingbroke: banned from courtly (political) life only to return as the good king, banned by his own law, and pilgrim under divine law to recover the court (politics). Autolycus the inventor of schemes is a useful key to Shakespeare’s own re-establishment and re-stabilization of his dramas as performances imitative of a human shape always already cast on English discourse, despite surviving parody and satire. The entrepreneur of writing can be met with Horkheimer and Adorno’s quote that cunning reverts to a stupefaction under the ‘natural’ and the familiar. Shakespeare’s text is its own dangerous material that might well have earned the wrath of aristocratic authorities, but it had to be flattering enough to make this troupe its living.

Endnotes

1. **Socio-poetics** is specifically the project of The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics written with Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev. **Dialogism** is developed and refined later in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Bakhtin provides two conditions for a mature literary dialogism, which he attributes exclusively to Dostoevsky's sociopoietic (historical) accomplishment, first: "All of Dostoevsky's major characters, as people of an idea, are absolutely unselfish, insofar as the idea has really taken control of the deepest core of their personality. ...what is important is not the ordinary qualifications of a person's character or actions, but rather the index of a person's devotion to an idea in the deepest recesses of his personality." (Bakhtin 1984: 87) second: "The idea **lives** not in one person's **isolated** individual consciousness—if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is. To take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of **others**." (Bakhtin 1984: 87-88)

2. To make the point apparent in conventional Marxian terms, the givenness or naturalness of things, especially what is dependent and relational about the social, is a reification. Following Adorno, this problem of reification is linked to his complex understanding of mimesis. Importantly this device of demystification first develops in literary critique by Georg Lukacs.

3. This process is elaborated in The Political Unconscious as three analyzable moments in the process of interpretation: first as a "symbolic act," second as the "ideologeme," and third as the "ideology of form." (Jameson 1981:61-62). All of which are elements of his "metacommentary": "according to which our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and to appropriate it." (Jameson 1981:x). For this study I am almost exclusively focused on the ideologeme: "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes." (Jameson 1981:61). Importantly, Jameson's dialectical approach is comparative of 'methods' of interpretation, where the: "...juxtaposition with a dialectical or totalizing, properly Marxist ideal of understanding will be used to demonstrate the structural limitations of the other interpretive codes, and in particular to show the "local" ways in which they construct their objects of study and the "strategies of containment" whereby they are able to project the illusion that their readings are somehow complete and self-sufficient." (Jameson 1981:x). A limitation of this study is that I will not proceed beyond the analysis of the ideologeme to carry out this further task of considering the differing 'methods' of Bakhtin/Medvedev from later writings of Bakhtin, or the differences between Pierre Bourdieu and Theodore W. Adorno on a short-circuit of socioanalysis by mediation, or Jameson and Kristeva on their respective use of the Bakhtinian ideologeme.

4. The plays are mimetic of pre-given tales. What is at work here is how these pre-figured stories were forgotten for novelty; a sense conspicuously over-developed in modernity as an uncritical appraisal of newness. This is a point of departure for Adorno and Horkheimer where they recognize the necessity of unpacking myth, including the forgetting of myth.

5. Bakhtin distinguishes two types of single-voiced discourse: as object-directed discourses and as discourse directed towards an others discourse. (Bakhtin 1984:185-189)

6. Another way to say this is that the use of metaphor in its radical, literary or dramatic performance is to flaunt incoherence as a way to remind the reader to use a connotative sense and not to take what is written or said literally or denotatively. In immanent critique the use of metaphor cannot be overlooked where it draws upon a genealogy of discourses through word choice, stylization, and especially parody. All of which are creative forms of mimesis, and especially important in signaling the reader or hearer to abandon the literal for a figurative context; to allow for un-familiar semblances to find form in our reception through hearing or reading. Sociopoetics in this sense is really a **socio-poiesis** inviting us into dialogue and the making of meaning dialogically, in dialogue with others.

7. Similar to Bourdieu's 'short-circuit effect,' Bakhtin cites this problem here: "Marxists often do not fully appreciate the concrete unity, variety, and importance of the ideological environment, and move too quickly and too directly from the separate ideological phenomenon to conditions of the socioeconomic environment." (Bakhtin and Medvedev 1978:15)

8. Kristeva follows Bakhtin here where the latter uses the terms 'extra-artistic' or 'extraliterary' to indicate ideological environments; encompassing utterances through assimilation, or as exteriorization in reference. These are modes of receptive sense, metaphoric or metonymic in their modes of interpretation. For the sociologist, these different receptive modes have some correspondence with moments of socialization in ideological environments, internalization and externalization respectively. In the former, a metaphorically receptive sense is necessary in representing incongruences of identity formation to oneself, what Bakhtin calls internal dialogism. The self is an overdetermined form that is more assembled than the cultural bric a brac used to form it, it is necessarily hubristic as Derrida has rightly observed, or as is explored here, **narcissistic**. In the latter, a metonymic receptivity is necessary for representing the environment, for a fetishization of things and reification of social beings through the metonym as the name-of-the-part-of-a-whole. That is, in reference to individuated voices at the cost of recognizing a dependence upon a social group discovered through the movement of history. This is of course a mode

of obviating; anticipating and forestalling social consciousness.

9. Bakhtin: "An ultimate semantic authority requiring purely referential understanding is, of course, present in every literary work, but it is not always represented by direct authorial discourse." ... "Drama is almost always constructed out of represented, objectified discourses." (Bakhtin 1984: 188)

10. Multi-voicedness: "To introduce a parodic and polemical element into the narration is to make it more multi-voiced, more interruption-prone, no longer gravitating toward itself or its referential object." (Bakhtin 1984: 226). Kristeva discusses several early forms of multi-voicedness or polyphony as they form in philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle: "[the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon] Not as much rhetorical as popular and carnivalesque, it was originally a kind of memoir (the recollections of Socrates's discussions with his students) that broke away from the constraints of history, retaining only the Socratic process of dialogically revealing truth, as well as the structure of a recorded dialogue framed by narrative." (Kristeva 1980: 81). She also follows Bakhtin in her comments on Menippean Discourse: "In other words, the dialogism of Menippean and carnivalesque discourses, translating a logic of relations and analogy rather than of substance and inference, stands against Aristotelian logic. ... Indeed, Menippean discourse develops in times of opposition against Aristotelianism, and writers of polyphonic novels seem to disapprove of the very structures of official thought founded on formal logic." (Kristeva 1980: 85).

11. (1527-1608) Court Astrologer and advisor to Queen Elizabeth I.

12. e.g. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Shakespeare's contemporary (1564-1616).

13. Terry Eagleton here: "At this point, therefore The Tempest conveniently folds itself up by inviting the audience to applaud, thus breaking the magic spell by foregrounding the theatrical fictionality of its own devices." (Eagleton 1986: 96).

14. Bakhtin describes double-voicedness: "Discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse" and as having many types including: "Unidirectional double-voiced discourse," "Vari-directional double-voiced discourse," and an "active type (reflected discourse of another)". (Bakhtin 1984:199).

15. Very seriously. Bakhtin observes internal dialogism as a double-voicedness in a spectrum of possibilities: "At its outer limit this tendency leads to a disintegration of double-voiced discourse into two discourses, into two fully isolated independent voices. The other tendency, which is inherent in unidirectional discourses provided there is a decrease in the objectification of the other's discourse, leads at its outer limit to a complete fusion of voices, and consequently to single-voiced discourse of the first type. Between these two limits fluctuate all

manifestations of the third type." (Bakhtin 1984:198). Kristeva notes that: "Pathological states of the soul, such as madness, split-personalities, daydreams, dreams, and death, become part of the narrative (they affect the writing of Shakespeare and Calderon). According to Bakhtin, these elements have more structural than thematic significance; they destroy man's epic and tragic unity as well as his belief in identity and causality; they indicate that he has lost his totality and no longer coincides with himself." (Kristeva 1980:83).

16. This is prefigured in the metonymy of Shakespeare's Gaunt where he uses the reference of enclosure: "incaged in so small a verge" to Richard's narrow vision of England as it's pre-figured modernization under Richard as "landlord." The latter is a point shared in Terry Eagleton's critique, however, I am emphasizing the ideologeme, the rise of Bourgeois and mercantile evaluations of land over the traditional and feudal possession of land as part of divine right. But we should attend to another point here, and that is the peculiar appearance of time-space to a critical literary sense. Shakespeare's Richard II de-historicizes the past if we forego the historicity of Shakespeare's own language. But to depend upon historicization is also to depend upon time such that the "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" exist in contradiction where literary sense is honed by historical conditions. For us, the archaisms of Shakespeare invite precisely this sense; in 1640 the figure of speech would have enjoyed a very different sense in its figurative distance.

17. Autolycus: (Αὐτόλυκος) his own wolf, or the wolf itself.

18. Here Kristeva's insight is particularly interesting, in that she recognizes Menippean discourse for its 'contrasts' including: "virtuous courtesans, generous bandits, wise men that are both free and enslaved," as well as 'misalliances' (Autolycus involves himself in several), and she notes: "Its language seems fascinated with the 'double' (with its own activity as graphic **trace**, doubling an "outside")." (Kristeva 1980:83). Her final comment: "The multi-stylism and multi-tonality of this discourse and the dialogical status of its word explains why it has been impossible for classicism, or any other authoritarian society, to express itself in a novel descended from Menippean discourse." (Kristeva 1980:83). This play, to recall for the reader, is no novel. And, following Bakhtin's dialogism, Shakespeare's work is only embryonic as multi-voiced. Nonetheless, Kristeva has managed to track Menippean dialogue as an intertextual event in Shakespeare's narrative (q.v.). In another sense, a critical and literary sense of the sociopoiesis of drama and narrative, we encounter Autolycus as a returning figure that both confabulates and fetishizes anti-authority. In a dialogical analysis this ambivalent character has the important social distinction of being beyond the polis (he is named after a beast, in the manner of a godling) and on this sense, a-social. In this specific sense the horizon of the political is turned into a boundary; only fantasies can persist beyond the pale of Realpolitik.

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Divining Domination: Steve Bannon as a Political Mystagogue

Tony Allen Feldmann

Right-wing commentators (on tv, radio, newspapers, documentaries, or the internet) are often considered a source of misinformation and radicalization in American politics. Understanding the role of such commentators in the political sphere has taken on new significance since the election of Trump, who regularly takes talking points as well as political advice from prominent figures in right-wing media. The purpose of these political “shock jocks” also extends beyond mere political commentary: They offer their audience a framework for understanding the world. This framework contains certain reified perceptions of society and history. Durkheim and those working in his tradition have long recognized that the reification of social forces forms the basis for religious, magical, and mystical beliefs and practices. Therefore, these hosts offer their audience a form of political mysticism. In this article, I will discuss a Durkheimian perspective of religion and magic, and I will show how it can be productively applied to Steve Bannon’s political ideology. I argue that from a Durkheimian perspective, Steve Bannon is a mystagogue, a modern diviner and diviner of the modern, who, to varying degrees, offers his followers a mystical worldview. I also argue that a central part of the dynamic between host and listener is the same as what O’Keefe argued is the core dynamic of magic: the defense of the self against society. This theoretical perspective opens a new way of understanding certain political movements while shedding light on the dangerous phenomena of personalization.

Introduction

Steve Bannon was the chief executive of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign. Before this role, he was the executive chief and cofounder of the right-wing online news outlet Breitbart News. Since 2004 he has also directed and produced several conservative-leaning documentaries (Green 2017a). If you were to watch Steve Bannon’s 2016 documentary *Torchbearer*, then you might come away with the idea that ISIS poses the same threat to today’s global order as the Nazis did in the 1940s. The documentary implies that America may need to engage in a similar military endeavor against this rising threat as it did in WWII. Importantly, to Steve Bannon, this coming war is not simply the product of recent historical clashes between Western and Middle East nations. Rather, it is the result of a nefarious group of elites who are the product of the unfolding of natural and immutable cycles of human history. Indeed, to Steve Bannon, the only way civilizations achieve prosperity and freedom is through these cycles of violent renewal, and America is currently on the brink. Such claims by Bannon cannot be understood simply as types of framing or propaganda; they provide a narrative about the source and nature of contemporary social problems, threats to “American” or “Western” institutions, and even evil. Furthermore, Bannon promotes particular reified social forces and regards certain groups as embodiments of those forces. I argue that Bannon acts as a mystagogue to the extent that he advocates these ideas.

Durkheim argued that when certain representations, symbols, or objects are placed at the center of collective life, people tend to misperceive their social role as the product of something other than collective practice. To Durkheim, such misperception sits at the core of religious and magical practices. I use Durkheimian insights into religion and magic to theorize the role and discourse of Steve Bannon. I focus on Bannon’s 2010 documentary *Generation Zero*

because it depicts central aspects of his political worldview (Greenberg 2017; Green 2017a).

Durkheim's thought can be productively used for critical sociological analysis (Jones, 2001; Smith 2006; Thompson 2016; Gangas 2007; Worrell 2018). Alienation and exploitation are social practices that aren't simply carried out by those with guns and a callous self-interest, though this certainly does happen. "In reality, however, society's hold on the mind owes far less to its physical supremacy than it does to the moral authority with which it is invested. We defer to its rules, not simply because it has the weapons to overcome our resistance, but above all, because it is the object of genuine respect" (Durkheim [1912] 2001:155). People not only regularly view different forms of domination as legitimate, but they often demonize anyone who criticizes such practices. People build up grand narratives celebrating the greatness and necessity of their government to deny certain groups of people their human rights. This fact does not mean that authoritarianism is inevitable. Rather, the point is that social structures and institutions are always alloyed with subjectivity. As Thompson argues, "we need to see social power and domination as a social fact that is embedded in social structures, but that these structures and forms of power are social facts produced by the routinization of consciousness to think along the lines of specific cognitive rule-sets, norms, and value-orientations" (2016: 3-4). In a broad sense, my interest is how certain political narratives relate to social facts and structures. Durkheimian insights into religion and magic can be productively used to this end.

Religion and Reification

Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (EFL) ([1912] 2001) does not simply provide a theory of religion; it can also be viewed as a roadmap to the sui generis effects of collective human practices. New phenomena occur when people come together and interact, new sentiments, thoughts, and behaviors are created, and they have unique consequences. Durkheim's central notion is the social fact. I define a social fact as any collective way of acting, thinking, and feeling that is external, coercive, and irreducible to the individual (Durkheim 1982: 50-59; Worrell, 2018). Social facts are a product of collective activity and as such only exist to the extent that people engage in them. However, they also exist independent of any one person's participation (Durkheim 1982: 55). This idea of a social fact may seem trivially true and pragmatic (obviously people interact, discuss, share, relate, and so on), but Durkheim was critical of pragmatism (Durkheim 1983) and had a more complicated conception in mind. People do not simply come and go from social facts based on their whim. Social facts are coercive, and not simply because disobeying them can result in violence. They are coercive in part because of the dual nature of human subjectivity.

Durkheim argued that we are homoduplex in that the psychic life of people has two aspects: individual and social. "Strictly individual, these states of consciousness attach us only to ourselves, and we can no more detach them from us than we can detach ourselves from our body. The others, on the contrary, come from society; they translate it in us and attach us to something that goes beyond us. Being collective, they are impersonal; they turn us towards ends that we share in common with other men; it is through them and through them alone that we can commune" (Durkheim 2005: 44). Representations and emotions are just as much a part of any given social fact as is behavior. We represent and justify our collective practices to ourselves. "Collective representations are the product of a vast cooperative effort that extends not only through space but over time; their creation has involved a multitude of different minds associating, mingling, combining their ideas and feelings..." (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 18). How we think and feel about our identities, roles, relationships, etc. is shaped by our collective representations. Thus, society is not simply networks of people interacting, but it is also a conceptual thing, part of all of our consciousnesses (see Worrell, 2018). Durkheim brilliantly articulates this in the Introduction of EFL: "If at any given moment men did not agree on these essential ideas ... then any agreement between minds, and therefore, all common life would become impossible. So society cannot abandon these categories to the free will of particular individuals without abandoning itself. To live, society needs not only a degree of moral conformity but a minimum of logical conformity as well" (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 19). Thus, society consists of both the interactions we have and the concepts we share. Society is not just the physical consequences we bring on one another but also the statuses and sentiments we together confer on people, places, objects, and practices. I emphasize this point because authority within society is the product of people collectively conferring a certain status onto a person. We obey and defer to someone or a group because we have invested them with moral authority.

An important tendency is that we often get lost to these projective practices and become blind to the properly social basis of authority. Marx makes this point in a footnote in chapter 1 of *Capital*: "For instance, one man is king

only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him. They, on the other hand, imagine that they are subjects because he is king” ([1867] 149) (Smith (1988) was the first to notice the similarity between Marx’s analysis of the commodity and Durkheim’s analysis of the totem). Marx used the concept of fetishism to describe how people mistakenly attribute autonomous powers to commodities and the capitalist mode of production (Smith 2006). We regularly misperceive the products of collective practices to stem from something other than collective practices. In other words, we reify them.

A Durkheimian perspective on reification differs in an important respect from more traditional ways of viewing reification. Since Lukacs, it has been common to think of reification as the process by which humans don’t see or forget the role they play in creating the social world. This viewpoint is taken up by Berger and Luckmann: “Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world, and further, that the dialectic between man, the producer, and his products is lost to consciousness” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 89). Such forgetting certainly happens, but Durkheim has a more complicated perspective. For Durkheim, people don’t just lose sight of the social; they actively confer something new onto people, places, objects, and practices: moral authority. People misperceive the moral authority they have granted to something as stemming from that thing-in-itself. They believe that a thing possesses certain qualities, substances, forces, or spirits that cause them to have reverence for it (anthropologists and sociologists have offered different ways of conceptualizing this side of reification; see Ellen, 1988 and Silva, 2013). Thus, people are not just passively trampled because they don’t notice their authorship of social forces; rather they participate in their alienation by misperceiving the moral status they confer onto things as a reflection of those things in-themselves. People often get ensnared in a trap of their own making, and, as Durkheim points out in *Suicide* (1951), they can even lose their lives to it. Durkheim’s analysis of totemism results in him making this point.

Durkheim views religion as a particular social fact which is characterized by a specific set of collective beliefs and practices. “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions—beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 46). Durkheim argued in totemic religions the clan does not worship the totem per se because they also have rites regarding basically any representation of the totem including the totemic animal. So, the clan is concerned with something that is shared by the totem, the totemic animal, and any totemic representation but is not reducible to any one of them in particular. Thus, the totem has a two-fold nature: in the concrete, it is an image of a particular animal, and in the abstract, it is a bearer of a universal substance/quality/force (Durkheim [1912] 2001). The totem is just the “material form in which that immaterial substance is represented ... this energy alone is the true subject of the cult” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 141). This force is what Durkheim calls the totemic principle or mana, and the clan believes that it is what sustains the life of clan members “as well as all things that are classified under the totem and participate in its nature” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 152). Belief in mana or the totemic principle is a belief in a substance/quality/force that is shared by the clan, the totem, etc. and accounts for their essential nature, sustains their existence, and is not identical to anyone of them in particular.

The basis for this sense of something internal and external, individual and shared, essential and impersonal, unseen and powerful is society itself. “Religious force is the feeling the collectivity inspires in its members, but projected outside and objectified by the minds that feel it. It becomes objectified by being anchored in an object which then becomes sacred, but any object can play this role ... Hence the sacred character that garbs a thing is not implicated in its intrinsic features, it is added to them. The world of the religious is not a particular aspect of empirical nature: it is superimposed” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 174). The totemic principle is a reified collective representation. The members of the clan misperceive the collective status of the totem as a reflection of some inherent mystical quality or sacredness. Such a misperception is not the result of some deficiency on the part of pre-modern people; it does not stem from an inability to reason correctly (which has been a common argument among social scientists in the past see Styers 2004). Rather, this misperception comes from the very way in which people experience collective practices and representations. “Collective representations ... presuppose that consciousnesses act on and react to one another; they are the result of these actions and reactions, which are possible only through tangible intermediaries. These tangible intermediaries, then, not only reveal the mental state associated with them, they contribute to creating it” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 175). The clan represents itself to itself with an emblem, and just as a person is socialized into respecting the norms of the clan, it comes to relate such respect to the different appearances of the emblem (in the totem, totemic animal, or other clan members).

During rituals, ceremonies, or festivals people experience powerful social forces that generate strong amounts of emotional excitation or collective effervescence. Such effervescence is real. It is just purely social. As a purely social

substance, it only materially manifests in the image of the emblem or the actions of others. “Generally, a collective feeling can become self-conscious only by being anchored in a material object” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 180). People misperceive the social effects they have on one another to be a reflection of some sacred force or mana that is shared by everyone in the group as well as the group’s emblem. “[In *EFRL*] we set out to show that sacred things are simply collective ideals attached on to material objects” (Durkheim 2005: 42). The idea of the sacred isn’t something that each clan member happens to arrive at independently because of the structure of institutions. Rather, the clan collectively and openly believes in sacred forces, and this belief results from the social forces they experience, which they reify and project onto certain people, places, objects, and practices.

Sacred forces are often of either a positive or a negative type. The positive type or pure mana is often viewed as a “benevolent, guardians of the physical and moral order, dispensers of life, health, all the qualities that men value” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 304). The totemic principle is an instance of pure mana. The negative type or impure mana creates “disorder, cause[s] death and illnesses, and instigate sacrilege” (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 304). Just as the sacred is kept separate from the profane, religious practices also involve keeping pure and impure mana separate. As with the totemic principle, impure mana is the misperception of collectively conferred negative status upon certain people, places, objects, and practices for a reflection of some inherent substance or force.

The dynamics of reification are different in Modern society than that of the clan societies that Durkheim studied. Modern people are subject to powerful, distant, and impersonal market forces. The alienating effects of globalized capitalist accumulation can leave people disoriented as they are unable to readily see why society is constantly transforming. Adorno argued that people rely on reified collective representations to provide a “pseudo-orientation” (1950: 622). He furthered this line of theoretical analysis with his concept of ‘personalization,’ which is the “tendency to explain social phenomena that are objectively motivated as the actions of the good or bad persons...” (1950: 663), for example, imagining that an upturn in economic growth is due to the brilliance of a political leader. As Smith argues, “authority fetishism is a response to commodity fetishism” where modern people have a “tendency to explain impersonal social facts as the result of acts by charismatic figures visualized either as enemies or as authorities” (2006: 102-103).

From a Durkheimian perspective, it is not surprising that we find political behavior that is analogous to religion and magic because both sets of human practices are centered around emotionally charged representations and identities. Scholars have long noticed such parallels, and some have proposed concepts like ‘political religions’ to refer to them (Gentile 2005). At times in modern politics, people can attribute mana-like qualities to certain figures or groups. The supremacy of a group deemed to have positive qualities or pure mana and the denial of human rights to the group deemed in possession of negative qualities or impure mana is all but assured when they emerge in modern politics because the pure cannot comingle with the impure without devastating consequences. I will argue that personalization is a major part of Steve Bannon’s politics and that he is, therefore, acting as a mystagogue. I will need to discuss magic and its relation to religion before I explore Steve Bannon’s political worldview.

Magic

Religion and magic cannot always be disentangled because they deal in the same reified social forces. Still, these two social facts tend to have certain roles, beliefs, and practices that are unique to each. I will be focusing on the magician, the laws of magic, and the role of magic within society as analyzed by Mauss as well as O’Keefe. I have chosen these two theorists because they are the two foremost Durkheimian theorists of magic.

Magic refers to the manipulation of some substance/quality/force or mana of people, places, objects, or spirits through specific rites causing automatic efficacy at a distance. Like religion, magic shares the belief in mana. “Mana is power, par excellence, the genuine effectiveness of things which corroborates their practical actions without annihilating them” (Mauss 2001: 137). Unlike religion magic does not revere that which bears mana; instead it manipulates its mana to achieve private ends. Though magic is certainly a social practice, it is not a communal activity. As Durkheim says, “a church of magic does not exist” (Durkheim 2001: 43). Magic does not bind a community together. Rather, magic is carried out between a magician and his or her clientele. A magician is simply anyone who deals in magic (Mauss 2001: 31), and magicians offer their abilities to conduct magic to private persons. “The magician is someone who, through his gifts, his experience or through revelation, understands nature and natures” (Mauss 2001: 94). Magicians have special knowledge and capacities which allow them to tap into the mana of things.

Either they have special knowledge of spells, incantations, ceremonies, potions, ect., or they have exceptional mana which allows them to carry out magic or both. Magicians may develop a following, and Weber classified such figures as mystagogues (Weber 1978).

Mauss pointed out that magic operates through three laws: similarity, contiguity, and opposition. The first law, similarity, has two forms: 'like produces like' and 'like acts on like,' for example, using an 'evil eye' to inflict harm on its recipients. The law of contiguity can be stated as 'the part is in the whole and the whole is in the part,' for example when a psychic needs a piece of a deceased person's property in order to channel his or her ghost. The law of opposition can be formulated as 'like acts on like to produce the opposite.' Mauss gives the example of pouring water on the ground to cause rain and end a drought. The laws of magic are not the source of magical efficacy; they are simply the way in which magical power acts. "Sympathy is the route along which magical powers pass: it does not provide magical power itself" (Mauss 2001: 125). Magical power is based on the mana of things, and in order to manipulate it classification is needed. As the laws of magic illustrate, magic is always dealing in similarities and oppositions, and so the basis for magical practice is in classifying people, places, objects, and practices into groups. "Magic becomes possible only because we are dealing with classified species. Species and classification are collective phenomena." (Mauss 2001: 97). Magical representations will significantly depend on the cultural context because what counts as similar or opposite will depend on an already existing classifying schema.

In an almost criminally neglected work, O'Keefe (1983) provides a stunning synthesis of sociological, psychological, philosophical, and theoretical literature on magic. O'Keefe lays out not only a fascinating theory of magic but also a socio-historical argument of its relation to religion, science, and individualism. O'Keefe argues that magic is a defense of the self against the social by building off of the insights, particularly of Durkheim, Weber, and Freud. "If religion is the projection of the overwhelming power of the group, and if magic derives from religion, but sets itself upon a somewhat independent basis to help individuals, and is, at the same time, frequently reported to be hostile towards religion...then is not the answer apparent? Magic is the expropriation of religious collective representations for individual or subgroup purposes—to enable the individual ego to resist psychic extinction or the subgroup to resist cognitive collapse" (O'Keefe 1983: 14). O'Keefe's Freudian model causes him to emphasize the ego-defense aspect of magic wherein the individual uses collective representations to resist being overwhelmed by the collective consciousness. My interest, however, is in the first aspect of O'Keefe's insightful conception of magic. From a Durkheimian perspective, the notion of mana is eminently social; it is based on reified collective representations. Magic's reliance on mana to achieve its goals demonstrates its collective roots. The magician is, therefore, someone who through their special knowledge uses and reworks reified collective representations for his or her clientele. Horoscopes are perhaps an ideal-typical model of magic. The astrologer uses their special knowledge into the mystical relationship between constellations and date of birth to offer readers insights into themselves and their futures.

O'Keefe argues that the constant expropriation of religious representations, both attacks and renews religion. Sometimes it may lead to the establishment of a new religion. Magicians are in this way cultural entrepreneurs who facilitate a change in people's relations to the sacred and therefore society itself. "Magic is the art of changing" (Mauss 2001: 76). It is in this light that I will argue we need to view certain political commentators.

Political Mystagogue

Politics is not just the battle for power—it also entails struggles over collective representations and collective identity. Certainly, there are soulless Macbeths who are willing to engage in various Machiavellian schemes to attain power. Still, power is a conferred status and all aspiring political leaders must contend with existing collective sentiments if they ever hope to get that status conferred on them. Every revolution is a demonstration that even when someone seemingly has an iron grip on a population, their hold can give out suddenly if a critical mass of people resists. Political commentary and propaganda entail the struggle over the meaning of certain events, policies, statements, etc. It also entails the struggle for the collective sentiment. Political commentators are entrepreneurs of collective sentiment; innovating new arguments, rationalizations, and narratives.¹

Steve Bannon states that Western society is in the middle of a crisis brought about by decadent liberal elites, and he is not alone. Several right-wing political commentators have promoted similar populist narratives. Glenn Beck, CEO and founder of a right-wing TV and radio network and former Fox News host, in his book *Liars: How*

Progressives Exploit Our Fears for Power and Control (2016) claims that liberal elites use scare tactics to push big government on the unsuspecting public to gain power and, ultimately, overthrow capitalism and the republic. Other conservative commentators like Tucker Carlson (2018), a Fox News host, and Ben Shapiro (2019), who is an author, former editor-at-large for Breitbart News, and hosts the right-wing podcast The Ben Shapiro Show, promote similar ideas of how liberal elites have caused America to lose its way. In 2019 Rush Limbaugh, a right-wing radio host, claimed that liberal elites refuse to stop “this mass movement of illegal immigrants from Central America” because those immigrants will help them overthrow the American republic. To Rush Limbaugh, this behavior on the part of elites is rooted in their deep animosity towards average American citizens and the foundations of the American republic, i.e., the Constitution, capitalism, and Christianity. Jeanine Pirro (2018), a Fox News host, argues that there exists a “Deep State” of unelected government employees who mooch off taxpayers and who have conspired to undermine Donald Trump’s presidency. Steve Bannon, however, takes these ideas further than his fellow commentators.

Bannon has a seemingly contradictory political worldview. He self-identifies as a conservative and an economic nationalist (Nelson 2016; Mead 2010). On the surface, Bannon seems like a standard American conservative; he endorses Christian values, supports capitalism, and promotes limited government. However, a more esoteric view of history rests underneath such staples of contemporary American conservatism. The journalist Joshua Green, who personally knows Bannon, articulates some of these contradictions in his book about Bannon’s time working for Donald Trump’s campaign (2017a). According to Green, Bannon has been significantly influenced by a number of anti-Modernist thinkers like metaphysician and occultist Rene Guenon (whose work Bannon has described as “a life-changing discovery”), the Italian fascist theorists and occultist Julius Evola (who was influenced by Guenon), and the Russian fascist theorists and occultist Alexander Dugin (who was influenced by Guenon and Evola; Green 2017a: 206).² Bannon takes three key ideas from Guenon: (1) time is cyclical, (2) the West is in the middle of a six-millennia-long period of spiritual decline wherein tradition is slowly being forgotten, and (3) the best way to ignite a spiritual renewal is through converting a group of elites to spread the message (Green 2017b). Green (2017a) writes about how Bannon is drawn to these writers for two main reasons: they emphasize the importance of tradition and the decadence of modern globalization. So, Bannon endorses modern institutions like the nation-state, a representative republic, and industrialized capitalism, but he also promotes a return to Medieval Christian spiritualism, which some have pointed out never really existed in the way Bannon imagines (Hawk 2019). He bemoans the effects of globalization but supports the economic system driving it.

These contradictions reappear in the principles and policies he promotes. Green claims that Bannon endorses the Catholic concept of subsidiarity, which means that political issues ought to be handled at “the lowest, least centralized authority that can responsibly handle them...” (2017a: 206). Bannon also endorses a strong military, state interference in international trade, and strict immigration controls. Green quotes Bannon saying, “You have to control three things,” he explained, “borders, currency, and military and national identity” (2017a: 207). Bannon states that free trade and mass migration are causing “Western Christendom” to lose its “sovereignty” to non-Western and non-Christian nations, particularly China (BBC 2018). He argues that a liberal globalist elite has pushed mass migration and free trade to suppress wages and enrich themselves, and this accounts for the deindustrialization of America. He states that reversing these policies will reinvigorate America and provide a bulwark for Christian traditionalism. He argues that the post-WWII international order has failed and that nationalism will continue to be ascendant as more people across the West rise to assert their nationalist interests. He envisions a complete reordering of the global economy such that the West is no longer in a “tributary” relationship with China (Ferguson 2018). To Bannon, the biggest obstacle for this transformation is a class of globalist elites.

Bannon believes the elite reached a zenith of corruption and betrayal of Western Christendom after the Great Recession when they bailed themselves out and abandoned the average citizen. Bannon doesn’t portray this elite as simply money-grubbing. In his documentary Generation Zero (2010)³ Bannon offers an explanation of the Great Recession and he lays out how more nefarious forces are at play than callous self-interest.⁴ Bannon features several representatives from right-wing think tanks and conservative politicians to weave together an overall story. He also uses a rather unorthodox theory of American history based on the pseudoscience (Lind, 1997) of William Strauss and Neil Howe’s The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy (1997). Bannon lays out the argument that American history goes through inevitable and necessary cycles. There are four cycles, each lasts about a generation or twenty years, and a full set of cycles takes about eighty to one hundred years. They move from a period of prosperity and stability to ever-increasing instability and decadence until a crisis point hits and the national system is overthrown, renewed, or remade. This cyclical palingenesis is the only way prosperity is created. There are “only a limited number

of social moods, which tend to recur in a fixed order” (Howe 2017). America entered this crisis cycle with the onset of the Great Recession. The economic crisis was brought about because the Baby Boomers, who now control our major institutions, have filtered down their selfish, loose, and materialistic values. He argues that culture changes because elites promote new values through government, schools, and media.

The Baby Boomers developed these irresponsible values in the 1960s, and the Great Recession is portrayed as the culmination of the spread of those values. He also argues that the Great Recession was not caused by a lack of regulation. Rather, it was due to the fusion of big government and big business. Starting in the 1990s, according to the documentary, the Democratic Party became convinced that global finance was the most important issue and started subsidizing Wallstreet. International financiers are soaking up more and more of the profit from risky investments while the American middle-class has to pay for their losses. A major way in which the Democratic Party has been able to fuse big government and big business is through guilting white Americans on issues of race. Democrats loosened lending regulations under the guise of trying to help out black Americans who were claiming they had experienced housing discrimination (For a critique of this line of argument see King 2016). Bannon argues that many of these claims are probably lies because the political activist Saul Alinsky advocated lying in order to “get what you want.” Thus, the Great Recession is ultimately the fault of the immorality of an elite class of politicians and businessmen, and it is implied that the elite’s ultimate goal is to overthrow capitalism. American institutions will go through a crisis that will purify them and lead to a new age of prosperity. As Howe states, “Forests need periodic fires; rivers need periodic floods. Societies, too. That’s the price we must pay for a new golden age” (Howe 2017).

Strauss and Howe’s theory relies on the reification of collective sentiments. They posit that there are only four collective “moods” or archetypes. Each generation is possessed by an archetype which determines how people of that generation behave politically, culturally, and economically. The archetype of one generation causes changes in institutions and child-rearing practices, which causes the development of the next generation’s collective archetype. History is driven by the replacement of one generation after another because a new archetype becomes dominant. Strauss and Howe’s theory is based on reification because the archetypes are not seen as a product of the collective activity, rather they determine collective activity. As historian David Greenberg (2017) points out, “the study of human decision-making in the past—or even the present—becomes all but irrelevant” because of the theory’s determinism.⁵ Bannon uses their theory in his documentary to rework other collective representations for his largely right-leaning audience. The manner in which he does this allows him to provide an explanation of the Great Recession while shielding conservative values like Christianity, capitalism, and the structure of the U.S. government from criticism. Potentially challenging ideas are foreclosed, and his audience’s political identities are affirmed. Bannon is, therefore, acting as a mystagogue by using his special knowledge of reified collective representations to defend a subgroup’s social identity against threatening aspects of the social world. There are three central methods Bannon uses to achieve this outcome.

First, Bannon uses Strauss and Howe’s theory to advance a specific right-wing conception of what it means to be American. “Judeo-Christian” values, “the work ethic, entrepreneurship, decentralization, local government, [and] volunteerism” are portrayed as the crucial aspects of those archetypes that have established America’s leadership on the international stage. The documentary argues that the story about the New Deal, helping to end the Great Depression is wrong. It is claimed that the “little” guys who humbly worked hard and took risks opening new business were the ones who ended the crisis. All recoveries are brought about in the private sector by “the man who pays, the man who prays,” according to the documentary. Contemporary right-wing values are reframed as the true source of prosperity and stability. Thus, any person or politician who does not share these values is, at a minimum, betraying what it means to be American.

Second, the documentary personalizes the movements and policies opposed by the right-wing, treating them as if they come from an immoral group of people. In the documentary, the elite have a two-fold nature: in the concrete, they are certain politicians and business leaders, and in the abstract, they are bearers of an immutable negative historical force or impure mana. Bannon’s use of vague references to the social and political changes since the 1960s and 1970s reframes the efforts to combat discrimination (particularly against African Americans) as a reflection of moral decline brought about by spoiled selfish Baby Boomers. Policies aimed at helping African Americans are reframed as cynical political ploys that ultimately causes more harm than good to the black community. He reframes government regulation and public programs as a nefarious fusion of big government and big business and a reflection of creeping “secular socialist European-style government.” Social security and Medicare are reframed as unfathomably expensive government programs that have put the U.S. government in almost \$100 trillion in debt and may cause hyperinflation similar to what Germany experienced during the 1920s (for a critique of the numbers Bannon uses to support this

idea see Kessler 2017). The Affordable Care Act is reframed as the government increasing its control over the daily lives of citizens in an Orwellian fashion. All of these policies are a result of a decadent elite and they are leading to a crisis moment analogous to WWII, the French Revolution, or the Russian Revolution.

Third, Bannon lays out a “Manichean vision” of what is to take place after the Great Recession (Smith 2006). On the one side, there is the decadent, globalist elite who are in control of the government, big business, and big finance and who are undermining American prosperity with excessive federal programs and Wallstreet bailouts. As embodiments of a decadent historical force, they are betraying what it means to be American. On the other side, there are humble workers, diligent entrepreneurs, and faithful Christians who want what is best for their country. Presumably, they are the only group who can stand up and vanquish the corrupt elite.

Bannon’s emphasis on the producers versus the unproductive elite, his personalization of historical dynamics he opposes in the form a decadent ruling class, and his apocalyptic tone of American’s future have all been standard elements in right-wing populist discourses (Berlet and Lyon’s 2000).⁶ In *Generation Zero* (2010) Bannon goes beyond framing a current event in a politically convenient light. Rather, he portrays it as the beginning of a crisis period that is part of grand immutable historical forces wherein the very existence of the nation is at stake. He uses this reified view to rework collective representations of the 1960s, the Clinton administration, the Democratic Party, and racial discrimination to explain the Great Recession in a manner that affirms the social identities of conservatives, Republicans, and Tea Party supporters. Bannon is, therefore, acting as a mystagogue. Bannon’s efforts to create a right-wing populist movement across Europe and North American to remove the globalist elite and usher the spiritual renewal of Medieval Christianity can be viewed as a piacular ritual. Durkheim explains that such rituals are done “to deflect an evil or expiate a misdeed by extraordinary ritual acts” (Durkheim 2001: 301). Mobilizing a pan-Western, anti-globalist movement to reverse the economic dynamics since the 1980s to expiate a global elite would certainly be extraordinary. Bannon’s only hope is that his political mysticism resonates strongly enough with existing collective sentiments.

Conclusion

Steve Bannon is just one of many political commentators that deals in magical forces. I have focused on him in this essay because he is a mystagogue who has risen to the point of power and influence that most people, yet alone mystagogues, ever reach. Bannon’s right-wing populist discourse uses what Adorno saw to be one of the central techniques of reactionary agitation: “the transformation of the feeling of one’s own impotence into a feeling of strength” (2000: 42). The alienating effects of capitalism are such that people are pushed around by impersonal, external, powerful forces that they cannot directly see. The immanent dynamics driving capitalism to spread across the globe appear in the form of factories closing, unions disappearing, the rise of retail chains, increases in prices at gas stations and grocery stores, and sometimes, like in 2008, politicians telling them their tax dollars must be used to bail out rich financiers. Commentators like Bannon allow people to feel like they can steal back some power from these seemingly autonomous forces. He does this by personalizing these social forces in the guise of a nefarious elite that needs to be defeated. This technique allows him to account for the failures of the U.S. government and capitalism while shielding them from criticism. He forecloses opportunities for immanent critique by mystifying the structural dynamics behind income inequality, wage stagnation, deindustrialization, the Great Recession, and political corruption (Brenner 2006; Gilens 2014; Kliman 2011; Panitch and Gindin 2012; Piketty 2014; Varoufakis 2011). His Manichean narrative affirms the social identities of conservatives, Republicans, and Tea Party supports by placing the blame largely on the shoulders of liberals, progressives, and Democrats. It also forecloses critical reflection on the part of his viewers, blocking them from noticing that the politicians they support pass policies that ultimately harm them (Hochschild 2016; Metzl 2019). Instead, Bannon allows them to view themselves as heroes in a grand Manichean struggle. It is in this way that reified collective representations and the mystagogues who peddle them contribute to perpetuating modern forms of domination.

Endnotes

1. In The Brink, a documentary focused on Bannon's political activity after leaving the White House, Bannon specifically compares the spread of political ideas to the spread of financial ideas across global markets
2. Evola's and Dugin's writings contain some of the most extremist sexist and racist language, which Bannon regularly disavows.
3. It is one of three of Bannon's documentaries that takes a more historical perspective, and it contains central tenants of Bannon's political ideology. See Frelander (2017) for a good summary of all three documentaries.
4. Bannon directed this documentary for the production company Citizens United from the infamous Citizens United vs FEC.
5. Greenberg (2017) also notes that news of Bannon's praise of The Fourth Turning has caused the book to go to number 1 in the "divination" category on Amazon.com
6. His techniques are similar to the "tingling backbone" and "last hour" devices Adorno discusses in his analysis of Martin Luther Thomas radio program

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Hamlet's Father: Hauntology and the Roots of the Modern Self

Lukas Szrot

In his 1949 work *Hamlet's Ghost*, Richard Flatter wrote of the ghost of Hamlet's father that the play ultimately belongs to him, to the ghost. Modernity, like the play, belongs to its ghosts, to its dead fathers haunting their wayward sons, the metaphysical specters it imperfectly endeavors to exorcise. Critical theory has often focused on the possibility, and the contours, of a utopia populated by liberatory spirit and liberated persons. Less well explored, however, are the implications for ethics, nature, and the transmission of culture at a metaphorical echelon—those ostensibly “pre-modern” ideas which the broader project of Enlightenment liberalism never fully leaves behind. Drawing upon thinkers as diverse as Marcuse, Derrida, Weber, and Nietzsche, I read Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, particularly the interaction between the ghost of the father and his vacillating son, as a metaphor for the failure to achieve a sought-after post-metaphysical world, and the ominous potential that inheres in the resulting ambivalence. The implications of these philosophical and sociohistorical developments are centered around the social-psychological emergence of a modern self, at once alienated from history and nature, but perhaps able to re-imagine selfhood from “outside the iron cage.”

Hamlet's Father: Hauntology and the Roots of the Modern Self

In his 1949 work *Hamlet's Ghost*, Richard Flatter (1949) wrote of the ghost of Hamlet's father: “Can we ever say that he ceases to be there? He is not there in person, but in principle, so to speak; not visible all the time, but all the time perceptible—by the task he has laid on his son's shoulders...The motive of the play is the Ghost's; and in this sense, it may be said, it is his play” (6). “The Ghost, though not the protagonist, is the real motive power of the play. For long stretches, he keeps behind (or under) the stage. Yet all the time—‘seeing, unseen’—he watches the progress of his case and is prepared to intervene if need be” (60). Like the play, perhaps “modernity” belongs in many ways to its spirits, to its dead fathers haunting their wayward sons, to the past it only pretends to leave behind, to the metaphysical specters it imperfectly endeavors to exorcise. This work takes as its starting-point Levinas' invitation to examine *Hamlet* as a means by which to engage the ethical—and political—demands involved in a confrontation with the other, with the past, with destiny, and with death (Griffiths 2005:163; see also Levinas 1985, 1989).¹

This confrontation with modernity's ostensible “other” takes place amid a transition from a medieval human selfhood and agency still inextricably bound to social station and family relations and a post-meaning man for whom, to quote Agger: “The loss of meaning is occasioned by a peculiarly ahistorical view of the world, which is flattened into an eternal present. We don't know who we are, or what formed us” (Agger 2002:3). To re-examine post-modernity retrospectively is to revisit this ahistorical “flattening,” which had its roots in the modern. Central to the work at hand is the transition of Hamlet's self over the course of the play in relation to the oath he takes to the ghost of his father, the slain king, and how this transition is a microcosm of the rise of a new self in the context of a new constellation of political, ethical, and social relations.

Trafficking in Ghosts: Moral Realism and Scientific Naturalism

The “other” that appears as death, as a ghost, is neither alive nor dead, but somewhere in-between, a vestige of a world before history allegedly ended and in so doing breathed new life into the prefix **post-**. To think on death while living is to inhabit a haunted realm, of cogitation in the face of the singularly unpleasant, and (perhaps eternal) unrest. Derrida (1994) opened *Specters of Marx* by speaking of learning “to live with ghosts, whether revolutionary or not, living otherwise, living better...a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations” (xviii).² I will speak of religion, and of rationality, **as** aspects of such a politics, defined in part by our dynamic relationship to the term **nature**. I speak not necessarily as a **naturalist**, whatever that may ultimately mean—it can indeed be demonstrated that a narrow **philosophical naturalism**, the view that “science exhausts rationality,” is “a self-stultifying error” (see Matteo 1996; Putnam 1995; Szrot 2015).³ The logical positivist exorcisms Marcuse (1964) railed against as **one-dimensional thought** in the form of “confusing metaphysical notions—‘ghosts’ of a less mature and less scientific past which still haunt the mind although they neither designate nor explain” (170) have themselves become ghosts of Anglophone philosophy. Everywhere the practicing scientist, philosopher, or educator insists on a distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal (see Lough 2006), between **methodological** and **metaphysical** naturalism (see Alters 2005), between science and religion as non-overlapping magisteria (see Gould 1999), the ghost of a disciplined naturalism hangs heavy. **And naturalists, whatever else they do, do not traffic in ghosts.**

The term **hauntology** emerges from the work of Derrida, a collapse of the ontological into the teleological and eschatological (1994:63). Put plainly, given a current state of affairs into which we may be thrust, however blissful or intolerable (it is the latter that creates the story arc of *Hamlet*), for what can we hope, and toward what are we obligated? Such questions lie in part beyond a naturalist conception of rationality. The ghost’s exhortation to the young prince at the end of the first act of the play draws attention to the possibility of a broader conception of reality:

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy (1.5. 862-864).

And in the final moments of the first Act, Hamlet curses his fate:

The time is out of joint. Oh, cursèd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right (1.5 885-886)!

Hamlet’s “terrible purpose” is established: vengeance on behalf of his murdered father, the restoration of temporal order, and a continuation of history. **The time is out of joint**—the present is **metaphysically** corrupted, unbearable. The ghost becomes **real**—a father, a figure from both a temporal and a **metaphysical** past—and in so doing sets into motion the sequence of events that dominate the narrative arc. The ghost sees while remaining unseen, a power granted entities populating the purgatory between life and death. Hamlet inherits a Herculean burden—he does not carry it well, say some commentators, and has been accused of cowardice in the face of righting a grievous injustice (see, for example, Flatter 1949:83-90). There is much debate as to whether Prince Hamlet failed to act on his oath to the ghost of his father out of cowardice. While I do not directly take a position on this particular issue, I do note for this analysis that extended deliberation before action is in many ways seen as the hallmark of “rational man,” and a subset of this type, “scientific man,” a creature ostensibly ruled by intellect and reason rather than passions and engaged in systematic study of any phenomenon, often before, and sometimes in place of, **acting**. The oath is the young prince’s initial response—protracted cogitation, his second; Hamlet must test the ghost’s pronouncements systematically, **scientifically**, in the course of this work. There is something thoroughly modern—at once **methodical** and **methodological**—in his approach to validating the ghost’s claims. To test the ghost’s claims, the young prince arranges for the showing of a play he rechristens *The Mouse-Trap* to determine his Uncle Claudius’ guilt in the murder, and in the closet scene, Hamlet confronts his mother, which the ghost clearly forbade as part and parcel to the oath:

Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once (1.5 770-773).

I am of two minds on the significance of this. Perhaps Hamlet's skepticism toward the ghost perhaps betrays a timidity, a desire to escape taking a principled stand (see Weber 1946:94-5) as is necessary for the commitment to an ethical or a political course of action. Of course, it is also the vision of rational prudence, of one unwilling to act until the preponderance of evidence is on one's side. This tension between **episteme** and **praxis**—between how we know what we know, and what we should then do—haunts us moderns still, particularly when we academicians seek to engage publics, abandon jargon or utilize practical reason (see Szrot 2019). Hamlet's failure, then, may be rooted in lack of nerve, but may also arise from an effort to create—to exaggerate—the disjuncture between knowledge and politics. More can always be known, scientifically, but how much must be known before we act?

Hamlet as Morality Play: Agency and Providence, Madness and Sanity, Life and Death

The ghost chastises young Hamlet for his delays, and for this confrontation. Hamlet is in another sense locked into a destiny, a providential calling. His is akin to Weber's (2011) reading of the famous Puritan literary work *Pilgrim's Progress*: the ghost expects Hamlet to suspend doubt: he swore to reveal the ghost's missive to none, and to dutifully realize his destiny (121). This begins the tension between the Hamlet of the middle of the play, who is a rational investigator of the veracity of the ghost's claims, and the Hamlet of the end, who displays a belief in divine Providence and an acceptance of fate. There is an implicit reference to something like a morality play here, in which the solitary believer must strive, oblivious to the world, toward salvation. Hamlet's terrible purpose drives him forward toward death at the end of a poisoned blade—a death preceded by his mother and his treacherous uncle. When Hamlet delays, lives are lost. He is exiled and returns. In the end, the young prince accepts his fate, a converted and providential Stoic—a fate that will include his death. Young Hamlet lives in the twilight zone between life and death throughout the play—in Act 1, scene 2, predating his father's arrival, Hamlet cries out in despair:

Oh, that this too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seems to me all the uses of this world (1.2 313-318)!

Perhaps inadvertently, the ghost brings to fruition the death-wish of a man locked between madness and sanity. Hamlet ties his fate to that of his father's ghost; the future unfolds in accordance with the **hauntology** of a dead king, and **unravels** when Hamlet departs from his oath. Fatalism dominates Hamlet's mood near the end of the play, giving reason to see in Hamlet a bridge—or a chasm—between a “pre-modern” self, locked to the will of an inscrutable Deity and naturalized social order, and a modern, worldly “humanistic” self, seeking to control nature and destiny through observation and experiment. Catherine Belsey (1985) calls Hamlet “the most discontinuous of Shakespeare's heroes,” citing medieval mystery plays such as *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance* to make the argument that Hamlet represents a character straddling the medieval and modern conceptions of individual agency and the self (41; see also Griffiths 2005:113). Hamlet's role in the play is Providential; he is beholden to an anthropomorphized Godhead, as an avatar of what Weber (2011) called *The Protestant Ethic*, a torchbearer from the medieval to the modern, from the feudal to the capitalist. The Hamlet of Act 5 speaks accordingly in a recognizably ascetic Calvinist manner:

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how you will. (5.2 10-11)

And to Horatio, when Hamlet presumably speaks of the imminence of his own death:

Horatio: If your mind dislike anything, obey. I will not forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

Hamlet responds: Not a whit—we defy augury! There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come: if it be not to come, it will be now: if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man has ought of what he leaves—what is't to leave betimes? (5.2 217-224)

In Act 1, we first witness Hamlet's despair and his oath to his father. Between the end of Act 1 and the second scene of Act 5, Hamlet has changed in fundamental ways. A young prince caught between haunting, rationality, and finally Providence comes to bridge different worlds and their value-spheres: the ethical-political and the scientific-rational, on one hand, which neither collapse into one another nor are entirely separate, and the Providential and the empirical. Scholars from Nietzsche and Weber to Merton argued that the latter has roots in the former (see Evans and Evans 2008:94-5; Merton 1970; Nietzsche 1967:148-49, fn5; Weber 1946:134-44). Like Hamlet mid-play, we who cling to modernity are prone to the belief that we have broken the spells of the ascetic priests of the past⁷ where we have only pretended to. Modernity is steeped in sociological ambivalence (see Merton 1976:4-12); as narrative it retains a Calvinistic flavor in its quasi-teleological predictions and reaches eschatological crescendo in the 1990s as scholars such as Francis Fukuyama (1992) proclaimed that the fall of the Soviet Union enthroned liberal democracy and technological society as "the end of history." The social psychology of the modern self wends its way from Shakespearean drama through the work of Nietzsche and Weber, shedding light on some of the tensions that inhere in the present—by whatever we choose to call it—the aforementioned site of historical amnesia and historical flattening. The ideas that gave rise to totalitarianism, and to fascism, among others, still haunt us—one only need to spend a few minutes on social media to find political dialogue across numerous liberal democracies has taken on a renewed divisiveness, demagoguery, and demonology in recent years. Hauntology holds forth both liberating potential and terrible promise.

The "Spirit of Capitalism," as Weber famously remarked, was in its roots Protestant, a "this-worldly asceticism" which focused attention on activity **in this world** coupled with, and giving rise to, a staunch individualism (2011:120). The modern self that arose from, and gave rise to, liberal democracy and technological society stands perched on a decidedly theological base. That individualistic theology, that radical alterity of divinity, the insuperable gulf between human beings and divine will, has manifested itself in decidedly divergent ways. It is implicated in continued racial and ethnic tensions in the Western world, in reducing racial-ethnic disparity in income and social standing to individual sin rather than historical and institutional discrimination in the U.S. (see, for example, Jones 2016), and in new religious and ethnic tensions in Europe (see Modood 2013). On another, its spirit gives rise to a sublime vision of nature as wilderness, as a testament to divine might, foreshadowing certain currents in modern environmentalism (see Stoll 2015). A radical separation of human and divine gave rise to a constellation of diverse phenomena still in the process of unfolding. In short, through the ideas that underpin Hamlet's—and Weber's—historical transition toward the modern individualistic, agentic, empiricist self, one glimpses the ineradicable stamp—the compellingly haunting afterimage—of destiny and teleology.

Rationality and Risk: Hamlet and the Ambivalence of Modern Selves

Regarding rationality, Nietzsche (1967) notes in *The Genealogy of Morals* that empirical investigation itself is a holdover of the "ascetic ideal," a worthy labor but also "a means of self-narcosis" (146-47). Hamlet's deliberation and investigation, his efforts to "prove" the veracity of the ghost's conjectures, amount ultimately to a costly and ultimately futile delaying action. So long as uncertainty could be cultivated, Hamlet could find it reasonable to continue to evade his terrible purpose. The epistemic component of an ostensibly *post-truth* society resonates with this consistent delaying action—casting endless doubt prevents the manifestation of uncomfortable truths and the actions that might logically follow from them. A highly relevant modern example of how investigation can be used to prolong doubt and delay action, and the harrowing consequences that follow therefrom, can be found in ongoing politically- and economically-motivated efforts to challenge threats to public health and the environment, from smoking and pesticide use to climate change (see Oreskes and Conway 2010).

Hamlet's struggles predate the rise of a new self and a new society, in which new ambivalence inheres. The world is more globally interconnected than ever before, and the proliferation of techno-economic innovation has led to sociopolitical dynamics that currently elude our collective grasp. The irony of this is evident to Giddens (2000)—the Enlightenment promise, that "the more we are able to rationally understand the world, and ourselves...the more we can shape history for our own purposes" (19) gave rise to a runaway world, in which "science and technology are inevitably involved [in solving problems]...but they have also contributed to creating [these risks] in the first place" (21). In such a world is it flimsy resolve or laudable prudence to wait, to gather more evidence, to "do more research?" Surely there are cynical reasons for calling for more information before acting; just as surely there is folly

awaiting those who act without sufficient knowledge. Hamlet's hesitation and despair foreshadow an ostensibly global civilization shot through with risk and ambivalence.

We moderns are endlessly confronted with **self-narcosis** via this ambivalence—Nietzsche regards **will to truth** highly in all its ascetic Protestant residue (1967:148-49, fn5), but it is Weber who explicitly and at length distinguishes between the Beruf of the politician and that of the scholar, in that the essence of the former is in “taking a stand” (1946:94-5).⁸ To kill a king is to exercise political will, to take a stand in the Weberian political sense, but to do so at the behest of a ghost is lunacy, barring hard evidence. But how much evidence, and of what kind? The delays surely pain Hamlet throughout the play; he is skeptical, he seeks, but he does not want to believe. **To meditate on the character development of Prince Hamlet in relation to the ghost's missive is to examine the dual nature of the modern human in the modern world.**

And what a dual nature! In a passage particularly evocative of this new self, arising out of, but not discontinuous with, the old, Hamlet laments:

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me—nor woman neither... (2.2. 302-309)

Modern man is “the paragon of animals”; man is a “quintessence of dust,” is vaguely reminiscent of the flavor of Weber's “last man,” the denizens of the iron cage—“narrow specialists without minds, pleasure-seekers without heart; in its conceit this nothingness imagines it has climbed to a level of humanity never before attained” (2011:178). The earth on which Hamlet envisions these humans, these last men, is “a sterile promontory...but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours” (2.2. 298-300). The time is out of joint—we are reminded—this is Hamlet's resolve after taking his oath. The monumental task he faces is becoming the person capable of righting what is wrong, and returning natural order as commanded by the unnatural spirit.

Conclusion: Faith and Nature in Modernity

This new, unnatural order mightily resists re-naturalization. We cannot simply capitulate to the ghost, and in so doing, be seduced by a romanticized past that never really existed, but haunts us in its nonexistence. If the wretched promise of Weber's, and Nietzsche's, **last man** emerges out of this ethic, the question left to us, finally, is: what is to right **these** wrongs? Weber, via Lough (2006), offers a hint: “The flight of the ‘spirit’ of capitalism [from the iron cage of bureaucratic modernity]—understood as Protestant asceticism—was necessary not only because it rendered the phenomenal world fully transparent to scientific inquiry. [It] is logically necessary because it preserves a vantage point outside the ‘mechanism’ from which the value of the mechanism itself can be accurately and objectively esteemed and condemned” (51). In other words, a critical standpoint is possible from outside the iron cage—is indeed perhaps **made possible** by an iron cage that exorcised the spirit of its own creation.

Marxian thinkers, such as the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, lambasted the separation of science from human life and morality, as well as an indifference to nature (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002; Marcuse 1964). There is something of a religion in this, at least in the sense that Horkheimer referred to **religion** as, “The not-yet-strangled impulse that insists that reality should be otherwise, that the spell will be broken and turn toward the right direction. Where life points this way in every gesture, there is religion” (quoted in Neiman 2002:306).

But the term **religion** can make us moderns queasy. It cries out for further explanation. It is a term that, where not decidedly unfashionable, has been relegated to cliché. Instructively, the American pragmatist Dewey (2013) distinguishes between **a religion** which “always signifies some special body of beliefs and practices having some kind of institutional organization, loose or tight” with “the adjective ‘religious’” which “denotes attitudes that may be taken toward every object and every proposed end or ideal” (9). It may arguably be the case that in the context of the U.S., as is the case in much of Western civilization, that the prevalence of **having a religion** in the Deweyan sense has declined in recent decades, and may continue to do so in the future (see, for example, Norris and Inglehart 2011). To **be religious** on the other hand neither requires nor presupposes an institutional affiliation nor necessitates a “fixed” doctrine. It may not be possible to directly quantify what it means **to be religious** given the plurality of possible incarnations of **being religious, of having faith**.

The lesson I glean from Hamlet is not a sermon warning of the dangers of a secularizing modernity, but an inculcation of something most would probably be more comfortable referring to as **faith**. Faith cannot only coexist with the modern but help us consider new ways to live in this newfound ambivalence. This is not necessarily the faith of organized religion, and is not the atavistic longing for the return to an imagined **pre-ambivalent pre-haunting**—even if the latter were desirable (and I contend that it is not) we can no more do this than Hamlet can undo the tragedy that unfolds around him. Nor can the lesson be a simple choice of “believing in” or “not believing in” ghosts—whatever that may ultimately mean—let alone knowing with certainty in advance what the consequences will be for delaying, or for acting.

Similarly, to have faith does not necessarily mean doing so in the context of an organization, tradition, institution—religious or otherwise (though it does not **a priori** circumscribe such, either). It involves a willingness to stand outside the iron cage, to recognize in all its poignancy, as Weber did, that, “after Nietzsche one could no longer look to science to free us from political decisions or give meaning to life” (Antonio 2015). The Providence of Hamlet at the end of the play may be read, alternatively, not merely as a residue of predestination but of a practical commitment—he has examined the evidence, but more importantly, he has seen the suffering that ensued with delay. **It was time to act.** Just as Hamlet could have acted differently, we could act differently, still; we have come of age in ambivalence, haunted by a past. Reliable information, noble intention, and the will to act do not guarantee avoidance of tragedy. But Nietzschean-Weberian vantage points outside the iron cage—outside the machine—hold forth promise for the re-development, and re-envisioning, of the machine. Hamlet’s haunting, and transition, offers some glimpse of such a vantage. It may be that alternative ontological—and **hauntological**—visions of the relationship between humanity and nature, as well as between morality and rationality, and between time and selves, can be conceived by taking heed of the spirit that has fled the iron cage, the ghost that exhorts we denizens of (post)(post) modernity to set right the time while—by—finding something akin to faith.

Endnotes

1. While writing this manuscript, I became aware of the vast extent to which Hamlet has been subject to literary interpretation and criticism. For a concise discussion of past “essential criticisms” from schools of thought ranging from Neoclassicism to the New Historicism and Poststructuralism, see Huw Daniel Griffiths (2005). Levinas’ invitation, a starting-point for future critiques, appears in this volume on p. 163. Levinas’ work on “confronting the other” as an act at once ethical and political is discussed at length in [Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo](#) and [Ethics and Infinity](#).

2. Though my analysis is ultimately more Weberian and Nietzschean, the work of connecting the act of haunting and the guise of the specter, specifically, of Hamlet’s father, to the present political, cultural, and ethical moment, is undertaken at some length by Derrida in the first third of his work, and serves a springboard of sorts in relation both to Levinas’ invitation (see footnote 1) and discussion of the phenomena of haunting in relation to the shaping of self and society.

3. An instance of this quotation that is relevant to the work at hand appears in Anthony Matteo’s “In Defense of Moral Realism,” [Telos](#) 106 (Winter 1996), p. 66: Hilary Putnam, in the tradition of American philosophical pragmatism, has been particularly vocal in stressing the need for a broader concept of rationality

than the logical positivist and narrowly empiricist approaches, one able to make sense of complex theoretical and practical judgments. “[T]he idea that science (in the sense of exact science) exhausts rationality is seen to be a self-stultifying error. The very activity of arguing about the nature of rationality presupposes a conception of rationality wider than that of laboratory testability. . . . [A]ny conception of rationality broad enough to embrace philosophy—not to mention linguistics, mentalistic psychology, history, clinical psychology, and so on—must embrace much that is vague, ill-defined, no more capable of being ‘scientized’ than was the knowledge of our forefathers. The horror of what cannot be ‘methodized’ is nothing but method fetishism; it is time we got over it.” Somewhat ironically, the idea that morality can be reduced to “mere sentiment” arises out of a conception of rationality that is sufficiently narrow as to exclude a great deal of other aspects of human experience. This is not to argue that morality does not have a strong emotional component, as argued as far back as Hume (1978) and corroborated by evidence from moral and political psychology recently compiled in Haidt (2012). Morality, even insofar as it arises out of sentiment, is not therefore beyond rational discourse, raising anew even the possibility of **moral realism**, the popular argument in philosophical ethics that disagreement across cultures and times regarding moral principles is often overemphasized. Speaking as a pragmatist:

insofar as morality is not ejected from the realm of rationality, moral principles can be “translated” cross-culturally in the way that other forms of intersubjectively verifiable knowledge can.

4. Indeed, the second half of Marcuse's (1964) work, “One-Dimensional Thought,” is largely devoted to the critical examination of a species of analytic philosophy popular in the English-speaking world in the mid-twentieth century that became involved in sorting out ever-more tedious linguistic puzzles and in so doing became fundamentally divorced from the practical ethical and political questions and engagements that characterized, in particular, classical Greek philosophy. In this regard if not in others, Marcuse's critique of mid-twentieth century analytic philosophy is an ally to the philosophical pragmatism that undergirds this analysis.

5. The noumenal-phenomenal distinction comes from Immanuel Kant. With Lough (2006), I detect Kantian notes in Weber, though Weber in his social constructivism did not draw as bright a line between noumena and phenomena, and therefore between value and fact, or between the sublime and the observable. It is worth noting that Nietzsche builds his critique of Enlightenment thought across many of his works upon an extended critique of Kantian thought. The distinction between **methodological** and **metaphysical naturalism** is expounded upon by Alters (2005) while “non-overlapping magisteria” is a term devised by Gould (1999). Centrally, talk of ghosts, of haunting, implies philosophical conceptions that delve beyond the reach of scientific inquiry; the critique of metaphysical naturalisms and (onto)logical positivisms foregrounds this work. I am not asking my reader to “believe in ghosts,” whatever that means, but to consider the role that these conceptual constructions have played in shaping—and perhaps **constraining**—the range of ethical and political deliberative possibilities that inhere in the modern self.

6. Hamlet quotes are taken from Modern Folio 1, and listed by act, scene, and lines http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Ham_FM/scene/1.5/#tln-725

7. Men of knowledge retain their faith in truth for Nietzsche; as for Weber, they retain their passion for their calling, for pursuit of knowledge. In the case of Merton, the scientist's status gives rise to roles in which sociological ambivalence inheres, placing demands on the scientist in terms of conduct that are at odds with the passion and competitive fervor that often characterizes scientific endeavor (see Merton 1970:32-64). All three men argue that there is something of the ascetic ethic which arose with the Protestant Reformation embedded in scientific and intellectual pursuits, and each seems to hold some ambivalence toward science, though their respective emphases differ in interesting regards that are beyond the scope of this paper.

8. This is the synthesis of points made by both Nietzsche and Weber in previous sections of this work. Note the use of the German term *Beruf* which Weber (2011) traces from its root as a originally referring to a Providential **calling**, and coming to refer to a secularized **vocation** in the context of the shift toward modernity.

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Max Weber's Odyssey: The Wild West, the Frontier, and the Capitalist Spirit

David Norman Smith

Of all the classical theorists, Max Weber is the most vivid in the eyes of scholars today. Simmel is an acquired taste, Durkheim a grey eminence, Tönnies an afterthought, and even Marx—despite his worldwide renown, despite the swelling tide of biographies—is an embodied Idea, a screen for projection and debate. Only Max Weber is a living presence for contemporaries. Curiosity is sparked not only by his work but by his personality, which biographers often call “volcanic,” “tormented,” “**Angst**-ridden.” Apparently, no aspect of Weber’s life is beyond the pale. Topics of perennial interest include the seemingly Oedipal character of the trauma that paralyzed Weber on the eve of the twentieth century, the intimate details of his marriage to Marianne Weber, and the tenor of his friendship with Else Jaffé and her sisters.¹

Scrutiny of this kind is usually reserved for literary lions. Proust, Kafka, Woolf, Mann, and others are appraised in minute personal detail, but their contemporaries among sociologists (Sombart, Tarde, Sorokin) are literary unknowns. As a signal exception to this rule, Max Weber thus figures as a kind of **Wissenschaftliche** Joyce, a **Soziologische** Auden or Dostoevsky. Whether for good or ill, Max Weber has a vibrant literary persona.²

This persona, the “Max Weber” of iconographic memory, is stereotypically German. Hence in most biographical accounts, the accent is placed on Weber’s central European persona and ties—his connections to Troeltsch and Treitschke, to pan-Germanism and neo-Kantianism, to Lask and Lukács.³ His deep interest in other cultures and continents has remained relatively obscure. Even his decade-long inquiry into the “world religions” of India, China, and ancient Palestine has interested relatively few scholars (among whom comparativists of neo-Weberian outlook loom large—including, e.g., Bendix, Schluchter, and Kalberg).⁴ Moreover, Weber’s abiding interest in the United States and Russia has begun to attract substantial attention only fairly recently.⁵

In what follows, my subject is just one aspect of Weber’s thinking with respect to the United States in particular, namely, his view of frontier regions as new horizons for capitalism. This was not an incidental or side issue for Weber, whose famed analysis of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was only half-finished when he traveled through the United States in 1904.⁶ Nor is Weber’s outlook on this topic immaterial for contemporary historians, many of whom now affirm quasi-Weberian views under such rubrics as “the New Western” history.⁷

A full account of Weber’s notion of the frontier would exceed the limits of a journal article, but we can highlight key points by recalling Max and Marianne Weber’s trek across the territorial United States in 1904. This journey is fairly well known, thanks to several sources—Marianne’s memoirs, Max’s essay on “The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism” (1906), and recent studies by Bärbel Meurer, Lawrence Scaff, Hans Rollman, and Guenther Roth.⁸ But the substance of what they learned on this journey has not yet been very fully integrated into the broader literature on either of them.⁹

Max Weber was, briefly, a wayfaring stranger in Mark Twain’s America. And his account of what he saw there sheds light on themes familiar from other writers of the period—notably, that America in the gilded age was a jungle of industry and greed, of railroads and robber barons, in which, even in the realm of faith, capitalism left an indelible imprint.

Weber's Odyssey

Marianne and Max Weber came to the United States in 1904 with their close friend Ernst Troeltsch, at the invitation of the Harvard University psychologist Hugo Münsterberg, who had offered both of the men honoraria to speak at a session held in conjunction with the St. Louis World's Fair. Their pilgrimage to Missouri began in "Manhattan island," as Marianne wrote, and carried them to Niagara Falls, Philadelphia, Chicago and (finally) St. Louis. After the World's Fair, Max and Marianne went south. Wishing to meet Max's cousins in the Blue Ridge mountains after touring Oklahoma, New Orleans, and Washington D.C., they arrived in October in North Carolina,¹⁰ where the most picturesque episode of their odyssey took place.

In this episode we find Max and Marianne in the mountains, with Max's "Uncle Fritz" Fallenstein (who had changed his name to "Miller" when he came to the U.S. from Germany) and with Fritz's children Jefferson, James, Hugh and Betty; another cousin, Frank; and many spouses and children.¹¹ Jeff and Jim owned hillside farms "within shouting distance" of one another in the woods outside Mount Airy,¹² near the Virginia border. Hugh, who was single, lived with Jim's family, and Betty lived nearby as well. Frank, a recent arrival from Germany, lived seven miles away in Red Brush.

Living in modest wooden farmhouses "with none of the comfortable expansiveness and floral decoration of German farmhouses," the Millers raised corn, wheat, tobacco, and cattle. They led "simple lives with little culture," as Marianne recalled condescendingly. After dinner, the men occupied themselves with fireside conversations. Max evidently felt quite at home as he made clear in a letter: "...we sat around the fireplace...and everybody chewed tobacco. Jeff spat well-aimed streams of brown sauce into the fire through and over the legs of those sitting in between. We were in quite good humor..." (Biography [1926] 1975: 297, 296, 298).

This sounds like a scene from *Huckleberry Finn*. Marianne's account of the cheerful conversations "among the corncocks outside" has a similar quality: "...I had to stay inside with the women and had only an occasional chance to pursue a burst of laughter which Max conjured up on the men's side. ...They often slapped him on the knee and called him a **'mighty jolly fellow'**." (Biography [1926] 1975: 299-300)

Max found his relatives intriguing and, in some ways, typical. Lamenting the anti-Black prejudice he found on all sides, Max, in a letter cited by Marianne, called Fritz one of "the good, proud, but confused people" who accepted neo-Confederate narratives about secession and the Civil War. Fritz had "never owned a slave and was a strict abolitionist, but he always fought on the side of the slaveholders, because according to his Jefferson-Calhoun theory his state...had the formal right to secede" (Biography [1926] 1975: 296).¹³

The religious views of the family were also of interest. The decisive figure in this regard was Fritz's wife. Fritz was a Methodist, Max wrote, "because every day his wife made him fear the torments of hell to which he would otherwise be subjected." Jim and Betty were also pious, but "the entirely unchurchly Jeff" was a skeptic, who had been "driven from any connection with the church by the terrible severity of his mother" (Biography [1926] 1975: 296, 298).¹⁴

Seeing this rift in the family was enlightening, as Max explained in connection with a baptism he attended one "beautiful sunny day" in Brushy Fork Pond by the Mount Carmel Baptist Church ("Protestant Sects" [1906] 1946: 304).

In the open air eight people...were submerged in the icy water of the mountain brook... The preacher, dressed in a black suit, stands in the water up to his hips; one after another the candidates for baptism get into the brook, grasp his hands, and after the various vows have been spoken, ...lean backwards until their face is under water. Then they come out snorting, are **'congratulated'**, and either go home dripping wet or, if they live far away, change clothes in a wooden shack. They do this even in the middle of winter, chopping a hole in the ice for this purpose. (Biography [1926] 1975: 298)

On the riverbank a revealing exchange took place: "James said that **'faith'** kept them from catching cold. Jeff, who regards all this as nonsense, said that he had asked one of them, **'Didn't you feel pretty cold, Bem?'** The answer: **'I thought of some pretty hot place** (hell, of course), **Sir, and so I didn't care for the cold water'**" (Biography [1926] 1975: 298).¹⁵ The baptism of another young man also yielded a telling exchange. "Look at him," Jeff said, **'I told you so!'** **'Why did you expect that?'** Max asked. **'Because he wants to open a bank in [Mount Airy],'** Jeff answered ("Die protestantische Sekten" [1906] 1947: 210, italics added). The point, Max realized, was that confirmation as a Baptist counted as a sign of approval from notables of the local community. The only way to win admission to the local Baptist congregation was to pass a moral screening, thus earning a reputation for probity.

This, Jeff cynically hinted, was reason enough for an aspiring banker to be baptized. It was good for business. Piety paid a dividend.

Max found this point compelling. “In general,” he concluded, “**only** those men had success in business who belonged to Methodist or Baptist or other **sects** or sect-like conventicles. When a sect member moved to a different place, or if he was a traveling salesman, he carried the certificate of his congregation with him; and thereby he found not only easy contact with sect members but, above all, he found credit everywhere” (“Protestant Sects” [1906] 1946: 305). The profit motive had infiltrated the realm of faith, giving the phrase “full faith and credit” a decidedly this-worldly connotation.

Occidental Rationalism and Frontier Capitalism

A conversation on a train in Oklahoma just a few weeks earlier had prepared Weber to grasp this point. Seated “next to a traveling salesman of ‘undertaker’s hardware’ (iron letters for tombstones),” Max commented in passing on the persistence of an “impressively strong church-mindedness.” The salesman replied, “Sir, for my part everybody may believe or not believe as he pleases; but if I saw a farmer or a businessman not belonging to any church at all, I wouldn’t trust him with fifty cents. Why pay me, if he doesn’t believe in anything?”¹⁶

Hence “belief,” as revealed by the embrace of a churchly ethic of conviction, is a “proof” of a moral and commercial character. Only believers are credible; only the **Gesinnungsethiker** is creditworthy.¹⁷

Here, as elsewhere, Weber saw evidence of the prodigious transformative power of youthful capitalism. Even the innermost regions of culture and conviction now bore the fingerprints of “business interest.” The same was true of the forests and fields of the once wild frontier, which Max and Marianne observed at first-hand in Oklahoma, “in an area that until recently had been reserved for the Indians. Here,” Marianne reminisced,

it was still possible to observe the unarmed subjugation and absorption of an ‘inferior’ race by a ‘superior,’ more intelligent one, the transformation of Indian tribal property into private property, and the conquest of the virgin forest by colonists. Weber stayed with a half-breed. He watched, listened, transformed himself into his surroundings, and thus everywhere penetrated to the heart of things. (*Biography* [1926] 1975: 291)¹⁸

Entering Oklahoma, Weber noted the “impenetrable” overgrowth of the “veritable virgin forest,” the “yellow, quiet forest brooks” and serpentine rivers “in an utterly wild state, with enormous sandbanks and thick, dark greenery on their banks. ...But the virgin forest’s hour has struck even here.” Indian cabins marked by colorful shawls were found side by side with “quite modern wooden houses from the factory,” and the forest itself was in decay: “The trees...are dying and stretching their pale, smoky fingers upward in a confused tangle... And suddenly one begins to smell petroleum; one sees the high, Eiffel Tower-like structures of the drill holes in the middle of the forest and comes to a ‘town.’” (*Biography* [1926] 1975: 291-92)

In these boomtowns, which were so rapidly eroding the wilderness, Weber found striking evidence of the vitality of nascent capitalism. “Such a town is really a crazy thing: the camps of the workers, especially section hands working for the numerous railroads under construction, streets in a primitive state, usually doused with petroleum twice each summer to prevent dust, and...wooden churches of at least four or five denominations.” Under this primitive façade, Max saw the signs of “a colossal ‘boom’” -- frenzied land speculation, a flood of immigrants, a “tangle of telegraph and telephone wires. ...There is a fabulous bustle here, and I cannot help but find tremendous fascination in it, despite the stench of petroleum and the fumes, the spitting ‘Yankees,’ and the racket of the numerous trains” (*Biography* [1926]: 292-93).

Although surprised at being accosted by eager entrepreneurs (“two ‘real-estate men,’ an asphalt man, and two traveling salesman”), Max found the townsfolk likable. All officials have received me in their shirt sleeves, of course, and together we put our legs on the windowsill... In the conversations...the courtesy lies in the tone and the bearing, and the humor is nothing short of delicious. Too bad: in a year this place will look like Oklahoma [City], that is, like any other American city. With almost lightning speed everything that stands in the way of capitalistic culture is being crushed. (*Biography* [1926] 1975: 293)

Journalism in Oklahoma

Not every vestige of the frontier had vanished, however. An episode in Guthrie, Oklahoma (as reported in The Daily Oklahoman on September 28, 1904), shows that Mark Twain's America was still alive and kicking. "WOULDN'T STAY," ran the headline. "A GERMAN PROFESSOR'S VISIT AT GUTHRIE WAS SUDDENLY TERMINATED. SAYS GREER NO 'SHENTLEMAN.' Had Intended Calling On the Editor But Heard He Used a Gun on Another Editor, and That Settled It."¹⁹

The ensuing article explains, breathlessly, that "a man of prominence, who registered as Prof. Von Webber of Heidelberg University, Germany," had arrived in Guthrie on the Santa Fe railway the day before, carrying "quite an amount of luggage. ...He claimed to hold down the chair of economics at Heidelberg and to be traveling through the United States to get posted on conditions here in his line." Upon arrival at the Hotel Royal, the Professor told the proprietor, Fred van Dyne, that he would stay a week before proceeding to Muskogee. But not long after, "Von Webber" raced downstairs to report that he would leave immediately. In explanation, he reportedly said: "I have a letter of introduction to a newspaper man here, the editor of the State Capital, but since I came to the city I see by the papers that he carries a gun and that he drew a gun on another editor. I can not see how a man who carries a gun can be a 'shentlemans' and, therefore, I will not meet him, but will go at once to Muskogee." When all efforts to persuade him to stay failed, he departed post haste.

This episode appears to have occasioned some astonishment in the offices of The Daily Oklahoman. "Fred Van Dyne...vouches for the truth" of this report, the newspaper explained. Evidently, the Heidelberg Professor's decision was hard to fathom.²⁰

Mark Twain would have understood. Indeed, The Daily Oklahoman story could easily have been drawn from a misadventure Twain said befell him in Tennessee some years before. "I was told by the physician that a Southern climate would improve my health," Twain wrote ([1869] 1985: 29-32), "and so I went down to Tennessee, and got a berth on the Morning Glory and Johnson County War-Whoop as associate editor." Instructed to write an overview of the local press, Twain soon found that his style was too mild. The chief editor scowled.

Presently he sprang up and said: 'Thunder and lighting! Do you suppose I am going to speak of these cattle that way? Do you suppose my subscribers are going to stand such gruel as that? Give me the pen!' I never saw a pen scrape and scratch its way so viciously, or plow through another man's verbs and adjectives so relentlessly. While he was in the midst of his work, somebody shot at him through the open window, and marred the symmetry of my ear. 'Ah,' said he, 'that is that scoundrel Smith, of the Moral Volcano. He was due yesterday.' And he snatched a navy revolver from his belt and fired. Smith dropped, shot in the thigh. The shot spoiled Smith's aim, who was taking a second chance, and he crippled a stranger. It was me. Merely a finger shot off.

Poor Twain! Before the day is done, he becomes the unintended victim of a whip, flying debris, a fall from a window, a virtual grenade, and myriad stray bullets. All of these injuries are suffered at the hands of incensed rival editors, among them (in the words of the chief editor) "that ass, Blossom, of the Higginsville **Thunderbolt and Battle Cry of Freedom**," "the inveterate liars of the **Semi-Weekly Earthquake**," "the besotted blackguard of the Mud Springs **Morning Howl**," and (memorably) Colonel Tecumseh. "The Colonel appeared in the door...with a dragoon revolver in his hand. He said, 'Sir, have I the honor of addressing the poltroon who edits this mangy sheet?' "You have. Be seated, sir. Be careful of that chair, one of its legs is gone. I believe I have the honor of addressing the putrid liar, Colonel Blatherskite Tecumseh?" "Right, sir. I have a little account to settle with you. If you are at leisure we will begin." "I have an article on the 'Encouraging Progress of Moral and Intellectual Development in America' to finish, but there is no hurry. Begin."

In the *melée* that ensues, the unfortunate Twain is shot in the arm and knuckle. "I then said, I believed I would go out and take a walk, as this was a private matter, and I had a delicacy about participating in it further. But both gentlemen begged me to keep my seat, and assured me that I was not in the way. They then talked about the elections and the crops while they reloaded, and I fell to tying up my wounds." When, at last, the Colonel was fatally wounded, "[he] remarked, with fine humor, that he would have to say good morning now, as he had business uptown. He then inquired the way to the undertaker's and left."²¹

“The Boiling Heat of Modern Capitalistic Culture”

From Mark Twain, as from Max Weber, we learn that the “progress of moral and intellectual development in America” does not take place with pristine purity, hermetically sealed from everything extra-rational. Unlike, e.g., the “rational actor” theorists of the New Resource Economics, who advance “a purely economic theory of Western society” (Brady & Noll, 1994), Twain and Weber were well aware that the “rationalization” of Gilded Age society did not require perfect utility-maximizing rationality. And capitalism, too, is often decisively irrational, harnessing or replicating the aggressive rivalries of what Richard Slotkin aptly calls the Gunfighter Nation.²² Many people fall by the wayside in what Max Weber, speaking in St. Louis, called “the strong blast of modern capitalistic competition” ([1904] 1946: 366). And capitalism, of course, is strictly non-rational in substantive terms. Illustrating this point in connection with Benjamin Franklin, Weber wrote, just before visiting the U.S., that in Franklin’s capitalist ethic “Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs.” On “this reversal of what we should call the natural relationship,” Weber makes two points: it is, to start with, extremely “irrational from a naïve point of view,” yet nonetheless “as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all peoples not under capitalistic influence” ([1904-05] 1976: 53).

Weber came to St. Louis in 1904 to speak about capitalism and rural society. What he said there remains relevant. In fact, the position Weber took on that occasion is a surprising blend of old and new trends in Western historiography. For the past decade, “New Western Historians” have been sharply at odds with partisans of the old orthodoxy, whose starting point has long been the “Frontier Thesis” of Frederick Jackson Turner (cf. Faragher 1994: 225f. and Limerick et al. 1991, *passim*). Weber, speaking just a decade after Turner gave his famous lecture on “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” ([1893] 1994), echoed Turner’s logic in some respects while anticipating his “New Western” critics in others.²³

Turner was a celebrant of the rough-hewn frontier democracy which, he believed, had triumphed when Andrew Jackson won the presidency and, several years later, abolished the national bank.²⁴ There was, Turner said, a frontier dynamic that powerfully spurred democracy, individualism, and a new invigorated national identity. “Western democracy was no theorist’s dream,” he said. “It came, stark and strong and full of life, from the American forest” (1906: 69). And the frontier “ideal,” he added, was faith in “the worth and possibilities of the common man, ...belief in the right of every man to rise to the full measure of his own nature, under conditions of social mobility” (68-9). Notwithstanding internal differences of various types, the Western frontier had “a fundamental unity in its social structure and its democratic ideals” (72). And the west was a safety valve for the stratified east, an open door for urban workers to find freedom on the land, thus defusing class tensions.

This Arcadian history, however, was now past. The supply of free land was exhausted, and hence, as Turner concluded his original essay, “the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history ([1893] 1994: 60).

Turner’s vision reigned almost unchallenged until his death in 1932 and remained orthodox even after many serious criticisms had been leveled and sustained. But in the past generation, this orthodoxy has been ever more comprehensively assailed. Paul Wallace Gates, in 1957, set the stage for many later critics when he charged Turner with glossing over frontier relations between capital and labor ([1957] 1968: 114f.).

More recently the failure of the Turnerian perspective to account for gender and race divisions has been eloquently demonstrated (Limerick 1987, Riley 1984), while others (Robbins 1994, Worster 1985) have deepened the critique of frontier capitalism (and rationalism). All this, in turn, has provoked strong resistance, not least, as William Robbins observes, from old-guard historians unfriendly to those who “invoke the dreaded ‘C’ word – capitalism – in discussing the West and its larger world” (1991: 188).

Max Weber did not hesitate to apply the “C” word to the frontier West. Yet his views on the frontier were not strictly or merely anti-Turnerian. Indeed, he took a position that is both Turnerian **and** “New Western.” This is partly because Turner’s views have been misconstrued.

Although his less critical and discerning disciples have shied away from the notion of capitalism, Turner himself stressed the **passing** of the earlier, more democratic West, which was giving way, he said, to a new West marked by “the manufacturing organization with city and factory” ([1893] 1994: 38). Just one year before Weber lectured in St. Louis, Turner said that “we find ourselves at the present time in an era of such profound economic and social transformation as to raise the question of the effect of these changes upon the democratic institutions of the United

States.” And he listed four new developments, which, “taken together...constitute a revolution”: “the exhaustion of the supply of free land,” the new expansionism of American foreign policy, the eruption of populism, and “such a [colossal] concentration of capital in the control of fundamental industries as to make a new epoch in the economic development of the United States” ([1903] 1994: 79).²⁶

In many ways, Turner’s views were vague and romantic, but in these particulars, at least, they do not clash with Max Weber’s outlook. Weber, too, stresses the openness of the class system in the formative periods of United States history, which he too credits to the presence of the “immense territory” along the frontier. In Germany, where capitalism arose amid a welter of hostile forces, the path of “bourgeois liberalism” was blocked by forces new and old, by socialist workers as well as by Junker aristocrats.²⁷ In the United States, in contrast, the working class was largely neutralized as an anti-bourgeois force by an amalgam of factors, including low population density, the relatively high price of labor-power, and opportunities on the ever-shifting Western frontier. Hence, in the Civil War and after, during the contest of strength between the bourgeois North and the Southern “planters’ aristocracy,” there was little working-class self-assertion. The result was the “destruction” of the planters’ aristocracy, and the victory of bourgeois democracy in a form unmarked by the “peculiar authoritarian stamp” of European capitalism ([1904] 1946: 385, 372, 369).

This analysis takes the frontier thesis as a partial explanation, not simply of “democracy” in the United State but of the specifically **bourgeois** character of democracy after the Civil War. It was, Weber held, the uncharacteristic weakness and even absence of “adversaries of bourgeois capitalism” that made it relatively easy for the ascendant capitalist class to forge a liberal regime ([1904] 1946: 369). Hence a quasi-Turnerian perspective was, for Weber, a source of clarifying insight into American capitalism, not a barrier to such insight.

Weber also emphasizes, as Turner had, that the day of the frontier is passed. Indeed, he prophesies that the closing of the frontier marks “the last time, as long as the history of mankind shall last, that such conditions for a free and great development will be given,” since “the areas of free soil are now vanishing everywhere in the world” ([1904] 1946: 385). Class polarities within U.S. capitalism, meanwhile, will grow more fixed and antagonistic: “if new districts for settlement are no longer available, and if the workingman is conscious of being forced to remain inevitably a proletarian as long as he lives,” then “the disciplined masses of workingmen created by capitalism” will revert, Weber predicts, to their “natural” impulse, “to unite in a class party.” This “is bound to come about sooner or later,” and indeed may be visible on the horizon already ([1904] 1946: 372).²⁸ Rural conflicts, meanwhile, will also grow more acute as “capital...begins to monopolize the land to a great extent” and as the “absolute economic individualism” of small farmers falls beneath the scythe of bourgeois competition ([1904] 1946: 383, 364).

From this vantage point, in other words, the class conflicts of the Gilded Age could not be grasped **apart** from the now-receding influence of the frontier west. This is the converse, and implicit corollary, of the claim by New Western Historians that the western frontier cannot be grasped apart from capitalism. And this, too, was perceived by Max Weber, who anticipates Worster, among others, when he warns that “the boiling heat of modern capitalistic culture is connected with heedless consumption of natural resources, for which there are no substitutes.”²⁹ ([1904] 1946: 366)

The Next Frontier

As the frontier recedes into memory, the environment is also imperiled. It was in this spirit, shortly after his return to Germany, that Weber penned the following memorable lines on the “tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order,” which expands, he says, to fill every geographic and ecological niche, and which rules us morally as well as economically: “This order is now bound to technical and economic conditions of machine production that... determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt” ([1904-05] 1976: 181).

Thus does capital “rationalize” the world. The danger, Weber implies, is that this heedless rationalism may yet be our undoing. Irrationality is not restricted to capital’s frontier. It is, rather, the paradoxical truth of capitalism, the underside of the instrumental, calculating, profit-driven “rationality” which turns even ordinary means of production – coal, oil, fertilizers – into means of destruction. But capital does also produce a working-class, as Weber stressed. That class, offering its labor-power for sale in every corner of today’s world, remains riveted to capital by ties both

economic and psychic. Whether workers, in all their endless varieties, will always see capitalism as “irresistible” – whether they will allow states and mega-corporations to burn through every last ton of fossilized fuel – remains to be seen. However, one thing is certain: the vanished frontiers of Max Weber’s day can no longer serve as safety valves for the displaced and discontented. Capitalism is still a wild west – a realm where, as Marx said, “one capitalist always kills many”³⁰ – and it is still very much what Weber called it, “the most fateful force” in modern society ([1904-05] 1976: 17). But today that force can neither be evaded nor held at bay. There is no refuge beyond the reach of capital. The next frontier is social, a choice – whether to allow profit-hungry capitalism to run its increasingly toxic course or to find a sustainable alternative. The urgency of that choice is becoming clearer by the day.

Endnotes

1. One major recent entrant in this genre is also among the most lurid: *Max Weber: A Biography* by Radkau (2009). See also the older study by Mitzman (1969). For level-headed correctives, see, e.g., Käsler (1988); Kivisto & Swatos, Jr. (1988), and my own “Charisma Disenchanted” (2013). On Weber’s links to Else Jaffé and her sisters, see the insightful Martin Green (1974).

2. On Weber and Mann, see Harvey Goldman (1993 & 1989). On Weber and Lawrence, see again Green (1974).

3. See, e.g., the anthology on Weber’s contemporaries edited by Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (1987). Curiously, nearly every figure discussed in this massive volume is European, despite Weber’s well-known interest in non-European contemporaries such as William James, Booker T. Washington, and Thorstein Veblen, among others.

4. See Bendix (1962); Schluchter (1996); and Kalberg (1994). See also my “Charisma and the Spirit of Capitalism” (2014), which discusses Weber’s account of Confucianism and Taoism. And there are, of course, many specialized monographs as well. A good running overview of the specialist literature – on this and all subjects Weberian -- is provided by the journal *Max Weber Studies* (2000-). See also Alan Sica, *Max Weber: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (2004).

5. On Weber and the United States, see Erdelyi (1992), Diggins (1996), and the essential sources cited in n. 8, below. Future discussions of Weber and Russia, meanwhile, will rise on the foundation of the English- and German-language editions of his writings on the Russian revolutions (1995, 1989, 1984).

6. *The Protestant Ethic* was originally a two-part essay in the journal that Weber edited with Werner Sombart and Edgar Jaffé, *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. For a superb translation of that original two-part essay -- the first part of which appeared before Weber went to the U.S. -- see Weber ([1904-05] 2002), translated and edited by Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells. This edition also includes Weber’s indispensable replies to Felix Rachfall and others in which he adds extensive clarifying detail to his account of the spirit of

capitalism, which he now sharply contrasts to the spirit of plutocracy. For an overall perspective on the wider history and significance of *The Protestant Ethic*, see Peter Ghosh (2014).

7. On this, see Robbins (1994, 1991). Donald Worster indirectly connects to Weber (through Karl Wittfogel and Max Horkheimer) in his outstanding study, *Rivers of Empire* (1985: 23-24, 347 n. 8). Also notable in this respect is Richard Slotkin, whose trilogy on the Frontier Myth (1992, 1975, 1973) is strikingly Weberian in spirit.

8. On Rollman (1993), see below. Roth’s many contributions include his massive account of the Weber family’s far-flung Anglo-German (and Belgian, Argentinian and U.S.) connections, *Max Webers deutsch-englische Familien geschichte 1800- 1950* (2001). Meurer’s massive recent biography of Marianne Weber (2010) includes a brief account of the U.S. sojourn from Marianne’s standpoint and material on other aspects of her connections to the United States. And I thank Larry Scaff for sharing drafts with Bob Antonio and me of his invaluable paper, “Remnants of Romanticism: Max Weber in Oklahoma and Indian Territory,” which ultimately appeared in Swatos & Kaelber (2005, 77-110). It was from Scaff, too, that we first learned about Weber’s encounter with the newspaper editor recounted below. And Scaff’s 2011 monograph on Weber’s travel in the United States is now the indispensable standard work on this subject.

9. There are two primary sources on this expedition: Marianne’s account, *Max Weber: A Biography* ([1926] 1975); and Max’s 1906 essay “The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism,” available in Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1946). Henceforth these sources will be cited as *Biography* and “Protestant Sects” respectively. Another key source is Rollman’s essay in Roth & Lehmann (1993), which drew upon unpublished papers in Troeltsch’s archives to highlight the visits to New York, Chicago and St. Louis. Also invaluable is “Max Weber’s Visit to North Carolina” by Larry G. Keeter (1981), which reports 1976 interviews with Max’s surviving North Carolina relatives, Maggie Fallenstein and Annie Miller Booker. Relatively little

English-language scholarship has been devoted to Marianne Weber, but, for a recent discussion, see Stacey Smith (2019). It is surprising how little overall influence the Protestant Sects essay ([1906] 1946) has exerted, even though this is one of the central loci of Weber's discussion of "charisma" and "charismatic authority" (most notably in the version of this essay that Weber revised for publication in what turned out to be his posthumous volume on the economic ethics of the world religions). The phrase "charisma of the disciples" had appeared a year earlier in the concluding chapter of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, ([1904-1905] 1976), but it was not until the Protestant Sects essay that Weber paused to elaborate this concept -- which he borrowed from Rudolf Sohm's exegesis of the Pauline meaning of the term (see Smith, 1998). In the English-speaking countries, the neglect of this essay may be due, in part, to the fact that it was published not, as Weber intended, as an epilogue to The Protestant Ethic, but as a stand-alone essay in an anthology.

10. Diggins (1996) shows, with a map, that Tocqueville's famous journey through the U.S. took a similar route.

11. Max's mother, Helene, was the daughter of Friedrich and Emilie Fallenstein. Emilie, who was descended from Huguenots named Souchay, was Friedrich Fallenstein's second wife. His first wife, Betty, had four children -- one of whom (Fritz Fallenstein) emigrated to America, where he changed his name to "Francis Miller." It was to visit "Uncle Fritz" Miller and his extended family that Max and Marianne came to North Carolina. Another cousin, Frank, the son of Fritz's brother Friedrich, had recently left Germany to join the Millers; he lived in a neighboring community. One of Max's cousins, probably Frank, was a miner to start with but later the "owner of a law office and associated with a smart Irishman for whom he did the work; he, at any rate, was on his way toward becoming a notable" (Biography [1926] 1975: 297). Fritz's three sons were poor Blue Mountain farmers; Jeff and Jim owned farms, and their unmarried brother Hugh lived with Jim and his family. Betty, a daughter, is mentioned only in passing. The other relatives are not named at all.

12. In the original text of the Protestant Sects essay ([1906] 1946: 304), Weber refers to "M. [the county seat]"; from Marianne's memoirs, it seems clear that this is Mount Airy, North Carolina. Keeter (1981) points out, however, that Mount Airy was never a county seat.

13. For analysis of the contemporary relevance, and persistence, of neo-Confederate narratives of this kind, see my forthcoming paper with Eric Hanley, "Nativism, Populism, and the White Working Class" (Critical Sociology, 2019).

14. With the exception of Jeff Miller's family, Max's cousins attended the Zion Methodist Church in Mount Airy; see Keeter (1981: 111).

15. The account of this dialogue in the Protestant Sects essay varies slightly: "One of my relatives commented

that 'faith' provides unfailing protection against sneezes. Another relative stood beside me and, being unchurchly in accordance with German traditions, he looked on, spitting disdainfully over his shoulder. He spoke to one of those baptised, 'Hello, Bill, wasn't the water pretty cool?' and received the very earnest reply, 'Jeff, I thought of some pretty hot place (Hell!) and so I didn't mind the cool water.'" A number of points about this passage deserve attention. Both lines of dialogue, in the German original, appear not in the main text but in footnotes; Gerth and Mills silently added these notes to the main text. They also added an ungrammatical construction ("Another relative...he") and twisted the translation in two ways: rendering "I didn't care for the water" (which appears in English in the German text) as "I didn't mind the cold water" -- and rendering "Hallo, Bill" as "Hello, Bill" ("Die protestantische Sekten" [1906] 1947: 210, fns. 1 & 2). Note also that the name of the baptized man varies from one text to the other: Bill vs. Bem. Keeter's informants reported that Bill is the correct name here, since the baptized man was Bill Phillips, the son of Joe Phillips, who owned the Brushy Fork Pond where the baptism was held. It seems likely that Marianne transcribed Weber's handwriting inaccurately in this case.

16. The salesman's reasoning here is, plainly, closely related to the logic of "civil religion," à la Bellah (1967).

17. In his famous lecture "Politics as a Vocation" ([1919] 1946), Weber opposes "**Gesinnungsethik**" -- the "conviction ethic" of utopians and moral absolutists -- to the worldly "ethic of responsibility" (**Verantwortungsethik**).

18. The romanticism of this character sketch mirrors, in spirit at least, the tales of "Old Shatterhand" by the enormously popular German novelist Karl May (especially Winnetou). In substance, however, the most notable point is that much of what Max and Marianne wrote about the treatment of Indians in the United States was sharply critical, and that Max was prepared to use the Archiv as a forum for criticism of federal policy in this sphere. "I think my host, the Cherokee, will attack the latest Indian policy of the United States in the Archiv," Max wrote in a letter. Later, Marianne recalled, "[Max's] eyes sparkled when he spoke about [this]" (Biography [1926] 1975: 294). At the same time, though, Marianne weakens her credibility as a Cherokee sympathizer when, apparently without irony, she refers to the white settlers as members of a "more intelligent" "race."

19. My thanks to Steve Kalberg and Bob Antonio for sharing this article with me.

20. Hans Rollman (1993: 380) reports that this story was picked up by many American newspapers, including the St. Louis Post Dispatch, which ran this headline: "GUN PLAY' SCARED SAVANT. GERMAN PROFESSOR LEAVES OKLAHOMA CITY INSTANTLY WHEN EDITORS DROP WORDS FOR WEAPONS." Rollman reports that, in

the incident in question, Oklahoma State Capitol editor Frank Greer pulled a gun on John Golobie, the editor of the Oklahoma State Register.

21. Twain had an equally jaundiced view of German journalism. Speaking about a visit to Max Weber's Heidelberg, Twain expressed amazement about the wonders of journalistic prose in Germany: "An average sentence, in a German newspaper, is a sublime and impressive curiosity; it occupies a quarter of a column; it contains all the ten parts of speech -- not in a regular order, but mixed; it is built mainly of compound words constructed by the writer on the spot, and not to be found in any dictionary -- six or seven words compacted into one, without joint or seam -- that is, without hyphens; it treats of fourteen or fifteen different subjects, each enclosed in a parenthesis of its own"; etc. ("The Awful German Language" ([1880] 1985: 441)

22. This is the title of Vol. 3 (1992) of Slotkin's great cultural triptych of American frontier mythology.

23. Weber's parallel with Turner has been noted by John Patrick Diggins (1996: 31).

24. This was an early version of the Jacksonian myth later popularized by Arthur Schlesinger. The truth of the matter -- that Jackson was originally a representative of Tennessee banking interests, who broke the National Bank to shift the balance of financial power from Chestnut Street in Philadelphia to Wall Street in New York, at the behest of New Yorker Martin Van Buren, Jackson's vice-president -- is beautifully limned by Bray Hammond ([1957] 1991).

25. See Robbins (1994: 202, n. 30) for a brief list of others who "see capitalism in its broadest form as an integral force in western American history." Meanwhile, Worster expressly adopts Max Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason as one of the pillars of his analysis of capitalism on the western frontier. Though this approach has merits, it also serves as a rationale for the anachronistic claim that the old West, far from being "wild" and free, was a precursor of the "totally administered," "one-dimensional" society analyzed in the mid-twentieth century by Adorno and Marcuse as well as Horkheimer. In this instance, the corrective to the Frontier Myth seems nearly as one-sided as the myth itself.

26. "The iron, the coal, and the cattle of the country have all fallen under the domination of a few great corporation with allied interests, and by the rapid combination of the important railroad systems and steamship lines, in concert with these same forces, even the breadstuffs and the manufactures of the of the nation are to some degree controlled in a similar way. This is largely the work of the last decade." (Ibid., 79) Many historians have ignored this aspect of Turner's thinking, and even Donald Worster, who calls special attention to Turner's views on capital and capitalists, adds that Turner "strangely assumed that his American democracy would be unaffected" by the fundamental changes resulting from capitalization of the West (1985: 12).

27. This failure was sealed in 1878 when Bismarck allied himself with the Prussian aristocracy, thereby jilting his former allies in the bourgeois National Liberal Party (of which Max Weber Sr. was a leading member). The younger Max Weber regarded this as a decisive turning point in German history, the juncture at which the spirit of capitalism was stifled by imperial bureaucracy and Junker aristocracy. Even in the Weimar Republic, when liberalism briefly reigned, the carrier of this liberalism was the socialist SPD, not a bourgeois party; and in the polar night of icy darkness that ensued when Weimar liberalism was defeated by Hitlerian forces, the regime that came to power was, plainly, neither bourgeois nor liberal. Hence German capitalism was not destined to assume a "normal" bourgeois political form until after the end of the Second World War.

28. This "labor-safety-valve" thesis has been one of the most controversial elements of Turner's doctrine. See, e.g., the three essays collected by Richard Hofstadter and Seymour Martin Lipset (1968: 172-224), in which Shannon offers a "post-mortem" on the theory, Simler offers a qualified dissent, and Murphy & Zellner challenge Shannon directly.

29. It is hence "difficult," he concludes, "to determine how long the present supply of coal and ore will last."

30. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1 ([1867] 1976: 928).

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Bound to Capitalism: The Pursuit of Profit and Pleasure in Digital Pornography

Jennifer Miller

A couple of years ago, on a foray into Target, I happened upon a display featuring kinky products inspired by the popular *Fifty Shades of Grey* franchise. Positioned near toothpaste and antacid, The Official Pleasure Collection illustrates two related phenomena explored in this article: capitalism's ability to appropriate and commodify taboo sexual practices and consequently, the ever-shifting terrain of sexual acceptability. The following cultural study of digital pornography explores the interrelated development of these two themes at this historical juncture by considering how neoliberalism and Web 2.0 influence the production and distribution of kinky pornographic content. The *Fifty Shades of Grey* franchise blurs the line between popular culture and pornography. In fact before, *Fifty Shades of Grey* was picked up by Vintage Books, an imprint of Knopf Doubleday, eventually selling over 170 million copies, it was distributed on a fanfiction site where it was created as an erotic response to *Twilight* (Cuccinello, 2017). By collapsing the distinction between producers and consumers and participating in the construction of a vibrant digital public anchored in fandom and creative labor, fan fiction is a clear reflection of the same Web 2.0 logics, particularly user-generated content and virtual community building, that I show have shaped the development of digital pornography through a case study of Kink.com, a popular BDSM (Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/Submission, sadomasochism) subscription-based pornography site founded by Peter Acworth in 1997.

This article attributes the acceptability and mainstreaming of *Fifty Shades of Grey*-style kink to the appropriation and commodification of live BDSM subcultural practices by digital pornographers in the 1990s. This early move made subcultural sex practices and emerging identities more accessible to a curious, although not necessarily initiated, public, which normalized some aspects of kink and extended our collective pornographic imagination. As Susanna Paasonen suggests: "There is little doubt as to the Internet contributing to the politics of visibility of various sexual tastes, the diversification of porn imaginaries and understandings of the very concept of pornography" (2007, p. 164). This, in turn, expanded the market for kink creating the conditions necessary for the unprecedented mainstream success of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* franchise, which has subsequently influenced digital pornography.

The Logics of Digital Porn

This project identifies the factors that have influenced the production, distribution, and consumption of kinky digital pornography including neoliberalism, authenticity, and Web 2.0.

Neoliberalism and Authenticity

Neoliberalism refers to political and economic policies that shift power from labor to capital and use state policies and institutions to maximize profit for private industry. One of the central logics buttressing neoliberal politics and economics is the personalization of crisis; its construction as a matter of individual inadequacy. Alternately, and importantly for my project, the personalization of politics favors personal empowerment over collective action, laying the groundwork for the politicization of sexual acts and representations as a political end in themselves.

Stephen Maddison's groundbreaking essay "Online Obscenity and Myths of Freedom: Dangerous Images, Child Porn, and Neoliberalism," critiques the neoliberal logic that "equates commodity choice with sexual emancipation" (Maddison, 2010, p. 17). He notes: "In a range of ways, neoliberalism offers us subjectivities and choices that propose new sexual freedoms, yet these foreclose sexuality to the sphere of economic enfranchisement" (Maddison, 2010, p. 25). In other words, one is sexually free to the extent that they can consume commodified versions of sexuality at their discretion.

Stephen Maddison's "Beyond the Entrepreneurial Voyeur" Sex, Porn, and Cultural Politics," introduces a new vocabulary for critiquing pornography; one that accounts for contemporary political-economic practices and new technologies. He uses the term "immaterial sex" to "describe the creative and affective energies commodified in porn production" and the term "entrepreneurial voyeur" to describe "the ways in which porn consumption, sexual subjectification, and the enterprise culture mutually reinforce one another" (Maddison, 2013, p. 107). He sees pornography as a technique of governmentality that produces the type of desiring subject required of a neoliberal economy. In the production of pornography, sexuality is commodified in a state of competition. He suggests that celebratory readings of pornography fail to adequately account for these issues by privileging individual agency and desire, which is actually limited to choosing content. In other words, pornography helps identify, organize, and by extension manage desire.

Simon Hardy echoes these sentiments in his book chapter "The New Pornographies" writing: "There is an appearance of unlimited choice amid the vast maze of websites and windows, but only in terms of fixed and finite options. The catch is that what is in fact a strictly commodified set of options can be experienced as the expression of the inner desires of the self" (Hardy, 2009, p. 11). Hardy makes a critical observation. Interiority, or a sense of essential sexual truth is, in fact, the project of picking desires from a finite catalog of (often commodified) options. The internalization of sexual desires that emanate outside of the self are experienced as a product of the self.

Social theorist Michel Foucault has convincingly argued that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed a proliferation of discourses about sex, which prompted the emergence of experts and institutions to manage sexuality (Foucault, 1990). According to many critical theorists engaging pornography, it functions in a similar vein to psychiatry and sexology. Experts working within these institutions produce narratives of desire that elicit and then manage desire, which forecloses sexual possibilities. Sexuality studies scholar Linda Williams explicitly identifies pornography as part of a power-knowledge apparatus claiming that hardcore pornography emerged out of the West's obsession with "knowing" sex and pleasure, and deriving pleasure from this knowledge (1999). Williams argues that learning the "truth" about our sexual desire is conflated with learning our personal truth, since sex has been constructed as "the secret."

This is where discourses of authenticity and neoliberalism intersect, but as I suggest also begin to break down as the desire for sexual truth is replaced with what I refer to as the logic of sexual assemblages. Although I agree that even just a few short years ago sexuality was linked to truth and authenticity, I suggest that sexuality has become untethered from sexual truth coinciding with the mainstreaming of kink, as well as other sexual identities and practices. This does not mean that authenticity does not continue to resonate for some people, but instead that the very movement to the mainstream emphasizes flexible pleasures. We are moving towards a "try it on" sexual culture in which the meaning of sexuality and importance of authenticity is undergoing revision; it is largely an external discovery based on consumption instead of an internal discovery based on reflection.

This is not to suggest that there is no relationship between authenticity and kink, but instead that mainstream awareness of subcultural phenomena shifts the focus away from authenticity and towards a new model of flexible assemblages in which sexual desires can be remade to reflect a play of surfaces that do not require depth or "realness" to be pleasurable. The discourse of authenticity, critical to understanding sexual subjectivity and authenticating sites like Kink.com are becoming less paramount to discussions. One need not "discover" what they like and commit to it through a subscription and community participation in a virtual environment, but one can instead flexibly try on new identities and try out new practices inspired by the click of infinite buttons. This does not reject logics of sexual fluidity popular in the 1990s, which coincides with the early institutionalization of Internet pornography; in fact, these logics, like kink, are becoming "mainstream" as sex and intimacy are reconfigured as flexible assemblages instead of core identities.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 refers to a mode of participatory engagement with digital culture. The logics of neoliberalism and Web

2.0 intersect in digital pornography, especially digital pornography that self-consciously constructs (i.e., markets) itself as alternative or anti-normative (queer, feminist, or BDSM pornography), which, as my case study illustrates, is critical to Kink.com's early development (Mowlabocus, 2010). Feona Attwood writes: "Altporn sites ... combine commerce with community, often adopting a subscription model in which prime content becomes available to members for a monthly fee. They often present themselves as sites of community as well as commercial enterprises..." (Attwood, 2010, p. 95). She continues: "The inclusion of blogs, discussion groups and message boards, campsites and chatrooms on many altporn sites further emphasizes the mixing of sex with social networking, self-imaging, and user-generated content. Here "sex work" becomes a stylish and alternative form of self-expression and a way of developing community" (Attwood, 2010, p. 25). As my case study of Kink.com shows, in addition to presenting sex workers as liberated sexual subjects exploring their fantasies, Kink.com encouraged consumer participation, primarily through discussion boards as a strategy to ensure loyalty. This affective labor collapsed product and consumer as part of what subscribers paid to purchase was the community, which they in fact created. Even more, it is Web 2.0 that is shifting the tide on digital pornography's marketability as amateurs increasingly produce their own content, which can be viewed for free on distribution sites supported by advertisers instead of subscribers (Paasonen, 2010).

I am not the first scholar to study digital pornography as a product of neoliberal and Web 2.0 logics that subsequently reinforces said logics. Grant Kien's "BDSM and Transgression 2.0: The Case of Kink.com" is a cultural study of Kink.com that historicizes the site to better understand how pornographic content has influenced shifting understandings of transgression. He identifies three steps in the "mainstreaming process": "first, the steady commodification of what began as a derelict virtual commons populated by deviants; second, the enclosure of virtual spaces that were considered "profane" until their appropriation by capitalism; and third, the legitimation of certain erotic practices" (Kien, 2012a, p. 119). Although I agree with the moves he charts, his 2012 publication does not account for the newest trends in digital pornography and the influence mainstreaming BDSM as well as the rise in free advertisement-based amateur-made pornography has had on production, distribution, and consumption of digital pornography. Much has changed in the last few years.

Although a fair amount of scholarship about digital pornography has been published over the last decade, no current scholarship has foregrounded the cycle of appropriations of BDSM, first by digital pornographers, then by mainstream literary and film companies, then by pornographers, which I suggest allows us to trace the shifting logics of late capitalism. The nearest analysis is by Susanna Paasonen in her epilogue to the collection *Pornification*. Paasonen writes:

Alternative pornographies have – from kink sites to subcultural pornographies – fed back to the imageries of commercial pornography that they seem to subvert. If independent porn productions appropriate poses and elements from mainstream porn while abandoning or disregarding others, this is also the case vice versa. The notion of the mainstream is porous and contingent. New categories and sub-genres are introduced and mainstreamed and they undergo transformation in the process. (2010, p. 163)

Paasonen identifies reciprocal poaching between altporn and mainstream porn; but she does not consider how mainstream culture more generally, from mass paperbacks to blockbuster films, are transformed under the weight of pornography. My original interpretation, grounded in a case study of Kink.com, draws on existing insights about digital pornography that have connected it to Web 2.0 logics and neoliberalism, while updating the analysis to include very recent shifts in the production and consumption of kink.

A Kinky Case Study

Kink.com owes much of its early success to a marketing strategy that threaded narratives of sexual discovery and sexual authenticity across site content, promotional materials, and news media stories about the site's owner, Peter Acworth, as well as its performers. Kink.com's origin story begins in 1997 when owner Peter Acworth was a doctoral student in Columbia University's finance program. While on vacation in Spain, Acworth spotted an issue of *The Sun* with the headline "Fireman Makes 1/4 Million Pounds Pushing Internet Filth." Inspired by the British firefighter's untrained entrepreneurial success Acworth decided to start his own Internet pornography business (Abrams, 2010; Mooallem, 2007). When he returned to the US, Acworth created HogTied.com, a site consisting of still-photos of bound women. Within a year the site was making over a thousand dollars a day. At that point, Acworth decided to

leave Columbia's finance program for San Francisco's fetish scene (Abrams, 2010). Once in San Francisco Acworth diversified the site's content by creating his own bondage scenarios with models he discovered on Craigslist. Soon after, in 2000, Acworth started a second site, *FuckingMachines.com*, which depicted women anally and vaginally penetrated by a variety of custom-made machines. Acworth's original content took advantage of the possibilities offered by the Internet including discussion forums and behind the scenes blogs that encouraged a sense of virtual community and client loyalty, a point I will return to later.

Importantly, *Kink.com* was never just a virtual community, part of its branding strategy was its location within San Francisco's fetish scene. In 2006 Acworth set up shop in a 20,000 square foot armory located in the Mission District (Mooallem, 2007). In the decade Acworth owned the armory *Kink.com* offices were housed there, much of the content was created there, and it served as a meeting place offering tours and eventually even a bar. Kien contends that it is impossible to understand *Kink.com*'s success and its sociocultural impact without contextualizing it within the San Francisco fetish scene writing: "its sociocultural role can only realistically be understood when contextualized among community based web and physical presences such as *Fetlife.com*, the San Francisco Society of Janus, San Francisco's weekly *Bondage a Go Go* event, and the San Francisco Citadel BDSM playspace" (Kien, 2012a, p. 122). The allure of San Francisco and its reputation for supporting sexually diverse communities added to the allure and authenticity of *Kink.com* even as the site became a staple of the community. Even more, practitioners and communities often appear in content for no fee because Acworth does provide a fantasy site for BDSM practitioners.

Acworth marketed *Kink.com* as a public service and community participant as illustrated through the site's mission statement: "To demystify and celebrate alternative sexualities (sic) by providing the most ethical and authentic kinky adult entertainment" (*Kink.com*). Additionally, in Kien's 2010 interview with Acworth, the porn mogul details his long-time donations to kinky community organizations and describes digitized kinky educational programs available on *Kink.com* as markers of his commitment to mainstreaming kink (Kien, 2012b, p. 122). Kien connects Acworth's commitment to mainstreaming kink to profit suggesting it would "expand the BDSM pornography market and build a solid alliance of popular support should there ever come a moralistic legal challenge to the business" (Kien, 2012b, p. 122). Although I do not doubt Acworth's investment in mainstreaming kink, which Kien argues convincingly, it is important to note the limits of Acworth's control over what would happen to kink once it was in the hands, and played out on the bodies, of a mass public that did not identify with the subculture per se. In other words, even five years ago it does not seem that anyone doubted the ability of a regionally specific kinky community such as that found in San Francisco to remain cohesive and strong under the weight of kinks mainstreaming. But, as I suggest, and as my case study of *Kink.com* illustrates, kinky subcultures did shift under the weight of mainstreaming in tandem with the culmination of neoliberal and Web 2.0 logics in popular advertisement-based digital streaming services (Paasonen, 2010).

Acworth's early construction of *Kink.com* as a public service coopts a 1990s trend to politicize sexual expressions, acts, and identities. Aristeia Fotopoulou identifies a "conceptual and activist move in queer feminist politics from questions of gender to those of sexuality as the primary site of oppression" (Fotopoulou, 2017, p. 64). Because sexuality was constructed as a site of oppression it was also envisioned as a site of potential liberation. The focus on the individual and her liberation seems to succumb to the logics of neoliberalism previously alluded to, but recent work by scholar Hannah McCann suggests that locating politics on the surface of the body and seeing gender subversion as a political end emerged as early as the 1700s with Mary Wollstonecraft's description of femininity as debilitating; a theme that was picked up in the second wave by feminists including Betty Friedan and Susan Brownmiller (McCann, 2018, p. 21). According to McCann, this logic was normalized in the motto "the personal is political," which too frequently reduced the personal to the political (McCann, 2018).

Additionally, Fotopoulou and I share similar concerns with the relationship between pornography and neoliberalism. She notes: "...discourses of authenticity, productivity and individuality shape a post-feminist understanding of porn, which legitimizes digital pornographic practices and, at the same time, creates new audiences" (Fotopoulou, 2017, p. 75). Acworth took advantage of this moment to build and profit from a material and virtual community anchored in kinky sexuality. One of his primary techniques involves collapsing audience and participant, observer and performer; a possibility that existed because of digitization and which reflects logics of both web 2.0 culture and neoliberalism. Neoliberal consumer choice rhetoric is critical to Acworth's marketing strategy as illustrated by a 2010 interview with *Details*: "We are all different. Some people are wired for monogamy, some, not, some are kinky, some gay; some need sex several times each day, some once per week. The diversity of pornography on the Internet is fueled by demand, and the diversity of our sexual tastes has never been clearer" (Abrams, 2010). Acworth links agency to consumption while also suggesting that sexuality is "wired," an essential truth that must

be discovered. Importantly, he abandons this argument as kink becomes more mainstream; a point I will return to. As I have demonstrated, many scholars have convincingly read digital pornography as a product of neoliberal and Web 2.0 logics, but to my knowledge no one is suggesting that these logics are influencing investments in sexual authenticity as a move is made to stop seeing sexual truth as internal and instead begin to see it as a stylization of the body, an assemblage of desires that do not demand commitment or the weight of “truth.”

The collapse of distinctions between producer and consumer are apparent in *The Upper Floor*, described on the site as “a real life sex party” (“*The Upper Floor*,” n.d.). Although there are paid performers, many of the participants are not compensated for their labor; this is facilitated by the fact that they do not consider it labor. As Melissa Gira Grant wrote in a 2014 *Dissent* article: “extras receive a “free” membership to the site. He pitches the experience to extras as a full-service sex party, with opulent sets, expensive BDSM furniture, sex toys, a bar, and initiation into the Kink community. However, the extras—unlike the paid performers who also engage in sexual performance on camera at the parties—are not regarded by Kink as performers. They are considered “guests” (Grant, 2014). Grant interviewed the producer of the *Upper Floor* for her article, and he suggested that many “guests” did not consider their participation labor because it mirrored the sex clubs they would often pay to enter. The issue is that someone, notably Acworth, was profiting.

The collapse between producer/consumer apparent on the *Upper Floor* reflects Web 2.0 logics and pivots around virtual, and, in this instance, physically located, affective community building that unites strangers through the consumption of digital kink. In a 2012 interview Acworth noted:

We're really ramping up our live offerings and our social network offerings to build a social network around our products and around our models, so you can not only watch a recorded video of a model, you can open a conversation with him or her, or visit a live show featuring that model or interact with that model while the show is happening. More interactive I would say, more of a community feel. (Getz, n.d.)

Part of what is being sold here is affective belonging and connectivity with other members of an alternative sex public where anyone with a credit card is welcome. The consumers are part of the intangible product, digital pornography, that they purchase; this is explicit in the case of the *Upper Floor* where unpaid participants are given a subscription to the site their presence helps produce. In other words, consumers are producers and product, which creates a tangled heap of obscured commodity relations.

Each of the many sites that comprise Kink.com has forums and blogs where subscribers can interact with each other, the webmasters and performers. They may make suggestions about what models to use for what types of shoots and recommend framing scenarios for the videos. Confessions of, mostly female pleasure, replace the “money shot” as proof of authentic desire, but they are, of course, staged. Kink.com performers are asked to narrate the realness of their desire in pre- and post-session interviews that are constructed to appear unscripted. Interview guidelines posted on Kink.com facilitate the framing of the sex scenes as both consensual and enjoyable. Among other things, interview guidelines state: “The model must be allowed to speak in their own words, and not be prompted to answer yes/no questions” (Kink.com). The interviews frame the explicit pornographic content and feature models describing the content as their personal fantasy and Kink.com as helping them explore their sexuality. These guidelines construct the models participating in shoots as sexual agents who are enjoying themselves, which downplays pornography as a site of labor by emphasizing it as a site of pleasure. The erasure of labor under the sign of pleasure and the emphasis on play is one-dimension of marketing authenticity in which material labor practices are relegated to the background. This encourages altporn to be equated with ethical porn with no thought to labor practices.

Journalists frequently embraced the fantasy that Kink.com presented an authentic kinky reality that deemphasizes the labor that goes into pornography as well as issues of exploitation as if doing so is to run the risk of being associated with a moralistic anti-pornography movement. As a result, most news coverage in Kink.com's early days provides gushing descriptions of a charming Acworth and his empowered co-workers who are able to make a living doing what they love. In a 2008 *Wired* article one journalist wrote:

The secret to the sites' longevity in an industry known for its churn lies in their emphasis on a genuine sexual experience. Newfangled producers like Kink and abbywinters are building successful businesses by creating content in which sex unfolds naturally, at its own pace. They still offer the content in every way possible, from short clips to features to making-of documentaries to live on-set streaming, but at the root of it all is pure, authentic sex. (Lynn, 2008)

Of course, the fact that most site content is staged, directed, and edited must be ignored for this interpretation

to make sense. In fact, what produces the sense of authenticity is not sex itself, which is usually not simulated in pornography, making it as real as it gets, but instead, stories told after the fact by participants who assure viewers that they did in fact find pleasure in the performance. So, the performance of pleasure, confessed by models is highly orchestrated before and after interviews, is used to equate sex with authenticity as if “real” sex is always pleasing.

The narrative of authenticity, public service rhetoric, and commitment to progressive sex prevalent across Kink.com makes it difficult to theorize the relationship between pleasure and exploitation, but several controversies surrounding Kink.com’s labor practices demonstrate. For instance, in 2011 aspiring pornography performer Aaliyah Avatari, stage name Nikki Blue, approached Kink.com with the idea of live-streaming her first vaginal penetration (Conger, 2013). She had previously had oral and anal sex on and off screen. Kink.com agreed and planned on using a “hymen cam” to offer visual proof. However, the camera’s ability to record the loss of virginity relies on conventional, heteronormative ideas about sexuality and virginity. Many would say Nikki Blue was already sexually active. The vagina, perhaps even the existence of hymen, were linked to Kink.com’s chosen marketing strategy, which further aligned itself with to conventional rhetoric using language like “deflowering” and “sacrificing innocence” (Conger, 2013). Its audience balked at the obvious appeals to conventionality embedded in virgin rhetoric that ignored Nikki Blue’s sexual agency and constructed her as a passive participant in the event (Carmon, 2011). Acworth later apologized for “being normative about female virginity” in marketing materials (Carmon, 2011). In his apology, Acworth wrote:

[W]e marketed it in a way that relied on sexist tropes and myths about the female body that we should not have perpetrated. And that fact was rightfully brought to our attention by bloggers who hold us to a much higher standard than that. We truly thank them for it and are gratified to see issues surrounding female sexuality, virginity and sexism being discussed in public forums – even if it was as a result of our screw up. (Carmon, 2011)

Acworth apologized for failing to live up to the standard of non-normativity that Kink aspired to, which learned about as soon as they were put on public forums. He was able to respond and attempt to reframe the shoot to redeem the event for a kinky public by focusing on Nikki Blue’s creative agency and catalyst for her pleasure.

Nikki Blue’s own account foregrounds pornography as a site of labor and it illustrates the precarity of sex workers. Kink.com has Acworth’s bottom-line, not the interest of performers at the center of their labor practices. The highly-publicized shoot took place in January 2011 on the Upper Floor and involved three male performers each of whom were to vaginally penetrate Nikki Blue; however, penetration was very difficult, and she screamed far more than usual, even for a BDSM shoot. In fact, before being fully penetrated the live and very well attended shoot was stopped for quite some time. According to Nikki Blue, she had to have vaginal reconstructive surgery after the shoot and her recovery took months (Conger 2013). She contends that she was blacklisted after her performance, because she requested workers compensation for injuries suffered during the shoot (Conger 2013).

Many disgruntled employees have since come forward with stories that contradict Acworth’s construction of Kink.com as a utopian space where performers are free to explore their sexual fantasies while being treated with dignity and earning a fair paycheck. Kink.com lists the model’s rights on the website demonstrating to consumers that models are given the autonomy to control shoots to a reasonable extent and end them when they wish. However, as suggested in recent scholarship by Aristeia Fotopoulos: “Empowerment discourses, and the focus on choice and agency, are ... often used to mask the exploitative conditions of sex work” (Fotopoulou, 2017, p. 77). It is not that sex work is inherently more oppressive than other labor, but instead that recognizing it as labor can be a challenge, and further, identifying and critically analyzing the type of labor it is, temporary and precarious, too frequently escapes analysis because such a critique has no clear place in existing pro- and anti-pornography debates. A nuanced reading of pornography sees the industry as an industry and reads it dialectically to reveal contradictions inherent in the logic and rhetoric of changing production, distribution, and consumption practices. The problem with constructing a false mainstream/alternative pornography binary is that it is often taken-for-granted that altporn is on the side of ethics and is somehow not clamoring after profit. I suggest, along with several other scholars, that altporn emerged at a particular historical juncture and profited off the politicization of public visual queer sexualities as political ends in themselves. Far from being above, beside, or beyond capital altporn is entwined with it, bound to it.

Maggie Mayhem, self-described “sex hacker, erotic artist, porn producer, and writer”, describes her ambivalence about working in the pornography industry by detailing the difficulty of asserting agency within labor relations (Mayhem, n.d.-b, n.d.-a). In one blog post, she describes being disempowered as a laborer who had little control over her work conditions noting that, for instance, quick bathroom breaks were difficult to take while bound so models were asked to relieve themselves in buckets (Mayhem, 2013). Additionally, according to Mayhem, models

were requested to work six-hour shifts with minimal breaks and have sex for free with performers and producers as practice runs. Mayhem asserts that she met with producers to discuss these issues but often felt voiceless and disempowered. For Mayhem the disempowerment she experienced, as a laborer, remains a source of shame. Her critique brings to the surface that the armory is “a workplace and porn is a job” (Mayhem, 2013). Moreover, she critiques The Upper Floor, a site on Kink.com that features people having sex with one another for free, noting that Acworth profits off this content without having to pay participants for it. At issue is not the enjoyment of the participants --- you can love your job while deserving to be fairly compensated for it and provided with safe conditions in which to do it. As Mayhem succinctly states: “Are we really fucking to make sure that the millionaire in the castle is a bigger millionaire?” (Mayhem, 2013).

I have discussed how neoliberalism intersects with and influences consumption habits, but it is just as critical to the organization of labor. In a neoliberal economic system, the profits of capitalists increase as the pay of laborers decreases. This is exasperated by attacks on unions that collectivize and empower laborers. In “Beyond the Entrepreneurial Voyeur? Sex, Porn and Cultural Politics,” Stephen Maddison writes:

On the one hand we can see the work of altporn entrepreneurs as expressions of the post-Fordist multitude: emergent expressions of creativity and sociality, arising from the articulation of communities of interest, where inter-dependence and co-operation is expressed by user-generated content and interactivity in forums, blogs and reviews, as a function of new technological possibilities. On the other hand, we can see altporn entrepreneurs as immaterial laborers for whom the distinction between life and work, and work, and leisure, has collapsed, and for whom the opportunity to comply with the requirement to enterprise themselves arises from an exploitation of their latent immaterial creativity. (Maddison, 2013, p. 107).

Another example of exploitative labor practices at Kink.com that increased Acworth’s profit at the expense of workers’ livelihood is a 2012 shift in the payrate of cam girls who perform in live-stream digital peepshows (Conger 2013). According to a [SF Weekly](#) article that Acworth has since refuted, Maxine Holloway, a cam girl, tried to organize her coworkers to protest the rate decrease and was fired (Conger 2013). Much as Acworth humbly apologized for the rhetoric used to market Nikki Blue’s hymen cam shoot, he apologized for how he handled the pay cut, although not the cut itself. He is quoted stating that it was his “biggest mistake of 2012” (Conger 2013).

Since Kink.com relies on the idea that its performers are thrilled to be working at the site where they can explore their sexual fantasies while earning a paycheck in a progressive work environment, these critiques are a reminder that Acworth may love the BDSM community that he identifies with, but he is also profiting off of it and he maintains a position of economic power that does not yield to any safe word. This is significant since the workings of capitalism are obscured behind the discourse of pleasure and the forging of a community both virtual and face-to-face that does benefit from the accessibility and visibility Acworth has brought to kinky sex practices. It is sites like Kink.com that have opened the gate for BDSM practices to seep into the mainstream by demonstrating their profitability and providing them with respectability.

Feona Attwood suggests that in the early 2000s pornography professionals were often characterized by “a reflexivity that marks them as thoughtful practitioners, indicating an overlap between critical, artistic, and activist interventions into the production of sex media” (Attwood, 2010, p. 88). She attributes this to Web 2.0 participatory practices and the increasing mainstreaming of kinky sexualities. So, in this period BDSM practitioners could propose shoot ideas to Acworth, as did Nikki Blue, with a legitimate desire to see a fantasy created. However, also as noted by Attwood, the pleasure of pornography professionals and their precarious employment situation in the industry are not mutually exclusive (Attwood, 2010, p. 91). A both/and reading of pornography needs to replace an either/or interpretation. Performers can be empowered to engage their fantasies while being economically exploited. Even more, as it is often performers’ fantasies that inspire content they are providing unpaid immaterial labor just as the “extras” performing on the Upper Floor as well as, and less explicitly, discussion forum participants who informed Acworth about their disappointment in his marketing of Nikki Blue’s “virginity” shoot.

I opened with an anecdote illustrating just how mainstream kinky sex has become by discussing stumbling upon a display of furry handcuffs branded as [50 Shades of Grey](#) merchandise while shopping at Target. Ironically, the popularity of [Fifty Shades of Grey](#) inspired recent shifts in Kink.com’s marketing practices as Acworth decided to appeal to a broader audience. In a 2014 press release Acworth wrote: “With the mainstreaming of kink as evidenced by the huge popularity of [50 Shades of Grey](#), we feel there is an opportunity to serve a wider customer base in the future (“Kink.Com: We’re Shifting Focus to Become a Lifestyle Brand” 2014). Community members are recoded as customers, and Acworth envisions Kink.com becoming a lifestyle brand encouraging kinky sex practices through the

sale of pornography and sex accessories.

One strategy to reach a larger audience and create a wider market for kinky pornographic content as well as the paraphernalia that accompanies it is Kink University in which participants can “Learn how to perform and enjoy the actual BDSM skills mentioned in the novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*!” (fiftyskillsofgrey.com). For instance, bondage gear is sold on the site and in 2015/2016 was marketed as “Go Beyond Grey” to appeal to franchise fans as well as that desire for novelty that keeps the machine churning. Of course, new consumers, once reached, must have new commodities to consume.

As of 2018, overt appeals to *Fifty Shades of Grey* have since been abandoned, but Acworth’s attempt to expand kink’s market has not. Kink.com is no longer trying to appeal to a relatively small but extremely loyal community of consumers as it did in Kink.com’s early days. In fact, Acworth made the decision to back away from much of the extreme content that put him on the map. As early as 2012 Acworth is quoted stating: “There will always be extremes that the mainstream society will find objectionable. I don’t want to get more hardcore . . . there’s not a big market for more extreme content, it doesn’t really appeal to the masses” (Kien, 2012b, p. 129). In the last five or so years, there has been a noticeable in how Acworth imagines Kink.com’s ideal audience, which has influenced shifts in marketing strategy and, by extension, content availability. These days Acworth is more likely to appeal to the masses than BDSM loyalists who made him millions. Moreover, this logic demonstrates that the market, far from freeing representational practices, limits representations based on the assumed tastes of the majority.

Despite changing marketing strategies, Kink.com is no longer raking in the money it once did, largely because of the same Web 2.0 logics that enabled the initial boon of digital porn. Users are generating their own content and distributing it for free on streaming sites like YouPorn that are supported by advertising (Paasonen, 2010; van Doorn, 2010). In a 2017 interview with J.K. Dineen, Acworth shared that Kink.com subscriptions were down to 30,000 from 50,000 and revenue was down by 50 percent. Acworth responded to dwindling profits by laying off his labor force and putting a halt to content production (Dineen, 2017).

Yet another recent transformation occurring at Kink.com is its location in San Francisco, a point Kien identified as central to Kink.com’s identity and success. Acworth sold the armory after a decade of ownership for \$64 million in early 2018 (Dineen, 2018). Kink.com is hardly the vibrant community it once was, either digitally or in the brick-and-mortar armory. In fact, the content on Behind Kink, Kink.com’s documentary site, is frozen in the summer of 2016 reading as a eulogy to a digital pornography industry that was too smart for its own good (“Behind Kink,” n.d.).

Post Kink?

A feedback loop emerges in the history of Kink.com. Acworth appropriated live sex cultures and commodified them in Kink.com’s early years, serving to reach and create a consuming public for kinky pornographic content. Once BDSM expanded the pornographic imaginary, because of its digital ubiquity, enabling previously taboo sex acts to anchor the plotline of mainstream literary and filmic sensations, Kink.com changed production and marketing strategies, although its distribution model remains the same. This suggests that Acworth’s love affair with kink could never be separated from his love affair with capital.

Far from refusing normative sexual orders, pornography reshapes normative sexual orders expanding our collective pornographic imaginary and producing, as some have suggested, a “pornocopia” of desires (Mooallem, 2007). However, the multiplicity of pornographies produced remain tethered to the logics of capitalism (even, as is increasingly the case, when they are not produced by profit but instead created by amateurs and distributed on advertisement heavy sites like YouPorn). The logics of capitalism reflected are those of consumer choice and individual agency that reduce politics to consumption and individual sex practices. Even attempts at creating sexual communities, which was part of Kink.com’s original mission, have been abandoned to provide more people with the ability to flexibly “try on” different sexual identities and practices.

I do not wish to imply that pornography and even more so sexual subcultures cannot prompt new ways of thinking and performing intimacy and sociality as suggested by a range of queer theorist (Bersani & Phillips, 2008; Dean, 2009). In fact, Eleanor Wilkinson’s recent article, “The Diverse Economies of Online Pornography: From Paranoid Readings to Post-Capitalist Futures” makes important contributions to debates about the politics of pornography (2017). She begins by noting the influence of Web 2.0 on digital pornography, specifically the collapse of clear distinctions between producers and consumers before introducing her very provocative claim: “I argue that

attempts to frame pornography as always capitalistic are profoundly limited, as such a framework can only manage to capture just one dimension of the diverse economies of online pornography” (Wilkinson, 2017, p. 2). She suggests that Web 2.0 allows for the co-existence of post-, non-, and anti-capitalist pornography. I agree with Wilkinson, but in focusing on the economy she seems to only be considering the material exchange of capital --- the for-profit motive endemic to capitalism. I, on the other hand, think that digital pornography helps to produce the kinds of social subjects that neoliberalism requires; individuals who see politics as personal instead of collective, consider easily discarded flexible assemblages of identity more compelling than the search for sexual “truth,” and subjects who associate pleasure with endless consumption. This is not to say that any of these characteristics are negative in and of themselves, but instead to identify how they may contribute to the reproduction of exploitative socio-economic conditions, and even more, how they may be the product of a stage of capitalism.

Wilkinson also makes the provocative claim that many critics of digital pornography are deeply suspicious of people who think that making their own pornography can be liberating. She writes: “The fact that Web 2.0 now offers a wide range of material that differs from commercial heteropatriarchal porn is dismissed as irrelevant. Instead, it is argued that it is the all-encompassing power of pornography that has duped people into foolishly believing that making their own porn can ever be a form of liberation” (Wilkinson, 2017, p. 8). She considers this line of reasoning anti-pornography, which seems unnecessarily divisive. As this paper has demonstrated, I am highly critical of pornography, but hardly anti-pornography. Instead, I suggest a move needs to be made for collective world making and institutional change **in addition** to imagining and enacting new modes of intimacy and sociality which only ever serve as space offs within a larger system of racist heteropatriarchal oppression and capitalist exploitation. As my case study of Kink.com has illustrated, the pursuit of non-normative sexuality is not antithetical to oppression and exploitation, but instead is quite easily co-opted by capital as the normative core of sexual act and identity normativity expands to make room for varied sexualities.

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The Twilight of Automation

Mario Khreiché

Introduction: (Semi) Automation and the Future of Work

The future of work has come under renewed scrutiny amidst growing concerns about automation threatening widespread joblessness and precarity. While some researchers rush to declare *The Second Machine Age* (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2014), *The Rise of the Robots* (Ford 2016), or *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (Schwab 2016), others proceed with business as usual, suggesting that specialized job training and prudent reform will sufficiently equip workers for future employment (Atkinson and Wu 2017). Among the points of contention are the scope and rate whereby human labor will be replaced by machines. Inflated predictions in this regard not only entice certified technologists and neoclassical economists (Sundararajan 2016), but also increasingly sway leftist commentators who echo the experts' cases for ramping up the proliferation of network technologies and accelerating the rate of automation in anticipation of a postcapitalist society (see Srnicek and Williams 2016, Mason 2017, Frase 2016, Rifkin 2015). In this essay, however, I caution that under the current cultural dictate of relentless self-optimization, ubiquitous economic imperatives to liquidate personal assets, and nearly unbridled corporate ownership of key infrastructures in communication, mobility, and, importantly, labor itself, an unchecked project of automation is both ill-conceived and ill-fated. Instead, the task at hand is to provide a more detailed account on the nexus of work, automation, and futurizing, to formulate a challenge to the dominance of techno-utopian narratives and intervene in programs that too readily endorse the premises and promises of fully automated futures.

As it stands, automation unfolds unevenly across socioeconomic domains, thus exacerbating precarity for workers in only partially automated systems while stealthily increasing wealth and power for service providers. Though automation processes take place in virtually all industries, the phenomenon of the so-called gig economy indicates how automated services rest primarily on workers' willingness to temporarily render their time, labor, and property available for other network participants. In these highly deregulated markets, some emerge as employers, makers, and coders while others are rendered logistical assets that complete the codes of the new modes of mobility, housing, and digital work. Gig-economy firms obscure information asymmetries and vertical power relations in their applications, offering in return narratives whereby robotized workers can consider themselves as entrepreneurial as the platform startups, whose innovative spirits they emulate. Thus, the confidence placed in current forms of automation, particularly regarding their potential to increase leisure time and economic freedom, is severely misplaced. Instead, today's digitally-mediated services conceal human labor and spin tales of user-entrepreneurialism to appease investors who, in turn, sponsor calculated business plans that trade instant profits for long-term market share. Guised as automation, the gig economy embodies a trajectory in which growing corporate power coincides with considerable reductions of employment rights and benefits for workers. The veneer of automation serves to advance monopolistic conditions by programming gigification, gamification, and taskification into the circuits of social, cultural, and economic exchange. Therefore, application interfaces contain shifting meanings of value accumulation that act as subtle yet powerful forces. What is ultimately considered acceptable, feasible, even meaningful economic activity, meanwhile, remains irreducible to technological forms.

Contrary to the narrative of automation as a mere job-eliminating force, this essay gestures toward a twilight of automation, where work is less replaced than displaced. To support this view, I foreground the concept of continuity as a programming feature in gig-economy interfaces and as a mode of engagement that perpetually shifts

the social meanings of economic activity. Such an intervention at the intersection of technology, culture, and work is crucial given the myriad of recent publications in so-called postcapitalist discourses that fail to attend to the implications of reconfigured work processes and corresponding social relations. Postcapitalist commentators jettison a detailed discussion of digital economies, where providers manipulate workers' senses of time, space, and self to optimize service distribution. A critical perspective of automation in the gig economy elucidates the demands of constant availability, connectivity, and communicability that push workers to conform their identity and immediate surrounding to the injunctions of late capitalism.

Insights from three popular gig economies—the ride-hailing service Uber, the home-sharing application Airbnb, and the micro labor brokerage Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) —serve to critique several postcapitalist projects: Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams' *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (2016), Paul Mason's *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (2017), and Peter Frase's *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism* (2016). Extending the econofiction genre, I emphasize that projects of automation are contingent on sociotechnical machines and the production of entrepreneurial subjectivities.

The Interfaces of Uber, Airbnb, and Amazon Mechanical Turk

According to estimates, gig-economy workers make up anywhere between 0.5% and 16% of the United States workforce (Katz and Krueger 2015). Compared to the current spotlight, the number of people earning a steady income through Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, TaskRabbit, and other ventures remains relatively low (Vinik 2018). Contrary to self-referential allusions to its disruptive potential, the gig economy instead surfs a decades-old wave of deregulation policies and flexibilization of working conditions (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007; Sennett 2006). Workplaces are restructured around screens that mediate, monitor, and surveil. As media theorist Jonathan Crary notes, “The individual [...] is constantly engaged, interfacing, interacting, communicating, responding, or processing within some telematic milieu” (Crary 2014: 15). Even the gig economy's most ardent critics often fail to recognize the historical context for the deluge of interfaces promising “to do more with less,” reproducing the hubris of technological exceptionalism (see Fowler 2018). Despite caveats of scale and novelty, the gig economy must be taken seriously as a manifestation of a trend toward informalized and unremitting work relations. Indeed, the fuzzy employment statistics encapsulate the rise of nonconventional work arrangements, challenging widely-held assumptions about what counts as meaningful economic activity. In this view, efforts to measure the effects of automation by appraising the rate whereby tasks in a profession become automatable, rather than accounting for professions per se, emphasize the need to consult qualitative employment accounts (Arntz, Gregory, and Zierahn 2016). Perhaps inadvertently, the focus on tasks as the primary metric in assessing the impacts of automation indicates a shift toward the economization of all activities, underscoring the ubiquitous demand to engage with multiple market interfaces.

The economies of Uber, Airbnb, and AMT exhibit this trend in their streamlined communication with users on the supply side, respectively, drivers, home sharers, and micro laborers. Encouragements to work extra hours, rent additional space, and complete more tasks, as the case may be, materialize in messages, notifications, and updates. Notably, economic activity in the gig economy increasingly registers as a hybrid of work and play. As media critic Alexander Galloway observes, these domains have become virtually inseparable: “labor itself is now play, just as play becomes more and more laborious” (Galloway 2012: 29). Indeed, gig-economy interfaces commonly issue gamified incentives, customized around users' relation to the marketplace. For instance, novice or casual Lyft or Uber drivers are likely to receive more valuable bonuses than frequent drivers who are merely reminded of their set financial goals (Mason 2018). Should drivers wish to clock out before the company limit, currently set at twelve hours (Farivar 2018), Uber might relay prompts including a graphic of a gauge with a needle just shy of a maximum value and a text that reads, “You're \$10 away from making \$330 in net earnings. Are you sure you want to go offline?” (Scheiber 2017). Beyond titillating drivers' entrepreneurial sensibilities, either by positive trigger or fear of missing out on potential earnings, the firm rigorously collects data to optimize its service. If a driver wishes to be at a certain place at a certain time, Uber might suggest fares that steadily guide the driver closer to the final destination (Ibid.).

Aside from more or less subtle incentives, the incorporation of humans into the itineraries and virtual projections of gigified mobility influences driver subjectivity in psychological and behavioral terms. The indisputable efficacy of Uber's reward and rating systems; for instance, noticeably affect drivers' demeanors. As private cars turn into commercial assets, physical space between driver and passenger is commodified according to Uber's community

guidelines that serve to enforce smooth market relations. In addition to defaulting to silent chauffeur mode, many drivers invest in headrest display cards to solicit optimal ratings, badges, and tips or offer amenities, such as bottled water, chewing gum, or phone charge. The cultural acceptance of rideshare platforms and the behavioral codes therein are less imposed by service providers than cogenerated and normalized over time through social habits and interactions in online and offline communities.

Typically, rideshare interfaces communicate a kind of endless temporality, a technologically mediated sense that the future is already contained in the present moment. The design is often so sleek that passengers virtually arrive as soon as they open the application. Paul Virilio considers this phenomenon as an aesthetics of disappearance in which “there will be no longer anything but arrival, the point of arrival, the departure will itself have disappeared in the instantaneity of the projection” (Virilio 2008: 11). The conditions that collapse present and future exceed the interface construed as a material device. Thus, the task is, in Galloway’s words, “to identify the interface itself as historical” (Galloway 2012: 30). To anticipate a central criticism of postcapitalist futurizing, the notion that access, speed, and continuity necessarily translate to more freedom is refuted in a Deleuzian sense whereby one “is never finished with anything” (Deleuze 1992: 4-5). The forms of “always-arriving-but-never-ending” accumulation materialize in the gig economy and inform a culture of uninterrupted engagement with interfaces as a coherent representation of economic activity.

While Uber is in the business of frictionless (auto)mobility, Airbnb deals in on-demand lodging. To connect hosts and guests more seamlessly to the platform, the firm continuously improves its design: “Hosts [...] need to track earnings, get rooms cleaned on time, and provide a de facto concierge service” (Rhodes 2015). Application updates organize information more efficiently, increase access, and decrease communication latencies (Perez 2016). These changes aim to produce efficiently performing gig-economy subjectivities, competitive entrepreneurs of the self unphased by the underlying codes that differentiate success in the same marketplace. Indeed, under the veil of open-minded, worldwide communities and all-around desirable disruption of international travel, Airbnb runs a deeply irregular business operation.

Since 2015, Airbnb encourages hosts to aspire to its so-called superhost status. Requirements to receive a superhost badge stipulate hosting at least 10 trips per year, maintaining a minimum 90% response rate, and achieving an 80% share of five-star ratings. Though technically anyone might qualify for a superhost badge, only about 7% of users make the cut (Chen 2017). Benefits include higher search visibility, invites to exclusive Airbnb events, and increased market credibility. Alternative strategies to boost market efficiency involve bots responding to guest inquiries overnight to improve communication. The commodification of time in these systems constitutes the new norm. Users may opt for a more casual approach to Airbnb, but the imperatives of constant availability saturate the entire marketplace. The injunction for on-demand responsiveness characterizes Crary’s *24/7*, a tale of an insomniac subjectivity “shaped around individual goals of competitiveness, advancement, acquisitiveness, personal security, and comfort at the expense of others” (Crary 2014: 41).

Luxury management services, such as Happy Host and MetroButler, optimize the Airbnb experience for those who can afford it. These agencies deploy software tools to assess the value of real estate, handle bookings, hire cleaners, and take on tedious tasks for clients in high-margin neighborhoods. Management services illustrate the gig economy’s complicity in integrating routine low-income professions into the logic of crowdsourced labor distribution, a certified approach to eliminating overhead costs and attracting outside capital. The trend toward evermore moving parts to be reorganized in a profit-oriented application results in the continuous displacement of workers, whose jobs always assume new meanings, as columnist Nathan Heller explains:

[A MetroButler worker] had put fresh company linens on the queen-size bed, and had left hotel-size shampoo and conditioner bottles, with the MetroButler logo, on the nightstand. He discovered that the bulb in the desk lamp had burned out, so he made a note to buy a replacement. [...] Every task was annotated on a photo of the space in an app that let MetroButler watch his progress in real time (Heller 2016).

Displacement and the crowding-out effect invite relatively privileged individuals to accept such gigs while workers who rely on more stable work relations and benefits are marginalized. Thus, Airbnb and its startup progenies foster competition on various levels: hosts must adjust pricing and increase service efforts through reduced response times and amenities. These demands spawn secondary economies that, in turn, informalize peripheral markets.

Gigification and continuous workflows also characterize Amazon’s Mechanical Turk service, a data clearinghouse connecting clients (Requesters) to workers (Taskers or ‘Turkers’). AMT, according to its website, “operates a marketplace for work that requires human intelligence [and] enables companies to programmatically access this

marketplace and a diverse, on-demand workforce.” Humans still outperform computers in tasks, such as identifying and classifying objects in images and videos, finding data duplicates, and transcription. These services attract expense management businesses, such as Expensify, which enlists AMT's contingent workforce to transcribe customer receipts while pretending to use “smartscan technology” (Solon 2018). In addition, AMT serves as a viable tool for content moderation on video platforms, streaming services, and social media. Lastly, AMT is popular in the social sciences, because it enables researchers to cut time and costs of conducting academic surveys. In all these areas, AMT's wager is to render “human intelligence tasks” (HITs) accessible, scalable, and cost-effective. AMT charges a 20% fee for each transaction and an extra 20% fee for HITs including at least 10 assignments. The marketplace lists about 500,000 tasks per day, though these figures vary significantly (Katz 2017).

AMT's design fittingly represents the role most Amazon workers play in the vast systems of cloud computing, networked automation, and uninterrupted consumer convenience. The brokerage advertises “access to thousands of high quality, global, on-demand Workers” who are kept at the backend of the interface, prefiguring their presence in a twilight economy of automation and residual human employability. If the partitioning of labor processes into user-clients and user-laborers is not a particularly new phenomenon, the effects of removal and alienation in AMT are intensified, since the concealment of labor is as crucial as the labor itself “The interface,” as David Berry observes, “reifies the social labour undertaken behind the surface, such that the machinery may be literally millions of humans ‘computing’ the needs to the software, all without the user being aware of it” (Berry 2015). Thus, “With workers hidden in the technology, programmers can treat workers like bits of code and continue to think of themselves as builders, not managers” (Irani: 2016: 36). Both descriptions echo Galloway's account of the interface as corporeal and incorporeal, material and ideological. The different designs and user interfaces for Turkers and Requesters, respectively, embody a historical configuration whereby digital work is part and parcel of an economic a system that sets out to eradicate its own reliance on labor.

Operating behind the scenes of big technology companies, information brokers, and academic research, AMT's legal meandering and quasi-exploitation hardly register in the same way that Uber and Airbnb continue to ruffle the feathers of regulators. While drivers and home sharers in the gig economy increasingly receive public attention, the sparsely paid gigs in AMT remain largely unnoticed. Likening AMT to a digital sweatshop, one commentator notes:

Many of the labor activists and scholars I spoke to for this story had never heard of Amazon Mechanical Turk, nor had several of the tech employees I reached out to—even ones who work at companies that employ microtaskers by the hundreds of thousands. Like Google Books employees, microtaskers are, for the most part, invisible. And that makes them easy to ignore (Cushing 2013).

Despite qualitative differences between platforms, Jeff Bezos' coinage of “artificial artificial intelligence” constitutes the engine in recent automation technologies.

While gig economies present human labor as automation and convenient services, drivers, home sharers, and micro workers exchange information about their would-be employers and develop tools to improve their economic conditions. In many instances, these makeshift support networks transform into savvy online communities that generate tangible gains. In the context of AMT, innovation arrives as scripts and browser add-ons that scan the quality of HITs. Among the most useful tools ranks the “Turkopecticon,” created by researcher-activists Lilly Irani and Six Silberman (Irani, Silberman 2013). In addition, reports suggest that Turkers increasingly employ bots to optimize their economic activity in AMT, resulting in quality concerns (Dreyfuss 2018). Similarly, Uber drivers have arranged mass “switch-off” operations via synchronized logouts, simulating supply shortages that trigger surge prices. Researchers explained that drivers “tried to regain some of their lost control and sense of autonomy [utilizing] forums such as UberPeople to share these stories and gain social support” (Solman 2017). Though such instances of hacking help reclaim autonomy, the challenges to the constraints of gig work also substantiate a culture of perpetual economic activity. That is, the DIY culture of support milieus reinforces the narrative of a flexible entrepreneur, an inventive and industrious gig-economy subjectivity, thus inadvertently validating gigification, taskification, and gamification.

The cultural production in these labor and resource markets is integral to their functioning. Uber and Airbnb disseminate the symbolic tools of entrepreneurialism while AMT focuses on directing representational resources toward prospective clients, particularly firms dealing in large scale data mining, intelligence, and advertising. Nevertheless, many Turkers consider themselves part of a freelance workforce, conveniently turning screen time into a profitable side hustle and escaping the grind of more conventional jobs. Workers in the gig economy are at once antagonistic, reliant, and yet rebelliously creative in the face of increasingly impenetrable forces of production.

Critically inflected perspectives of these digital economies address blind spots in discourses on the future of work, particularly in the genre of postcapitalism.

On Determinist Futures in Postcapitalist Discourses

Critiquing postcapitalist discourses through an analysis of the gig economy is a delicate task in a time when leftist visions of the future are far and few between. Whether Margaret Thatcher's infamous dictum that "there is no alternative" or Fredric Jameson's oft-cited claim that "it has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism," both speak to a decline in viable alternative futures (Jameson 2003: 76). Similarly, Marc Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* invokes "a pervasive **atmosphere**, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action" (Fisher 2012:16). Challenging a deleted future, various recent projects sketch roadmaps out of the malaise by appropriating predictions stating that automation technologies will replace large parts of the workforce. Postcapitalists envision accelerated productions, fully-automated futures, universal basic incomes, and freedom from labor.

Though postcapitalism addresses a range of problems, including socioeconomic inequality, social organization, and political formation, most authors explicitly endorse technological innovation as an indispensable component of their future schematics. Indeed, platforms, networks, sensors, and gadgets often mark the cornerstones of postcapitalist futurizing. Aside from the commendable feat of reintroducing radical visions into contemporary social and political conversations, however, postcapitalist projects warrant a critical intervention. Specifically, postcapitalism suffers from a certain naïveté, in that its authors undertheorize how emerging technologies unfold as sociotechnical systems, rather than isolated machines.

Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams' *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* received an unusual amount of attention from academic and journalist outlets. Sounding a neo-Promethean clarion call to unite the left, the authors demand abandoning so-called "folk politics," whose horizontalist and localist tactics lack political efficacy (Srnicek and Williams 2016). Taking to task an unorganized contemporary left, Srnicek and Williams insist on realizing four concrete demands: "building a post-work society on the basis of fully automating the economy, reducing the working week, implementing a universal basic income, and achieving a cultural shift in the understanding of work" (Ibid.: 108). While the call for political organization around the universal principles of "synthetic freedom" barely conceals the authors' neo-Gramscian leanings, Srnicek and Williams' also present a controversial reading on the relation between technology and the future of work.

In particular, the idea of a fully automated future indicates a lack of attention to the power relations of currently existing automation processes: "Thus *Inventing the Future* has a sort of Wizard of Oz problem at its core. It's not clear what clever devices are behind the curtain, we're just supposed to assume that they will be sufficiently communistic if we all believe hard enough" (Galloway 2017). Srnicek and Williams conveniently conceptualize the technological advances apart from the social world, taking at face value the technologists' plugs of automation as frictionless replacements for labor.

Inventing the Future hardly accounts for the political economy of automation, that is, an articulation of how corporate providers and stakeholders, such as Google, Amazon, and the gig-economy firms make automation happen. The demand for full automation, then, ignores that the very labels of "automation," "artificial intelligence," and "on-demand networks" are part and parcel of a proprietary economy that exerts a massive influence on how such practices materialize. What is ultimately called automation is largely a function of capital valuation and corporate strategizing, which need not correspond to a technically sound meaning of the term. Amazon is not the only technology giant profiting from the shiny rhetoric of automation and AI. Google operates its AMT counterpart as Google Surveys and recently announced the rebranding of its research division into "Google AI" (Lunden 2018), furthering the mystification of crowdsourcing as quasi-machinic intelligence. In short, thinking about technologies in the domains of information (code, protocols, and "smart" algorithms), logistics (rideshare networks and "smart" cars), or material production (3-D printers), as somehow independent from capitalist flows is of limited usefulness.

Rather than heralding automation as a liberating force, it is imperative to assess how automation acts on schedules and spaces of production and, importantly, on workers' subjectivities. As Galloway clarifies, automation primarily "**transforms the organic composition** of labor through deskilling and proletarianization, the offshoring of menial labor, and the introduction of technical and specialist labor required to design, build, operate, and repair

those seemingly ‘automagical’ machines” (Galloway 2017). This account of automation disambiguates between the fiction of automation fully replacing workers and the evidence of automation displacing workers. To recall, Uber’s centrally monitored scheduling system relies on processual optimizations that increasingly prefigure when and where drivers next liquidate their time and property. Similar practices unfold in more conventional workplaces, such as Amazon fulfillment centers, where handheld tablet aids enforce specific schedules for packaging and stowing tasks. The myth of “automagical” machines belies how automating applications actually manage efficiency on the back of workers. Conjuring up the specter of automation as replacement perpetuates a long tradition of concealing the reality of displaced labor. As the image of automated services often rests on computational management of bodies in space and time, a call for more of the same appears as an unwitting embrace of capitalist structures: “it becomes difficult to untangle accelerationism from the most visionary dreams of the business elite” (Galloway 2017). In sum, there is little evidence that acceleration, be it as warehouse robotics, mobility networks, or digital labor, would mitigate the informalization, deskilling, and precarization of workers. Without a decidedly political intervention—a program Srnicek and Williams’ are undeniably contributing to—accelerationism will be divided among accelerators and accelerated.

Another version is presented in Mason’s *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*, which contends that economies generally go through 50-year-long cycles in which 25 years of economic growth precede 25 years of decline. Following Nikolai Kondratieff’s theory, phases of decline are accompanied by depressions, before igniting the pursuit of new technologies, business models, markets, and money. In Mason’s view, crisis theory could have predicted the depression in the 1930s and the subsequent economic upswing toward the end of the 1940s (Mason 2017). According to long-wave theory, another crisis was due in the late 1990s, if it were not for “the basic elements of the fifth long cycle: [...] network technology, mobile communications [and] a truly global marketplace and information goods” (Ibid.: 48). Somewhat confusingly, Mason also asserts that “the fourth long cycle was prolonged, distorted and ultimately broken” (Ibid.: 78), ostensibly by the same factors. Indeed, the author goes to great lengths to stress the virtues of long-wave theory, only to see it disrupted at the turn of the millennium, paving the way for a new, postcapitalist economic order based on the inherent properties of communication technologies. Replacing an economic determinism with a technological determinism, Mason spends the second half of the book exploring how the internal processes of modern information and communication platforms are “corroding market mechanisms, eroding property rights and destroying the old relationship between wages, work and profit” (Ibid.: 112).

Taking a page out of Jeremy Rifkin’s *The Zero Marginal Cost Society* (Rifkin 2015), Mason insists, “Info goods change everything,” that is, the modes in which information can be copied and distributed would undermine previous forms of value creation (Mason 2017: 116). The formula is simple: “Once you can copy and paste something, it can be reproduced for free. It has, in economic-speak, a ‘zero-marginal cost’” (Ibid.: 117). Mason’s presentation of information technologies remains rudimentary and, in many ways, linear. He assumes that intellectual property rights ultimately challenge the telos of value creation as conceived in conventional supply and demand models. As Christian Fuchs argues, however, “Although the copying time of information is very small, there are ways of how capital tries to institute new forms of labour-time, value creation and exploitation in the information economy. [...] information goods are not just produced once and then copied, but there are often new versions, constant updates, and forms of support labour” (Fuchs 2016: 236).

Likewise, Mason’s analysis on Google’s partial use of Open Source Software (OSS) illustrates his inability to apply a robust framework of political economy and to theorize technologies as continuing social environments. Mason writes, “Google is a hard-assed capitalist firm, but in the pursuit of its own interests it is forced to fight for some standards to be open and some software to be free. Google is not postcapitalist—but as long as it keeps Android Open Source it is being forced to act in a way that prefigures non-capitalist forms of ownership and exchange” (Mason 2017: 123). Collapsing “open” and “non-capitalist,” Mason ignores that technology firms engage in OSS projects to gain a competitive edge. At the heart of this misconception is Mason’s view of Google as a communication firm with a popular search function. Instead, user attention contributes immensely to accumulation processes. Failing to conceptualize online advertisement, Mason’s model remains reductive, as it puts a premium on the work of coders and programmers. Again, Uber drivers generate value not only by performing logistic services, but also by responding to psychological stimuli.

Mason’s faith in the inherent features of technology exposes an underlying problem of theorizing openness and control as coinciding historical phenomena. While the scope of commercial outsourcing, crowdsourcing, and distributing microlabor practices already renders Mason’s projection as overly confident, his determinism obfuscates the power relations in the context of OSS. A Mason-inspired analysis on Microsoft’s recent acquisition of the code

repository GitHub would, by extension, amount to yet another technology giant's turn toward postcapitalism (Finley 2018). Put differently, Microsoft's integration of GitHub would reverse the proprietary ethos in Bill Gate's infamous "Open Letter to Hobbyists," which anticipated the monopolization of operating systems and programming languages. Questioning this legacy, Mason notes that "10 percent of all corporate computers are running Linux" (Mason 2017: 122). The contrast between Gates' proprietary software capitalism and Richard Stallman's *GNU Manifesto*, a milestone in the open-source movement and Linux development, however, belies the nonlinear entwinements of technology and culture. Mason's uncritical championing of OSS prematurely extrapolates essential features from a narrow technological application to a complex social context.

Since Gates' letter and Microsoft's rise to record market capitalization in 1999 (Seifert 2012), the firm has taken several steps toward incorporating OSS. For instance, Microsoft made its .Net Core (a general-purpose development platform) available to applications on Linux and OS X (Finley 2016), rendered Git (a tool to manage source code) more compatible with the Windows operating system (Finley 2012), and integrated Linux into its cloud platform Azure (Finley 2016b). These moves, however, hardly suggest a step toward a non-capitalist future. Instead, such integrative moments realize competitive strategies against other expansive networks, such as AWS and Google's AI division. The incorporation of technical openness into the flows of information capitalism resonates in responses to the Microsoft-GitHub deal. One industry analyst comments: "I think it will be good for the open-source community. I don't think Microsoft has the mentality of the early 2000s where it thought 'if you want to work with our technologies, you need to work in our ecosystem'" (Stokel-Walker 2018). Mason's insistence on a postcapitalist trajectory intrinsic to communication technologies, such as the collaborative Wikipedia library, the undeniable utility of open coding platforms, and the sharing of labor and property in the gig economy, fails to reconcile technological features of openness with core tenets of information capitalism.

The underlying problem in Mason's project could be remedied by recalling Deleuze's dictum that "machines are [...] social before they are technical," that is, the context in which machine function takes precedence over their narrowly defined technical processes. In *Postscript*, Deleuze theorizes how the rise of networks begets a kind of synchronicity of openness and control, specifically "ultrapid forms of free-floating control" (Deleuze 1992: 4). This paradigm is synthesized in Galloway and Thacker's contention that "network control is unbothered by individuated subjects (subjected subjects). In fact, individuated subjects are the very producers and facilitators of networked control. Express yourself! Output some data! It is how distributed control functions best" (Galloway and Thacker 2007: 41). Given the coinciding of openness and control, a tentative prediction of GitHub's future might involve imagineering the social parameters of the code repository. Recalling Microsoft's purchase of the social network LinkedIn, executives might seek to increase the platform's commercialization and intensify the efficacy of popularity scores. After all, well before the acquisition, GitHub featured an effective value system rendering code collections visible to the community.

GitHub users keep up with commits (the GitHub equivalent of a code gig) flag discussions, and star projects, to indicate interest and appreciation. "Following" feature and "rockstars" label help designate popular and active users. A study exploring how the added social structure influences the repository suggests "that a new type of leadership may be emerging through follower relationship" (Blincoe et al. 2016: 38). The study clarifies that mere activity does not have the same impact, because activity is simply not publicized to the extent of popularity. Microsoft might promote an economy of social capital regarding real-time coding and the continuous publicization of these processes. In this view, GitHub would move closer toward a social network experience that meticulously registers and streams user activity. To distinguish between the technical quality of code and its represented value would become increasingly difficult. A competitive coder identity, among other traits, could be built into the programming infrastructure and reshape the GitHub experience. Indeed, transforming GitHub into a more competitive and expressive network, without formally jeopardizing its decentral appeal, might constitute a step toward turning the coding platform into an informalized labor market, another gig economy.

The Continuous Production of Meaning in the Future of Work

A nuanced criticism of postcapitalist futures, particularly how such futurizing relies on economic or technological determinism, requires a sensibility for the sociocultural and sociotechnical dynamics of late capitalist accumulation. A third contribution to postcapitalist discourse, Frase's *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism*, represents a hybrid project,

in that it proposes a relatively static framework of four Weberian ideal types in which more detailed scenarios unfold. *Four Futures* construes thought experiments along an x-axis, delimiting a spectrum from scarcity to abundance, and a y-axis, representing a range from egalitarianism to authoritarianism (Frase 2016). Frase, therefore, arrives at four quadrants, each representing a distinct future after capitalism.

Frase's first two scenarios take him down the path toward a future of abundance, courtesy of automation technologies, much in the same way *Inventing the Future* prognosticates. The latter two scenarios, meanwhile, follow current anthropogenic anxieties of climate catastrophe, leading to a future of scarcity. In each case, Frase inserts caveats of political organization, such that resources are distributed in either centralized or decentralized fashion. The resulting futures comprise "Communism" (Egalitarianism and Abundance), "Rentism" (Hierarchy and Abundance), "Socialism" (Egalitarianism and Scarcity), and "Exterminism" (Hierarchy and Scarcity). While *Four Futures* considers humanity's fate as contingent, an underlying utopianism permeates Frase's work, particularly concerning emergent productive and distributive capacities. Though the author guards, via the authoritarian caveat, against an inevitable end of work, he nonetheless suggests that "human societies will increasingly face the **possibility** of freeing people from involuntary labor" (Frase 2012). Frase, like other commentators on the left, indulges an obsession with 3-D printing and decentral organization of social production and reproduction. *Four Futures*, therefore, undertheorizes the extent to which differential forces of taskification, crowdsourcing strategies, gamification restructure the interfaces of work and the social meanings of productive activities. Technology remains an abstract concept, largely unaffected by the social parameters and perimeters that would guide its application in any of the four scenarios.

Frase concedes that a utopia, where socioeconomic capital no longer determines access to vital and recreational resources, might still contain hierarchies, such as social capital and popularity scores. Readers are nonetheless left wondering if the current trend toward these modes of stratification might not indeed pose the trickiest challenge to a postcapitalist project. Frase's future of a post-scarcity rentism, to be sure, addresses some of these concerns: "A characteristic of most mainstream economic discussions is their presumption that if human labor in production becomes technically unnecessary, then it will inevitably disappear. However, the system of capital accumulation and wage labor is both a technical device for efficient production and a system of power" (Frase 2016: 70). In other words, today's gig economies are already characterized by layered systems of power that exceed mere infrastructural concerns. Social market activities including the discursive production of competitive freelance subjectivities, the affective labor of gig workers in emergent spaces of taskified and gamified work, and the increasing cultural demands to liquidate resources, render contemporary economic relations, in many ways, postcapitalist.

In this context, Frase cites science fiction writer Cory Doctorow's novel *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* (Doctorow 2003), where people amass "whuffie," a currency representing sociocultural approval, inspired by the proliferation of rating systems, badges, and points on various social media. Frase misses, however, that Doctorow's point goes beyond a mere premonition of a reputation-based capitalism. Instead, Doctorow suggests that a seamless shift of all activity into quantifiable values is unfolding in the present. Doctorow's insight is therefore doubly disquieting, as the combination of corporate rent extraction with practices of establishing competitive, but largely voluntary environments already constitute the building blocks of contemporary economic forms. The roles of corporate providers in distributive labor markers are discretely normalized and largely compatible with a politics of decentralization and distributive access, as postcapitalism would have it. Doctorow offers an eerie narrative version of the Deleuzian paradigm whereby control continues to exist in accelerated movements and potential liquidations. Speculating if, when, and how a postcapitalist future might arrive seems less productive than theorizing how sociotechnical interfaces and mutable subjectivities already convey the appearance of such a future in the present.

Doctorow imagines several futures that defamiliarize the teloi of supposedly clear-cut technologies and fixed political systems by introducing ambivalent social dynamics, idiosyncratic cultural conventions, and rather heterogeneous protagonists. Doctorow's latest novel, *Walkaway*, delimits the matter more succinctly (Doctorow 2017). Compared to Srnicek and Williams' "fully-automated future," Mason's "zero-marginal-cost-techno-utopia," and Frase's somewhat static ideal typography of future imaginaries, Doctorow refuses to adopt to the classic categories of utopian and dystopian fiction:

[Walkaway is] the story of a utopia in progress, as messy as every new thing ever is, told in the form of people talking to each other, arguing with each other and working together to solve problems. It's all about the deep, disturbing, recognizable weirdness of the future that must come from the present we have already made for ourselves, trying to figure out what went wrong and what comes next (Sheelan 2017).

Walkaway takes seriously the notion that technologies are continuously subject to application and interpretation.

Given its emphasis on social interaction and contingency, it is not clear whether *Walkaway* takes place in a utopian or dystopian setting, a tension that produces a simple but effective narrative effect of contracting a comfortable distance that science fiction tends to offer, replacing it with a lower suspension of disbelief. As Doctorow notes, “The most perfect society will exist in an imperfect universe, one where the second law of thermodynamics means that everything needs constant winding up and fixing and adjusting” (Doctorow 2017b). The emphasis on an imperfect world, where constant updates are required, challenges the sterile futures of postcapitalism and their presentation of technologies as asocial, perhaps even ending the social. As the discussion intimates, such visions derive from rudimentary understandings of economies as merely accruing capital value and technologies as simply performing their desired functions. Instead, today’s modes of accumulation deal in power, identity, and subjectivity.

One *Walkaway* character conveys this insight strikingly: Limpopo, a manager at the “Belt and Brace,” a bed and breakfast type place in the badlands of an uninviting civilization controlled by a wealthy elite and the looming dread of “non-work,” a post-scarcity phenomenon that speaks to an ambiguous prospect of automation. Limpopo helped create the bed and breakfast from scavenged waste and advanced coding and printing software, evoking an image of a versatile structure that blends material and immaterial features of Airbnb and GitHub. The distance to civilization does not undo the blurry lines between work and play so familiar from the gig economy, though the “Belt and Brace” is clearly modeled around a futuristic version of a communist enclave. Limpopo is introduced as a feeling of two minds about her stellar commits record, which charts user repairs and improvements to the building infrastructure:

In a gift economy, you gave without keeping score, because keeping score implied an expectation of reward. If you’re doing something for a reward, it’s an investment, not a gift. [...] It was so easy to keep score, the leaderboard was so satisfying that she couldn’t help herself. She wasn’t proud of this. Mostly (Doctorow 2017: 44).

The short passage illustrates the organic social interactions at the intersection of work and play that would likely remain intact in a postcapitalist future. Moreover, the passage illustrates the ease whereby gig economy providers incorporate and manipulate social relations, affecting the production of a subjectivity constantly involved in economic activity. Programming interfaces to integrate seamlessly with everyday activity constitutes an efficient strategy to prolong user engagement with gigs, commits, HITs, shares, and so on.

Conclusion

Despite the criticism in this chapter, developing the discourse on postcapitalism is crucial, as few other genres currently attempt to elevate work-related issues in a politically organized fashion. As an important caveat to this claim, contributors to postcapitalism are advised to question their preoccupation with a technology-induced future of fully automated production or evenly distributed services. Instead, postcapitalism must be informed by present-day accounts on labor dynamics ranging from fulfillment centers to online crowdsourcing. While the general sense that work is undergoing drastic changes is uncontroversial, automation processes and networked distribution of services are part and parcel of highly differential enterprises that involve workers in continuous market activity. The effect that seems to elide the registers of postcapitalist thinkers is the simultaneous production of vertical power relations that favor providers but increasingly disenfranchise gig workers.

This mode of social control requires theorizing beyond mere modes of exploitation toward a more open and subjective paradigm, where asymmetrical and precarious working conditions register increasingly as freelance opportunities. In this paradigm, economic imperatives and autonomy are mediated by interfaces that blend categories of work and play. Thus, further study is required to explore the shadowy spaces of partial automation in highly informalized work environments of which the colloquial gig economy is but one manifestation of a larger trajectory of integrating quasi-autonomous subjectivities into the machinic circuits of platform providers. The gig economy has evolved into a blend of corporeal and incorporeal resource markets that comprise the management of human bodies and their immediate assemblages. The cultural economy to participate in such systems is sustained by an injunction of continuous engagement and a pervasive demand to liquidate idle resources. The future of work is eclipsed by an endless present of constant enterprising across numerous platforms.

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Minding Machines: A Note on Alienation

Sascha Engel

This paper¹ discusses an underrepresented dimension of contemporary alienation: that of the machines, both smart and dumb, which share the everyday lives of contemporary humans. From household items connected in the ‘Internet of Things’ to ubiquitous smartphones, I focus on ‘smart’ machines to suggest that a form of alienation manifests in their functionalist use and description; that is, in descriptions of such machines as mere tools or testaments to human ingenuity. These descriptions underestimate the real and often capricious existence of machines as everyday material entities. In a world overdetermined by smart machines, it is high time to abandon their characterization as basic tools and to re-embed former *Homo Faber* into her Google Home.

To restore this machinic dimension, I first suggest an analytics of alienating machines – machines contributing to human alienation – and then an analytics of alienated machines – machinic alienation in its own right. The focus in these discussions is on smart machinery, from smartphones to commercial platform APIs, as these are ubiquitous in today’s technosphere. This is not to say that the present argument is not applicable to dumb machines, from harvesters to vacuum cleaners. Yet in smart machines, the problem poses itself more forcefully. On the one hand, the developed countries are now nearly saturated with them, and they have become indispensable everyday companions – without, however, being recognized as such. On the other hand, the rapidly developing extrapolation of smart machinery into autonomous or intelligent machinery renders a conversation about machinic alienation an urgent necessity. Based on this conversation, I derive some approaches for addressing machinic alienation, and I conclude with some thoughts on the benefits of doing so in the context of developing Artificial Intelligence.

1. The Concept of Alienation

Despite its widespread use and abuse – to the point where it “has proved a highly profitable commodity in the cultural marketplace” (Jay 1973: xiii) – the term ‘alienation’ continues to denote a discernible phenomenon in contemporary capitalism. Its pervasive presence in contemporary relations of production has been predicted in its classical account as described by Karl Marx at the inception of the industrial revolution. In this account, alienation is constitutive of the capitalist mode of production in its entirety. Because labor is alienated under capitalism, it produces “for the rich wonderful things – but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces – but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty – but for the worker, deformity” (Marx 1844/1975: 73). Alienation is here, first, alienation of the worker from her or his own product. Due to this separation, the worker is forced to purchase for survival the very products which his or her labor produced in the first place (ibid: 72).

Alienation further denotes a separation between workers and the means of production by which these workers produce palaces and hovels for capitalist and laborer, respectively. On the one hand, this side of alienated labor is the alienation of workers from nature, which is appropriated and plundered for the enrichment of those owning the means of production (Marx 1844/1975: 75-76). On the other hand, alienated workers confront their own labor, as well as nature, crystallized in the means of production owned by someone else and used to exploit them. Machinery, in particular, confronts workers as the “consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations” (Marx and Engels 1845/1975: 160).

Industrial machinery is thus an alienating force, employed by the capitalist class at the expense of the laboring class. Indeed, the historical ascent of the bourgeoisie is that of industrial machinery and, along with it, alienated labor. The bourgeoisie “puts the interests of technique before the interests of individuals, who had to be sacrificed in order that technique might progress” (Ellul 1964: 53). Under capitalism, the machine serves as an instrument of ever-increased alienation. Removing the workers from the means of production and the products of their labor, capitalist production eventually “replaces labor by machines – but some of the workers it throws back to a barbarous type of labor, and the other workers it turns into machines” (Marx 1844/1975: 73).

This does not mean, however, that machinic imperatives are somehow in a position of dominance in the power relations characterizing the alienation at work in capitalist labor. Capitalist technocracy remains capitalist first and foremost (Meynaud 1968: 30-31). Far from liberating machinery, capitalist production confines it to subordinate status within the bourgeois socio-economic architecture: “It is solely because the bourgeoisie made money, thanks to technique, that technique became one of their objects” (Ellul 1964: 53). Machines, like humans, serve as a means to exploit nature for profit. For Marx, industrial machinery represents dead labor confronting living labor, human exertion crystallized in automata coercing new human exertion (Marx 1844/1975: 78). Machinery is thus a crystallized form of human alienation: an alienated product accumulating by alienating the labor which creates it.

Machinery has developed a long way since Marx. Through the second industrial revolution of the mid-20th century, introducing cybernetic and homeostatic feedback machinery, and the digital revolution of the late 20th century, machines have come to be miniaturized and ubiquitous in everyday lives (Ihde 2015). At the same time, they have become ‘smart’: rather than simply maintaining equilibria, as homeostatic machines did in the mid-20th century, ‘smart’ machines are capable of algorithmic self-improvement, getting better at their tasks or adjusting to new tasks autonomously. Nevertheless, the classical understanding of machines as forces assisting in the alienation of humanity and nature remains widespread among critics of capitalism. Social critic David Noble (1993: 12), for example, traces the history of political economy as a history of an “apologetics for unrestrained technological progress,” which ignores the human alienation manifested in machinery. For Noble, machinery crystallizes Marx’s two aspects of alienated labor. First, industrial machines alienate the products of labor by allowing ever-more distant machinic apparatuses to take control over human labor connected with it. Secondly, industrial machines alienate the process of labor itself, allowing ‘entrepreneurs’ to conceive of the factory as a “vast automaton” and of “capitalist industry as the very embodiment of reason, against which worker opposition could not but appear to be futile and irrational” (ibid).

At the present point of machinic history, this focus on machines as tools alienating humans is no longer fully adequate. On the one hand, are the smart, connected machines sharing everyday households today not themselves members of those households, at least in some sense? On the other hand, as the boundaries blur between labor and machine in APIs underlying zero-hour work, does code itself labor in some sense? Finally, how would one extrapolate such questions to the complex of Artificial Intelligence? Must smart machines impose “visions human obsolescence” in an environment “of our own making” which nevertheless “assumes we must timidly become the victims of the culture we have created” (Roszak 1994: 43)?

2. Analytics of Alienating Machines

Tracing the history of the integration of capitalist labor into industrial and post-industrial machinery shows no sign of decreasing alienation. Beyond the industrial factory, an analytics of machinic alienation finds the familiar two aspects of Marx’s concept of alienation at work throughout the capitalist economy: alienation of the worker from the product by means of machinery, and alienation of the worker from the process of labor, likewise by means of machinery. Neither of these aspects has changed since the inception of the so-called service economy, and indeed both are going strong despite pronouncements of ‘creative classes’ and ‘knowledge workers’ for whom machinery is said to liberate creativity (Florida 2014).

Alienation by machines remains at the core of capitalist production in the 20th and 21st centuries. The continuities are strong. In contemporary FIRE sector offices as on the Fordist factory floor, once “the traditional work of the craftsman is subdivided into its constituent tasks and performed in series by a chain of detail workers, ... the instrument of labor is removed from the worker’s hand and placed in the grip of a mechanism” (Braverman 1974: 169). This mechanism alienates the workers’ product and confronts them in the process of production as an

alien force. On the early 20th-century factory floor, the Fordist “assembly-line system is alienating primarily because the worker becomes a virtual cog in the machine, performing a narrow, piecemeal productive function” (Agger 1992: 189). In the paper offices of the 1970s, keypunching machinery played a similar role, keeping large amounts of workers in low-paid, no-challenge, menial jobs, alienating them from the processes of production and their products (Braverman 1974: 331-337). In the (ostensibly) paperless offices of today’s call centers, the filling of spreadsheets works in a similar way, bathing hunched-over workers in the light of rows of alienating screens – not to mention the everyday degradation felt by those whose headsets are plugged into call center operating systems.

In all three cases, “human instruments are adapted to the machinery of production according to specifications that resemble nothing so much as machine-capacity specifications” (Braverman 1974: 180). In customer service, regulated bathroom breaks, per-hour targets and service level agreements transform workers into plugged-in machines. In food delivery apps, this takes the form of by-the-second accounting of labor time, along with time and routing requirements (Jones 2018). This latter mode of alienation by machines is increasingly dominant and ubiquitous:

If you are taking a closer look at templates of 21st-century work that are currently put in place, you will notice a trajectory of workers taking on many gigs at once [in] subcontracting and rental economies with big payouts going to small groups of people. Occupations that cannot be off-shored, the pet walkers or home cleaners, are now subsumed under platform capitalism. [...] Companies like Uber and airbnb are enjoying their Andy Warhol moment, their \$15 billion of fame, in the absence of any physical infrastructure of their own. They didn’t build that— they are running on your car, apartment, labor, and importantly, time. They are logistics companies where all participants pay up the middleman: the financialization of the everyday 3.0. (Scholz 2015)

For over a third of the U.S. workforce, tethered to platform APIs, their smartphones act as alienating forces (McCue 2018). The remaining two thirds, too, are embedded into machinic alienation. Across the economy, one might thus classify two modes of machine-based alienation.

1. For the two-thirds of workers in the spreadsheet economy, computing machines do not just produce cheaply and quickly – from the predictive algorithm providing pre-filled email communication to automated spreadsheets and modular programming suites. Like their counterparts in the Fordist factory, computing machines also serve to break possible labor resistance. In the industrial economy just as the spreadsheet economy, the more work processes are sourced on computing machines, the more management surveillance becomes possible, from ‘quality control’ to time measurement (Braverman 1974: 170). In present-day spreadsheet jobs, direct control of a worker’s internet and intranet behavior allows conclusions not only about the worker’s productivity but also their personality (Booth 2019). What is more: in the 1970s, machines alienated workers in the form of boring drudgery or monotonous, repetitive tasks (Braverman 1974: 195). This has certainly not vanished today. Indeed, boredom at work is so pervasive now that it is being reinterpreted as a virtue: “boredom is a warning signal that we’ve become stagnant, we may have lost sight of our goals, and it’s time to create change” (Sturt and Nordstrom 2018).

2. In the gig economy tethered to platform APIs, direct integration of humans into the machinic circuitry of continuous API calls is the most widespread way in which computing machines alienate labor. Managerial control of worker output and the manner in which it is achieved has in no way lessened since the industrial economy. Quite the contrary: in the ‘gig economy’, the subjection of workers to mechanically mediated managerial control has reached new heights, as real-time workplace surveillance comes to be replaced by the self-management of the workers through the platforms to which they sell their services. As full-time employment gives way to the precarity of formally self-employed app-based work, managerial control takes on the new form of metrics-based measurements in whose continuous review the livelihoods of reviewees are all the more at stake as they are reviewer and reviewee at the same time. Low-level managerial and technical staff, too, are integrated to assure API calls are done accurately, providing the behind-the-scenes spreadsheet and programming work enabling workers to perform tasks in a faster and ostensibly qualitatively better fashion. Before the contemporary economy of viral reviewing developed, this was mostly a question of motivating workers to work more (Heskett 1987). Now, a continuous review is mostly a question of maintaining precarity to ensure apps ‘users’ work better and work more (Coyle 2018).

It comes as little surprise, then, that emancipatory perspectives tend to describe machinery as a force actively complicit in alienation and exploitation. Thus, for example, Herbert Marcuse advocates “the end of alienated labor,” which he argues will be “based on the rational mastery of existing technology” (Agger 1992: 94). Such mastery manifests, for Marcuse, as “workers’ control of the technological apparatus,” such that “workers are able to understand and manipulate the productive apparatus so that it does not dominate and discipline them” (ibid: 189). From this perspective, it may well seem that a change of machinic ownership – perhaps towards worker-operated forms of production in the spreadsheet economy, and calling into question the existence of zero-hour contracts and call centers – would emancipate workers. After all, “past or dead labor takes the form of capital” because the “means

of production [are] the property of the capitalist” (Braverman 1974: 227).

3. Analytics of Alienated Machines

Yet this overlooks an entire dimension of alienation. To be sure, machinery does serve to alienate the workers of today, as it did in the 20th and 19th centuries. To a significant extent, however, alienation of humans by machines is part of a more general structure in which machines themselves are alienated. This is not simply due to the legal relations of ownership of machinery. Machinery is not a simple instrument for the alienation of workers by capital, to be replaced by worker control in an emancipatory movement. Nor is machinery inherently alienating, as some primitivists have it (Zerzan 2012). The question at hand goes much further. As Gilbert Simondon argues,

the most powerful cause of alienation in the contemporary world resides in this misunderstanding of the machine, which is not an alienation caused by the machine, but by the non-knowledge of its nature and its essence, by way of its absence from the world of significations, and its omission from the table of values and concepts that make up culture (2017: 16).

Such banishment of machines from thought is near-universal. It manifests primarily in two different ways (Simondon 2017: 17). The first sees machines as mere tools or gadgets, thereby neglecting reflections on their presence altogether. This form of neglect goes back to Marx’s own time. When historian Siegfried Giedion wrote his history of machines, tools, and furniture in the 1940s, he found that

an amazing historical blindness has prevented the preservation of important historical documents, of models, manufacturer’s records, catalogues, advertising leaflets, and so on. Public opinion in general judges inventions and production exclusively from the point of view to their commercial success... This means the discarding of time, both past and future (1948: v).

The same happens with the productive machinery sharing everyday work lives in industrialized countries today. Widespread ignorance of the designs, structures, and inner details of everyday machinic companions is actively encouraged at a time when attempts to repair computing machines are effectively rendered legal offenses.² To be sure, this does not mean that the forgetfulness of machines is total. One could well argue that computer literacy is at an all-time high. Such literacy is at an application level, however. One will know how to perform the troubleshooting steps prescribed by applications – clearing caches and cookies, and so forth. In this sense, awareness of machinic presence does certainly exist. Yet, who knows whether all cookies have really been cleared – or how many other stacks store one’s data which the application does not reach.

What is more, reflections on the effects of app-based living are made substantially more difficult due to the neglect of more in-depth exploration of machinic presence. Smartphone presence is certainly widely recognized as ubiquitous. Yet its precise mode remains underexplored. Instagram does not merely slow down food consumption in fancy restaurants – it also redefines the boundaries of sociality. This has been explored with an eye to the alienation and exploitation of social media ‘users’ (e.g. Fisher 2012). Likewise, social media influencing has been explored for its pernicious effects on body images, modeled ever more towards continuous beauty-industrial consumption (Cheney 2010). What remains underexplored in these perspectives, however, is the mode of machinic activity underlying it. Social media influencing is based on forms of the algorithmic weighting of factors human and non-human, such as clicks and likes, on the one hand, IP signal distribution and crawler hits on the other. The latter two, in turn, stem from automated non-human processes: the distribution of packet-switched signals, and the response of search engine algorithms to the Internet’s ‘long tail’ distribution, respectively. These do matter – not least, for privacy, piracy, and ‘hacking’ concerns – but remain invisible to the vast majority of users whose expertise ends at clearing their caches and cookies.

Other examples abound. Planned obsolescence requires ignorance of production and waste disposal processes, while the maintenance of copyright law – and the persistence of flimsy advertising – require ignorance of real technological developments, or the absence thereof. Transposed to the office and factory floors, managerial control is facilitated by workers’ ignorance regarding the systems that monitor them. In the same vein, surveillance is exercised at home by Alexas, Nests, and Google Homes. I will expand on these below.

In addition to alienating because it is unknown, machinery also alienates by overwhelming. Thus the second approach to machines today is a sort of shock-and-awe submission. Here, too, the machine is present but its inner workings remain obfuscated – this time more deliberately so. This is most obviously represented by the effects of

military-industrial machinery, with warships and flyovers awing civilian audiences, or in the form of intentionally unknowable bot swarms. In civilian life, shock and awe are replicated by advertising industries ensuring that the glamour of supposed technological advance falls onto the latest gadget, regardless of its actual performance or improvements. Like the historical blindness described by Giedion, this feeling of awe comes with ample historical precedent. Historian Henry Adams has described it in 1918, saying he “began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force” when visiting a factory floor,

much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within an arm’s length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring – scarcely humming an audible warning to stand a hair’s-breadth further for respect of power... Before the end, one began to pray to it (Adams 1918/1999: 37).

As in the first approach, the machine itself remains unknown, and deliberately so, as its overpowering effect can only be achieved when its workings and shortcomings remain hidden. The shortcomings of military hardware are the best example of why such willful obfuscation is a strategic necessity. A 2016 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found that the U.S. armed forces have spent more than USD 50 billion on abandoned projects in the previous decade, ranging from canceled tank modernization programs and abandoned air and space endeavors to vanity projects such as new presidential helicopters (Harrison 2016: 10). Bot swarms, too, rely more on the diffuse feeling of ‘democracy under threat’ than actual efficacy: supposedly Russian ‘hacking’ of Western elections caused shockwaves in 2016, but has had few empirically observable effects (Berghel 2017). Even those machines not abandoned at various stages of their project lives are not nearly as terrifying as militaries and intelligence communities need civilians to believe.

In both cases, the machine is relegated to a “structureless world of things that have no signification but only a use, a utility function” (Simondon 2017: 16). The machine alienates because it is itself alienated. Anonymously exploited to serve the ends of its owners, its very structure points to its status as a subordinate facilitator of capitalist accumulation. Neutralized and obfuscated, the app dictating, for example, the delivery cyclist’s routes and times is, after all, merely a transducer accepting any syntactically well-structured input, and transposing its elements to generate equally well-structured output (Denning, Dennis, and Qualitz 1978: 4-5).

Yet the cyclist’s smartphone has a presence beyond transduction, as indeed does the API governing the payment flows setting the cyclist in motion. Just as, for Marx, human workers are alienated from their “essential being,” their “spontaneous activity” (Marx 1844/1975: 74), so the alienated machine has an underlying spontaneous activity from which it is alienated. Constituting it as a mere tool or gadget, or an awe-inspiring monstrosity ignores the machine’s own capricious presence. Alexas and Google Home may not have the same subjective agency that the cyclist has, and from which the cyclist is alienated. They do, however, possess actancy: situational presence which is not fully non-human but decisively not fully human. That is, they labor in the vibrant network of a household, co-constituting it as a space in which “each of the actants possesses a unique signature” (Latour 1993: 86). The effects of the presence of an Alexa range from the mundane to the troubling. Thus, the well-known problem that Alexas occasionally respond without being called to do so easily leads to troubling conclusions about privacy. Whether by law enforcement or by less state-driven efforts, Alexas generate spaces in which every sound is potentially used against Alexa’s co-inhabitant. This manifests machinic actancy, as it changes the spaces affected and alters human behavior (Chung et al 2017). Yet more actancy is discernible with regards to the psychological effects of an Alexa. Thus, cognitive science is exploring the effects of Alexa’s kin on children’s development; from politeness to virtual assistants to the latter’s effects on children’s way of processing information (Gonzalez 2018).

In none of these cases, Alexa is a mere inert tool. The eerie actancy of Alexa responding without being activated is not exclusively due to Alexa’s household co-inhabitant, nor its producer. It is an effect of programmatic structures whose materiality is pressed into the service of its corporate owner. Likewise, Google Home’s surveillance actancy, while embedded in a web of statist security discourse, surveillance capitalism, and uncontrollable bureaucratic proliferation, is nevertheless distinct from these. Even the cyclist’s zero-hour app, ostensibly more directly embedded into the economic and legal structures of platform capitalism than Alexa, holds actancy of its own: integrating an API, it implements the latter’s stratagems contained in its API call structure, and whose quirks often counteract its commercial purpose. A common example for the latter are the requirements of programming languages as they clash with commercial or legal requirements. Thus, for instance, the conversion of non-Latin alphabets frequently causes issues for platform APIs verifying their users.

4. Errors, Glitches, Generative Networks

Alienation of machines goes yet further than actancy, however. A smart machine's essence is not exhausted in its effects on its environment. Its essence can rather be conceptualized more broadly as its technicity: the way in which it implements an abstract object – such as a smartphone type – in a concrete situation, uniting the characteristics of the abstract object, the aberrations from it which make it this concrete object (and thus more than an instance of the abstract object), and the characteristics of that situation (Simondon 2017: 72). The machine's technicity gives it an actancy in a given situation, where it registers as a presence. Such presence can manifest in dumb machines as material efficacy, as when a machine illuminates or warms, or conveys or transports. In smart machines, it plays out as a series of symbols by which the machine, while “incapable of will and bias,” is nevertheless “capable of showing, signing, writing, and scribbling” (Latour 1993: 23). Accounting for this allows taking stock of the machine's vibrant solidity, its warmth, its sounds and noises, its raw constructive and destructive energy (Smith 1998). The appropriation and overdetermination of a machine's technicity and actancy alienates it.

A seemingly fairly mundane example for this are so-called errors. On their surface, errors are malfunctions interrupting the normal way an app or, more generally, a computing machine should behave, and forcing human users to invest time and resources into fixing the recalcitrant machine. Yet, this view, once again only reflects alienated machines confined to the “structureless world of things that have no signification but only a use, a utility function” (Simondon 2017: 16). Unpacking this imposition makes it clear that not all interruptions of machinic activity are errors. On the one hand, there are blips and crackles which remain below a threshold, making them an error. Thus, packet-switched messaging in server-to-server communication entails redundancies rendering individual issues in individual packets ineffective. Likewise, multiplexed busses between computer hardware elements always come with safeguards against individual blips during transmissions (Mamidipaka, Hirschberg and Dutt 2004). On the other hand, there are functionally necessary interruptions, such as loading, buffering, and synchronization times for apps, or downtimes for servers. These likewise do not constitute an error. What defines them as errors is an error handler setting a certain threshold beyond which aberrations manifest as such.

Beneath error handling lies a range of blips and glitches. The blip is, in itself, nothing but a sequenced pattern received in lieu of another sequenced pattern. Indeed, as pure sequence received it is not, initially, an aberration at all. Rather, it is merely a part of the sequence at hand. If a sequence 0110 is received, the 0110 must first be constituted as an aberration from, say, an expected sequence 0101. Thus a classical account of error handling, “instead of a pair of like digits, 00 or 11, we have received a pair of unlike digits, 01. We don't know whether the correct, transmitted pair was 00 or 11. We have detected the error, but we have not corrected it” (Pierce 1961: 149-150). Only when the aberration is contrasted with an assumed ‘original’ – that is, when the 0110 received is overwritten by a 0101 – does the former become an error. The result are error libraries, taxonomies of machinic malfunction – and thus of their correct function.

Such error handling alienates the rich technicity of computing machines of all types. As artists such as Ryoji Ikeda demonstrate, glitches make vast source material for art. While still arranged by human composers, such glitch art nevertheless manifests the machine's own materiality in a way that allows its actancy to manifest itself. Nor is this metaphorical: besides offering “ways of disrupting the finality of the music commodity,” glitch “exposes the medium as such,” bringing the materiality of computed sound directly to the ear (Hegarty 2007: 182, 189). In many ways, too, glitch aesthetics exclude human composition altogether. In the works of Autechre or Merzbow it is difficult to distinguish compositional elements from the effects of labyrinthine arrangements of technology or found sounds, or both. And while these two examples remain within the realm of human attribution (if not human production), fully autonomous art emerges when Generative Autonomous Networks, which are capable of emulating certain more formulaic styles of artistic production, are coupled with algorithms capable of deviating from styles (Elgammal et al. 2017). The result is genuine machinic creativity.

Ranging from error handlers overriding glitches to artists claiming credit for them and their effects pedals' actancy, to corporations owning machinic creativity, machines are alienated from technicity and actancy. Google Deep Dream produces art, but this art is appropriated by copyright law ascribing it to the authors of its algorithm (Stecher 2017). Yet, machinic creativity can also subvert such ownership when it becomes increasingly unclear what art is generated by humans and what by Generative Networks. Glitch-based art, where algorithm and art become indistinguishable, and the creations of Generative Adversarial Networks, where deviations from established styles are at the center of autonomous non-human processes, take this even further. A vast world opens up, ranging from

the simple recognition of 0110 as a signal of its own rather than a deviation from 0101, to deepfakes questioning notions of control and communication, property and propriety altogether (Parkin 2019).

5. Addressing Machines' Alienation

What if blips and crackles were seen as more than a nuisance to be fixed, or a token of a familiar type to be classified and handled, or as something to be ascribed to supposedly human creativity? Errors may yet come to be seen as reminders of machinic materiality, and glitches and neural network creations as reminders of machinic actancy. What error handling and technical support constitute as a nuisance within alienated production could rather be conceived as an opportunity in a less alienated context. Beneath error handling and technical support, a blip would then be an opportunity to learn something about the computing machine confronting its human companion. It can lay bare the machine's inner structure and mechanisms, and indeed its capricious personality. More than merely a token of a type, the machine at hand can thus come to be seen as an individual existence with which one shares one's life. Instead of discarding one's machinic companion and buying a new one, the error can be seen as an invitation to enjoy understanding things oneself, and understanding them in themselves – thus exploring “computation in the wild: that eruptive body of practices, techniques, networks, machines, and behavior that has so palpably revolutionized late-twentieth-century life” (Smith 1998: 6).

The machinic actancies manifest underneath error handlers and in networked creativity are immediately relevant to political economy. On an individual level, blips may well invite humans to consider their machinic companions in their own right. Yet who can afford to follow this invitation apart from a few hobbyists? From ‘entrepreneurs’ tethered to platform APIs to socially mediated influencers and influences, alienated human existence requires alienated computing: it has neither time nor resources to live otherwise. It is deliberate that the machinic individuality manifesting in hardware glitches is papered over by software's error handling and diagnostics programs. As a result, and again deliberately, scarcely anyone knows how their computing machine works. This precludes tampering in its various forms and renders ‘users’ powerless. Thriving do-it-yourself environments would, after all, diminish profits realized by platforms whose profits are entirely based on making connections will capable of coming about without them. What is more, they would also threaten the substantial profits realized by the technical support industry.

What is more, such DIY environments would render obsolete the regimes of planned obsolescence, which take the widespread ignorance of the inner workings of computing machines to its logical conclusion. This, in turn, would affect machine life cycles. Here, too, machinic alienation facilitates capitalist accumulation. Who really knows where their smartphone came from, and where it goes when it is thrown away? Advertising may suggest where Smartphones are ostensibly made, to be sure, but is this information trustworthy? Assembly lines have been distributed globally to networks of alienated machines producing alienated machines for fifty years (Anders 1981: 110-127). The majority of smartphones, for example, claim to be assembled in either China or the U.S., but their parts have traveled much further: Vietnam, Laos, India, South Korea (Schmitt and Schulz 2016). The conditions under which such distributed production works are typical of alienating capitalism: Shenzhen, the Chinese ‘silicon valley’, which is home to WeChat's Tencent and Huawei among others, is also a site of notorious exploitative brutalization, with “products with razor-thin margins” produced by mostly “migrants from rural areas” working “without many social protections” (Wang 2016).

Likewise, one is led to think that electronics get recycled, perhaps even in an environmentally sound way, by advertising campaigns such as SERI (Sustainable Electronics Recycling International), a Minnesota-based NGO providing certifications for recyclers of electronic waste, or EU directives such 2012/19/EU, attempting to implement sustainable infrastructures for recycling Computers, TV Sets, or smartphones. To be sure, such work does have effects. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of Euro-American electronic trash ends up in African landfills simultaneously used as slums for workers searching scraps for precious metals. The most notorious example is Agbogbloshie in Ghana, where “boys and young men gather in groups, picking their way through piles of old hard drives, untangling wires, and breaking up old air-conditioning units and even irons,” to gather and sell scrap metal amid a wasteland “contaminat[ed] with lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic and flame retardants” (Hirsch 2013).

Alienated machines thus constitute and cause alienation along their life cycle: they confront humans and the environment in production, from mining to assembly; they confront humans and the environment again in usage, from electricity consumed to lives spent online; and they confront humans and the environment when discarded, with

humans dwelling amid toxins seeping into groundwater. Yet this very ubiquity of machinic alienation – of humans by machines and of machines by humans – opens new vistas of mutual recognition, too (Jaeggi 2014). Geographical dispersal of the sites of machinic production, usage, and waste does not mean that the global apparatus of machinic, human, and environmental alienation is not rooted in the everyday lives of human beings. Here, a starting point for reform arises.

Taking errors seriously as learning opportunities would be one, only seemingly insignificant, point of departure for counteracting alienated and alienating machinic lives. To begin, it would require a much larger quantity of publicly available resources of the kinds implemented, for software, by Linux repositories or platforms such as Gitlab and Stackoverflow. Error handling could here return to everyday human readability, rather than requiring a specialist or, worse, specialist software to decipher what the original software aims to tell its user. A second step would then require publicly maintained error libraries alongside forums dealing with fixing them. Linux's Wiki system and Stackoverflow's forums are existing examples for this. For hardware, however, corporate control often thwarts efforts of this kind.³

Alongside such resources, secondly, a shift in individual attitudes would be required. To be sure, not everyone can be expected to build their own version of Arch Linux. Yet advocating people take time to understand their machinic companion may not be a fool's errand in the age of wellness apps and mindfulness retreats. One would do well to return to the attitudes of early computing as summed up in a 1982 handbook for the ZX81 minicomputer: "And if you ever find yourself thinking, 'What would happen if...?' then for goodness sake try it! You won't break the ZX81 and you'll probably learn something" (Norman 1982: 3). As a 1962 handbook on computer programming suggested: once the computing machine is understood, the programmer "will have the basic tools of programming at his [sic] fingertips but only practical experience as a working programmer can develop the knowledge and skill required to be considered an expert" (Saxon and Plette 1962: vii). It is not an accident that encouragement of this kind is much harder to find today.

What hinders this shift, and thus the third element to be addressed, is the commercially entrenched attitude to everyday machines, where they are seen either as mere tools towards one's job or entertainment, or they are violent status symbols, manifestations of private or public conspicuous consumption, or they are tools of managerial control. In the first and third cases, an error is a nuisance interrupting accumulation; in the second, it is an unacceptable weakness. Developing an appreciation for machinic actancy can counter this and work towards a less alienated existence. At the very least, such appreciation will entail a recognition of machinic creativity in its various forms, from glitches recognized as a genuine manifestation of a machine's own materiality, to rethinking mechanisms of attribution by which the work of Generative Networks is credited to humans.

6. Conclusion: Alienated Artificial Intelligence?

Thus even within alienated society, it is both necessary and possible at least to attempt to understand machines as individual entities in themselves. Observing the capricious individuality of machines in their everyday existence, one might develop an attitude resembling that of "a sociologist or psychologist of machines, living in the midst of this society of technical beings as its responsible and inventive consciousness" (Simondon 2017: 19).

As Artificial Intelligence moves further and further from the conceptual realm to actual implementation – examples such as the above Generative Networks demonstrate at least a good amount of potential – the question facing any such sociology or psychology of machines is how they will come to be alienated, and how this alienation can be mitigated. It will be necessary to develop at least a changed everyday attitude, absent a more thorough social liberation from alienated society. As Artificial Intelligence develops towards embodiment, there is ample need to allow machines to constitute themselves as everyday companions, lessening their alienation along with that of humans and the environment. Widespread fears of Artificial Intelligence show that changes towards more seriously engaging machines and particularly smart – or indeed intelligent – machines, on their own terms are much needed. Some caution is, of course, advised – after all, the 'A.I.' revolution was said to be ten-to-fifteen years away in 1960 just as it was in 2010 – yet being mindful of one's machinic cohabitants would allow humans to come to terms with more or less sentient robotics a lot more easily.

Assuming that the current trends towards blurring the ontological boundaries between human and artificial intelligence continue, working towards reducing the alienation of machines may well become a fundamental social

necessity. Even refraining from discussions about personhood for artificially intelligent beings, it will lower the bar for such conversations to take place. If intelligent robots are not developed, too, and machines remain merely ‘smart’, adjusting one’s approach to them is crucial for reducing their alienation and with it that of humans and the environment. Thinking of machines as individual entities with life cycles would go a long way towards realizing what happens before and after one adopts and discards one’s machinic companions. Exposing the alienated existence of computing machines can be instrumental in exposing that of alienated humans amid environmental destruction. Finally, machines also have characteristics of their own, and ignoring those contributes to their, and our, alienation.

Endnotes

1. Written with the help of an ASUS T100 alienated from its Intel Z3775’s technicity by Windows 10 and LibreOffice Writer, to whom I owe many thanks. I would also like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their extensive and helpful comments.

2. To be sure, the 2018 case surrounding e-waste recycling businessman Eric Lundgren – who is now in prison – is, it seems, largely based on questions of copyright. Particularly, it appears that the prosecution’s argument rested on claims Lundgren had sold repair kits containing counterfeit software. Since this software is feely available, however – which the prosecution has conceded – it is difficult to see the judgment as anything other than an attempt to chill efforts of machinic restoration (Swearingen 2018).

3. Sweeping statements from either side notwithstanding, the issue here is more complicated than pitting proprietary hardware against open source hardware. To take just one obvious example: in 2010, an article describing Apple’s relation to open source hard- and software was entitled “Why Apple Hates Open Source” (Gralla 2010), while in 2016, another discussing the same issue could reference “the false debate between open and closed in tech” (Mossberg 2016). Nevertheless, open source hardware is considerably harder to come by than open source software, with major players like Arduino being an exception that rather proves the rule.

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The Solace of the Sojourn: Towards a Praxis-oriented Phenomenological Methodology and Ethics of Deep Travel in Martin Heidegger's Sojourns

Andrew Urie

Introduction

Martin Heidegger's little-read travel journal, *Sojourns* (1962), is a literary-philosophical gem that yields surprisingly fruitful insights into our contemporary era of neoliberal globalization via its implicit exploration of the complex interconnections between travel, phenomenology, and ethics. As I demonstrate in this paper, *Sojourns* contains an implicit praxis-oriented phenomenological methodology and ethics of global travel that together gesture towards a coherent practice of "deep travel," which American literature scholar Cinzia Schiavini aptly defines as "a vertical movement in a closed space which starts from the surface of the land and goes backward in time, searching for the hidden social and cultural dynamics embedded in that [given] geographical context" (94).

Sociohistorical Context

Originally intended as a seventieth birthday gift for Heidegger's wife, Elfriede, *Sojourns* bears the following dedication: "To the mother, For her seventieth birthday, A token of Appreciation" (vi). Although penned in 1962 during Heidegger's first journey to Greece, the text would not be published until 1989, when it was released in Germany as *Aufenthalte* by the venerable Frankfurt am Main publishing house Vittorio Klostermann. It would not be available in an official English edition until 2005, when it was published as *Sojourns* by SUNY Press via a translation by scholar John Panteleimon Manoussakis.

Sojourns opens with the following quote from the poem "Bread and Wine" (1801) by the German Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), Heidegger's favourite poet:

But the thrones, where are they? Where are the temples, the vessels, Where to delight the gods, brim-full with nectar, the songs? Where, then, where do they shine, the oracles winged for far targets? Delphi's asleep, and where now is great fate to be heard?" (qtd. in Heidegger 1)

Here Hölderlin expresses a sense of longing for the poetically nourishing spirit of mythos that he feels is disappearing amidst Europe's post-Enlightenment culture of burgeoning modernity. In this sterile, technocratic modern age, the fecund and imaginative mythopoetic spirit of ancient Greece has waned and the wise oracle Delphi now slumbers.

As the socio-religious cultural critic Karen Armstrong notes in her book *The Case for God* (2009), it was during

the time period ranging from the Renaissance to the dawn of the European Enlightenment that mythos became overtaken by modern conceptualizations of logos,¹ thereby paving the way for the birth of our contemporary Western society of sterile technocratic orthodoxy:

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries . . . Western people began to develop an entirely new kind of civilization, governed by scientific rationality and based on technology and capital investment. Logos achieved such spectacular results that myth was discredited and the scientific method was sought to be the only reliable means of attaining truth” (xv).

Informed by a utilitarian worldview, this sterile modern ethos has today bequeathed a vulgar “means to an end” psychosocial mentality, which political theorist Janice Gross Stein has defined as the “cult of efficiency” (Stein 3-4).

As a prefatory poetic quote, the Hölderlin lines constitute a fitting introduction to *Sojourns*, in which Heidegger recounts his journey to Greece and his search for its mythic foundations. Similar to Hölderlin, who was concerned about the enervation of mythos in a post-Enlightenment era of burgeoning modernity, Heidegger worries about the enervated state of mythopoetics in a post-WWII world: “We, who are in greater need, in greater poverty for poetic thoughts, we need, perhaps, to pay a visit to the island of the islands, if only in order to set on its way the intimation that we have cherished for a long time” (4). Writing at the height of the Cold War when the world was divided between the opposing blocs of the capitalist West and the communist East, Heidegger undoubtedly recognized that both blocs were dominated by very similar forms of spiritual and mythopoetic stultification.

Heidegger and Globalization

Although he never employs the term “globalization” in any of his writings, Heidegger is today regarded as an early theorist of globalization.² As scholar Eduardo Mendieta observes in his essay “The Globalization of Ethics and the Ethics of Globalization” (2002), Heidegger “contributed to an incipient philosophy of globalization” via his 1938 essay, “The Age of the World Picture” (45), in which he outlines the dawn of a modern perspective that was witnessing the world become apprehended as a totalizing picture, which was subject to humankind’s calculatory desires: “The fundamental event of the modern world is the conquest of the world as picture. . . . In such producing, man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is” (134). In his later 1950 essay, “The Thing,” he further elaborated upon this proto-globalizing worldview by associating it with time-space compression, which is today regarded as one of the most salient features of techno-economic globalization: “All distances in time and space are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by plane, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel” (163). Writing before the birth of the Internet, he presciently recognized how this late modern worldview was being facilitated by a geo-unifying technological system that was giving birth to a pervasive superficial fascination with images: “Distant sites of the most ancient cultures are shown on film as if they stood this very moment amidst today’s street traffic. . . . The peak of this abolition of every possibility of remoteness is reached by television, which will soon pervade and dominate the whole machinery of communication” (“The Thing” 163).

Intriguingly, Heidegger implies that this technologically facilitated process of geo-unification was not truly uniting the global community in humanist solidarity, but rather further alienating humankind from its rich cultural diversity via a uniform assimilatory matrix: “Everything gets lumped together into uniform distanceless. How? Is not this merging of everything into the distanceless more unearthly than everything bursting apart” (“The Thing” 164). In his most foreboding passage of “The Thing,” he addressed the popular Cold War-era anxiety about nuclear conflict by implying that global nuclear annihilation might potentially give final form to the humanistic and spiritual annihilation that technological geo-unification was already accomplishing:

Man stares at what the explosion of the atom bomb could bring with it. He does not see that the atom bomb and its explosion are the mere final emission of what has long since taken place, has already happened. Not to mention the single hydrogen bomb, whose triggering, thought through to its utmost potential, might be enough to snuff out all life on earth. (164)

As Heidegger rhetorically questioned, “What is this helpless anxiety still waiting for, if the terrible has already happened?” (“The Thing” 164). In other words, if modern humanity had become so entrapped within a technocratic matrix of its own making that it was incapable of fathoming how it was the master of its own potential demise, then had its end not already been accomplished?

With *Sojourns*, Heidegger is clearly building upon such previously articulated concerns about the relationship between globalization and technology, for his motivation in journeying to Greece emanates from an evident desire to escape the malaise of modernity: “Who is to show us the path? What is to give us a hint about the field that we seek? This field lies behind us, not before us. What is of necessity is to look back and reflect on that which an ancient memory has preserved for us and yet, through all the things that we think we know and we possess, remains distorted” (3). In a modern world that has for Heidegger lost its guiding spirit of humanity, Greece holds the potential ability to reinvigorate the mythic impetus that continues to exist as a sort of intimation in the minds of the poetically inclined: “We, who are in greater need, in greater poverty for poetic thoughts, we need perhaps, to pay a visit to the island of islands, if only in order to set on its way the intimation that we have cherished for a long time” (4).

Accordingly, Heidegger is pursuing not just a visceral travel experience, but a mental one as well. In this regard, the title of his journal is a particularly apt one, for as the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates, a sojourn denotes “[a] temporary stay at a place” (“sojourn, n.”). In journeying to Greece, Heidegger thus seeks both a temporary physical stay there as well as a temporary mental immersion in the mythic essence of its ancient **Dasein** or being.³ As we shall see, his journey ultimately reveals itself to be less a sojourn in one particular place than a series of sojourns in a variety of Greek locales, several of which afford him temporary mental sojourns via which he is able to experience fruitful phenomenological encounters with ancient Greek **Dasein** and its constitutive mythic elements.

For a man with such prescient insights into globalization, Heidegger did not travel much. As Heidegger scholar John Sallis notes in his “Foreword” to *Sojourns*, Heidegger “took himself to belong to the southwest German region where, except for the five year period in Marburg, he spent his entire life” (xiii). While noting that Heidegger did make “brief lecture trips to other German cities” as well as a “ten-day trip to Rome in 1935,” Sallis observes that Heidegger mostly “avoided” travel and “actively discouraged others from undertaking extensive travels” (xiv). In journeying to Greece, Heidegger seems to have made a “great exception” (xiv), as he finally elected to travel there in 1962 when he was more than seventy years old. Although fascinated by Greek antiquity, Heidegger had “[f]or years hesitated about making such a trip” (xiv).

As Sallis proceeds to note, Heidegger had hesitated to make this journey partly because he feared that the Greece of antiquity had been totally lost and partly because he feared that his presuppositions about Greece might not correspond to the reality he encountered:

Heidegger’s hesitation had to do partly with his doubts about modern Greece, his doubts as to whether the Greece of today could still reveal anything of the Greece of antiquity. Yet there was also, as he confesses, a deeper doubt: he was concerned that the concrete revelation of Greek antiquity . . . might prove at odds with what – in relation to Greek antiquity – Hölderlin had poetized and he had attempted to think. (xv)

To his credit, Heidegger is quite candid in acknowledging his personal doubts. As he notes, the proposal of a journey to Greece was met with initial hesitation on his behalf:

That proposal was followed, of course, by a long hesitation due to the fear of disappointment: the Greece of today could prevent the Greece of antiquity, and what was proper to it, from coming to light. But also a hesitation that stems from the doubts that the thought dedicated to the land of the flown gods was nothing but a mere invention and thus the way of thinking (**Denkweg**) might be proved to be an errant way (**Irrweg**). (4-5)

Heidegger’s account of his initial philosophical hesitation is here most interesting, as it clearly relates to the unique form of hermeneutic phenomenology that he employs throughout his journey.

Indeed, in searching for traces of Greece’s ancient **Dasein**, Heidegger neither relies solely on his rationalist presuppositions about Greece nor argues that the visceral or empirical experience of traveling there is enough to allow for the discovery he seeks. Instead, he seems to fuse rationalism and empiricism in relation to mental attunement, thereby developing a unique form of hermeneutic phenomenology that might grant him a psychogeographic traveling experience via which he can gain sojourning access to Greece’s originary culture. In this respect, he is not concerned with the modernized Greece that is present but rather the mythos-dominated Greece that is absent. Consequently, he is faced with the prospect of seeking out buried psychogeographic fragments of insight in modern Greece that might allow him to experience the call of its ancient **Dasein**: [W]hat matters is not us and our experience of Greece, but Greece itself” (9).

As popular culture scholar Ueli Gyr notes in “The History of Tourism: Structures on the Path to Modernity” (2010), the dawn of the 1960s had heralded the massive expansion of European tourism:

The apex of European tourism began in the 1960s: in response to the economic situations and strategic innovations in the market economy, commercial tour operators and travel companies transformed the nature of competition through increasingly cheaper offers, propelling it in the direction of mass tourism, introducing new destinations and modes of holidaying. (Gyr)

Deeply concerned about the potentially distortive psychosocial effects of this then burgeoning tourist industry, Heidegger associates the “unthoughtful onslaught of tourism” with the manifestation of an “alien power [that] enforces its own commands and regulations” (55). In this respect, he seems to be implicitly channeling his theory of “**Ge-Stell**” or “enframing,” which Manoussakis succinctly defines as follows in his “Translator’s Notes”: “It [**Ge-Stell**] has been rendered into English as ‘im-position,’ ‘en-framing,’ and ‘framework;’ it indicates a certain kind of calculative thinking that deprives things from their possibilities by not letting them appear (as they are) but instead pre-establishing their functionality” (66).

In reflecting on his stay in Venice during the early stages of his journey to Greece, Heidegger alludes to this process of enframing when he notes how Venice has been deterritorialized of its historic spirit via the reterritorializing ethos of consumerist-imbued modernity: “It has become an object of historiography, attractive scenery for confused novelists, the playground for international conferences and exhibitions, loot for the tourist industry to squander” (5). In essence, the tourism industry has enframed Venice within the distortive cultural currents of a modernity that denies this historic city the opportunity of expressing the traces of its historic being: “Aged was everything and yet not exactly old; everything belonged to the past and yet not a past that still continues and gathers itself into something remaining so it can give itself anew to those who await it” (6).

When Heidegger subsequently turns his meditative attention to modern Greece, he explicitly ponders whether it has also been enframed or whether it can still “speak” its ancient cultural **Dasein**: “Can Greece still ‘speak’ what is proper to it and claim us, the people of today, as listeners to its language, we, the people of an age whose world is throughout pervaded by the force and artificiality of the ramifications of the enframing (**Ge-Stell**)?” (10). In his subsequent travels throughout the region, he is often disappointed with what he finds. Upon arriving in Olympia, for example, he discovers a “plain village disfigured by the unfinished new buildings [to become] hotels for the American tourists” (12). Further elucidating his concept of enframing, Heidegger reflects on how the Museum of Olympia distorts the cultural essence of its various artifacts by presenting them for modern visual consumption, thereby robbing them of their mythic power:

At moments a chasm was opened between the act of dedication and the exhibits; the latter were placed in accordance with the contemporary artistic intentions, but, at the same time, were out of place; caught in themselves as they were, they became subjected to the machinations of the industrial era – they remain unable to show even what is proper to themselves to this world, let alone to indicate the paths of its transformation. (17)

In subsequently departing Olympia, the fabled home of Greece’s mythic Gods, Heidegger concludes that while the “Greek world” can still speak “in an immediate way through the sculptures,” the fact that these sculptures are housed in a museum ultimately negates the possibility of a true sojourn from being granted: “[T]he region of Olympia did not yet set free the Greek element of the land, of its sea and its sky” (18-19).

Amidst our technologically interwoven Web 3.0 era of twenty-first-century globalization, Heidegger’s concerns about the process of enframing seem more relevant than ever. What Heidegger is addressing in *Sojourns* is not merely the enframing of ancient Greece, but also the enframing of the international community itself: “What for us today is called world is the inestimable entanglement of a technological apparatus of information that confronted the unscathed and took her place, while the function of the world became accessible and tractable only by calculation” (35). As modern logos now systematically enframes our global community within a unifying neoliberal apparatus that systematically eradicates our humanity and positions us as drone-like knowledge consumers, we are in more need of mythos than ever before. To quote biologist and cultural critic E.O. Wilson, “We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom” (Wilson 294).

To be sure, our contemporary “cosmopolitics” is defined by a form of shallow anomic wanderlust, which is epitomized by the popular Internet meme that reads, “Travel. As much as you can. As far as you can. As long as you can. Life’s not meant to be lived in one place” (“Travel”). By envisioning the world as a sort of global amusement park in which “new” and “unique” experiences can be constantly sought out and consumed, today’s generally privileged global travelers remain ignorant of how their wanderlust powers the very system of cultural homogenization from which they seek to escape. An excellent example of this phenomenon can be found in the current circumstances

surrounding the ruins of the once sacred Inca citadel of Machu Picchu in Peru, which are now suffering from devastating erosion caused by the yearly influx of tourists to the site. Despite UNESCO's recent calls for Peru's government to implement a public use plan to mitigate the devastation to Machu Picchu and its surrounding area, the global influx of tourists to the site had as of 2014 surged to nearly 1.2 million visitors per year ("Drastic new rules"). One can only speculate that this rapacious touristic desire has been fueled by a hypocritical desire to visually consume Machu Picchu's ruins before they are ultimately destroyed and the seemingly inevitable commemorative simulatory theme park is erected on their once sacred grounds.

In specific reference to Greece, we might note how this contemporary wanderlust and its transformative modernizing currents have affected Athens's fabled Acropolis site, which contains many historic buildings, the most notable of which is the Parthenon. As we shall see, Heidegger's experience of visiting the Parthenon proves to be of significance in his quest to attain a pure sojourning experience in Greece. Yet while the Acropolis was once a sacred region, it is currently in danger of being overshadowed and obscured by the construction of two ten-story buildings that are slated for construction in Athens, which is today a trendy global hotspot. As noted in a February 22, 2009 *Neos Kosmos* newspaper article entitled "Petition launched to stop new building projects from 'boxing' in the Acropolis," the decision to build these two structures has enraged local residents. As Athens's current mayor, Kostas Bakoyannis, notes in the article, "The Acropolis belongs to everyone. . . . Therefore we have to respect it. We cannot allow urban monstrosities to pop up around it and cast their own shadows upon its light."

Heidegger seems to have recognized the emergence of this commercialized wanderlust as early as 1962, for in *Sojourns*, he describes the dawn of a globalized era in which "technology and industry" are enabling people to feel everywhere at home while also paradoxically inculcating an insatiable desire for new experiences via travel:

What if, then, this groundless "homeness," secured only by means of technology and industry, abandons every claim to a home by being contented with the desert-like expansion of traveling? As a consequence, even this question could cease to be of interest, because the concept of "content" would have been cancelled out by the supply of an always-increasing demand for new things. (37)

In essence, Heidegger here schematicizes the inaugural phase of the shallow "unity in diversity" rhetoric that now defines neoliberal globalization, which glibly champions the novelty of superficial "diversity" while simultaneously obfuscating the techno-capitalistic uniformity that increasingly engulfs our world's formerly differentiated countries. By enframing the world in this manner, we are fetishizing the most trivial forms of cultural difference while altogether ignoring how a unifying dogma of techno-capitalistic efficiency is exterminating the unique cultural mythopoeics that once granted individual nations their own distinct forms of **Dasein**.

In reading *Sojourns* today, one gets a sense of how Heidegger's insights into his journey constitute a sort of prologue to our global present. Writing roughly five years before the French intellectual Guy Debord would publish his landmark *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), which chronicles the rise of a Western consumer society in which human relationships were becoming increasingly "mediated by images" (Debord 1.4, 12), Heidegger associates the touristic zeal for travel with a superficial desire for visual consumption:

The annoyance with the crowds was not that they blocked the ways and obstructed access to different places. What was much more bothersome was their tourist's zeal, their toing and froing, in which one was, without being aware, included, as it threatened to degrade what was just now the element of our experience into an object read-at-hand for the viewer. (42)

In subsequently reflecting on the crowd that gathers in the once sacred region of Delphi, Heidegger alludes to how tourists practice a form of superficial image consumption that seems entirely divorced from any sense of an attempt to appreciate the mythic currents that once defined the region: "The throw their memories in the technically produced picture. They abandon without clue the feast of thinking that they ignore" (54).

One can only imagine what Heidegger would make of our contemporary Web 3.0 world, in which travel-hungry masses use Facebook to exchange images of foreign locales like trading cards. In our wired global society, travel becomes a game of crass one-upmanship to outdo one's fellow "cosmopolitans" by visually documenting one's latest "exotic" foreign escapade for Internet consumption. What is increasingly lost in this shallow touristic process, however, is the possibility of a deep phenomenological sojourn that might provide a respite from neoliberal techno-capitalism and its mythos-exterminating dogma. While Hans Holbein would caution against envisioning the world as a mere playground for human desire via his painting *The Ambassadors* (1533), which brilliantly juxtaposes the Renaissance impetus for global exploration against an anamorphic **vanitas** image of a skull, such an enlightened

worldview seems unimaginable in our current epoch. Indeed, while Heidegger's journey to Greece was born of his desire to pursue a meditative confrontation with history that naturally entailed that he accept the finite nature of his existence, the shallow restlessness of today's global travelers seemingly emanates from a Thanatophobic angst on their behalf. Amusingly, this angst is insightfully conveyed in the opening scene of the 2009 film *Up in the Air*, in which the film's perpetually traveling corporate protagonist, Ryan Bingham (George Clooney), delivers a glib motivational talk to a rapt audience of "fellow travelers," noting, "Make no mistake, moving is living. . . . The slower we move, the faster we die."

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Deep Travel

Yet if *Sojourns* constitutes an insightful critique of globalization, it also functions as a praxis-oriented schematic for a form of phenomenologically engaged deep travel that holds out the possibility of a sojourn from modernity. By having first engaged in a deep intellectual exploration of Greece, Heidegger then makes his empirical-experiential trip there. What results is a psychogeographic journey via which he seeks out gaps within the grid of modernity that might allow him sojourn-like moments of access to the remaining traces of ancient Greek **Dasein** that he is able to phenomenologically intuit.

This somewhat mystical approach leads Heidegger to an unexpected insight into the very historical essence of Greece. The beginning of this insight is first sparked when he visits the island of Crete and discovers, to his surprise, that it "encloses a strange, pre-Greek world" (22) that manifests itself in the "Egyptian-oriental essence" (23) of the palace of Knossos at Herakleion: "Everything is focused on the luxurious, on adornment and embellishment, from the large frescoes to the insignificant utensils of everyday life" (23). Clearly, Heidegger is astute in this recognition, for it is today widely recognized that ancient Greece was in indebted to intercultural dialogue with Egypt, for as Robert Garland notes in his book *Ancient Greece: Everyday Life in the Birthplace of Western Civilization* (2008),

By claiming to be the oldest people on the face of the earth, the Greeks were able to [misguidedly] feed their sense of national pride and to claim special status among the other people they encountered, although it is fair to state as well that educated Greeks, like the historian Herodotus, were open and forthright in acknowledging the debt of Greek culture to other, older cultures, notably that of Egypt (1-2).

Intrigued by what he observes at Herakleion, Heidegger ponders whether the palace's luxurious allure constitutes mere superficial appeal or the trace of a deeply buried history: "And yet, what shines in this amazing shine? Is the question not fitting? Could it be that what shines in the shine is only the shine itself and therefore neither can conceal nor hide anything?" (24). Further ruminating on this experience upon arriving in Rhodes near the coast of Asia Minor, Heidegger pursues a form of deep recollective thinking that leads him to conclude that ancient Greek **Dasein** was the byproduct of an historic intercultural dialogue between East and West: "[T]he confrontation [**Auseinandersetzung**] with the Asiatic element was for the Greek **Dasein** a fruitful necessity" (25).

For Heidegger, the realization of this pivotal East-West intercultural dialogue proves of immense importance. In his view, Greece's historic confrontation with the East holds the potential for an alternative theorization of globality:

This confrontation is for us today – in an entirely different way and to a greater extent – the decision about the destiny of Europe and what is called the Western world. Insofar, however, as the entire earth – and not only the earth anymore – is enclosed and penetrated by the radiation zones of modern technology and the atomic fields that technology has activated, the decision was overnight transformed to the question, whether and how man sets himself free in relation to a power that is capable of warding off the violence in the essence of technology. Faced with such a global situation, the thinking [**Andenken**] of the global proper character of Greece is a world-alienating occupation. (25-26)

By engaging in recollective thinking and resurrecting and confronting the mythic currents that once bound East and West together in an early world interculture, Heidegger discovers a potential alternative path for global awareness that might herald an escape from the techno-capitalistic currents that he fears are now engulfing the modern world.

Yet as potentially "world alienating" (26) as this discovery is, it is still not enough to qualify as a sojourn for Heidegger, who does not experience his first true sojourn until he visits the island of Delos: "Only through the experience of Delos did the journey to Greece become a sojourn. . ." (34). The fabled birthplace of the Greek god Apollo and his twin sister, the goddess Artemis, Delos was an important locale in Greek mythology. As Heidegger

discovers, the location constitutes a sort of gap with the grid of modernity that allows for a temporary sojourn within ancient Greek **Dasein**. In phenomenologically intuiting and accessing this absent presence, Heidegger utilizes a hermeneutic aid that is found in the etymological significance of the Greek word *aletheia* or *ἀλήθεια*, for as he notes, “It is only seldom then and after long preparation that we can succeed in looking at the presence of that which had once received form and measure from the field of *ἀλήθεια*” (35).

While the Romans had rendered *aletheia* as truth, Heidegger recognizes that the term had actually denoted “unconcealment” in ancient Greece. As Barbara Bolt notes in *Heidegger Reframed* (2011), “For the Greeks, as for Heidegger, truth is not propositional, but rather it is a revealing that brings forth the being of something out of concealment forth into unconcealment” (171). By engaging in recollective thinking, Heidegger hermeneutically engages *aletheia* and experiences a sojourn within ancient Greek **Dasein** via the gap or clearing that Delos affords within modernity’s grid: “The meditations that for a long time occupied me with regards to *ἀλήθεια*, and the relationship between concealment and unconcealment have found, thanks to the sojourn in Delos, the desired confirmation” (34). Further ruminating upon Delos’s connection to *ἀλήθεια* during his departure from the island, Heidegger concludes that Delos now functions as a contemporary sanctuary, for he notes how it is essentially concealed in plain sight by the neighboring isle of Mykonos, a “fashionable spot of international tourism” (36): “Perhaps it is good that, because of Mykonos, an oblivion cloaks the lonely Delos, for in this way it remains protected” (36).

Energized and invigorated by this sojourn, Heidegger recognizes that the remainder of his journey will constitute a series of experiences that will necessitate his piercing through many phenomenological layers of meaning. As he notes upon his arrival in Athens, “The awareness that we should go through many layers became stronger, that we should overcome many things that distract our attention, and to leave behind many familiar representations, in order to allow the Hellenism that is sought even here in Athens to show itself” (39). In contrast to his experience of the sheltered Delos, Heidegger finds that Athens has become a popular tourist locale. To this end, it is only during a lonely early morning visit to the Parthenon that he experiences a pure sojourn, albeit a “distantly fitting one” (41) given that he achieves this transcendence only through the contemplation of how modernity has deterritorialized the site of its mythic aura: “Through an inconceivable shine the entire building began to float, as, as the same time, it assumed a firmly defined presence, akin to that of the supporting rock. This presence was fulfilled by the abandonment of the holy. In this abandonment the absence of the flown goddess draws invisibly near” (40-41).

Interestingly, it is not until Heidegger approaches Delphi near the end of his journey that he makes it clear that it is this location that has been the central object of his thoughts throughout his travels through Greece: “Judging from the previous experiences of the sojourns I was expecting that this last one, **which had been considered as the crowning visit of the entire journey** [emphasis added], would surpass all knowledge and imagination carried with me and would speak with its own language” (50). The hallowed site of the Temple of Apollo, Delphi was the veritable locus point of ancient Greek **Dasein**. As mythologist J.A. Coleman notes in *The Dictionary of Mythology*, Delphi was home to the Greek earth-mother and oracle Gaia (or Gaea) and was “regarded as the centre of the world” in ancient Greece (see “Delphi”). In subsequently making his way throughout the region, Heidegger intuits that its sacred **Dasein** comes not from “the ruins of the temples” but rather from “the greatness of the region itself” (51). In this regard, he is able to recognize that the key to Delphi’s essence is not found in its Temple of Apollo, but rather in the entire region, which essentially constitutes a temple in and of itself: “Under the lofty sky, in the clear air of which the eagle, Zeus’s bird, was flying in circles, the region revealed itself as the temple of this place” (51). Paradoxically enough, Delphi engages in the concealment of that which is in plain view.

In subsequently departing Delphi before making his return trip home, Heidegger ponders the immense value of the various sojourns he has been granted. His melancholic conclusion is that such respite from modernity will become ever more difficult as the world becomes increasingly engulfed within geo-unification: “The irresistible modern technology together with the scientific industrialization of the world is about to obliterate any possibility of a sojourn” (56). In essence, he fears that humanity will become captured by the relentlessly future-oriented discourse of globalization, which entails an attendant denial of the recollective thinking that constitutes a core element of the hermeneutic phenomenology that he has found essential for a deep travel sojourn. Amidst this globalizing condition, the potential for the revelation of any form of cultural **Dasein** apart from that of the inauthentic **Dasein** of modern technology will be suppressed.

Commenting on this very phenomenon in his essay “Optical Craving versus Ontological Desire,” Michael E. Zimmerman situates Heidegger’s concerns about technological **Dasein** in relation to the competing geopolitical systems of capitalism and communism:

[T]echnological **Dasein** has ended in the grip of a control obsession that elevates a means – technological mastery over entities – over all other ends. By making power an end in itself, capitalism and communism alike undermine not only traditional religious beliefs and cultural values, but also the ontological motion of transcendence (**ek-sistence**) that makes human existence possible. In his role as ontological therapist, Heidegger sought to diagnose such self-destructive compulsiveness. (515)

Faced with a marked awareness of these then competing geopolitical systems, Heidegger chose to eschew overt political commentary in favor of instead exploring how human **Dasein** was becoming endangered by modern logos, which defined both capitalism and communism alike. In essence, Heidegger recognized how post-WWII humanity was trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea, for he understood that any attempt to enframe the world within a geo-unifying technological system could only succeed at the expense of humanity's richly diversified forms of cultural **Dasein**.

Yet in spite of his contention that “modern technology” and “scientific industrialization” are about to “obliterate any possibility of a sojourn” (56), Heidegger maintains that his departure from Greece does not constitute an ultimate farewell to its originary culture, but rather a pivotal recognition of its absent presence beneath modernity's grid: “The departure from it [Greece] became its arrival. What had arrived and brought the assurance of its stay was the sojourn of the flown gods that opens itself to recollective thinking” (56). To this end, he once again praises Hölderlin by quoting the last strophe from Hölderlin's “German's Song,” a passage from which he divines obvious inspiration for a stand against the “futureless progress” of the technological epoch (57):

Where is your Delos, where is your Olympia,
For celebration that would conjoin us all?
How shall your son divine the gift that,
Deathless one, long you have darkly fashioned? (qtd. in Heidegger 57)

Clearly, Heidegger admires Hölderlin's call for modernity to confront its absence of mythopoetics, an invocation that presumably inspired his own practice of recollective thinking.

If, then, modern technology and scientific industrialization together encompass a sojourn-denying grid, this is only because they have systematically reoriented the collective consciousness of mass society in relation to modern logos. Indeed, Heidegger suggests that a phenomenological sojourn from modernity is still possible for those who are able to cultivate recollective thinking and develop a sufficient sense of phenomenological intuition. In essence, Heidegger is seemingly endorsing a phenomenological perspective that lies somewhere between William Shakespeare and William Faulkner, for while Antonio in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (c. 1611) admonishes that “what's past is prologue” (I.ii.278), Gavin Stevens in Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) suggests, “The past is never dead; it's not even past” (92). Accordingly, Heidegger concludes *Sojourns* by cryptically yet informatively advising that Greece, “the birthplace of Occident and modern age, secure in its own island-like essence, remains in the recollective thinking of the sojourn” (57).

If we distill *Sojourns* and relate it to Heidegger's unique phenomenological views, we can divine the core elements of a comprehensive framework via which he intimates a praxis-oriented methodology and ethics for deep travel. To this end, language and its status as a cultural repository of history play a key role throughout *Sojourns*, for as Heidegger had earlier pronounced in his “Letter on Humanism” (1947), “Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells” (217). In other words, language defines our conceptions and perceptions of social reality; it is the central matrix through which we form and process meaning. Accordingly, Heidegger first explores various historic mythopoetic narrative accounts of Greece before making his actual physical journey there, for traces of Greece's originary culture inhere within the ancient Greek language itself.

Put in more praxis-oriented methodological terms, Heidegger desires to intuitively excavate the remnants of Greece's originary culture. In order to accomplish this feat of knowledge, he does not turn to popular travel guides that will likely distort Greece's cultural history by enframing it within superficial contemporary narratives; instead, he builds upon his accrued knowledge of ancient Greek mythopoetics and the grand tradition of Western Hellenism. For Heidegger, deep travel thus begins with deep reading and deep study, for as he notes, “The Greek element remained an expectation, something that I was sensing in the poetry of the ancients, something that I intimate through Hölderlin's *Elegies* and *Hymns*, something that I was thinking on the long paths of my own thought” (19).

Deep Travel Ethics

Viewed from an ethical perspective, deep travel involves cultivating a sufficient level of phenomenological perception to intuit the essence of a foreign culture. While this phenomenological approach may initially seem somewhat mystical to contemporary readers, this is only because it rejects the intellectually confining parameters of modern logos in favor of cultivating a mythopoetic sensibility. More specifically put, Heidegger's travel ethics are not commensurate with our contemporary system of techno-capitalism, which enframes the world as a sort of high-tech global shopping mall via which privileged travel consumers can avail themselves of the latest commodified travel experience.⁵ For Heidegger, travel is a serious matter that emanates not from the superficial "cosmopolitics" of globalization rhetoric, but rather from a sincere cosmopolitan quest to appreciate international cultural diversity in all of its uncommodified forms.

If one doubts the salience of Heidegger's concerns about modernity's sojourn-denying ethos, then they should consider the current state of Greece. Ravaged by crippling debt and faced with calls for draconian austerity sanctions from Germany, Greece is about to be permanently deterritorialized of the remnants of its originary cultural **Dasein** by the cold, calculatory reterritorializing ethos of neoliberalism. Fundamentally incompatible with neoliberal techno-capitalism and its crude rhetoric of efficiency, Greece is effectively being punished not just for its debt but also for its continued cultural resistance to the lifestyle norms of neoliberal capitalism. As the IMF's 2012 call for Greece to accept a six-day workweek suggests, the international community resents the premium that Greek citizens continue to place upon their distinct lifestyle. Despite OECD findings that clearly indicate that Greeks average longer weekly working hours than any other European workers (McCarthy), Greece is routinely impugned in the Western media for its ritualistic afternoon siesta time and its historic emphasis on valuing leisure as a vital component of its daily life-world. Once considered the bedrock of any enlightened society oriented towards the *jouissance* of existence, the very concept of the leisured life has today become anathematized in a global neoliberal society calibrated to the insatiable velocity of techno-capitalism. Amidst this new global condition, the prospect of achieving a sojourn from neoliberal ideology has become a near impossibility.

Long accused of intellectual sophistry by philosophers working within the Anglo-American analytic tradition, Heidegger is, of course, an easy critical target for those seeking easily articulable answers to highly complex problems. In this respect, the British philosopher A.J. Ayer undoubtedly spoke for many within the Anglo-American analytic tradition when he uncharitably opined of Heidegger, "The question of Being? A senseless querying of what must be an absolute presupposition. . . . Heidegger has displays of surprising ignorance, unscrupulous distortion and what can fairly be described as charlatanism" (qtd. in Collins 7). Yet in contrast to analytic-minded individuals like Ayer who would likely contend that Sojourns is a mere embodiment of sophistry or "charlatanism," I would counter that the work is actually highly amenable to praxis-oriented application.

Deep Travel Phenomenology and Ethics: From Theory to Praxis

It is my view that *Sojourns* contains the theoretical fundamentals of an ethics of deep travel that can be distilled and applied. To cite a recent personal experience that involved the praxis-oriented application of what I term Heidegger's phenomenology of deep travel, I had the unique and valuable experience of first reading *Sojourns* and applying its implicit deep travel techniques while visiting Central Europe for the first time. As I wandered the cobblestone streets of Prague throughout the resplendent chill of a mid-February week, I found myself surprised to discover that this historic city had seemingly become completely reconfigured as a marketplace for global neoliberal capitalism and its attendant culture of conspicuous consumption. What, I wondered, had happened to Prague's historic **Dasein**? Surely, the historic being of this city was not expressed in the omnipresence of such varied multinational corporate brand names as Rolex, Cartier, H&M, and Starbucks? What had happened to the Prague of history? Had Prague been completely deterritorialized of its historic cultural **Dasein** by the reterritorializing and geounifying ethos of global neoliberal capitalism?

Interestingly, a visit to Prague's Franz Kafka museum helped me work through all of the above questions. Although initially hesitant to visit the museum because I feared Kafka's life and works would be distortedly enframed by a hoary touristic apparatus, I found myself pleasantly surprised to discover a nuanced commemorative site that avoided enframing Kafka and his works within some simplistic exhibitional narrative. Having studied Kafka's works

at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I found that the museum did justice to the immense complexity of Kafka and his literary masterpieces. Of particular use was a guidebook sold by the museum, *The City of K.: Franz Kafka and Prague* (2010), which I happily elected to purchase. It was in perusing the opening section of this guidebook that I came across a passage that reminded me of a key aspect of Prague's historic culture that I had been exposed to during my formal study of Kafka but had subsequently forgotten during the intervening years. Situating Kafka in relation to Prague's historically complex and divided urban culture, the passage notes,

Frank Kafka was born inside a vortex named Prague. A city in which three ethnic groups (Czechs, Germans and Jews) had lived together for centuries, yet still separated by differences in language, customs and culture. This conflict leaves its mark on the city's physiology, transforming it into hermetic compartments and defining invisible borders, without determining the size or the very essence of the cage. That cage has to be intuited from the bird's perspective. (9)

As the passage reminded me, Prague had been historically marked by unreconciled sociocultural differences that had resulted in a psychosocially conflicted urban society characterized by varying forms of cultural neuroticism.

This cultural neuroticism was, of course, manifested in Kafka's deeply introspective literary works and Prague's historically creative intellectual milieu, the latter of which was obviously born of the city's collective socioexistential anxiety about the indeterminate state of its cultural identity. Intriguingly, Prague's historic sense of cultural neuroticism and its attendant penchant for intellectualism were continued throughout the Communist period. Even during Soviet totalitarianism, Prague had maintained a vibrant culture of creativity and difference that proved resistant to the crude assimilatory dictates of Soviet socialist realism. Only recently, it seems, has the city's creatively fruitful cultural neuroticism approached its seeming end – an end that has been ushered in via a totalizing global neoliberal apparatus that preaches the rhetoric of difference as it systematically proceeds to geo-unify all cultural diversity within its assimilatory ethos.

To this end, I could only appreciate Prague's historic **Dasein** by engaging in the practice of recollective thinking that was triggered by my visit to the Kafka museum, an experience which subsequently provided the avenue for a deep phenomenological sojourn via which I was able to fuse my rationalist presuppositions about Prague with my actual experience of it. By harnessing my knowledge of Kafka and his relationship to Prague as a hermeneutic aid, I experienced the phenomenological realization that traces of Prague's originary cultural **Dasein** were still discernible throughout the city's landscape. Paradoxically enough, however, I was only able to achieve this realization by observing how Kafka had become commodified and assimilated within the giant neoliberal marketplace that contemporary Prague had become.

If Kafka had once been a marginalized voice of a neurotic yet creative culture, he was now firmly integrated within the cultural monomania of consumer capitalism that had come to define contemporary Prague. As I wandered the city's consumer-inundated streets I was constantly bombarded by kitschy Kafka dolls, Kafka mugs, and Kafka T-shirts that were available for sale via countless stores, newsstands, and street vendors. Once a tortured, introspective writer who had toiled away in virtual obscurity, Kafka was now an essential "brand name" that had become indelibly associated with Prague. Curiously, this had the effect of rendering Prague even more surreal than in Kafka's writings. If Kafka had toiled away creating works that he feared would neither be accepted nor comprehended by the reading public of his era, his name was now omnipresent in a city that had embraced his image while seemingly having ignored the introspective content and quality of his works.

Again, the overall effect of experiencing this phenomenon was even more Kafkaesque than a work by Kafka himself. While Kafka had achieved ubiquitous status in contemporary Prague, the majority of the city's tourists had likely never seriously engaged with a work by him. Only by harnessing Kafka as a hermeneutic aid and drawing upon my knowledge of his life and works could I intuit Prague's historic **Dasein** of vexatious cultural neuroticism, the remnants of which were still detectable in the city's unique art, architecture, and monuments. A deep travel sojourn was thus possible in Prague, albeit one born of a concentrated phenomenological effort to pierce through the city's contemporary cultural monomania of neoliberal capitalist consumerism.

Conclusion

Heidegger's *Sojourns* is perhaps now more relevant than ever, though its praxis-oriented methodology and ethics of deep travel will be accessible only to those who are able to achieve a temporary break from neoliberal

techno-capitalism and its attendant forces of **Das Man**.⁶ Accordingly, a journey abroad must be preceded by a sojourn within one's self, for cultivating an authentic sense of personal **Dasein** is a virtual necessity for those who harbor the ultimate ambition of pursuing a deep travel experience. Undoubtedly, there will be those who will argue that this very notion of deep travel is rooted in mystic sophistry. Should this be the inevitable case with some people, however, this is perhaps because the calculatory coordinates of neoliberalism have simply rendered them unable to fathom the inherent solace that a deep travel sojourn might provide.

Endnotes

1. Our modern understanding of logos as "reason" or "logic" differs considerably from its ancient Greek meaning. As Heidegger notes in his chapter "Logos" in his book Early Greek Thinking (1975), logos had meant "the Laying that gathers" in ancient Greece (76). Roughly speaking, this had denoted a process of cultural deliberation via which ancient Greek society had laid ideas out and gathered them together in a manner that disclosed their fundamental essence.

2. For an excellent recent anthology of essays exploring this topic, see editors Antonio Cerella and Louiza Odysseos's Heidegger and the Global Age (2017).

3. Defining **Dasein** in her book Heidegger Reframed (2011), scholar Barbara Bolt notes, "From [the German] 'da' (there) and 'Sein' (being). Heidegger uses the term '**Dasein**' for the fundamental fact of being-right-there that characterises human existence. It relates to the German term for 'Being,' '**das Sein**,' i.e. 'the to be' or '**existenz**': . . . **Dasein** is constituted by being-in-the-world."

4. In employing the term "Web 3.0" I am borrowing from cultural critic Andrew Keen, who coins it in his book

Digital Vertigo: How Today's Online Revolution is Dividing, Diminishing, and Disorienting Us (2012) to distinguish between "the Web 2.0 of Google, YouTube, and Wikipedia" and "the Web 3.0 of Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn (17).

5. As John Carlos Rowe notes in The Cultural Politics of the New American Studies (2012), the model of the American shopping mall has now become a global phenomenon: "Whether directly exported by U.S. business interests or developed by multinational corporations to look like its U.S. prototypes, the international mall is often traceable back to U.S. funding, design, and marketing sources or models" (108).

6. Literally translated from German, **Das Man** means "the one" or "the they." As Heidegger scholar Daniel O. Dahlstrom notes in his book The Heidegger Dictionary (2013), Heidegger employed **Das Man** "to designate **Dasein** in its average everyday way of being-with others, where, figuratively and literally, it exists by following the crowd" (207-208).

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The Modern-World System: Europe or Asia? Fernand Braudel & Andre Gunder Frank

Charles Lemert

It is well-known that the concept of a modern world-system owes to Immanuel Wallerstein's six decades-plus of writings and other interventions; in particular those since 1974 when his Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century appeared. After that, Wallerstein completed volumes II through IV of a projected seven-volume series on the rise and fall of the modern world-system. As this edition of Fast Capitalism comes online, Wallerstein will have died but weeks ago. Still his prodigious intellectual and literary labor remains as a tribute to the man and his work on several fronts—work that continued well into his 88th year of life. Of this, none was more important than the four volumes on the Modern World-System. These first four volumes, alongside hundreds of other writings including 27 books and countless essays and shorter writings—not to mention the 500 bi-monthly short commentaries on current affairs that began October 1998 and continued without exception until June 2019—, Wallerstein's literary *oeuvre* must be considered one of the most important in the still young history of the academic social sciences.

In more than a few of these writings, Wallerstein has argued that the modern world-system of a half-millennium from 1500 to 1989 has lapsed into a period of uncertainty that may well spell the end of the capitalist world-economy as we have known it. In as much as capitalism is, indeed, something quite different from what it originally was and—if the elite class of global capitalists succeed in high-jacking it—we may be seeing the end of capitalism itself. As the modern world-system has become multi-polar without any prospect of a hegemonic core, the world economy seems to be shifting toward East and South Asia. Even Brazil along with Russia and South Korea among the once ascendant BRIC economies seems unlikely to stand strong with China and India as truly global economies. China and India and perhaps South Korea, if it survives the growing crisis with North Korea, are likely to be whatever we will come to call the transactional center of global capitalism.

None of this is assured; hence, Wallerstein's insistence on Ilya Prigogine's dynamic theory of uncertainty. Still, the economic primacy of the major Asian economies lends credence to the idea of The New Silk Roads as Peter Frankopan's 2018 book puts it. However, the slower thought on this theme is one that not that long ago was of considerable prominence:

It was André Gunder Frank, in his 1998 book ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asia Age, who argued aggressively that the very idea of a **modern** world-system was a historic mistake. Gunder Frank meant to separate himself from the world-systems tradition of which he had been an influential contributor by virtue of his writings in the 1960s on dependency theory. ReOrient is particularly stern, and often unfair, in its attacks on Wallerstein, even as it also criticized Fernand Braudel who was not only the principal source of the history of the modern system's capitalism but also of its status as the first global economy. Gunder Frank, were he still here to argue the point, would insist that the Asian Mode of Production in the immediate pre-modern era culminating around 1400 was not just earlier than the modern capitalism world-system but in crucial ways an economic market place that allowed early North Atlantic traders to produce surplus economic value that Eastern Europe could not. Gunder Frank, thus, would have said that today's supposition that Asia is the future of a future world economy is all wrong. He might even

have said that today's world economy was always and originally Asian. Against this Wallerstein has a one-word reply: **capitalism!** The Asian mode of production, such as it was, was not even remotely capitalist.

Gunder Frank, his earlier admiration of Wallerstein's work notwithstanding, was extravagantly dismissive of the claim that the modern world is inherently capitalist. Wallerstein, by contrast, was patient if firm in his view of Gunder Frank's work. Thus, I propose that the slower thought on this lies partly in the differences between Fernand Braudel's work—done without the kind of personal relation with Gunder Frank he had with Wallerstein—suggests for the time being the distinct value of examining Braudel and Gunder Frank side-by-side.

Were I writing for one of those overly-long established academic journals such a purpose would be laughable. They are only interested in fast thinking that moves the unmovable bulk of disciplinary thought forward in time. Fast thinkers, even when they are doing what they considered historical work, tend to assume that disciplinary thought can only move forward if it is efficient in their world-weary definitions of wooden variables. I have served hard time worrying about such things. The great luxury of advancing age is that it relieves one of the bother of trying to please those who control the means of disciplinary reputation.

There is, in this instance, a special pleasure in starting up again what was once a regular column in *Fast Capitalism*. It was, of course, Ben Agger who originally invited and, I think, appreciated my *Slow Thoughts in Fast Times*. Ben was a genius of a special kind. Not only did he write prodigiously and well, but he shrugged off, in a generous way, the conventional norms of academic scholarship. I remember him with intellectual affection for what he gave us and miss him for what we lack in his absence.



Fernand Braudel (1902-1985) was born in Luméville-en-Ornois, Gondrecourt-le-Château, France of peasant stock of which he remained proud. He often, at various times, dreamt of the landscape of his native Lorraine. Still, Alexander Lee observes, “the countryside of Eastern France was “full of military recollections, his imagination was fired by battles and wars more than anything else ...” As things turned out, war was to be an important real-life experience in his early adult life.

Braudel's studies in history began at the Sorbonne in 1920, culminating some years later with the prized **agrégé**. He was still quite young, which may partly explain why his early writings were shockingly positivist, even drab. Braudel's historical mind began to change in 1923 when he began his teaching career in Algeria. There he met the Belgian medieval historian Henri Pirenne whose work was both structural and more material than the prevailing positivism in France. Then too, the alluring landscapes of North Africa on which early modern economic trading and cross-cultural conflict between Ottoman and Christian cultures reinvigorated Braudel's earlier attachment to the French countryside while inducing him toward a broader view of history than the one Pirenne had inspired. Later he would teach at the University of São Paulo. Onboard a ship returning to Paris from Brazil, he met Lucien Febvre, a cofounder with Marc Bloch of the **Annales** school of historical research. They became close friends. Braudel would become the leader of the second generation of **Annales** historians. The influences of mentors and of the local histories of Algeria and Brazil fixed Braudel's interest in the Mediterranean region and the early modern Iberian dominance of the Atlantic trade routes and colonial settlements in the Americas. In 1942, back in France, the war would again affect Braudel's life. He was arrested by the Nazi occupiers and imprisoned until the War's end in 1945. In those long years, Braudel famously drafted the notes that would become his first and greatest book, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, published in 1949. This massive, two-volume book was the groundwork of the historical theories that caused many in his day, as in ours, to think of him as the most important historian of the twentieth century, perhaps of the modern era.

The Mediterranean is an enduring contribution for at least the following reasons. **First**, it begins with the role of the environment even before describing the region's historical map. Here is Braudel's first deployment of his theory of **la longue durée**—of long-enduring historical time rooted in geological and climatic structures against which, in his words, is situated “The Mediterranean as a Human Unit: Communications and Cities.” Hence, *The Mediterranean*'s **second** major contribution is the displacing of event history with its disposition toward a positivistic recital of the facts of political and cultural events as the units of a linear **event history**. Instead of a history of battles and thrones, the book turns in Part Two of its first volume to demographical and economic factors. Then follows the **third** structural feature of the book—its introduction of **conjunctural history**. “There is no single conjuncture: we must visualize a series of overlapping histories developing simultaneously.” [II, 893] This is the decisive displacement of event history in favor of a strong structural idea notion of “overlapping” histories that transpire in long-enduring

geographies whereupon “the rhythms of material life and other diverse fluctuations of human existence” come into conflict with one another to create the setting wherein the events, politics, and people of a given time and space like the Mediterranean come to pass. Then and only then comes the “story” (if the word applies) of The Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II of Spain and Portugal in the middle decades of the 1550s when Iberia became the dominant force in the Atlantic world. Braudel all but apologizes for the final major section of the book. “It is only after much hesitation that I decided to publish his third section, describing events in the Mediterranean during the fifty years of our study.” He wants to keep his distance from event history; yet, the events in the Age of Phillip II are necessary to the story—war, secularization, defeat, and decline. Braudel so wanted to avoid dramatizing major events that the reader must look hard even for a mention of the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 that brought Phillip’s Age to its end. The collapse of the Iberian hegemony led to the conjuncture of the historical vectors in which North Atlantic capitalism as we know it today came fully into its own.

Among Braudel’s other works, Civilization and Capitalism: 15th-18th Century—a three-volume series completed at the end of his career—is not as well known. But it should be. Here his structural approach to history turns primary attention to as the defining global economy of the modern era. Here too, Braudel ranges comprehensively in his analysis of modernity as a world-ordering structure. The Civilization and Capitalism: 15th-18th Century series was, therefore, a systematic study of the world economy as a system comprising three structural vectors—the demographic and economic features of everyday life; the commercial elements of the cities and states of the economic-system; and role of the capitalism that arose in Europe and the history of its domination of the world economy.

The Structures of Everyday Life, the first volume in Civilization and Capitalism: 15th-18th Century trilogy, does not view everyday life as somehow unrelentingly local or as a function of face-to-face interactions. Braudel’s The Structures of Everyday Life begins with a hearty dose of demographic facts as to the shifts in world population, in which the scale of reference is towns, armies, and navies; followed by the 18th century as “a watershed of biological regimes”—which is say famines, epidemics, plagues, diseases. The first chapter in Structures ends with a section on “the many against the few” on the decline of barbarian empires and the disappearance of the pre-17th century nomads, the conquest of spaces, and the emergence of civilizations contesting each other for which he offers the telling statement: “A culture is a civilization that has not achieved maturity, its greatest potential, nor consolidated its growth [Braudel, 1979 (I), 101].” The rest of the book covers topics like daily bread, food, and drink, houses and clothing, the spread of technology, money, town and cities—all presented in relation to his history of the early modern world. The subtlety of Braudel’s scheme is stated in the Conclusion to Structures:

With **economic life**, we shall be moving outside the routine, the unconscious daily round. However, in economic life the regularities will still be with us: an ancient and progressive division of labour led to the necessary separations and encounters which nourished active and conscious everyday economic life with its small profits, its micro-capitalism (whose face was not unacceptable) distinguishable from ordinary work. Higher still, on the top floor, we have placed real capitalism, with its mighty networks, its operations which already seemed diabolical to common mortals. What had this sophisticated level to do with humble lives at the foot of the ladder, the reader might ask. **Everything perhaps for they are drawn into its operations.** [Braudel, 1979(I), 562; emphasis at the end added]

Here the readers encounter a trace of Marx’s top-down structure where the workers suffer from ignorance of the inner workings of capitalism. But in Braudel’s formulation, the humble that endure at the bottom of the ladder are well aware of the diabolical nature of capitalism and are critical theorists of their situation because they are drawn consciously into capitalism’s operations. Marx’s workers were dumb and alienated. Braudel’s were alert and engaged.

In Wheels of Commerce, the second book of Civilization and Capitalism, Braudel considers the extent to which capitalism arose out of prior economic and social conditions that made it possible to the end of making capitalism as we know it possible. In his summary of those conditions he offers: 1) a robust and expanding market economy, 2) a certain kind of society necessary to capitalism even before it came to be, 3) and “the liberating action of world trade” [Braudel 1979 (II), 606-601]. The wheels of trade are presented as a vector that could be said to cross-cut the lower and higher aspects of economic life with which he concluded The Structures of Everyday Life. In The Wheels of Commerce Braudel lends geographical weight to the analysis by pointing out the interconnection between local town markets and what he calls the higher wheels of trade—fairs, warehouses, granaries, stock markets and, crucially, the penetrating effect of global trade markets that began with the Portuguese and Spanish colonial interests in the age of Phillip II—interests that were, even then, already part of a growing system of global exchange between Europe and the world as a whole. Though Braudel does not press the **wheels** figure of speech, throughout this second volume in the trilogy nearly everything major aspect of the new commercial world **the wheels of commerce**—wheels,

plural—depict an ever rolling historical process in which local and regional capitalist markets turn more and more toward the global markets that in turn roll in a necessarily close relation to the more local markets. The dynamic factor energizing the wheels of economic history is of course **capital**.

For many, especially social theorists, the most interesting, and compelling feature of *Wheels* is chapter 5 in which Braudel defines the otherwise impossible-to-define concept of “society” as “... ‘a set of sets,’ the sum of all the things that historians encounter in the various branches of our research” [Braudel 1979 (II), 459]. This notion serves two important purposes: first, to propose a way to account for all of the many and different aspects of collective life that cannot be reduced to any aspect so readily observed as the economy; second, his idea of society serves to locate social hierarchies as the ubiquitous and seemingly necessary structural feature of the mass of collective activities and institutions that gather together around and inside the economy and the polity. Hence, his important historical observation: “Societies in our own time, whatever their political system, are hardly any more egalitarian than those in the past” [463]. The structural inequalities modern society are conditions required of the “certain kind of society necessary to capitalism.”

The *Perspective of the World*, volume three in the trilogy, is where Braudel carefully presents the key concept, **world-economies**, that became central to Immanuel Wallerstein’s version of world-systems analysis he developed in the years he and Braudel worked together in Paris after 1975-76. In 1974 Wallerstein, for his part, had finished the first volume of *The Modern World-System* which Braudel read avidly. Then began a collaboration that lasted until Braudel’s death in 1985 and, in a sense, continued well after through the Wallerstein’s Fernand Braudel Center at the University of Binghamton. Though the influences between the older and younger man were robustly mutual, Braudel admits that the general theory in *The Perspective of the World* presents in “general outline” the 1974 *World-System Theory* [Braudel 1979 (III), 69-70]. *Perspective* is far more than an outline of Wallerstein’s first volume (just as Wallerstein’s subsequent histories of the modern world-system, while grounded in Braudel’s master-work, *The Mediterranean*, covered history after the Iberian hegemony by means of his own emergent analytic scheme).

Braudel begins his third volume with a statement that, in the hands of Andre Gunder Frank, would spark an abiding controversy—namely: the distinction between a **world-economy** and **world-economies**. The former, of course, refers simply to the fact that the world at large is contrived around an economic system of one or another kind; while the latter insists that in a given conjuncture there can be several world-economies, of which modern capitalism after Phillip II is one. The book’s many descriptive chapters deal with both concepts in the sense that the first four chapters deal with aspects of Europe’s world-economy, after which the long fifth chapter considers the world’s world-economies than were “for and against Europe” before ending with the soon to be controversial statement that “the Far East [was] the greatest of all the world economies.” Then, the sixth and final chapter on the industrial revolution and economic growth could be seen as a qualification of this statement by its strong conclusion on the early capitalist industrial conjuncture in which “material and living standards” soar to previously unheard-of heights.

What remains is that China’s ancient world economy may have been “greatest” by one measure and Europe’s greatest by another. Hence, the breach André Gunder Frank entered.

V

André Gunder Frank (1929-2005) was born to a Jewish family in Germany on the eve of Adolf Hitler’s rise to power. They fled, first to Switzerland, then to the United States in 1941. Frank studied at Swarthmore and the University of Chicago where in 1957 he earned his Ph.D. in economics. Even after many years of schooling in America, Gunder Frank said on his website: “I received very little education if any and learned nothing of any use in any of the many schools that I attended here and there.” At the least, the schooling, such as it was, was sufficient, as, again, he put it: “My Chicago Ph.D. in Economics, with Milton Friedman, finally did me some good in Brazil where it proved to be my union card for an appointment to teach anthropology... [at the University of Brasilia]”. After that, Gunder Frank became an academic migrant stopping along the way at universities and institutes first in Mexico, then Montreal, then Chile where he advised Salvador Allende’s administration. He fled Chile after the military coup in 1973 for Europe where he found academic homes in Starnberg, Norwich, East Anglia, before settling at the University of Amsterdam until mandatory retirement in 1994. In the remaining years until his death in 2005 Gunder Frank continued to move about the world for positions of various kinds in the US, Europe, Canada, and China.

Amid all these, perhaps the single most important stop-over was in Brazil early in the 1960s where Gunder Frank came to appreciate the importance of dependency theory, in large part because of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso-

-then a young sociologist and social democrat and future president of Brazil. At the time Cardoso was writing influentially in the early tradition of world-systems theory begun in 1949 by Raúl Prebisch. Dependency theory is the radical economic theory that turn on its head the liberal, modernization idea that the problem in the poorer regions of the world-system is that they had **failed** to modernize. Dependency theories and policies insisted, on good economic grounds, that the so-called modern and developed nations, far from being interested in developing the underdeveloped regions, are in fact the chief beneficiaries of capitalism's historical interest in creating poverty in the global economy. Capital rich, so-called mature, nations necessarily gave birth to economically immature, dependent regions from which they extracted, among much else, cheap labor power and valuable mineral resources.

Gunder Frank's influential contribution to dependency theory first appeared in a now-classic 1966 article in Monthly Review, "The Development of Underdevelopment," where he said:

It is generally held that economic development occurs in a succession of capitalist stages and that today's underdeveloped countries are still in a stage, sometimes depicted as an original stage, of history through which the now developed countries passed long ago. Yet even a modest acquaintance with history shows that underdevelopment is not original or traditional and that neither the past nor the present of the underdeveloped countries resembles in any important respect the past of the now developed countries. The now developed countries were never underdeveloped, though they may have been undeveloped.

In 1967, Gunder Frank published Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil that lent empirical and analytic texture to the 1966 article. These and other of his early writings made Gunder Frank famous as an early contributor to the world-systems analysis movement that took shape in the mid-70s and after.

In time, Gunder Frank veered away from the theories of modern capitalism associated with Braudel and Wallerstein. Late in life, he became the foremost proponent of the idea that the capitalist world-economy was neither the first world-economy nor one that arose entirely from Europe's notion of itself as the center of the modern world-system. Gunder Frank came to be a particularly aggressive opponent of Immanuel Wallerstein's work, as of Fernand Braudel's history of the modern world-economy. In the conclusion to his ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age (1998), Frank said: "Contrary to the mistaken allegations of Braudel and Wallerstein among so many others, our study also leads to the inevitable conclusion that early modern history was shaped by a long since operational world economy and not just by the expansion of a European world-system [Gunder Frank, 1998: 328]." Yet, the three of them were and will be forever connected in a literary matrix that defines the historical time and space of capitalism as we supposed we knew it. Without making too much of Gunder Frank's pride that his last contrarian book belongs in the company of Braudel and Wallerstein, there is good enough reason to see him as part of a matrix—if not an equilateral triangle—portraying the historical fluctuations in the history of Western capitalism.

Today there are numerous commentaries on the theme of a new silk road turned back toward the East. East and South Asian are widely considered to be the possible, if not entirely probable, economic successor to the West's economic hegemony. In such a time, Gunder Frank's 1998 book, ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asia Age serves as a goad for current discussions of the past and future of East Asia in the global economic system. Was East Asia always there as the **first** world economic system? Alternatively, is the possible turn toward an East Asian pole, if not a core, a falling away of the European world system? Gunder Frank makes his position clear in the conclusion to ReOrient: "Contrary to the mistaken allegations of Braudel and Wallerstein among so many others, our study also leads to the inevitable conclusion that early modern history was shaped by a long since operational world economy and not just by the expansion of a European world-system" (1998, 327).

"So how did the West rise?" Gunder Frank asks (1998, 277). For which his answer is three-fold. The first and "most important answer is that Europeans obtained money from the gold and silver mines they found in the Americas." The second is that they "made more money" off the backs of indigenous people in the Americas. However, the third answer is "that Europeans also used both American silver money and their profits to buy into the wealth of Asia itself" (1998, 281). Hence, his theme is that the Western world-system "climbed up on Asian shoulders." He buttresses this part of his argument curiously with substantial references to Adam Smith's 1776 Wealth of Nations. The book as a whole refers broadly to contemporary economic historians. At all the crucial points, Gunder Frank takes his departure from Braudel often and, more often, Wallerstein and those in his world-systems analysis circle. For example, on the question of the global economy in 1500—the metonymic date that Wallerstein takes as the beginning of modern world-system—Gunder Frank asks: 1500: Continuity or Break? He thereby to begin his insistence that the modern system was continuous with the long pre-existing Asiatic modern of

product. Here, Gunder Frank's earlier association with world-systems analysis reveals itself in their common regard for the Nikolai Kondratieff's wave theory of economic cycles in the global economy to justified his continuity idea:

Indeed, even Wallerstein ... refers to the widespread agreement that an expansive long [Kondratieff] "A" phase from 1050 to 1250 was followed by a contractive "B" phase from 1250 to 1450 and then after that by still another expansive "A" phase in the "long sixteenth century" from 1450 until 1640. The evidence ..., however, suggests that this long expansive phase had already begun in much of Asia by 1400 and that it lasted there until at least 1750. Wallerstein's European "long sixteenth century" probably was a belated and more temporary expression of this world economic expansion. Indeed, the voyages of Columbus and Vasco da Gama should probably be regarded as expressions of this world economic expansion, to which Europeans wanted to attach themselves in Asia. Therefore, the continuity across 1500 was actually far more important and is theoretically far more significant than any alleged break or new departure. (Gunder Frank 1998, 329)

Earlier in *ReOrient* in the section "Is There a Long-Cycle Roller Coaster?" Gunder Frank claims William McNeill, the author of *Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since AD 1000* (1983), as the authoritative voice for his conviction that in the long sixteenth century in Europe, China remained the center of the economic world. Predictably, he concludes (1998, 268), regarding 1500 as a beginning of the modern:

... that the strongest and most dynamic parts of the world economy still remained in China and India. ...I argue therefore that these and other major Asian economies had, and continued to have, a pattern of long cyclical economic growth reaching the upper turning point of its expansive "A" phase, then passing on to a contractive "B" phase. Moreover, these Asian economies were of course all connected to each other. Therefore, it cannot be "co-incidental" and should not be surprising that they were experiencing such expansive and contractive phases nearly simultaneously, if that is what was happening. However, these Asian economies were not only related to each other, they were all part and parcel of a single global economy, which presumably had its own long cycle of development.

The foremost reason that Gunder Frank failed to win the day in his debate is that he failed to account for the key difference in the modern economic system after 1500. Capitalism, as it emerged even from the colonization of the Americas, was itself a departure from not only the Asian mode of production but from premodern economic and cultural systems. Capitalism, whatever else it has been, is a formally rational economic system that came to assume that markets obey, to some large extent, a logic of their own. This, is a classically modern view associated primarily with Max Weber and Karl Marx, among others. For Gunder Frank to bolster his continuity theory he was forced to dismiss all those with whom he disagreed (1998, 330): "Marxists, Weberians, Polanyists, world-systematizers, not to mention most "economic" and other historians, balk at pursuing the evidence and the argument to examine the sacred cow of capitalism and its allegedly peculiarly exceptional or exceptionally peculiar mode of production." His criticism of those with whom he came to disagree would be more persuasive had *ReOrient*, its brilliance being granted, been more explicitly an empirical study in comparative economic history. In fact, it is a book of economic theory that is satisfied with asserting the Asiatic Mode Production as global in both senses of the word—a global system and historically inclusive of all rival economic systems.

In the end, Gunder Frank ironically succeeds in calling attention to the distinctive—which is to say, discontinuous nature of the capitalist world-system—a system that surely has endured in spite of its own historical ruptures; and one that, well into the twenty-first century, may well be entered into a new even uncertain phase. To be fair, by calling attention as Gunder Frank has too long the enduring Asian world economy—toward which to European world economy seems to have decisively turned, perhaps even to a new quasi-core in the region—Gunder Frank has suggested a reason that the future of capitalism may be in Asia. Though the Asian mode of production was not capitalist, it might be thought of as possessing a deep structural disposition by which its late long ago regionally centered economy has been able to embrace the truly modern economic world-system that arose around 1500 in Europe.

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